



**Vermont State
University**

Center for Agriculture
& Food Entrepreneurship

CAFE: An Overview and Action Update

February 20th, 2025

- Center Overview
- Activities/Projects/Progress
- Agriculture, Food and Forests Assoc. program
- Meat processing facility – 1787 Butchery



The Center for Agriculture and Food Entrepreneurship (CAFE) is Vermont State University's gateway to applied skill-building within agriculture, food, and forest systems.

Immersive workforce development opportunities:

Associates Degree (*pending*)
Certificate-Trainings (*current*)

Randolph-based land, facilities, equipment and instructors:

Hands-on skill building resources

Private partnerships With businesses that are innovative and entrepreneurial:

Efficiently and effectively facilitate internships and on- and off-campus experiences

◀ Where we were

Challenges

Enrollment and financial conditions

Changes

Ag degrees paused; dairy herd sold

Champions

Ag Advisory Committee

A dedicated 40+ person committee formed to research & report
4+ years of work-to-date

Issued a comprehensive report with recommendations

Create CAFE

Offer diversified Ag and Food Entrepreneurship degree pathways
with robust internship requirements

Invest in focused selection of new on-campus enterprises

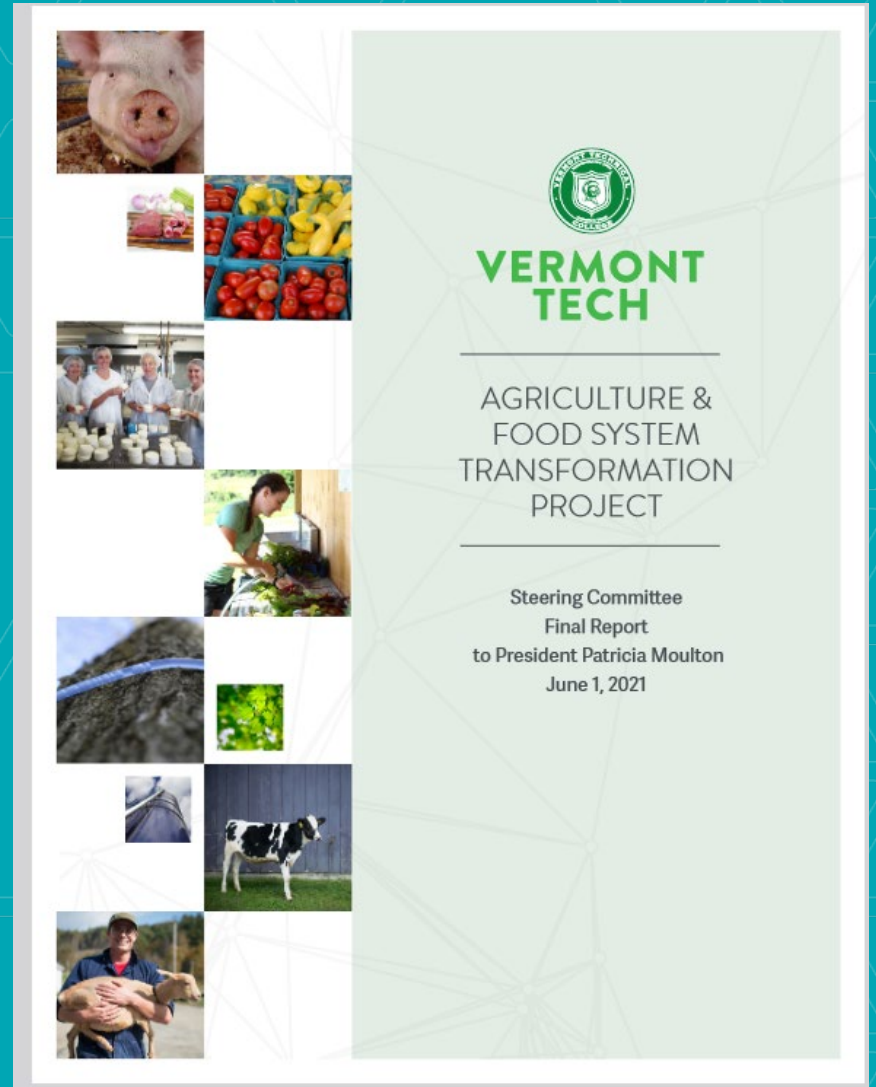
Major grant funding (\$3MM total) was secured:

