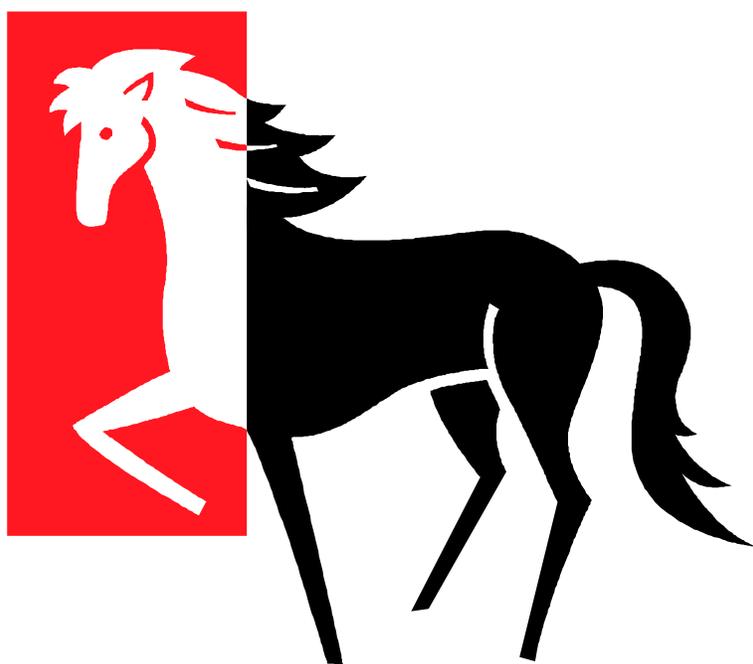


Pierce College Equestrian Program
Viability Committee:

Final Report and Recommendations



November 16, 2007

Executive Summary

On May 11, 2007 the Educational Planning Committee authorized the formation of a viability committee to explore the status and future direction of the equestrian program at the college. The following individuals were appointed to the committee:

Academic Senate designee:	Diane Levine
Educational Planning Committee designees:	Phyllis Braxton, Tom Rosdahl
Department Chairs:	Donna Accardo, James Rikel
Curriculum Committee Chair:	Sharon Levick
AFT designees:	Richard Follett, Art Gillis
VP of Academic Affairs designee:	Carol Kozeracki
Academic Affairs Dean:	Carole Delgado

Given the college's recent investments in the Equestrian Education Center and its substantial land resources, as well as its academic tradition as an agricultural institution, the goal of the viability review committee was perceived as "program modification and improvement" rather than as "program discontinuance."

Over the course of the summer, committee members reviewed the department's program review report and enrollment information, met with the department chair and faculty members, toured the facilities, visited and spoke with faculty from other programs in the state, reviewed the report produced by the Statewide Visiting Committee Evaluation Team for Agriculture and Natural Resources ("Statewide Visiting Committee"), spoke with a community advisory board, and met with the Associate Vice President for Administrative Services who oversees the Enterprise division of the college.

Based on this input the committee identified a number of issues facing the program, and created a list of recommendations to present to the Educational Planning Committee and Academic Senate for approval. A summary of the committee's recommendations is listed below:

1. Faculty staffing

The department needs to hire a new full-time equine science faculty member as quickly as possible. This person should be hired on a D-basis with appropriate release time to oversee the overall direction and operation of the Equestrian Center as well as the program's course offerings. It is essential that the hiring committee include faculty members from related disciplines in agriculture, as well as one or two experienced faculty members from equestrian programs at other community colleges. The selection of an outstanding faculty member is critical to the success of the program.

2. Classified staffing

The department needs to hire the equivalent of one full-time classified person to assist the faculty in overseeing the campus' facilities, providing needed assistance with riding classes, and serving as the campus liaison in arranging for shows to be held at the campus on a regular basis.

3. Assignment of primary responsibility for equestrian area

The department should have formal oversight of the equestrian facilities, including the scheduling of shows and workshops, and the utilization of the barns. Administrative Services, Community Services Program, and other campus organizations, as appropriate, shall provide support to the faculty member as requested.

4. Curriculum focus

The department's current curriculum addresses the interests of both horse owners interested in improving their riding skills and caring for their horses, and individuals interested in pursuing a career in the horse industry. The committee supports the continuation of this two-pronged approach and urges the new full-time faculty member to evaluate the current curriculum in light of appropriate career focus(es) for the program, which could include facilities management, show management, teaching/training, and judging. Similarly the new faculty member should work with Community Services to determine the balance of riding classes to be offered through Extension and through the credit program.

