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# Education in Viticulture and Enology at Washington State University

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The development of an academic program within a University is much like the development of a market for a product. It starts with an innovative idea, a sense, on the part of one or more individuals, that there may be a demand for the product and it grows often by fits and starts, as an idea, a vision, and then, finally, an implementation plan. The success of the development of the program, as in the development of a market, is a matter of both perceived and real demand, of preparation and delivery of a quality product, and a bit of luck.

We are in the initial stages of our thinking and development of an academic program at Washington State University to better serve the wine grape, juice grape, and enology industry in the state. I want to talk today about the process that we have followed, the stage that we are at, and the potential for the delivery of an outstanding program that would better support a growing industry in the state of Washington.

We have heard three important messages from the industry:

- The need for world-class quality in our instructional programs, as well as our research and extension education programs, in order for the industry to have a reputation for world-class quality products.
- It is essential that our instructional programs be accessible to those people working in the industry, both for the intern experience, which is a vital part of this educational program, and to meet the needs of many place-bound individuals.
- The importance and the value of cooperation across academic institutions, so that the complementary strengths of each institution can successfully contribute to the educational programs. This means that the community colleges and Washington State University provide their respective programs and complete an articulated educational program for the betterment of the students.

With these core goals in mind, Washington State University has met numerous times with the leadership of the Washington Wine Commission, and we have submitted a proposal for consideration to develop a

viticulture/enology educational program. Such a program would focus on both the extension education and the academic programs. Our proposal has been well received by the industry, and we are clearly at the point where, to quote one of my favorite singers - Barbara Streisand, "having a vision is no solution, everything depends on execution." The implementation of the vision and the concept is now beginning.

This effort also occurs at a timely point in Washington State University's history. President V. Lane Rawlins has succeeded President Samuel H. Smith and arrived on-campus with a clear goal of improving the quality of our instructional programs. Washington State University has emphasized access and increasing access to our programs by place-bound students throughout the State. As a result, we have built the branch campuses, including Vancouver, Spokane, and WSU Tri-Cities. At the same time, the College of Agriculture and Home Economics, through its Cooperative Extension programs, has developed the Learning Centers in partnership with community colleges. We have two Learning Centers in this region up and running at the Yakima Valley Community College and Awl Walla Community College. It is this infrastructure that increases the access so that the highest quality programs can be made available to students.

But President Rawlins is asking for more; he has asked every College to develop a five-year strategic plan; a direction that we will pursue, in partnership with our stakeholders. It is the strategic planning exercise that is so timely as we begin to think about the curriculum and the delivery of programs to support the needs of the grape producers in this State and the wineries of the State.

The Washington Wine Commission requested a proposal and a budget for a high-quality education program in viticulture/enology. Their thought was to submit a funding request for a legislative initiative in 2001-2003. Given the fact that the University had already submitted its budget request to the Governor and the Office of Financial Management, we believed it would be premature, at this time, to go forward with a legislative request; however, we did see the possibility of developing a two- to three-year plan, initiating the partnerships and relationships, beginning to provide essential courses, and laying the groundwork for a legislative request in 2003.

Washington State University, in discussions with the Commission and the Research and Education Committee of the Washington Wine Commission, has identified the following priorities and requirements.

1. Increased extension educational programs, short courses, training and symposia.
2. A strong, high-quality two-year program at community colleges that can transfer to Washington State University for B.S. degrees in horticulture or food science, with an area of emphasis in viticulture and/or enology.
3. A needs assessment that adequately measures the demand and expectations of the industry in the near- and long-term for a BS degree that involves the community colleges and Washington State University.

I want to discuss briefly each of these priority areas.

### **Extension Educational Programs**

We have proposed to form an extension program steering committee with Dr. Sara Spayd and Jack Watson from Washington State University, along with industry and community college representatives, to develop the priority educational programs required. Jack Watson and Sara Spayd have begun discussions and plan to appoint an advisory committee and prioritize program efforts. They have identified several areas for educational programs, including: vine nutrition, irrigation, monitoring and sampling, grape maturity, enology basics, cellar working, and grape and wine chemistry.

These will be the topics of five to seven short courses in the next year.

## **Academic Programs**

We have proposed to appoint an academic program committee consisting of key faculty from Washington State University and the community colleges. Dr. Charles Edwards, Food Science, and Dr. Sara Spayd, Food Science, as well as Dr. John Fellman, Horticulture, will provide leadership to this Committee. We are also requesting representatives from Columbia Basin Community College, Walla Walla Community College, and Yakima Valley Community College. Without the partnership and the active participation between community college teachers and our teachers, the kind of carefully articulated program that we envision will not be possible. With their cooperation, we can achieve the goals of a high-quality, science-based program.

