

COA, NC State on track for ag program in 2018

BY REGGIE PONDER
For the Chowan Herald



DOLE WYNEGAR

An administrator at N.C. State University believes College of The Albemarle is on track to put together an agriculture curriculum that could help students either transfer to the university or go directly into the workforce.

John Dole, assistant dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at N.C. State University, said he and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean Richard Linton met with COA President Robert Wynegar in Elizabeth City two weeks ago to discuss plans for COA's program.

COA officials have indicated they hope to launch an agriculture program in the fall of 2018. Wynegar said the community college hopes to have transfer agreements with N.C. state in place by the end of December and hire faculty in the spring of next year in anticipation of a fall 2018 start.

Wynegar said the original proposal from N.C. State was for one year of work at COA followed by three years at the university, but the two institutions are now working on a program that allows students to complete two years of the work at COA.

"We're working on a more robust two-year program that serves our students well and that also satisfies the academic rigor that is required at N.C. State," Wynegar said.

N.C. State hopes one outcome of the COA agriculture program will be students transferring from COA to the university's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as agriculture majors, according to Dole.

That hope is rooted partly in Dole's personal experience. He explained that he was the first person in his family to go to college and attended a community college for the first two years of his college degree because of the savings it offered his family.

But Dole also acknowledged that not all the COA students who study agriculture will want or need to complete a four-year degree.

"We recognize that for a lot of students the two-year degree that they get at a community college is what they want and what they need for

the kind of work they want to do," Dole said.

Dole said the job outlook in agriculture in North Carolina is good. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has found that it generally has job opportunities waiting for its students when they graduate, Dole said.

The one exception is students who want to work in a particular area of the state — especially if they want to live in a specific small town — and who are in a highly specialized major rather than a more general major. Those students usually have to choose either to work in a field other than their major in order to live where they want to live or to move somewhere else in order to land a job in their field, Dole explained.

The university's academic advisers try to communicate those realities to students clearly, he explained, so that they understand what the job outlook is likely to be in their field of study and in the area where they wish to live and work.

All in all, though, Dole noted that even during the height of the Great Recession, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences was getting calls from companies that were wanting to recruit its graduates for jobs.

N.C. State is training students to be growers, managers, propagators and technical support, Dole said. COA presumably has in mind the same kinds of jobs for its students, he added.

"A fair number of our students will also go into business for themselves," Dole said.

Opportunities for people to start their own businesses abound in niche areas such as organic farming, plant nurseries and specialty crop or specialty animal production, Dole said.

Dole cited Avoca, a company in the Bertie County community of Merry Hill, as a classic example of a niche business in agriculture that is doing very well. Avoca processes clary sage, extracting from the crop a chemical that is used in the manufacture of perfume and other products.

The Merry Hill plant provides a ready market for sage growers in Bertie, Chowan and other northeastern North Carolina counties.

"Agriculture in general is doing very well in the state," Dole said.

The positive job outlook for N.C. State's agriculture graduates would also hold true for students who graduate from a community college with a two-year degree

in agriculture, Dole said.

Agriculture in North Carolina is not a "boom" industry like oil in South Dakota, but neither are most other industries, Dole said. But agriculture remains an important industry in North Carolina that offers good opportunities for students, he said.

Jeff Smith, chairman of the Chowan County Board of Commissioners and a farmer in the Tyner area, said that when many people hear the word "agriculture" they don't understand how many different activities it covers.

"All they think of is farming," Smith said. "When you talk about an ag school everybody that's not really involved with farming thinks about tractors and plowing and all that."

But in reality, he said, "agribusiness is a big, broad thing," Smith said.

A highly skilled workforce is needed to work with the sophisticated equipment that is used in modern agriculture, Smith said.

Jobs are available for grain inspectors, other commodity inspectors, and experts in areas such as pest control and food safety, Smith said.

All of those areas are things that could fit with a program that COA could offer, he said.

Dole said he understands that it's a high priority at COA for students to be able to stay in the area after they graduate. He said that is consistent with the mission of community colleges, which are intended to support the local community.

So as COA finalizes plans for its agriculture curriculum, the college will certainly want to look closely at what it will offer to be sure it's the best possible fit for the area, he said.

Dole said COA officials in their conversations with N.C. State have discussed a lot of different possible degree options. One goal certainly is to provide a college transfer program that would blend in very well with the programs at N.C. State, he said.

But COA also could offer a two-year program for students who don't want or need a four-year degree, he said.

N.C. State has been working hard to smooth out transitions from community colleges to the university, and in this case COA is out in front in planning the agriculture program with that kind of seamless transfer in mind, he said.

"It's really great that the College of The Albemarle wants to do that from the very beginning," Dole said.

REUNION

Continued from 1A

"Chowan High was a special place," said Evans, Class of 1979. "Small — everyone knew everyone. Teachers knew you and the whole school was a family. I look back at those teachers and administrators now as folks that helped educate me and above that, teach life lessons that can't be bought."

Ullom remembers the days when students could drive school buses. Truly, students looked up to their classmates who not only had their driver's licenses, but could drive a school bus. Many of these drivers were the "cool" kids.

"Remember the days when students drove school buses (I did) and they only went 35 mph and all grades 1-12 rode those buses together," Ullom said.

And then there was the FFA — perhaps Chowan High's most popular club.

"Remembering back to

the days of FFA initiation week and wondering how your assigned members were going to make you dress, or count the bricks on the school, break out in song in the hallway," Ullom said. "Their names were written on a board that hung around your neck. Steve Evans was one of those names written on my board! No matter what year you attended Chowan, you knew everyone from two grades below you to two grades above. Everyone was family, students and teachers alike."