5. Utilization of equestrian facilities

The committee strongly supports the concept of utilizing the equestrian facilities for shows and workshops. The committee recommends that these events should be overseen by the faculty and, whenever possible, should provide educational opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience. The committee recommends that horse boarding options for students be limited to enrollment in specific, relevant courses on a semester-by-semester basis.

6. Advisory committee

The department must establish an active advisory committee. Advisory board members can not only provide guidance on curricular issues but also student apprenticeship and future job opportunities.

7. College financial commitment

The college will need to make additional investments in the equestrian property that will strengthen the academic program. Funds must be allocated to improve the teaching areas as well as the show facilities. In addition, the committee recommends that the college explore the costs for landscaping the equestrian area.

8. Mule handling program

After reviewing enrollment figures for the mule handling program for the past three years, and after taking into consideration the input of the visiting state commission and the current faculty, the committee recommends that the college discontinue the mule handling program.

Background of the Equestrian Program

During the academic year, the Pierce equestrian program utilizes the horses from a trail-riding company that operates during the summer. Although these horses are loaned to Pierce at no cost, the college is financially responsible for feeding and grooming the horses. The college provides a budget of approximately \$17,500 to cover hay and shoeing expenses. Riding courses are relatively expensive to offer because enrollment is limited to 18 students. Pierce Extension also offers community services riding classes, which are designed to be self-sustaining financially (students are charged \$150 for each 6-week course).

Horse Science classes include the 14 Animal Science courses numbered between 600 and 650. The mule handling courses are Animal Science courses numbered between 680 and 699 (plus some special sections of the riding courses). Over the last two academic years (Fall 2005 – Spring 2007), 10 of the horse science classes have been offered. A total of 850 students were enrolled in these classes, primarily in the riding class and accompanying lecture, as shown below:

Fall 2005 - Spring 2007 Horse Science Enrollments (total enrollment = 850)				
Title	Course	Lab/Practicum	Units	Enrollment
Horseback Riding Lab	621	Yes	1	253
Basic Equitation	620*	No	1	165
Equine Management Techniques	603	Yes	10	105
Horse Production	601	No	3	92
Horse Husbandry	602	No	3	56
Equine Issues	645	No	5	56
Beginning Equine Training	630	Yes	2	40
Equine Health and First Aid	650	Yes	2	39
Advanced Equine Training	631	Yes	2	24
Introduction to Rodeo	615	No	1	20
*Co-requisite is 621				

Compared to the overall college population, the students in the horse science courses are significantly more likely to be female, to be older than age 25, and to indicate an educational goal of “personal development.”

The program offers an A.S. Degree in Horse Science, a 28-unit certificate in Horse Science, and a 16-unit certificate in Mule Handling and Management. Few students earn these degrees, with a total of two A.S. degrees and two certificates being awarded during the 2003-04, 2004-05, and 2005-06 academic years.

Equestrian Program Issues Considered by the Committee

Curriculum Emphases

In researching the programs at a number of other colleges in the state, the committee concluded that a “model program” does not exist. The equestrian programs at each of the colleges investigated, including Shasta, West Hills, and Feather River, were very different and served the needs of their particular constituents. One emphasized ranch skills and pack horse riding, another focused on rodeo, and another was evaluating its future direction. At all of these colleges, the programs were struggling with a lack of administrative support. One of the larger programs generated most of its revenue by breeding horses.

The current curriculum at Pierce addresses the interests of two groups: horse owners interested in improving their riding skills and ability to take care of their horses, and individuals interested in pursuing a career in the horse industry. Courses such as “Horse Show Organization and Management” are oriented toward career preparation whereas “Basic Equitation” and “Introduction to Rodeo” are designed for the horse owners interested in personal development. The instructors estimate that approximately half of the students are taking courses for personal enjoyment and half are interested in pursuing a career in the field.

The report produced by the Statewide Visiting Committee emphasized the importance of career preparation, stating that “equine courses need to focus on career opportunities and occupational training,” and that the department should “create new certificates for all instructional programs – emphasizing career area needs and program completers.” Similarly, the department’s most recent program review included a strong recommendation that “an expansion of our classes is necessary to meet emerging employment requirements. These include stable management, horse show management, farrier (horseshoeing) science, racetrack training, and therapeutic principles.” Conversations with the department chair and faculty emphasized four potential career areas: facilities management, show management, teaching/training, and judging.

