



**Agriculture and Horticulture
Advisory Committee**

Meeting Date: March 3, 2025

Time: 4:00pm

External Participants:

Joel Barczak – Owner – Blumen Gardens

Matthew Fredrickson – Director of Greenhouse Operations – Hampshire Farms

Internal participants:

Barbara Leach – Vice President of Instruction

Chase Budziak – Dean of Instruction

Jescelynn Gibbons – Associate Dean of Instruction

Janet Gallagher – Horticulture Faculty

Sean Walters – Biology and Horticulture Faculty

Kimberly Rotella – Greenhouse Grounds Specialist

Catherine Macias – Administrative Specialist

I. Program Update

A. Spring 2025 Enrollment

- i. College is up 11.3% credit hours over Spring 2024.
- ii. AGT increase of 11 credit hours (+157.1%) over Spring 2024.
- iii. HOR increase of 95 credit hours (+51.4%) over Spring 2024.

B. Department Update

i. Student News, Field Trips/Experiences

1. Spring 2025 Agriculture and Horticulture Job Fair - February 4, 2025, 9am-12pm.
 - a. 17 employers and over 100 students attended.
 - b. Agriculture Biology and Horticulture Faculty Sean Walters invited biology students to attend.
2. Horticulture Plant Sale - May 8 and 9, 2025, 9am-1pm.
 - a. Online pre-order will be available May 2 – 5, 2025.
 - b. Pick-ups for pre-orders will be May 8, 2025, 9am-1pm.
 - c. Budziak will send Plant Sale flyer to committee members with more information.
3. April 11, 2025, local FFA chapters will be on campus for Horticulture contest.

4. Horticulture internship groups are smaller this spring, but several employers have been able to come in and speak with students individually about careers in the industry.
5. Horticulture students attended iLandscape Show in Schaumburg on February 25 - 27, 2025.
6. ARES program representative Julie Poultnier from Iowa visited the floral students and discussed the many possibilities of careers in the industry.

ii. Department Events

1. The Kishwaukee College Foundation is awarding multiple scholarships for the students.

iii. Facilities, Equipment, and Supplies

1. Fall 2024 advisory committee discussed replacement or rehabilitation of the greenhouse.
 - a. The College is assessing information regarding enrollment, wages and employment outlook data for Horticulture and Agriculture programs to determine needs for the greenhouse.
 - b. The College is consulting with an architect to get some baseline ideas for the future of the greenhouse.
 - c. The Board of Trustees will be presented with the data later this spring as part of the capital planning process as internal and external funding and the economy play important roles in renovation decisions.

II. Employer Discussion & Feedback

A. Spring Job Fair

i. Feedback and Recommendations

1. The committee confirms the job fair provides valuable learning experience for students and can help them prepare for the interview process.
 - a. The committee agrees to continue to support the job fair but recommend continuing to host the event earlier in the year.
 - b. Budziak will send a survey out to the employers for additional feedback on the job fair event.

B. Hiring – Employment Needs? Open Positions?

1. The committee recommends continuing to improve the field study experience for the students as a way of exposing students to diverse industry opportunities and encouraging them to explore different areas of horticulture.

C. Industry Update/Employer Needs

- i. The committee shares that the industry is becoming more data driven.
 - 1. The need for students to develop skills in Excel, including creating pivot tables and graphs.
 - a. Skilled workers are needed for tasks such as growing, operating and troubleshooting equipment as well as leadership roles.
- ii. Event industry has a decrease in sales and booking for the upcoming year.
 - 1. Potential recession and delay in wedding planning in the younger generation.
 - a. Large suppliers have been closing due to bankruptcy.
 - b. The committee expressed concern about the potential impact of tariffs and how it will affect the industry particularly regarding materials and plants sourced from Canada.