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New vineyard partnership plan opens door for industry investment

A new, unprecedented agreement between Fresno State Vineyards and industry partners paves the way for increased investment in the university's viticulture and enology programs and provides a revamped infrastructure to remain on the leading edge of industry advancements.

Improvements will include development of new raisin, table and wine grape instructional and demonstration plots in the vineyards for training students and hosting educational workshops for industry constituents while spurring financial investment.

"This is a new era for our program," said Dr. James Kennedy, chair of the Department of Viticulture and Enology.

He said the agreement was a collaborative effort between the Agricultural Foundation of California State University, Fresno, which oversees Fresno State Vineyards, the foundation's Viticulture and Enology Industry Advisory Board (IAB), Fresno State Vineyards and various individual industry sponsors, and represents a commitment to coordinate redevelopment efforts and financial investment for the campus vineyards, ensuring that Fresno State students remain on the leading edge of the industry's advancements, Kennedy added.

"We look forward to promoting industry investments into the vineyard to ensure that our students — our future workforce — are well trained in vineyards that are relevant to the grape and wine industry and to the outside world," Kennedy said. "I look forward to the educational impact of improvements that represent the latest varieties, trends and technologies," he said.

Dianne Nury, president of Vie-Del Winery of Fresno who is vice chair of the IAB, said the plan — which the board approved unanimously Jan. 10 — is the first of its kind and presents a financial incentive for industry to invest in the program.

"We are supportive of this endeavor and see it as a major step forward in advancing the viticulture and enology department's mission of training students for the future," Nury said.

In 2011, Kennedy assembled an evaluation team of industry and department representatives to help develop a long-range strategic plan for the Fresno State Vineyards. The team, with all segments of the grape and wine industry represented, identified areas that could strengthen the educational program, thus sustaining Fresno State's hands-on approach to learning, he explained.

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The results led to the MOU — what Kennedy called “a new model for creating university-industry partnerships.”

Pat Ricchiuti, owner of P-R Farms in Clovis and chair of the Agricultural Foundation’s Board of Directors, said the plan will help with upgrading the university vineyards and expressed the foundation’s gratitude for the support of industry partners.

“Their partnership to invest in the redevelopment of our vineyards is so critical given the age and condition of our farm laboratory,” Ricchiuti, said. “These vineyards are an important instructional component of our students’ academic experience at Fresno State and it is our responsibility to provide our students with the latest farming technologies and vineyard development practices.”

The first vines at Fresno State were planted more than 60 years ago and are operated under the auspices of the university’s Agricultural Foundation. Today, approximately 120 acres of raisin, table and wine grapes are currently in production and are used for teaching and research purposes.

For more information, contact the Department of Viticulture and Enology at 559.278.2089.

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By [Tom Uribes](#) | January 28th, 2013 | Categories: [PRESS RELEASES](#) | Tags: [Agriculture](#), [Viticulture and Enology](#) | [2 Comments](#)

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