In addition, a number of people interviewed stated that a background in equestrian science provides opportunities for students to explore a range of careers, including farm or ranch management, tack and feed store ownership, writing and publishing opportunities with horse-related magazines, public relations for race tracks, horse appraisal for insurance purposes, technical directors for Western movies, etc. The book “Careers with Horses” (2004) provides examples of horse-related careers and salary information:

Horse Breeder: \$22,650
Farm Manager: \$27,084
Publication Editor: \$37,560 - \$42,560
Farrier (horse shoer): \$58,536 (before expenses)
Veterinary Technologist (private practice): \$26,250

Professional Horse Rider: \$19,705
Horse Trainer: \$25,828
Insurance Claims Investigator: \$42,440
Groom/Stable Hand (sometimes also includes housing): \$16,216

Other people interviewed felt that an emphasis on assisting community members to develop their riding and horse care skills was a more appropriate focus for the college, because of its location in an area with large numbers of horse owners. These types of courses, which could address such topics as riding, private facilities management, health issues, reproduction and breeding issues, and participation in horse shows, could also serve as foundational courses for individuals interested in career pursuits. The committee supports the continuation of this two-pronged approach and would urge the new full-time faculty member to evaluate the curriculum in light of appropriate career focus(es) for the program.

In keeping with the need to make the curriculum current and relevant, the Statewide Visiting Committee urged the department to conduct a yearly review of courses that would result in needed adjustments to the curriculum and the development of course-level and program-level student learning outcomes. They also suggested that the department update its technological capacities so that digital technology could be better incorporated into the curriculum.

Finally, the committee discussed the need for the department to examine and evaluate the balance of riding classes being offered for credit by the department and those offered not for credit through Pierce Extension. A schedule should be established that is cost effective for the college and meets the needs of the students.

Staffing Issues

The substantial curricular and facilities-related responsibilities in this area require the hiring of a full-time faculty member and the assistance of at least one classified staff person with expertise in working with horses and related facilities. Above and beyond the normal faculty responsibilities of designing and teaching classes, a full-time faculty member in the equestrian program will be responsible for overseeing the equestrian grounds and facilities, coordinating the rental of these facilities to external agencies that are interested in conducting shows on the campus, and ensuring that the shows serve an educational purpose by allowing students to participate in the operations of the shows. In addition, because the program has been curtailed as the result of inadequate funding over the years, a new full-time faculty member will be expected to create a vision for the future direction of the program. Both the department and the Statewide Visiting Committee assigned a high priority to hiring a new faculty member.

The department's most recent program review led to two major recommendations, one of which was the "hiring of a full-time faculty member to be present on a daily basis to manage the program." More specifically, the Statewide Visiting Committee

recommended that the college “hire one full-time faculty member in equine. . . with the ability to 1) develop an instructional plan which includes updating/development of degrees, certificates, courses, curricula as well as facility use/planning and student leadership development, 2) create a shared vision for the equine program to incorporate an enterprise approach into the instructional plan, and 3) bring stakeholders together for implementation of the shared vision.”

In talking with faculty and members of the community advisory board, it is clear that a range of background experiences can serve as appropriate preparation for the faculty member. Experience in teaching riding is relevant, but a background in shows or racetrack management could also be beneficial to the students. One important consideration, asserted numerous times by a number of people, is the recognition that the horse community is close-knit and well-networked, and that the full-time faculty member should be actively involved in the industry and have a strong reputation if Pierce wants the program to be respected and to attract students and organizations looking to rent facilities for shows.

To assist with the instructional and entrepreneurial responsibilities, the full-time faculty member will need the assistance of at least one classified staff person. Likely responsibilities for this person will include caring for the facilities and grounds, overseeing horses that are being boarded on campus for classes or shows, and helping to coordinate the logistics for shows. Currently existing titles for classified positions do not match the needs of this department. The committee felt that the department would benefit from creating the position of “Instructional Assistant, Equestrian,” which the new faculty member could use for hiring a classified person to assist him or her with required duties. Depending on the interest of the faculty member and the skills of the classified person, this position could be filled as a full-time position or several part-time positions. The faculty member will be responsible for supervising the individual(s) to ensure that the instructional needs of the program determine the priorities and responsibilities of the classified staff member. There are existing classified staff members performing some of these functions. These individuals would be eligible to apply for the position(s). Community members emphasized that since these people often serve as the liaisons to the public, it is very important that they are knowledgeable about the industry and interact well with the public.