EDA grant providing a runway until 8/2026 to fund 3 Center staff

NIFA grant for audio/visual improvements, marketing trainings

NBRC grant for equipment and forestry (termed 2024)

CRRP, Working Lands, and Leg. Appropriation to fund a dedicated Meat Processing Facility



VTSU Advisory Committee

Andy Wood – Deputy Director of Agricultural Lending at Vermont Economic Development Authority

Calley Hastings – Program Manager, Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

Ellen Kahler – Executive Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

Louise Calderwood – Director of Regulatory Affairs, American Feed Industry Association

Pat Moulton – Former President of VTC

Emma Marvin – Special Projects Manager, Butternut Mountain Farm

Jenn Colby – Owner/operator, Howling Wolf Farm

Philip Ackerman-Leist – Foodshed Solutions LLC / Director of Ecological Benefits at The Lexicon

Vern Grubinger – UVM Berry and Vegetable Specialist

Kate Findley Woodruff – Associate Dean of CALS, University of Vermont

Meg Nelson -- Financial Services Communications Specialist /Co-owner Nelson Farms

Earl Ransom – owner/operator, Strafford Organic Creamery

David Dolginow – founder and VP, Shacksbury Cider

Marc Mihaly – State Representative and Vermont Law School professor emeritus at Vermont Law School and eighth president and dean

Cheryl Cesario – Senior Livestock & Grazing Specialist, American Farmland Trust

Matt Angell – Co-owner/Operator White Rock Farm – In the same family 222 years.

Regina Beidler – Member Program Specialist, Organic Valley

➔ *Where we are*

1 Team complete – third position filled in May of 2024

2 Construction of Meat Processing Facility – scheduled completion this May

3 Actively teaching 10+ unique certificate trainings; 97 students in 2024

4 Ag. Advisory Committee continues to provide guidance and industry support

5 A new Ag., Food and Forest Associate Degree has leadership approval and is moving through internal approval processes. Target of marketing this degree beginning Fall of 2025, and enrolling students Fall of 2026

6 Increased industry connections in ag., food and forest sectors

7 Increased relationship building with prospective student pipelines and peer organizations: CTEs (in and out of VT), VSJF Farm-to-Plate, FFA, NRCD, VYCC, 4-H, UVM, FEAST, NOFA-VT...



Certificate
Trainings



Happenings at the VTSU Farm

- Partnerships/Leases
 - Dairy & Agronomy
 - Grass-Fed Beef
 - Orchard
- Equipment Sales & Reinvestment
- Facilities
 - Silo demo, repairs, cleanup
- Farm support staffing remains a limitation

