

Enhancing Access, Success and Engagement through Farm & Food Programming *A SUNY Investment and Performance Fund Proposal*

Executive Summary: SUNY Cobleskill has a 100-year tradition of excellence in agricultural education and is poised for tremendous growth as the global food system's demand for well-trained food professionals expands. In partnership with Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Science (CALs), the College will leverage its state-of-the-art farm and food facilities and existing external support to launch a certificate program that will enhance **access** to academic services for a broad constituency, provide innovative **applied learning** opportunities and **engage** the large and diverse agricultural business community in New York State. Taking a "**cradle to career**" approach, the initiative will also expose elementary, middle and high-school students to exciting career and academic opportunities in the farm and food ecosystem and ensure a sufficient, well-trained workforce for this dynamic sector.

Access & Engagement. The 15-credit professional certificate program in Farm & Food Entrepreneurship will appeal to existing agricultural producers, processors and entrepreneurs. The target audience is individuals seeking to take advantage of burgeoning consumer demand for regional raw and value-added food products in the Northeast but who require knowledge of food production and management best practices. The program's hybrid delivery approach will provide the flexibility required by non-traditional student populations including adult learners, re-entering students and individuals who work full-time. Certificate program completion will take six to nine months for most students.

Upon completion, program credits will transfer seamlessly into the following SUNY Cobleskill programs: Associates in Applied Science (AAS) in Agricultural Business Management, Bachelor of Technology (BT) in Agricultural Business Management, BT in Food Systems & Technology or Bachelor of Science (BS) in Agricultural Business Management. With support from the Investment and Performance Fund Initiative, the Farm & Food Business Management certificate program will welcome its first cohort in December, 2016. Certificate program courses will include:

- Agricultural Production Management (6 credits)
 - To be developed as an intensive six week hybrid experience that utilizes SUNY Cobleskill's farm complex (including the "Coby Farm"), the SUNY Cobleskill meat processing facility and collaborating area farm businesses
- Value-Added Product Development & Marketing (2 credits)
 - Online course currently being developed with support from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA); intermittent in-person sessions to be held at SUNY Cobleskill's farm complex and at Cornell's Food Processing & Development Laboratory
- Food System Regulation (2 credits)
 - Online course currently being developed with support from USDA NIFA
- Farm & Food Entrepreneurship (2 credits)
 - To be developed as an online course
- Food Processing Technology (3 credits)
 - To be developed as an intensive three week hybrid experience that exposes students to processing technologies at SUNY Cobleskill's Dairy Processing Center, Cornell's Dairy Processing Plant and Cornell's Food Processing & Development Laboratory

Individuals may register for one or any combination of the aforementioned courses if they do not desire to complete the certification process. The six-credit "Agricultural Production Management" course in and of itself will be marketed as a summer hybrid course option for SUNY students and beyond. Professionals successfully completing certification will receive priority access to services provided by the forthcoming Farm & Food Business Incubator (a 2015 Mohawk Valley REDC/CFA project).

Applied Learning. There are no certificate programs in New York State that combine hands-on technical education with online delivery to create a rigorous curriculum relevant to the broad farm and food complex (except for an existing dairy food certificate program at Cornell specifically targeted towards professionals in the dairy food industry, which will be leveraged to develop the program proposed here). Also novel is that baccalaureate students from both SUNY Cobleskill and Cornell will be provided for-credit “special project” and internship opportunities to assist in online and on-site program delivery each year. This initiative, then, embodies SUNY Cobleskill’s longstanding commitment to applied learning in two ways: first, by utilizing physical farm and food facilities for hybrid certificate program delivery; second, by offering credit to baccalaureate students for putting their knowledge and training to work in implementing certificate program curricula alongside faculty. The leadership, communication and problem-solving skills that will result from this innovative approach will indubitably benefit participating students in their professional endeavors.