As the program grows, it may be appropriate to hire additional faculty and classified staff, but one hire in each of these areas is strongly urged for the short term. If Pierce begins hosting a large number of horse shows on the campus, additional classified assistance may be appropriate.

Facilities Issues

In recent years, the college spent a substantial amount of money to create the Equestrian Education Center (EEC), which, despite its name, was primarily intended to attract outside organizations to sponsor riding shows at the campus. Most of the facilities,

which include three barns that can house 48 horses, a covered riding arena, and three additional outdoor arenas, have not been completed satisfactorily. The footing in three of the four arenas – which must be carefully constructed and monitored to ensure the safety of the horses – has not been properly installed, and the barns and covered arena have not received approval from DSA, which means these facilities cannot be used for teaching purposes. Efforts to attract boarders at market rates were unsuccessful, and the EEC lost approximately \$140,000 in 2006. In December of 2006, the boarding program was closed and the horse owners were forced to relocate their animals to other facilities. A retired professor in the equestrian program, who had been the central person shepherding the program from the early 1970s through 2005, stated that prior to the creation of the EEC the program had generated money by hosting rodeos and that the boarding program for students, which required the students to clean the stables, had been profitable.

The president of the college, the chair of the department, and the Statewide Visiting Committee have all made clear that decisions made about the appropriate use of the equestrian program's facilities should set the educational needs of the students as a priority and that revenue generation should be a secondary, complementary function. To date, the money dedicated to the creation of the EEC resulted in the neglect of the areas used by the faculty for teaching students. The Statewide Visiting Committee's report emphasized that "instructional activities should provide the priorities for facilities use." The visiting committee as well as members of a community advisory board that have provided input to the college in the upgrades needed to the arenas have emphasized that the educational and entrepreneurial aspects of the equestrian program do not have to be at odds and, in fact, have tremendous potential for preparing students for careers in the horse industry. Several of the community advisory board members who are show organizers stated that many (but not all) of the companies that would be interested in hosting shows at Pierce would be willing to let students gain practical experience during the shows by helping out in a variety of capacities. The Statewide Visiting Committee concurred, recommending that "an instructional plan should be developed to provide a framework for incorporating enterprise efforts into the teaching program."

One of the lingering issues related to the use of the facilities is whether students should be allowed to board horses on campus in connection with courses they are taking. There were concerns that local community members had developed an expectation that they would be able to take advantage of relatively inexpensive boarding indefinitely as long as they enrolled in a riding course or two. The retired professor, who had overseen student horse boarding prior to the creation of the EEC, stated that student labor in exchange for lower costs is a workable system if a knowledgeable supervisor is in charge. The Statewide Visiting Committee report supported the use of the barns for student-owned horses. "Horses can be boarded on campus and provide an excellent teaching opportunity. However, boundaries/rules can be put in place to prevent the community from taking advantage of inexpensive facilities (e.g. only degree seeking students may board horses, etc.)." Taking into account the wear and tear that regular use of the barn stalls places on the facilities, the expenses associated with having an assistant available 24-7 to deal with crises, and the tendency of boarders to expect continued boarding privileges, the committee concluded that horse boarding options for students should be

limited to enrollment in specific, relevant courses on a semester-by-semester basis. The use of these facilities by students requires DSA approval of the facilities, which is being explored at the present time.

Community Relations

As was made clear at the January 24, 2007, Board of Trustees meeting at Pierce College, when a number of individuals addressed the board to protest the closing of the boarding facilities, community interest in the program is high. This is reinforced by the turnout for the community forum sponsored by the Statewide Visiting Committee when they came to the campus in March 2007, and the involvement of a dozen knowledgeable people on a community advisory board for the equestrian program who have provided input to the department and college on the facilities and the potential for hosting shows on campus. Members of this advisory board have also donated equestrian equipment to the college.

The Statewide Visiting Committee commented that community stakeholders and program alumni are supportive of the equine program and are “ready to support [its] growth and renewal.” They strongly urged the department to create an active advisory board that builds on the support of professionals in the industry. “The industry should be called on to act as instructional resources, assist with fundraisers, assist in developing curriculum, provide job shadowing opportunities, and provide support for administrative or community challenges.”

Mule Handling Program

A number of years ago, the department developed a new program in mule handling that led to an 16-unit certificate in “Mule Handling and Management.” While this innovative program initially attracted students from great distances, its popularity was not sustained. Enrollments and course offerings in recent years were extremely limited. Both department faculty and the Statewide Visiting Committee recommended that the program be eliminated.

