Executive Summary

NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Agricultural Leadership Development Program

2014-2016 Class Mid-term Report

The North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission Agricultural Leadership Development Program (ALDP) is a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences leadership program to develop personal and civic leadership skills in North Carolina farmers and agricultural professionals. The program involves in-depth personal leadership assessments with coaching, training in civic leadership, and learning opportunities in NC, U.S., and global agriculture. The two year program is implemented through seven 3 ½ day sessions in North Carolina, study tours to Washington DC, a U.S. study tour to an agricultural area outside NC, and a study tour to Brazil. The program is funded by a $5 million endowment from the North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission. The 2014-2016 class began October, 2014. Graduation will be March, 2016.

The program is led by CALS faculty and emeriti faculty. Blake Brown, Professor, is program director. Former director, W.K. Collins, Professor Emeritus, is assistant director. Dr. Lanny Hass and Eleanor Stell, both emeriti faculty, conduct the leadership modules of the program. Carolyn Bunn provides assistance with the program.

Program participants were selected through an application and interview process. All applications were reviewed by a committee of 6 program alumni who placed applicants in 3 tiers, Highly Meritorious, Meritorious, and Not Ready. Participants were selected for the program from the Highly Meritorious and Meritorious categories based on their applications and personal interviews with the program directors. The interview included explanation of the content and expectations of the program. Over 60 applications were received, with 36 being selected to participate in the program. The class composition is 14 full time farmers, 1 plant nursery owner/manager, 5 part-time farmers (2 of whom are also employed in agri-business), 6 working exclusively in agribusiness, and 10 employed by farm organizations including 4 cooperative extension agents and 2 NCDACS employees. All geographic areas of the state are represented. The farms are diverse ranging from large diversified crop and livestock operations in eastern NC to a small local food producer in the mountains. Several agribusiness sectors are represented and include agricultural lenders, integrated hog and poultry companies and suppliers and crop science companies. Participants paid $800 tuition. Most of the expenses are paid from earnings on the $5 million endowment set up from NCTTFC with some additional funds raised from nine donors. A financial statement for the current class is included in this report.

The current class has completed 4 sessions in Raleigh focused on personal leadership development that also included educational components about the North Carolina general and agricultural economy and current federal policy issues pertinent to NC agriculture. Leadership instruments and courses focus on improving participants understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses and how they interact with others, particularly in high stakes situations. Coaching and education were given on how to use the knowledge gained from the instruments to improve capabilities in personal, business, and civic leadership roles. Leadership development instruments are described in this report. Dr. Lanny Hass and Ms. Eleanor Stell facilitate the leadership modules for the class and are certified in administering the instruments.

Improvement in communications skills is also a focus of the program. Each day of the session a class member is assigned an article, usually a relevant leadership topic, to review and present a summary of to the class. Also each day a class member is assigned to do a graphic recording of the day's lessons learned. The class member then presents this graphic recording to the class at the beginning of the next day's session. The December 2014 session included segments on writing professionally and communicating with the media including a segment on speaking on camera.

The first year culminated in a legislative tour in Washington DC in February 2014. In the November session the class identified 6 key issues for NC agriculture. The class was then divided into 6 teams with each team assigned an issue. The issues were fairly broad and each team was responsible for targeting a specific aspect of their issue that could be addressed through federal legislation. Each team then developed an issue paper to be used with congressional offices on the legislative tour. Class members put into practice many of their new skills and abilities gained from the program. Team members arranged visits with their House member for their teams to present their issues to the member and/or staff during the legislative tour. A booklet of the 6 issue papers given to congressional members and staffs is included in this report. The class also met with Senators Burr and Tillis to discuss agricultural issues. The tour included a session hosted by American Farm Bureau on agriculture issues. House Agricultural Committee member Congressman David Rouzer and the committee senior economist conducted a session with the group about the work of the committee. In addition the Chinese embassy hosted the group with a tour of the embassy and a round table discussion with embassy officials on trade and agricultural issues. Another highlight of the tour was a pig pick'in hosted by the class for congressional members and their staffs.

As the class enters the second year of the program the 6 issue teams are beginning work on team practicums that will address an additional aspect of their broad issues. Practicums must have some practical application with a target audience (e.g. elected government official, commodity group). Teams work on the practicums this summer and fall with completion by the December 2015 session. Each team will make a brief presentation on their completed practicum to the class with feedback from the class. At graduation teams will make brief presentations to the ALDP steering committee.

Sessions planned for the second year include additional leadership instruments and modules plus a session in November with the UNC-CH School of Government learning about local and state government. In December the group will meet with NC House and Senate Agricultural Committee members and staff to focus on agricultural issues pertinent to state government. The class will also have sessions focusing on the leadership that has facilitated growth and success in NC swine, sweet potato, and local foods. This will include interaction with senior industry management and farm group leaders as well as tours in eastern and piedmont NC. The Brazil study tour will be in January. The domestic study tour will include a National Security Round Table session with the Army at Fort Leavenworth KS and a tour with focus on immigration and border control in south Texas.

We are grateful to all the NC Ag leaders who help implement this program. We are especially indebted to NC Farm Bureau for their gracious support and session facilities, as well as to Linda Andrews, NCFB National Legislative Director, for her great help with the legislative and domestic study tours.