

**Abstract** Cal Poly's Farmer Experiential Education and Development Program (FEED) is an 18-week, for-credit, agricultural training certificate program developed to educate and prepare individuals who aspire to become beginning farmers. FEED's primary goal is to increase the number of farmers throughout California by exposing veterans and socially disadvantaged individuals to the agricultural industry and prepare them to successfully own and/or operate farms. FEED gives students a hands-on, Learn by Doing experience that will provide the knowledge, skills and tools required to create successful farmers. In addition, FEED is specifically designed to provide post-enrollment mentorship throughout the first year of the farmer's career to create a foundation for success.

Though successful, the first cohort's tuition proved too expensive for the target market to ensure enrollment levels required for long-term sustainability. We propose to transition FEED to a joint certificate program between Cal Poly and nearby Cuesta and Hancock Colleges with the goal of increasing access to educational opportunities by serving a broader constituency at a lower price point. The Colleges will provide prerequisite courses (Plant and Soil Science; Agribusiness; and Machinery Safety) and Cal Poly will offer a capstone experience in a unique agricultural internship designed to immerse students in sustainability-focused market farming. We are requesting \$100,000 to provide a bridge to maintain FEED's outreach efforts and development needs and to assist in development costs until enrollment reaches the level required for sustainability - something we are confident that the partnership can achieve over the 24-month grant period.

**Unmet need** California's farmers are declining at an alarming rate, posing a threat to this vital industry. In addition:

- Over 68% of U.S. agricultural industry workers are over 55
- California's standing as the nation's leader in agriculture creates tremendous opportunity
- Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties are among the State's most productive agricultural regions adding an annual combined total of \$2.4 billion to the economy

As one of California's leading agricultural education institutions, Cal Poly is in a unique position to address these issues by reimagining our newly implemented FEED program to train California's future farmers. The Innovation Grant allowed us to develop the curriculum, market the program and successfully serve its first cohort but for-credit tuition prohibited many in underserved communities from participating. In response, we procured a generous gift that applied to student tuition, but acknowledging that gifts are not sustainable we looked for a way to reduce costs. The result is an innovative plan to partner with Cuesta and Hancock Colleges

[\(http://www.cuesta.edu/\)](http://www.cuesta.edu/)[\(http://www.hancockcollege.edu/\)](http://www.hancockcollege.edu/) to create a more accessible and affordable program.

**Description** FEED shares the CSU's objective of meeting California's workforce development needs by educating individuals who will help maintain leadership among the states in farm cash receipts. Cal Poly's partnership with the Colleges further aligns with the CSU's objectives by providing increased access to educational opportunities for broader constituencies by greatly reducing the program's overall cost. We can reach more of the targeted population by combining Cal Poly's marketing with traditional college channels. We developed this alternative instructional delivery system by offering a certificate pathway, which accepts prerequisite courses from either school, then requires attendance in the capstone internship on a working farm. This partnership will result in creative new opportunities that provide both personal and lifelong learning to a wider array of participants by introducing new students to college-level learning in a supportive environment.

Furthermore, the FEED model addresses two of the initiatives of the GI 2025 Pillars by preparing a non-traditional student population for academic success and doing so in an environment that both supports and engages students to serve their wellbeing through certificate achievement and beyond. While many students will finish the program and begin their farming career, others may opt to apply for matriculated status in a degree-seeking agricultural program. FEED both introduces agricultural academic learning and provides a hands-on internship that allows the participant the option of continuing their education or immediately seeking employment in the agricultural industry.

The Colleges are uniquely poised to provide key elements of the FEED curriculum, while focused firmly on making FEED accessible to more students. The Colleges together serve 26,872 students, of which more than 650 are veterans. More than 40% of the Colleges' students qualify as economically disadvantaged, while 1/4th are first generation college students. Additionally, from 2010-2016, Cuesta's White students decreased to 54% while Hispanic students increased to 34%.

<b>Partnership Goals</b>	<b>CSU Objective</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Data Tracking</b>
Transition program from Cal Poly to joint certificate program with Cuesta and Hancock Colleges	Creatively develop new programs  Develop alternative instructional delivery systems	Student enrollment and experience is enhanced by access to two institutions of higher learning	Increased enrollment, attendance and completion of the program
Increase cohort size	Increase access to educational opportunities by serving broader constituencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce cost to students by 70%</li> <li>• Increase enrollment by at least 100%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Registration fee down from \$6000 to \$2,000</li> <li>• 2X enrollment by Fall 2019</li> </ul>
Post-FEED job placement or transfer to degree program	Meet California's economic and workforce development needs	Clear path to development for participants	Reach 100% career job placement or application to degree program
Engage non-traditional students in the program	Provide personal and lifelong learning opportunities	Enroll students who have finished college prerequisite courses in internship	Grant certificates to 10% of each cohort with no previous higher education
Provide hands-on learning and follow up coaching and life planning services	GI2025: Student Engagement and Well-Being	Student success during the program and afterwards	100% completion rate and mentoring with Waypoint
Create opportunities for FEED students to transfer to Cal Poly or elsewhere	GI2025: Facilitate progress toward degree completion for the traditional student body	Completed applications for each student attempting the transfer	Survey those who have applied to degree programs

**Collaboration** Cal Poly, as lead and fiscal agent of this grant, is excited about the prospect of partnering with the Colleges to reintroduce FEED to the local community and potential students from throughout California. Extended Education will deliver the following services:

- Program management
- Marketing (web site, brochures, videos, social media)
- Enrollment and registration in the internship course (payment processing, enrollment tracking, certificates, communications with prospective and current students, etc.)
- Fiscal management (collection of fees, expense disbursement, contracts, POs, invoices, expense tracking, instructor/vendor payments, and refunds)
- Agricultural Internship
- Student Experimental Farm for the internship

Cuesta and Hancock will offer the required courses for the program. Cuesta North recently constructed a plant facility, which includes a greenhouse where students will learn and apply new skills in cultivating both plants and soil and Cuesta Main will introduce students to agricultural machinery safety. Hancock already offers plant/soil science as well as Agribusiness. In addition, Cuesta's faculty is developing a new business course focusing on establishing and managing a farm enterprise.

A fourth key partner in this collaboration is Waypoint Coaching and Consulting (<http://waypointcoach.com>). Waypoint will vet applicants, provide mentorship, resiliency training, and networking. Waypoint serves returning veterans and related organizations by providing transition/life planning coaching, training, and community integration. In partnership with the Veteran Services Center, the Vet Center, and America's Job Center, Waypoint provides a large-system perspective of healthy transitions and offers credibility, in-depth knowledge and experience.

**Value and Viability** FEED is unique in that the students will participate in an internship on a 2.5-acre organic farm designed to replicate a typical market farming enterprise. Students will not only work the land using the skills learned in prerequisite courses, but will also harvest, market and distribute their produce to local farmers' markets and restaurants. Many students will fulfill the prerequisite coursework by the summer of 2018, so we will draw from these students for the internship course in fall. Anticipating high attendance rates, Cal Poly plans to hold up to two internship cohorts annually training approximately 40 students each year.