
Docket Item: 6.3 - CONSENT ITEM: Southwestern Oregon Community College |
Agroecology, AAS.

Summary:

Southwestern Oregon Community College proposes a new Associate of Applied Science in Agroecology. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the degree as proposed.

Staff Recommendation:

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following program: Southwestern Oregon Community College AAS in Agroecology.

Recommended Motion:

Move to approve the following degree: Southwestern Oregon Community College AAS in Agroecology.



Southwestern Oregon Community College seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission's approval to offer an instructional program leading to an Associate of Applied Science in Agroecology.

Program Summary

Agroecology integrates ecological, social, economic, and agricultural principles into research, education, and the practices of our food system and land management. This two-year program provides a broad understanding of the various aspects of ecology and agriculture, with the health and well-being of local populations and the workforce. Courses may include topics that discuss soil nutrient and building, orchard maintenance, vegetable production, native plant propagation, agroforestry, and mushroom cultivation. In addition to the agriculture core courses, there are pathways for business courses to give students the business framework to make their ideas into a successful and sustainable business. Students will have hands-on internship experiences to develop and use the skills that are essential to be a successful vegetable farmer, nursery manager, landscaper, watershed technician, or an entrepreneur.

1. ***Describe the need for this program by providing clear evidence.***

Upon review of employment data and local industry partners, there is viability for an Agroecology program at SWOCC. According to the Oregon Employment Department ten-year projected job growth is from 7-26% in the state for Farmworker and Landscaping workers. Local industry partners have expressed a need for more skilled employees, with trouble filling the positions available, as well as a general need for more food producers. Coos and Curry County have a shrinking number of farms and diversity of food grown. According to the 2017 Agricultural Census, Coos County has seen a 15% decrease in the number of farms from 2012-2017. The south coast also has a relatively low number of farms growing vegetables. Across Oregon 40% of farmers are 65 years old or older, and that farmland will need to change hands into the next generation of farmers.

Currently there are no Agriculture, Horticulture, or Botany courses offered at SWOCC. Content in some of the Biology, Natural Resources, and Forestry courses discuss Plant and soil science. However, there are few learning outcomes that apply to students applying that knowledge to growing food, or installing sustainable landscaping. Across community colleges in Oregon, there are no AAS programs for Agroecology or Sustainable Agriculture, an important pathway that encourage higher education and get students into the workforce in about 2 years.

2. ***Does the community college utilize systemic methods for meaningful and ongoing involvement of the appropriate constituencies?***

Local and statewide industry representatives have all expressed interest in SWOCC developing an Agroecology degree pathway. Key industry partners include Valley Flora Farm, Myrtle Glenn Farm, Swanson Restoration, Bandon Dunes, Coos Watershed Association, Stillwater Nursery, Oregon State Extension Service, Oregon Organic Hazelnut Collective, and Coos Head Food Coop. These and other industry partners have participated in meetings starting in Spring 2022. There were 3 collaborative meeting held in the fall term of 2022, and planning on quarterly meeting for the 2023 calendar. Industry partners have provided feedback on program and course learning outcomes, resources for curriculum, and specific curriculum details. The industry partner plan on staying involved in curriculum development, as well as providing internship and field trip opportunities as the program progresses.

3. ***Is the community college program aligned with appropriate education, workforce development, and economic development programs?***

The Agroecology AAS was developed with local business and industry support and was designed to meet current workforce needs. Each student is required to complete an internship or work-based learning experience with an employer. Students can transfer credit from other colleges and high schools' articulation.

4. ***Does the community college program lead to student achievement of academic and technical knowledge, skills, and related proficiencies?***

Additional skills communication written and verbal, computer skills, data collection and analysis are all part of the program learning outcomes. The one-year certificate feeds into the Agroecology AAS degree. The Farm Business Management and the Restoration and Landscaping Technician Career Pathway Certificates both feed into the one-year certificate and the AAS. Students must pass the Math 20 and the Writing 115 or equivalent placement tests. All students must pass 4 credits of Speech, 2 credits of PE, and 4 credits of Anthropology to achieve the AAS degree. Tutoring services, academic advising, and other support services are available to students on campus and at a distance.

5. ***Does the community college identify and have the resources to develop, implement, and sustain the program?***

The college currently has the budget available to allocate a full-time faculty position. Sustainability of the program, the college is looking at a combination of Perkins and other grant funding for building the infrastructure for instructional garden space. The college anticipates a student/faculty ratio of 15:1 which will sustain the program. The college has already identified industry partners willing to teach as part-time faculty, host internships, and/or participate on the advisory committee.

Assurances

Southwestern Oregon Community College has met or will meet the four institutional assurances required for program application.

1. *Access.* The college and program will affirmatively provide access, accommodations, flexibility, and additional/supplemental services for special populations and protected classes of students.
2. *Continuous Improvement.* The college has assessment, evaluation, feedback, and continuous improvement processes or systems in place. For the proposed program, there will be opportunities for input from and concerning the instructor(s), students, employers, and other partners/stakeholders. Program need and labor market information will be periodically re-evaluated and changes will be requested as needed.
3. *Adverse impact and detrimental duplication.* The college will follow all current laws, rules, and procedures and has made good faith efforts to avoid or resolve adverse *intersegmental* and *intra-segmental* impact and detrimental duplication problems with other relevant programs or institutions.
4. *Program records maintenance and congruence.* The college acknowledges that the records concerning the program title, curriculum, CIP code, credit hours, etc. maintained by the Office are the official records and it is the college's responsibility to keep their records aligned with those of the Office. The college will not make changes to the program without informing and/or receiving approval from the Office.