Evans spoke of a time when his life and that of his peers was centered around school; a time when there was a newness and feeling that memories — no matter how small — were being created. Though disco died for some in 1979, that didn't stop some radio disk jockeys from playing the Bee Gees "Stayin' Alive". Country music fans might remember Hank Williams Jr.'s "Family Tradition". Evans



SUBMITTED PHOTO

played bass in a band that preferred Southern rock — Lynard Skynard — "Freebird" baby!

Passionate school spirit reigned supreme.

"We had a school spirit that was second to none other," Evans said. "When a basketball game was held at our gym, the spirit was electrifying. I didn't play basketball, but I was there every game, making my share of noise! I drove the activity bus to all the away games, so I felt I was a small part of those teams.

One of my basketball classmates said one time, 'If you can't play basketball at a home game at CHS with all that support from schoolmates, family and friends, you need to sell your basketball shoes!' I played basketball all four years, I can still play some of those games in my head!"

Class reunions are organized as means to get together and about talk the old times and to see how life has treated everyone. While different things happened to different people then and

now, common themes and values created a shared experience of the time spent as a Bulldog. Though Evans contends that he hasn't used a logarithm to balance a checkbook since he graduated those many years ago, he has used a cell phone to send text messages — that would have been cool to have had in high school.

Seeing that time, tide and technology waits for no one, maybe it's time for a reunion.

"We started the idea of this reunion about a year ago," he said. "We started out just thinking about the 70's classes, but we decided, what the heck, let's make it an ALL classes reunion! We really hope folks will keep responding, it has been good so far, but there are so many more locals that haven't responded yet. We also want all the faculty to show up. There are lots of folks I would like to see and say, you were right, I did need this or that to make a good living."

RATE

Continued from 1A

\$230,000 annually.

Regarding the solar farm ordinance, commissioners directed county staff to make some changes to the draft proposed by the Planning Board. Commissioners may bring their individual recommendations to the next meeting Aug. 21.

Commissioners imposed a 120-day moratorium in May on any new solar development in the county to give the board time to study the county's current ordinance and recommend potential changes. That moratorium ends Aug. 28.

In other business, the commission approved a proposal for construction of a state-mandated back-up 911 tower that will cost \$475,000. Stallings said the project will cost the county \$250,000 and the state grants will provide an additional \$247,000.

OUTLAY

Continued from 1A

ence — N/A

D.F. Walker Elementary

■ Restripe Teacher Parking Lot; Budget Request — \$3,500; Cost/Quote — \$3,000; Difference — \$500

■ Install Fence Around

Playground; Budget Request — \$6,500; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Replace Carpet in Six Classrooms with Tile; Budget Request — \$14,000; Cost/Quote — \$13,827; Difference — \$173

Chowan Middle School

■ Additional Lights in Parking Lots; Budget Request — \$2,000; Cost/

Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Fill Potholes and Restripe Parking Lot; Budget Request — \$6,000; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Furniture Replacement; Budget Request — \$10,000; Cost/Quote — School Handling; Difference — N/A

■ Window and Door Replacement in CTE Classroom; Budget Request — \$80,000; Cost/Quote — \$19,392.57; Difference — \$60,607.43

■ Renovate 7th and 8th

Grade Restrooms; Budget Request — \$30,000; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

John A. Holmes High School

■ Replace Boiler; Budget Request — \$65,000; Cost/Quote — \$76,040.20; Difference — \$10,529.60

■ Repair/Resurface Driveway; Budget Request — \$40,000; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Gas Piping for HVAC Units (Auditorium, Music, Band, Gym); Budget Request — \$50,000; Cost/

Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Resurface Tennis Courts; Budget Request — \$51,880; Cost/Quote — \$36,748; Difference — \$15,132

■ Window Replacement (Auditorium, Music, Band); Budget Request — \$50,000; Cost/Quote — \$32,471.88; Difference — \$17,528.12

■ Construction of Room for Graphic Design Academy Equipment — \$8,500; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Parking Lot Lighting; Budget Request — \$2,000; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Replace Flooring in EC Suite and Vocational Rooms; Budget Request

— \$6,500; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Replace Two HVAC Units on English Building; Budget Request — \$20,000; Cost/Quote — \$9,000; Difference — \$11,000

■ Replace HVAC Unit on Band Building; Budget Request — \$9,000; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

■ Resurface Track; Budget Request — \$189,450; Cost/Quote — Quotes Pending; Difference — N/A

Johnson told the school board he and his staff were working diligently to clear as many items from the list as possible before school started including painting the lines in the parking lots at the two elementary schools.



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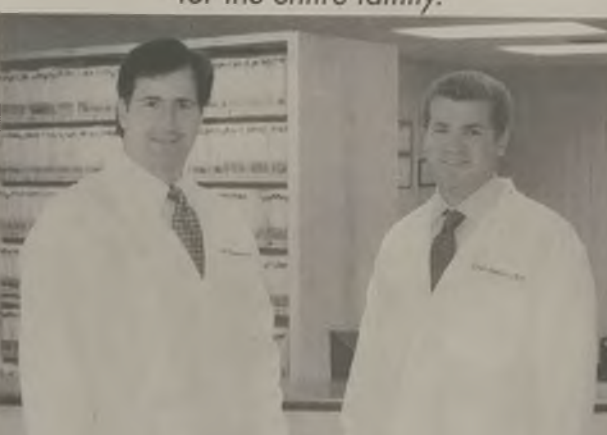
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