

Program Assessment Report
Undergraduate Program
Department of Agriculture Economics and Agribusiness
University of Arkansas
2017-2018

Program: **Agriculture Economics and Agribusiness**

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A. Goals

To be the premier agricultural business and applied economics program in Arkansas, provide concentrations and specializations that are responsive to the needs of both students and industry stakeholders, and prepare students for success in the global marketplace.

B. Expected Outcomes

We expect all graduates to have the following skills and competencies:

1. Understand the fundamental principles which describe how markets operate in an economy
2. Ability to comprehend and analyze firm-level problems using basic economic principles, particularly those problems of businesses in the agricultural sector
3. Have the necessary written and oral communication skills to explain economics concepts
4. Have a working understanding of basic quantitative analysis tools and an ability to analyze data
5. Understand the impacts of government policies and general economic conditions on firms, markets and institutions
6. Be prepared for work in agribusiness or for a program of graduate/professional education.

C. Program Assessment

The continued growth of the undergraduate research program is critical to quality educational experiences and in developing leaders for the future. Below are the means in which the programs are assessed.

1. Student performance in courses
2. Curriculum review
3. Electronic survey of all graduating seniors
4. Confidential exit interviews with Department Head
5. Course/instructor teaching evaluations
6. Periodic feedback from alumnae

D. Analysis of Results

1. Student performance. Average enrollment in all undergraduate AGECE courses remains at historic levels. Undergraduate classes average 58 students fall semester and 53.5 spring semester. The enrollment numbers may have peaked after several years of increases. Student performance was assessed by each instructor based on a combination of homework assignments, class projects, papers/presentations, and quizzes/exams. This combination of performance measures enabled each instructor to assess the student's ability to: (a) Grasp fundamental principles and how to apply them to problem solving (papers, projects); (b) Analyze data and apply quantitative tools (homework assignments); and, (c) Master written and oral communication skills, both individually and in a team environment (papers, presentations, projects). Exams in each course provided instructors with a concise measure of each student's ability to successfully master course content including principles, problem-solving skills, and ability to communicate. The average grade point average in undergrad courses is a 2.86.

AEAB conducts student assessment of performance in the two campus core courses it teaches, AGECE 1103 (Principles of Agriculture Microeconomics) and AGECE 2103 (Principles of Agriculture Macroeconomics). The assessment consists of ten multiple choice questions asked on the final examination in each class. This assessment commenced in Fall 2009 and continues to the present. Class averages on the ten multiple choice questions in AGECE 2103 have ranged from 48% to 60%. The ten questions asked in AGECE 2103 range from very simple and basic to very difficult. The class averages on the ten multiple choice questions in AGECE 1103 have ranged from 58% to 86% and cover a similar range of level of difficulty. There is a gap in the data for AGECE 1103 due to the departure of a faculty member in late 2013. Only data for 2011-2013 and 2015-2017 are included here. As would be expected, students do very well on the simple questions and do less well on the more difficult questions. Although efforts are made continually to improve student performance, the faculty are of the opinion that the range of difficulty is a good measure of the level for teaching the course. Since student abilities and aptitudes vary greatly across any given class, the faculty are more interested in uniform shifts up or down in the range of responses. Clearly, substantial, across-the-board improvement would likely lead to a more rigorous treatment of the subject.

2. Curriculum review. The increase in class enrollment has made scheduling difficult for some students, especially for junior and senior level courses offered only once a year. As noted in the Degree Changes section below, we have added courses and made changes to the curriculum to give students more flexibility to meet degree requirements. This has been possible by the hiring of a second instructor during the past year and two tenure track faculty positions in the 2013-2014 academic year.

3. Exit interviews and electronic surveys. For several years, the Department Head of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness has conducted confidential exit interviews with selected graduating seniors. Virtually all graduating seniors were complimentary of the quality of advising and instruction in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness and the genuine one-on-one care of the faculty for students. Since the 2009-2010 academic year AEAB has conducted an on-line survey of all graduating seniors to supplement the exit interviews.

Data from the Qualtrics Undergraduate Exit Survey indicate students view the program as having high academic value. AEAB courses were commonly among those listed as most valuable across the curriculum and none were listed among the least valuable. This points to high quality instruction amongst the department's faculty. Most students participating in the Agricultural Business Club rated the experience favorably. The Agricultural Business Club is the department's registered student organization. Nearly 70 percent of graduating students had a job lined up at the time of the survey. This demonstrates the value of coursework in preparing students for careers. The vast majority of these careers were related specifically to the major. Among the courses students perceived to be most valuable were those that had specific career-focused skill sets at their center. Students completing an internship rated the experience as extremely valuable.

4. The Department takes pride in its advising. Students can expect a personal touch in the advising they receive from the department. We target 15-20 student advisees per faculty member. The addition of two instructors in recent years has allowed us to keep faculty advising to manageable numbers. The Dean's Office has a professional academic advisor to assist our department with undergraduate advising. This staff member advises all entering freshmen and transfer students until students have accumulated 60 credit hours. Students are transitioned to faculty advisors for their junior and senior years.
5. Teaching evaluations. Course and instructor evaluations were conducted for each course to assess quality of instruction and course content. Summary data forwarded to the Department Head and feedback are shared with faculty during their annual evaluations. Each faculty member may view a copy of the student evaluations to assist in preparation of future classes.
6. Alumnae feedback. We invite alumnae to visit with faculty and students at fall and spring social events and for special occasions throughout the year. We have implemented a new on-line questionnaire for graduating seniors to get feedback on their experiences and to collect data to facilitate future communication with these new alumnae. We send an electronic newsletter to alumni and stakeholders 3-4 times a year. We receive comments and other feedback on items that appear in the newsletter.

E. Changes to Degree Program

Enrollment growth of the past few years has increased average class size and has created difficulties for student class scheduling. Over the last three years, we have made a series of program changes to give students more options and scheduling flexibility. We have reduced the number of specifically required courses and grouped courses requiring students to take one or two of a group of three or four courses emphasizing main topic areas such as agricultural finance and management; agricultural policy; and agricultural marketing rather than one or two specific courses. Also, additional teaching resources have allowed us to offer some higher level courses twice a year rather than once a year. Together, these changes give students more flexibility to meet their degree requirements in a timely manner.

F. Changes to Assessment Process

We implemented an on-line questionnaire for graduating seniors during the 2009-2010 academic year to supplement the traditional exit interview system. This on-line survey is conducted at the end of every academic term. We have used the results of this survey to guide the program changes noted above.