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KVCC Hires New Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator

FAIRFIELD—Kennebec Valley Community College (KVCC) has named Benjamin Crockett as instructor and coordinator for its Sustainable Agriculture program, which gives students the opportunity to run a working farm.

A Maine native, Crockett graduated from Oxford Hills Comprehensive High School in South Paris and has spent the past 11 years learning and mastering his trade in Vermont and New York.

“Having grown up in Maine, I have been in search of opportunities that would allow me to move back and continue pursuing an agricultural profession in a meaningful way,” Crockett said. “I’m looking forward to teaching at KVCC. It seems like there has been some great work over the last few years, and I’m hoping to capitalize off of that momentum, as well as work with the farm manager to increase student time spent on the KVCC farm.”

Since earning a degree in sustainable landscape horticulture from the University of Vermont, Crockett has been immersed in farm operations including farm management; raising animals; planting, harvesting, and preserving vegetables; maintaining equipment; operating a CSA; creating agricultural programming for students; and much more.

Most recently Crockett managed a 300-acre incubator farm in New York’s Hudson Valley, where he taught new farmers farm-management skills, provided technical assistance, developed systems to improve farm efficiency and aid in soil restoration, and oversaw field cultivation, soil testing, pasture rotation, and more.

Crockett noted that he’s looking forward to connecting with the local farming community now that he’s back in his home state.

“I want to make sure students utilize the resources we have in the Kennebec Valley and are truly connected to the community they will be growing in,” Crockett said. “And I would emphasize that those resources aren’t just organic farms, just vegetable farms. There are great institutions like MOFGA [Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association] that are well known, but I am hoping to get to know most of the other operations, like the larger dairy farms, so I can provide a more complete education on the

state of agriculture and how society as a whole can continue to feed ourselves and nurture the land for years to come.”

Established in 2013, KVCC’s sustainable agriculture associate degree program is the first of its kind in Maine, a farm-to-table endeavor that teaches students both the technical and small-business skills necessary to manage or develop a small farm or agricultural business. Housed on the Harold Alfond Campus in Hinckley, the program boasts a new state-of-the-art sustainable agriculture building and a 120-acre organic farm that includes an education facility, vegetable processing center, greenhouses, shelters, fields, livestock, and more.

Ranked among America’s best two-year colleges, Kennebec Valley Community College offers more than 35 programs and is recognized as the best value in higher education. The college has invested nearly \$25 million over the past three years, opening a new campus, upgrading infrastructure, expanding program offerings, and ensuring the highest-quality instruction. More than 94 percent of KVCC graduates find jobs in their field or continue to a four-year college or university. KVCC provides an affordable and practical path to success with small class sizes, excellent support services, and flexible scheduling. KVCC has the lowest tuition in New England, yet most students receive generous financial aid packages to cover the cost of tuition and fees.