

Department of Agricultural Economics

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Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
B.S., AGECE & AGBU	Exit interviews	84
B.S., M.S. & Ph.D., AGECE	Survey of Alumni from Programs as part of University Assessment Office	Ongoing
B.S., AGECE & AGBU M.S., AGECE Ph.D., AGECE	Team Competition at regional & national meetings	About 20
M.S. AGECE Ph.D. AGECE	Case Study Competition	3

Analysis and Findings

- Exit interviews provide the Department Head and curriculum committee a feel for the students' understanding of whether their curriculum prepared them for their next venture in the real world. Which courses are meeting the needs of the students and which are not? What areas do the students see missing in the curriculum? We are in the middle of a reorganization of our courses and this feedback continues to help us analyze the impact of this reorganization. From this feedback, one of the things we are examining is the possibility of dropping the senior seminar course and just requiring an exit interview. During this past year feedback from the exit interviews prompted the establishment of an undergraduate computer lab in our reference room.
- The Department participates in the Survey of Alumni of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs when they are conducted. We included our own questions to help with our ongoing review of the topics and requirements for our degrees. Our curriculum committee uses the results along with other information to consider changes in our programs.
- The Department sponsored two teams from our Aggie-X Club that participated in the American Agricultural Economics Association quiz bowl and another group to the Southern Agricultural Economics Regional Quiz bowl. The experience of the students provides feedback on how our curriculum and students compare to others around the country. One team finished second at the AAEA quiz bowl in 2003. We had one individual on the winning team at the SAEA Quiz Bowl. The SAEA Quiz Bowl is conducted using a mixture of students from the different schools instead of teams from the schools. We also had a graduate student team compete in the Case Study Competition at the AAEA meetings in 2003. The results of these competitions help us determine the quality of our students compared to other students around the country. In addition to providing assessment information about the quality and training of our students, the exposure and publicity that comes from these competitions is beneficial for recruiting of both undergraduate and graduate students. The activity also builds a stronger alumni support base among the students who participate in these events.

Uses of Assessment Results

- As we have discussed the last several years, we began implementation of revised and new courses in the Spring of 2001. We implemented new option sheets in the Fall of 1999 which have been designed to agree with the revised and new courses. Therefore, at the undergraduate level we have moved into a transition period for assessment. Unless major problems with the new curriculum show up in exit interviews or discussions with employers, we expect few changes for the next few years except perhaps reducing the total hours to 120. We had a faculty discussion of the courses by discipline during the summer of 2002 to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the changes we have implemented. Also, the curriculum committee continues to examine the results of the Alumni

Surveys of Undergraduates and Graduates along with other information to figure out if additional courses in the finance and sales areas are needed for all majors. We continue to examine whether to delete some options or create additional options or an additional minor in Agribusiness.

- The Department's curriculum committee continues to use all data available to make recommendations concerning prerequisites and course content. The committee recommended dropping general education credit for most of our 4000 level courses as a requirement to maintain graduate credit. Our committee fails to see the reasoning of why upper division courses should not be allowed to maintain graduate and general education credit, especially for courses that are ideal courses for graduate students outside of their major. The instructor of one course has modified the course to meet the criteria to obtain an "I" designation for the course. Students in exit interviews and through advisors had been requesting an additional course within the major to meet the "I" designation. Also, we are examining how we are going to maintain the "S" designation for some of our courses given the change in the writing requirements required to maintain "S" designation for courses. While we support the importance of students writing more and we include writing projects in several of our courses, we do not see writing as necessarily a requirement to teach and develop social and behavioral sciences concepts.
- The Department has drafted a revised assessment plan to agree with the ongoing strategic planning exercise currently being conducted university wide.
- Results from the competitions show us that our students are obtaining the basic set of materials required. The knowledge the students' gain from participating in these competitions helps them understand and explain to other students the need for certain topics and repetition in their curriculum. Having students that are active in clubs and as teaching and research assistants that know how our curriculum compares to curriculum at other universities allows the students to communicate this information to other students. Development of such knowledge helps the students understand the work they need to do if they are going to be competitive in the work force.
- This past year we did not send a team to the NAMA competition because the students preparing the presentation and their faculty advisors recognized that their project would not be competitive at the national competition. A concern that arose when we reorganized our curriculum was that no single course now provides an entry point into the NAMA competition, as was the case before the revision. The NAMA competition was designed by industry and we feel requires many of the skills that industry feels our students should have. In the past we had one course that did this well. We believe we still teach these desired skills across the program, but they do not culminate in a single course that feeds into the NAMA competition. We continue to search for a solution to this problem so that we may field NAMA teams and assess the learning relative to other top programs and reap the publicity benefits of their competition activities.