



Horticulture Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date | time 10/11/2017 | 3:00PM in Room A 1228

Meeting Called to Order by Matt Ewert at 3:05pm

In Attendance

Members Present:

Vicki and Larry Hubbard—Owners, Pepper Creek
Joyce Grattoni—Owner, Flowers by Grattoni
Laurie McGhee—Sales Representative, Mariani Plants
Kelly Nicholas—Greenhouse Manager, Midwest Goundcovers

KC Present:

Matt Feuerborn—Dean of Career Technologies, KC
Joanne Kantner—Vice President of Instruction, KC
Rich Alde—Assistant Professor in Horticulture, KC
Matt Ewert—Assistant Professor in Horticulture, KC
Janet Gallagher—Assistant Professor in Horticulture, KC
Bill Nicklas—Executive Director of Foundation, KC
LaCretia Konan—Director of Business and Training Partnerships, KC
Brianna Hooker—Administrative Assistant to Instruction, KC

Welcome, Introductions, Approval of Consent Agenda and Minutes

LaCretia thanks everyone who submitted a letter for the Illinois Cooperative Work Study grant.

Laurie makes a motion to approve the consent agenda and the minutes as written. Joyce seconds the motion. Unanimous approval.

Industry Updates

Kelly reports that Midwest Groundcovers had strong spring and early summer sales this year which stalled slightly with the drought late summer. Thankful for the recent rain and sales are picking back up. It is still challenging to find skilled, quality labor. Midwest Groundcovers is undergoing a lot of construction currently and the greenhouse is expanding.

Laurie confirms similar sales trends at Mariani Plants that Midwest Groundcovers reported. Hopes to be busy into November this year. Laurie reports hearing that labor has been a challenge with construction/landscape crews recently.

Joyce reports a strong summer season for the floral industry however, the recent hurricanes have impacted sales/availability/prices industry-wide. Matt Ewert confirms that lumber is dealing with the same effects from the hurricanes.

Larry from PepperCreek reports that spring sales were not great, however, caught up over the summer for the greenhouse. Overall, business is doing well.

Vicki from PepperCreek reports that the floral shop business has been strong and it was a great summer wedding season. In March, PepperCreek joined WeddingWire and has received all 5 star reviews. Vicki thanks her great team for contributing to these great reviews. She currently has a KC horticulture graduate on her team and she is doing great. Larry and Vicki report doubling their wedding business this year and believe joining Wedding Wire played a significant part in that.

Laurie reports a recent landscape website that was launched. She describes it as being similar to Amazon but exclusively for landscape/wholesale product.

Vicki reports that her and Larry participated in “Petal It Forward” today in Rockford. Research has shown that giving and receiving flowers boosts happiness in both parties. Vicki and Larry gave away 200 4-stem bouquets in a half hour at this event and it was a great experience.

Curriculum Update—Hydroponics Class

Rich reports the Hydroponics course was going to be offered as a 3 credit hour course however, it didn’t run so we will be offering a 1.5 credit hour class as a second 8 week course this semester. There are currently 6-7 students registered for the course.

Rich is working on getting all of the systems set up for hydroponics in the greenhouse. Believes this course will be a great asset to our program.

Matt Feuerborn thanks the Foundation for funding through the DK Family donation for the hydroponics lab.

Bill reports Mighty Vine and Bright Farms coming into the community influenced our decision to create this course as it seems to be the “way of the future.” These companies have national contracts and are regionally strong companies. Bill is hopeful to create internship opportunities with these companies in the future.

Matt Ewert reports taking Chef Rudy, our new on-campus chef, and Monique, our Food Service Director, on a tour to see the vegetables that we grow here on campus. They are excited at the opportunity to use the veggies at the Kish Café.

Rich announces that KC donated veggies to a food pantry in Lee this year.

Marketing/Recruitment—Dual Credit

Matt Feuerborn reports that KC has received a Dual Credit Enhancement grant and KC’s focus this year is going to be on enhancing existing programs and fostering stronger relationships between KC faculty and high school Horticulture faculty as well as faculty exchanges.

Plans include working with Indian Creek High School with their landscaping courses as well as with the Biological Sciences—Ag Applications course. Rich is working to ensure that this course aligns with our Botany course here at KC to ensure consistency between high school and college credit courses.

Laurie asks if and how we reach out to people in the sales industry to draw them into Horticulture? Matt Ewert explains difficulty to attract sales people into the Horticulture program however, Matt tries to promote this aspect to our current students. Joanne thinks we could work on promoting the Sales side of Horticulture to our existing Business and Marketing Management students. Rich reports that one of our previous Horticulture students is working in industry sales and sold \$1 million in product this year.

Matt Ewert reports that KC Marketing is working on a stronger social media presence so he is trying to capitalize on Work Week to promote this idea.

New Business—Interview Day

Interview Day is scheduled for Tuesday, February 20, 2018 for this academic year. Matt Ewert reports that we had to turn business away last year due to the shortage of students in the program.

Kelly reports that many schools are doing internship/career fairs in the Fall semester and specifically at Midwest Groundcovers, they're usually done with their hiring by the end of the calendar year. The last two interns that Midwest hired from KC, the positions were created for them but it is not going to be possible to do that every year. Midwest attended fairs at ISU, U of I, Purdue, and Iowa all in the last 3 weeks.

Rich explains that KC hosts Interview Day at the time we do and have not had an issue placing students. Matt Ewert reports that we have offered the internship course that Interview Day is a part of in the Fall and students do not sign up for the course when it is offered in the Fall. We seem to be better meeting the needs of our students by offering the course in the Spring semester.

Amanda from Midwest Groundcovers is planning to come to our 101 course this semester as a guest speaker and Rich invites an HR rep from Midwest to come as well to talk about internship opportunities.

LaCretia announces that KC hosted a Career Fair today on campus. Also asks Kelly for a list of internship opportunities from Midwest Groundcovers to be included on our campus internship hub which serves as a "one stop shop" for our students looking for internships. Kelly would be happy to email the link to LaCretia.

New Business—High School Visits

Matt Ewer reports 40 students from Rockford East High School came to campus yesterday to visit the Horticulture department. Matt thinks having high school students visit campus is more beneficial to prospective students than KC faculty visiting the high schools because it gives the students the opportunity to see campus and our facility.

Janet reports DHS will be bringing students in November and students will be sitting in on a class. It is nice to get HS teachers on campus as well because they have the opportunity to learn about KC as well.

Bill proposes the question that we are asking ourselves on campus which is, what can we do to attract our local high school students? One way to do that is to show students that we have money available for them to attend KC. Bill announces an extra \$12k in scholarships available to students for the SP18 semester. There are currently two rounds of scholarship application/award periods each year.

Other Announcements from Committee Members

Larry Hubbard reports on a talk from Charlie Hall from Texas A&M—Horticulture Sciences department. His research is on how people relate to living things. Charlie has found that college students value, 1) health and well-being, 2) Environment, and 3) Financial benefit. His talk had a great emphasis on landscape and greenery in a person's surroundings and how it impacts health and well-being. Charlie Hall also discovered that students will often take slightly lower paying jobs for higher quality health/well-being.

Larry reports previous thinking that pesticides and fertilizers are not necessarily always a good thing however, there is research that proves a well maintained yard is actually carbon-positive so that is something interesting to consider.

Next Meeting

Tuesday, February 20, 2018 at 1pm; Kishwaukee College
Meeting Adjourned at 4:05pm.