Recommendations

1. Faculty staffing

The department needs to hire a new full-time equine science faculty member as quickly as possible. This person should be hired on a D-basis, with appropriate release time to oversee the program's future direction and course offerings as well as the operation of the Equestrian Center. It is essential that the hiring committee include faculty members from related disciplines in agriculture, as well as one or two experienced faculty members from equestrian programs at other community colleges. The selection of an outstanding faculty member is critical to the success of the program. It is clear from input received by the community advisory committee, as well as from current faculty, that the horse community is tightly networked, and that the reputation of the faculty member among peers outside the college will play a role in Pierce maintaining a strong program.

2. Classified staffing

The department needs to hire the equivalent of one full-time classified person to assist the faculty in overseeing the campus' facilities, providing needed assistance with riding classes, and serving as the campus liaison in arranging for shows to be held at the campus on a regular basis. This role could be filled by one person or two half-time people. Currently available titles for this person include agricultural assistant and agricultural technician. The committee does not feel that the management titles in existence (Farm Manager and Equestrian Manager) are appropriate for this position because this person should serve under the direction of the full-time faculty member. The committee recommends that the department create a position for an Instructional Assistant, Equestrian. This will provide the full-time faculty member with another option, one specifically tailored to the equestrian program, for hiring a classified person. Because of the time required to create a new position, the committee suggests that this process commence as quickly as possible. If Pierce begins hosting a large number of shows on its campus, additional classified staffing might be needed to coordinate the logistics.

3. Assignment of primary responsibility for equestrian area

The department should have formal oversight of the equestrian facilities, including the scheduling of shows and workshops and the utilization of horse stalls. Administrative Services, the Community Services Program, and other campus organizations, as appropriate, shall provide support to the faculty member as requested.

4. Curriculum focus

The department's current curriculum offers a mix of courses serving two groups: horse owners interested in improving their riding skills and their ability to appropriately care for their horses, and individuals interested in pursuing a career in the horse industry. The committee supports the continuation of this two-pronged approach to the equestrian program and urges the new full-time faculty member to evaluate the current curriculum in light of appropriate career focus(es) for the program. Areas that have been suggested for consideration include facilities management, show management, teaching/training, and judging. The full-time instructor, with input from the advisory committee, will be the appropriate person to determine the need for additional courses and the shaping of

degree and certificate requirements. Similarly the new faculty member should work with Community Services to determine the balance of riding classes to be offered through Extension and through the credit program.

5. Utilization of equestrian facilities

The committee strongly supports the concept of utilizing the equestrian facilities for shows and workshops. The full-time faculty member, with the assistance of a classified person, Administrative Services, and needed campus support, will be responsible for scheduling weekend shows and workshops at the campus. The committee recommends that these events should, whenever possible, provide educational opportunities for students to gain hands-on experience by shadowing professionals and providing needed assistance during these events. The committee recommends that horse boarding options for students be limited to enrollment in specific, relevant courses on a semester-by-semester basis. The college needs to take into account the additional expenses and obligations of boarding horses on campus (particularly the need for an experienced horse person to be on call 24 hours a day) in determining the circumstances under which the boarding of students' horses will be allowed.

6. Advisory committee

The department must establish an active advisory committee. The input received during the community forum hosted by the state committee in March and at the community advisory board meeting convened by Bob Garber in July demonstrates neighborhood interest and support for the equestrian program. Advisory board members can provide guidance on curricular issues and also student apprenticeship and future job opportunities.

7. College financial commitment

The college will need to make additional investments in the equestrian property that will strengthen the academic program. The allocation of funds in the development of the Equestrian Education Center strongly favored the construction of facilities that were intended for use by external groups. As a result, the facilities and grounds used by the faculty and students were sorely neglected. Bob Garber has already told the community advisory committee that funds will be made available to improve the footing in the riding arenas. In addition, funds must be allocated to improve the teaching areas. Dick South and the program faculty should be consulted for recommendations as to needed upgrades. In addition, the committee recommends that the college explore the costs for landscaping the equestrian area, which will make the property more appealing to community members driving by the college on Victory, to students in the program, and to potential renters of the facilities. The Statewide Visiting Committee also emphasized the need for the college to provide the department with funding to update technology for use in classes.

8. Mule handling program

After reviewing enrollment figures for the mule handling program for the past three years, and after taking into consideration the input of the Statewide Visiting Committee and the current faculty, the committee recommends that the college discontinue the mule handling program.