Developing a Pipeline of Agriculture Students:
Starting & Nurturing a Two-Year Agribusiness Program

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NACTA
June 26, 2013
Starting & nurturing a 2-year program

• Who we are
• About SVCC agribusiness
• How it all started
• Increasing recognition
• Where we are now
• Tools for increasing enrollment
• The pipeline
Who We Are

• Who represents a four-year institution?
• Who is from a two-year school?
• For the four-year schools, how many of your states have colleges that offer a two-year agriculture degree that can be a pipeline for you?
Who I am

- Lunenburg County Virginia farm girl
- Virginia Tech and Southside Virginia Community College
- My life’s work....agriculture
About SVCC Agribusiness

• 20-credit Career Studies Certificate
• Technical Associates
• Associates of Arts and Sciences (transfer degree)
• Animal Science, plant science, soils, management, finance, human resources, marketing, professional selling, ag policy, alternative energy, ...
How It All Started

• Consortium of colleges in the “tobacco footprint”
• SVCC joined in 2010
• My chance to go home!
• Started in August 2010 with 1 student majoring in agribusiness and 2 courses with 4 and 5 students
Increasing Recognition

• Telling the agribusiness story to anyone who would listen
• What do most people think when they hear ‘agriculture’?
Increasing Recognition

• Agribusiness is farming...and so much more!
• Meetings with high school CTE directors and teachers, class visits, FFA events, Rotary, Ruritans, Chambers of Commerce, career fairs, county fairs, news articles, posters, brochures, Facebook
Where We Are Now

• Starting our 4th year this fall
• 35 students who have declared agribusiness as their major
• 4 have graduated with their certificate
  – 2 work on their family farms
  – 1 employed as a farm manager
  – 1 research technician at a VT research center
• 3 have received their associates
• 7 who have taken AGR coursework have transferred to Virginia Tech and 1 to Virginia State, with more in the pipeline
Tools for Increasing Enrollment

• Talk to anyone who will listen!
• Be sure your colleagues are knowledgeable about opportunities
• Educate both parents and students about opportunities in agribusiness
• Develop relationships with high school counselors and teachers
• Make personal contacts via mail, email, phone
  – Email yesterday: “You’ve been very helpful. Can’t remember this type of personal response when I initially went to college. Thank you so much.”
Tools for Increasing Enrollment

• Utilize students as ambassadors for your program
  – Take students with you to meetings, conferences, college/career fairs, etc.

• Keep the program in the local news
The Pipeline

• Students have enrolled in Virginia Tech’s departments of Agricultural & Applied Economics, Crop & Soil Environmental Science, Wood Science & Forest Products, Forestry

• More to come!

• Don’t we have the best jobs? Thomas Jefferson thought so.
"Agriculture is our wisest pursuit, because it will in the end contribute most to real wealth, good morals, and happiness."

- Letter from Thomas Jefferson to George Washington (1787)
I am proud to lead SVCC’s agribusiness program, and proud to be training the next generation of agriculturalists!

• Agribusiness is the country’s #1 industry
• Agribusiness is Virginia’s #1 industry
• Agribusiness is Southside’s #1 industry
• Agribusiness at SVCC allowed me to come home!
And there’s no place like home!
And there’s nothing like family
I am proud to be a part of agriculture, and I am proud to be in Southside.
And I’m proud to be creating a pipeline of agriculture students for our four-year schools.

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