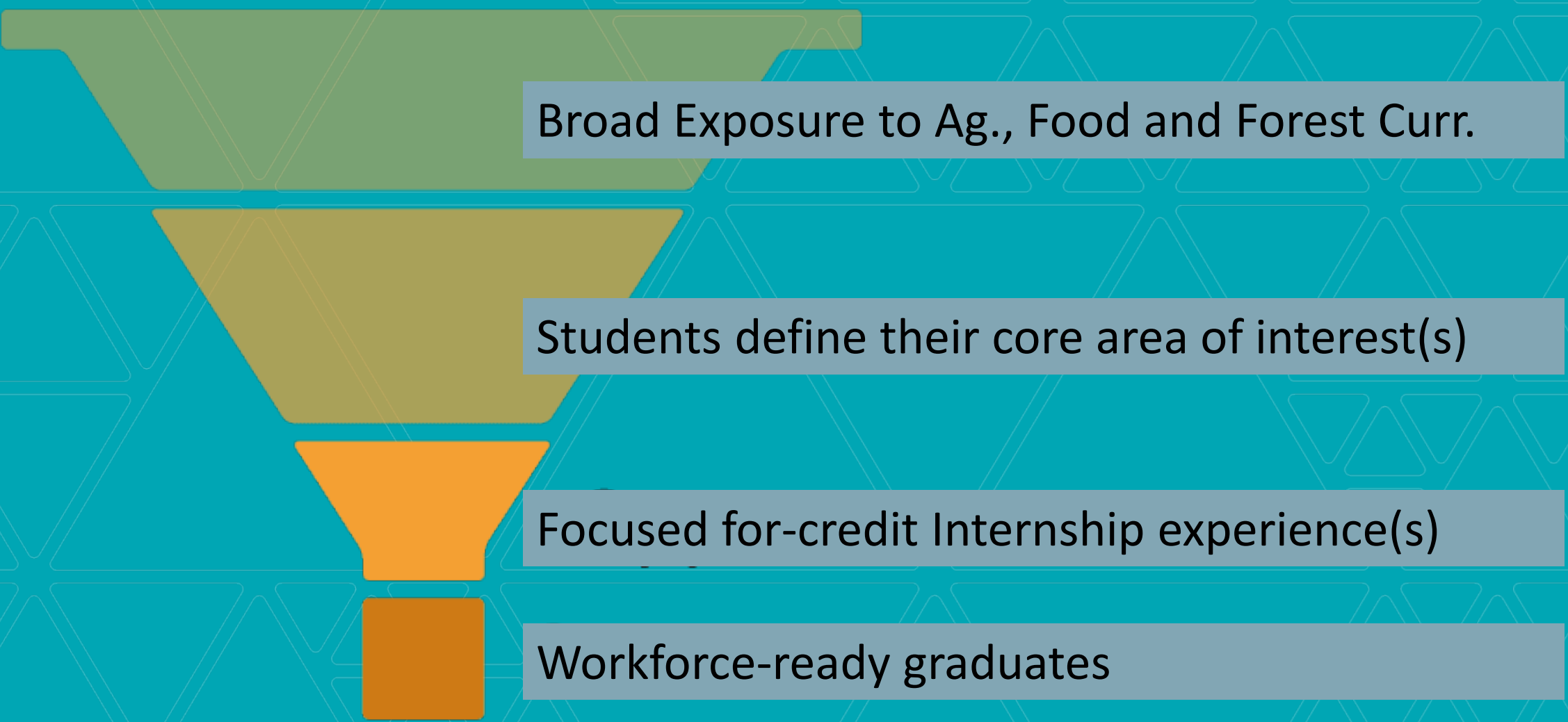


Associate Degree in Ag., Food and Forests:

Achievable Objectives

- Meet critical regional, state and industry needs (workforce, career pathways, food security, sustainability...)
AND
- Meet aspirational goals of prospective students (engaging, experiential, open, orienting, achievable...)
AND
- Meet University needs (exemplify quality instruction, innovative, distinctive, fiscally-sound...)

Funnel Approach to single Ag., Food and Forests Degree



Broad Exposure to Ag., Food and Forest Curr.

Students define their core area of interest(s)

Focused for-credit Internship experience(s)

Workforce-ready graduates

Degree Program: Agriculture, Food and Forests (AFF)

Steps in Motion

Budget analysis – Cost accessibility is key!

Done

Leadership support

Done

Curriculum development w/ faculty

In process

Faculty teaching model (identifying & hiring)

In process

Policy 102 proposal submission

April 2025

Academic review of new programming

June 2025

Approval, accreditation, availability in course catalog

July 2025

Targeted marketing campaign...Regional, CTEs, High schools, industry, events...

Fall 2025

Students! An engaging experience!

Fall 2026