Cradle to Career: Agriculture has been identified as an economic cluster with high growth potential in many regions of New York State but its effectiveness as a regional economic driver will depend upon the availability of entrepreneurs, managers and workers trained in the scientific and technological principles of food production, processing and distribution. To that end, summer programming will be developed through which elementary, middle and high-school students in-residence on SUNY Cobleskill’s campus will learn in the College’s farm and food facilities about food science, food production and food business management from faculty and baccalaureate interns. Students completing the high-school program will be granted one “technical elective” credit upon successful admission to SUNY Cobleskill’s AAS or BT degree programs in Agricultural Business Management.

Funding Request: Support from the Investment & Performance Fund in the amount of \$82,500 is sought here and will be used in the following ways: \$56,000 in summer, 2016 pay for three SUNY Cobleskill faculty, one SUNY Cobleskill professional staff member and one Cornell faculty member to develop three of the online and hybrid courses described above and to build the administrative structure for the certificate and cradle to career programs; \$24,000 in first-year staff/intern support for certificate and “cradle to career” program implementation (December, 2016 – October, 2017); and \$2,500 for program promotion. It is anticipated that certificate program fees will sustain intern and professional staffing necessary for program implementation past its inaugural year. As one of the 29 state-operated campuses in the SUNY system, SUNY Cobleskill is eligible for this funding and seeks to apply it to approved uses (new program development; short-term operational support).

Matching Funding: Approximately \$40,000 of a \$137,500 USDA-NIFA award made to SUNY Cobleskill in 2012 is currently being used to develop a portion of the online/hybrid curriculum described above. Further, in the last year, \$1.38 million in state (ESD), private and campus funding has been raised to construct and equip the SUNY Cobleskill Dairy Processing Center, a critical resource for the programs proposed here. Recently purchased by the Cobleskill Auxiliary Service, the “Coby Farm” is a 120-acre diversified farm enterprise proximal to SUNY Cobleskill’s campus that will be used a hub for all in-person, hands-on sessions developed for the certificate and “cradle to career” programs.

Proposal Impact: All components of the project described here including development and launch of a STEM-focused, market-relevant hybrid professional certificate program and creation of credit-bearing teaching/mentoring opportunities for baccalaureate students are replicable and scalable. Best practices for certificate and “cradle to career” program development and implementation will be summarized and made available for other campuses seeking to create similar opportunities in technical disciplines. A quantitative summary of the project’s anticipated impact is included as Attachment A.

Project Timeline: Please see Attachment B for a complete timeline of project development and implementation activities.

Enhancing Access, Success and Engagement through Farm & Food Programming
Attachment A

Summary of Anticipated Project Impact

Metric	Inaugural Year 12/ 2016 - 10/ 2017	Year Two 12/2017 – 10/2018	Year Three and Beyond (Annually)
Certificates Awarded	30	40	60
<i>Facilitated AAS completions</i>	5	10	15
<i>Facilitated BT/BS completions</i>	2	5	5
SUNY Cobleskill/Cornell Baccalaureate Internships/Special Projects created	4	5	6
Cradle to Career Program Participants	60	90	120
<i>High school participants enrolling at SUNY Cobleskill</i>	8	12	18
Farm & Food Businesses Sustained/Created/Enhanced through Certificate Programming	5	10	15

Enhancing Access, Success and Engagement through Farm & Food Programming
Attachment B
Project Timeline

Date	Action Item
December, 2015	Notification of award
May – August, 2016	Design and development of Agricultural Production Management, Farm & Food Entrepreneurship and Food Processing Technology courses; Design and development of Cradle to Career programs for elementary, middle and high-school age groups
August, 2016 – December, 2016	Marketing/Promotion of certificate program enrollment; Final development process for programmatic structure
December, 2016	Enrollment of first certificate program cohort
January – October, 2017	Matriculation for first certificate program cohort; certificates awarded in October
February – May, 2017	Marketing/Promotion of Cradle to Career summer programs
June, 2017	Session I of Cradle to Career Program 2017
July, 2017	Session II of Cradle to Career Program 2017
August, 2017	Session III of Cradle to Career Program 2017