We would initially propose to develop courses for viticulture and enology options at Washington State University, Tri-Cities, and in Pullman, via Distance Education, as well as in direct classroom teaching.

This process, of course, requires multiple meetings and discussions. We have scheduled the first meeting with Larry James and myself and the presidents of the community colleges to define the role of WSU and each community college. Each of us bring strengths to this partnership and with those strengths we can put in place a program that will meet the needs of the industry. The Academic Program Committee will be formed to oversee the development of the curriculum.

## **Curriculum**

In conversations with the faculty, I can see the possibility for initial offerings at Tri-Cities in the Fall of 2001. Courses, such as the Science of Viticulture and Enology, could be upgraded from a lower division course to an upper division course and made available at Tri-Cities, but it would require additional faculty at WSU Tri-Cities. At the same time, we have the Distance Education Technology (WHETS - the Washington Higher Education Telecommunications System), which could be used to send courses between Pullman and WSU Tri-Cities. We are moving to modularize our courses in Entomology, Plant Pathology, Horticulture, and Food Science. Individual one-credit courses might be available with additional support to the faculty to develop the courses and provide teaching assistance support at the campus at a distance from the faculty member. We have also considered the possibility of providing additional horticultural courses, Growth and Development of Crop Plants, Viticulture and Small Fruits, at WSU Tri-Cities to increase the opportunities for place-bound students to take these courses.

Washington State University already has in place a Tri-State Agricultural Distance Degree Alliance (TADDA), which includes Oregon State University, the University of Idaho, Walla Walla Community College, Treasure Valley Community College, and Blue Mountain Community College in Oregon. Students can take courses from Washington, Oregon, or Idaho for credit toward their graduation in the state of their location. With external grant funding from USDA, we have developed the common curricula, and coordinated the reengineering of courses for distance delivery. These courses are in place and could become the basis for a distance education degree in general agriculture. Within this general agriculture framework, specific courses in viticulture and enology and horticultural production could also be taken by students. Even with this capacity that we have, we still lack significant resources to pull these programs together quickly. This is the value of a multi-year planning and development process.

## **Needs Assessment**

Even as we initiate specific courses in response to perceived need, Washington State University, and the community colleges, must conduct a serious needs assessment in order to justify any requests for additional resources from the legislature or the internal reallocation of resources within the institutions. This is where the industry could play an important role in helping to determine the educational needs for your industry. What are the priority areas? Is it in the winery, or in the vineyard? Is it in the marketing area? We also need to talk to the industry about the kind of support that they can provide for

scholarships, or internships. Both are essential in the educational process. Finally, we need to determine the nature of the jobs, the adequacy of the salaries, to determine whether or not there is the demand to pull the students into the programs and then into initial entry level positions with a goal for a career in the industry. Much of this information will have to be generated by interactions between the universities and the industry.

## Summary

I am here to talk to you because I see great potential. Our wine grape, and wine industry has been growing steadily. It is the bright spot this past year in agricultural production. The community colleges have recognized a need and Walla Walla Community College has developed a one-year certificate program in viticulture/enology. In visiting with President Steve VanAusdle, he is talking about a two-year program. WSU has a Winery Pilot Plant and research and extension faculty at WSU Prosser. We need to take the capacity that we currently have, the strengths of our faculty based in Pullman and Prosser and in the counties, and working with the community colleges and industry, develop a plan that we can demonstrate will work.

Our proposal to the Washington Wine Commission requested funding for the extension education programs that I have described, for the partnerships between community colleges and WSU to develop the academic program, and to conduct the needs assessments for future extension and academic program. This one-year request for \$100,000 would lay the basis for a longer term program.

We also have outlined Phase II, during which we would move toward a permanent program, from September 2001 to August 2003. During this Phase II period, we would also need additional resources to expand the Extension programming, the teaching of viticulture and enology, and the development of a detailed proposal for a permanent program, funded by the State Legislature.

Phase III would be the result of additional legislative funding, provided in the legislative session of 2003. We are cautiously optimistic, working diligently to complete the preparation of our proposal, and anticipating a positive outcome. As I mentioned in my opening comments, we need to clearly assess the market, be able to provide a high-quality product, and with a little luck, this preparation will pay off in an outstanding program.

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