

## AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES INSTITUTE

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### MCC SUPPORTS KEY WORKFORCE INITIATIVE, DEVELOPS CERTIFICATE PROGRAM

In partnership with the Finger Lakes Food Processing Cluster Initiative, Monroe Community College's Agriculture and Life Sciences Institute (ALSI) surveyed employers and conducted focus groups to identify and better serve the educational needs of food and agricultural workers in our region. Responses to a voluntary, online survey were used by ALSI to develop a new Agriculture and Food Studies Certificate program—providing students with more informed career pathways within the local food and agricultural sector.

Responses to the survey identified that although education and training are highly valued, most employers lacked the funds to reimburse employees for formal education and training. The majority of the 47 responders preferred online training programs over classroom instruction. Most employers currently train their employees on a one-on-one basis.

"The survey confirmed that employers and employees are interested in and realize the benefits of higher education," said ALSI Senior Specialist Bob King, Ph.D. "The challenge faced by employers is revising budgets and seeking grants or additional revenue to support higher education for their employees."

The new certificate program requires 24 hours of instruction and is expected to be offered beginning in fall 2013. Offering the program both in the classroom and online provides opportunities for students to fit the program into their busy work schedules while reducing the cost of traveling to and from MCC.

The Finger Lakes Food Processing Cluster Initiative (<http://www.rit.edu/gis/flfpci/>) is a coordinated effort led by the Center for Integrated Manufacturing Studies at Rochester Institute of Technology's Golisano Institute for Sustainability. The initiative offers education and certification for incumbent, underemployed and displaced workers designed to spur economic growth and job creation in the nine-county region. The program offers advancement, training and small business programs.

To find out more about the Agriculture and Food Studies certificate program, contact the MCC Admissions Office at [admissions@monroecc.edu](mailto:admissions@monroecc.edu) or (585) 292-2200.

### What we learned from our recent needs assessment of local agriculture professionals and employers:

- Employees with some college education are highly desired.
- 68 percent of respondents would use online/Internet-based training programs.
- Employers need employees with hard skills, including technical knowledge of food and agriculture, food safety and sanitation, and quality assurance.
- Soft skills such as communication, writing, management, problem-solving and applied computer experience are also important to employee success.
- 70 percent of respondents lack the funds for education and training reimbursement.

### GROW MONROE ON THE ROAD

Every year the Great New York State Fair attracts nearly a million people to Syracuse. The fair is the largest and the most historic exposition of its kind in the Northeast. For the first time this year, in cooperation with SUNY, Grow Monroe hosted a display at the fair—generating awareness of MCC, ALSI and agriculture in the Rochester region.



More than 300 people stopped by the Grow Monroe display and received information on local agriculture and MCC's educational programs. This effort built upon Grow Monroe's presence at the SUNY Showcase in downtown Rochester in April.

Throughout the summer, Grow Monroe also hosted information tables at public and private farm markets in Chili, Hamlin, Mendon, Penfield and Pittsford—raising awareness

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## GROW MONROE ... (Continued)

among local consumers of the many benefits of buying local and making healthy food choices.

During Greentopia 2012 in September, Grow Monroe hosted an information display and sponsored the New York state debut of *Symphony of the Soil* at Nazareth College. Directed Deborah Koons Garcia, the film addresses “the delicate balance of our fertile soil and the importance of maintaining that balance for sustainable agriculture, energy, water and other key elements to human survival.” Garcia responded to audience questions via Skype after the film showing.

Grow Monroe also reached over 500 MCC students by sponsoring and presenting at activities and events during the academic year. ALSI representatives also introduced children to farming techniques at a summer day camp on campus.

“Simply just standing at a table won’t make the public interested in agriculture,” said Grow Monroe student intern Gene Y. Kim. “We have to show that we care for them by being active in the community”

## FROM ONE OF OUR READERS:

*While traveling from my hometown of Rochester back to Denver, I came across your informative packet about buying local. I cannot express enough how glad I am to see this type of material*



*in such an area. As a registered dietitian I also am strongly for preserving what few small farms we have left. My family is particularly invested in this cause as they are distributors of agricultural equipment to Monroe County and upstate New York. ... I appreciate you taking the time and energy to put out this material... keep up the good work people are reading it!*

*Thanks for listening,  
Jody Abrams, R.D.*

## PROMOTING FARMLAND: A PRIORITY

ALSI provides subject matter expertise and assistance to Monroe County, agricultural districts and towns for the development and implementation of farmland protection plans and agricultural economic development.

Farmland protection plans are designed to protect working farmland for future generations of New Yorkers. According to the American Farmland Trust, in 1996, New York responded to the loss of state farmland by establishing the Farmland Protection Program. The program, which is administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, provides grants to eligible municipalities for the purchase of conservation easements (also called development rights) from farmers. To qualify, counties and towns must have state-approved “agricultural and farmland protection” plans.

During 2012, ALSI assisted the towns of Perinton, Ogden and Rush, in the development, funding and approval of such plans. Recently, the towns of Wheatland and Chili have also received funding from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets for farmland protection plans. ALSI will continue to provide an integral role with municipalities in their efforts to promote and protect farmlands for future generations.

## LOCALLY GROWN RECEIVES TELLY AWARD

ALSI received the bronze Telly Award for its documentary *Locally Grown*. The 25-minute documentary takes an in-depth look at local farming and its role in Monroe County. For over 30 years, the Telly Awards have recognized film, video productions, online video content, to regional cable television commercials and programs. During the past year, 11,000 entries from multiple countries were reviewed by a select-panel of over 500 industry professionals.

“The Agriculture and Life Science Institute’s accomplishment illustrates their creativity, skill, and dedication to their craft and serves as a testament to great film and video production” said Linda Day, executive director of the Telly Awards.

Written and narrated by Bob King, Ph.D. and directed by John Frontuto, the documentary can be viewed at [www.monroecc.edu](http://www.monroecc.edu), under the ALSI Web pages.

## MCC COURSES THAT SUPPORT THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

- Introduction to Agriculture
- Introduction to Greenhouse Management
- Introduction to Sustainability
- Supervising for the 21st Century
- Computer Literacy
- Interpersonal Communication
- Independent Study – Agriculture and Food Studies
- General Microbiology for Food and Agriculture (proposed future course)
- Food and Agriculture Problem Solving – Behavioral Applications (proposed future course)