

Organizers: Miguel Gómez, Brad Rickard and Todd Schmit
November 29, 2011

Attendance: Miguel Gómez, Brad Rickard, Todd Schmit, Antonio Bento, David Kay, Mike Hoffman, Wayne Wilcox, Tim Martinson, Lauren Chambliss, Jonathan Russell-Anelli, Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman, Brian Caldwell, Rod Howe, Marvin Pritts, Frank DiSalvo, Mark Lawrence, Helene Schember, Lauren Chambliss.

Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems: Exploring Contemporary Policy Issues

Recently, a University-wide committee was appointed to develop and implement a plan for a School of Public Policy (SPP) at Cornell. Based on the preliminary work of the committee, there are three potential pillars of such a school: Social and Welfare Policy, Environment and Energy Policy, and Sustainable International Development. The committee is interested in identifying ways in which the future SPP may connect with CALS's important extension, outreach and applied research programs in the areas of food and sustainable agriculture. The committee wants to devise strategies to highlight our unique strength in sustainability of food systems and agriculture. This topical lunch started with a brief description of the initiative to launch a SPP at Cornell, followed by a guided group discussion among participants to provide feedback to the committee regarding the potential role of extension and outreach programs in the SPP initiative.

Antonio Bento provided an overview of the initiative for a SPP in Cornell. A central component of this initiative is offering a MPS degree in Public Policy. There are opportunities for CALS faculty and researchers working on the area of food, agriculture and sustainability to link with the proposed MPS program. One interesting possibility is to link MPS students with CALS' extension/research faculty through Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). The Ohio State University is an example of a Land Grant University with a SPP that has made such links. Antonio Bento also described the Engineering MPS program at Cornell focused on energy, which is a successful program with over 100 students per year.

Several opportunities for CALS involvement were discussed. Rob Howe stated that CCE would welcome being a key player in the proposed SPP, particularly in articulating relationships between MPS students and extension specialists and educators across New York State. Lauren Chambliss indicated that at the university level there is pressure to increase our presence in Washington; and contributing to the MPS may help CALS enhance policy outreach. Tim Martinson and Heidi Mouillesseaux-Kunzman described various projects with LEAD NY, which have an important policy component with the leadership of CCE and local governments. Antonio Bento explained that MPS students will have a one-year core; and in the second year the students can take classes and do research with individual departments to pursue their specialization. Therefore, it is in their second year that students could work on research/extension projects.

David Kay asked what the policy audiences for the proposed SPP might be. Are these State, Local or Federal? Antonio Bento indicated that traditional orientation to Federal agencies may be difficult because this market may be saturated. There may be more opportunities in regional and local policy audiences, and also internationally with strong micro-foundations. The demand for this type of program in CALS is evident: CIPA's applications have risen to about 600. Antonio Bento pointed out that CIPA has insufficient resources for marketing, recruitment, and course offerings and linking CIPA to the SPP may help overcome such limitations. Rob Howe stated that CaRDI could serve as a facilitator to link the proposed MPS to local governments and CCE. Brian Caldwell mentioned that food & agriculture are

relevant to all of the pillars, to which Antonio Bento responded that the school would be organized around broad themes rather than around particular sectors.

Miguel Gómez stated that the current internship program run by CCE could provide the framework to link MPS students with extension activities. The SPP could contribute to existing extension programs by allowing students to work in CCE offices across the state under the supervision of faculty with extension/research appointments. Antonio Bento indicated that UC Santa Barbara provides a good example for this: the school links students with stakeholders interested in working with these students on specific group projects (defined by stakeholders).

In summary, there was consensus that there are benefits to link extension/research activities conducted by CALS faculty with the proposed SPP. Antonio Bento explained that first draft of the report is due by end of 2011. Depending on this preliminary report, the SPP committee will move towards a second phase in January, 2012.