

Annual Assessment Report

Academic Year: 2017-18

Department: Agricultural Economics and Economics

Program(s): Agricultural Business

1. What Was Done

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Economics (DAEE) has an assessment plan that have been developed and updated with involvement from the DAEE advisory committee and resident instruction committee. Following this assessment plan, the undergraduate program has consistently focused on the following three objectives as being central to the Agricultural Business program.

1. Our graduates will develop excellent critical thinking skills
2. Our graduates will develop effective communication skills
3. Our graduates will receive educational programming that enables them to understand and cogently discuss current economic issues as applied to the agricultural sector

2. What Data Were Collected

Student evaluations and senior exit interviews are annually evaluated to assess the Department's progress in meeting the three objectives and fulfilling the specific goals in the assessment plan. Other data are also collected including detailed Danforth reviews of faculty teaching for candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion. When possible, feedback from program alumni is collected to assess the long run impacts of the program.

3. How Data Were Analyzed

Student evaluation data are evaluated as part of the annual faculty and instructor review process by the Department's advisory committee and the department head. The department head then meets with each faculty and instructor to discuss evaluation outcomes and recommendations from the advisory committee. Discussion from the senior exit interviews is transcribed and reviewed by the Department's resident instruction committee and the department head. Peer-evaluation and reviews for candidates for retention, tenure, and promotion are reviewed by the Department's tenure and promotion committee and the department head.

For quantitative data (e.g., student evaluations), evaluations are based on historical comparisons and trend analyses for each individual faculty and instructor and based on comparisons to average scores received by other faculty and instructors teaching courses of similar level (e.g., upper-level courses). The former provides an opportunity to examine growth at an individual level, and the latter helps assess a faculty or instructor's teaching effectiveness relative to a normalized department-wide scale.

Qualitative information is compared to similar information collected in previous years, providing an opportunity to determine whether weaknesses have been improved and whether new issues are arising.

4. What Was Learned

1. Students indicated that their critical thinking and assessment skills have become highly developed. They noted that the program builds on itself and creates continuity of knowledge development. The program has sufficient breadth and depth of topic areas.
2. Faculty are available to students and have an open-door policy for answering questions.
3. Students indicated that there are sufficient supporting classes for developing communications and most upper-level agricultural business classes have sufficient opportunities to hone industry-specific communication skills.
4. Employers continue to recruit heavily for summer internships and full-time positions post-graduation. However, not enough employers from outside the northern Great Plains region are recruiting.
5. Agricultural business students noted that STAT 217 would be a useful addition to the curriculum due to the increasing need for statistical and data analysis skills in the agricultural sector.

5. How We Responded

The DAEE has highly successful undergraduate programs that continue to meet the objectives stated in the assessment plan. The department will continue focusing on and innovating to ensure that it remains excellent in the three areas.

The DAEE resident instruction chair has reached out to colleagues at other universities to better understand strategies for engaging employer recruitment from a broader region. The addition of the STAT 217 requirement to the curriculum is being considered and additional data will be collected to evaluate how the course would best be incorporated into the curriculum.

6. Closing the Loop

The DAEE resident instruction chair worked closely with the instructor of AGED 105 to ensure that the course include learning components that would sufficiently prepare agricultural business students for applied work in upper-level agricultural business courses. Responses from students who completed the restructured AGED 105 course overwhelmingly indicated that they felt much more prepared than students in previous years.