TO: Dr. Fred Hartmeister, Dean
FROM: Leslie Thompson, Interim Chairman
DATE: July 28, 2008
SUBJECT: Post Graduate Program Review – Department of Animal and Food Sciences

The Department of Animal and Food Sciences (AFS) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the reviewers’ comments, and to continue to grow and improve our graduate program. The following are our responses to each of the reviewers’ individual comments.

The review committee pointed out that there is good quality in the graduate students within the program, but there was a concern about the lack of established minimum standards and the lack of a departmental graduate committee for evaluating applicants. What progress has been made to address this concern?

The department follows the Graduate School admissions policy statement, “Three general categories of criteria are used as part of a holistic process to evaluate applicants for admissions and competitive scholarship…” The department evaluates academic records, GRE scores, TOEFL or other University-accepted tests for English as a Foreign Language, individual profiles, and at least three recommendation letters for each student. The Department of Animal and Food Sciences recommends that Master’s program applicants have at least a 3.0/4.0 undergraduate GPA, a combined GRE score of 1000 and at least a 3.5/6.0 on the written portion of the GRE. Desirable Doctoral applicants should have a Master of Science degree with thesis in a related field, at least a 3.5/4.0 graduate GPA, a combined GRE score of 1000 and at least a 3.5/6.0 on the written portion of the GRE. All international students having English as a Second Language shall meet the minimum Graduate School standards. Students are admitted however using a holistic policy considering letters of recommendation, experience, and other relevant factors.

Beginning in the academic year 2008-2009 the graduate committee consisting of the graduate coordinator and three other faculty members, appointed on an annual basis, will provide an initial screening of applicants. Applicants having satisfactory credentials will be sent on to faculty for further consideration. Final acceptance of students and offers of assistance will be up to individual faculty.
One of the concerns of the review committee was that the number of TA positions was low and the RA’s were being asked to teach as part of their workload and the recommendation was the teaching duties of the RA’s should be eliminated. How have you been able to address this issue?

The Department of Animal and Food Sciences still has a low number of TA positions. Twenty-nine undergraduate and 8 graduate courses with labs in animal sciences and 11 undergraduate courses and 5 graduate courses in food science with labs make it necessary for RA’s to assist with teaching. For the fall 2008 semester, AFS has 30 laboratory sections offered in the department. The department lacks the financial resources to hire a sufficient number of TAs to assist with the teaching of all these labs sections. Teaching assistantships are utilized for judging team coaches, that is teaching ANSC 2301 and 2302 Livestock and Meat Evaluation I and II, and ANSC 2304 Selection and Evaluation of Horses (Meats, Horse, Wool and Livestock Judging Teams), as well as ANSC 2202 Anatomy of Domestic Livestock, all classes requiring a large time investment in preparation and instruction. Faculty teaching other classes utilize their RA’s to assist with lab instruction. If the financial resources were in place we would have more students on TA’s but resources are limited. Philosophically, AFS faculty members believe it is important for all M.S. and Ph.D. students to teach during the course of their academic careers. Learning to balance research, teaching and coursework is part of the academic experience for graduate students.

The only deficiency in facilities addressed during the review was the short supply of individual computers available to graduate students, but that a computer lab was available. Is this problem sufficient enough that a change needs to be made in the near future?

At least 70% of graduate students in AFS have their own laptop computers. The department computer lab containing 24 computers is available for use by graduate students when the lab is not in use for a class. Many faculty members purchase at least one desktop or laptop computer for their labs. Additionally, the department has 3 laptops available for graduate students to check out for use. Each of the three classroom and two teaching labs in AFS has a computer that interfaces with the LCD projectors. Having a computer available for each graduate student would be ideal and the department will work toward that goal using primarily technology and graduate tuition funds. These funds are also used to purchase statistical software licenses for SAS or other relevant software needs.

There is concern campus wide about the use of dual-listed courses within any graduate program. At the time of the review, there were four 3000 level and seven 4000 level courses dual listed with graduate courses within your program. Please address this issue from the standpoint of how this affects the graduate students, both from the pros and cons standpoint, and how you monitor the classes to assure that graduate level work is being completed by the graduate students taking these classes.

The department still has the same number of dual-listed courses. All dual listed courses have additional requirements for the graduate students. Graduate students are required to become familiar with the scientific literature in the subject area, and are typically required to write papers serving as literature reviews or that require a synthesis of information to address industry-
relevant problems. Many courses require graduate students give presentations based on the scientific and regulatory literature to their undergraduate and graduate classmates. Many faculty members create separate exams for undergraduates and graduates, and evaluate performance of the graduate students with higher expectations. Some of our courses provide certification, for example in ServSafe or hazard analysis critical control point (HACCP). Using ServSafe as an example, one goal for an undergraduate is to become ServSafe certified as a food manager/handler (75%). Expectations for graduate students include ServSafe certification as an instructor (90%).

The chair and associate chair review syllabi on all courses on an annual basis, making sure that dual-listed courses have heightened requirements for graduate students. We continue to offer dual-listed courses due to a lack of faculty to teach the courses as separate courses. As an advantage to the undergraduates in these courses, the undergraduates often benefit from the experience of the graduate students through class room discussion or lab experience.

A concern brought up by both faculty in the program and the review committee as to the timeliness of obtaining student application materials from the Graduate School. How has this issue been addressed and has it been solved to everyone’s satisfaction?

The timeliness of receiving materials from graduate admissions has improved, but at times is still an issue. Loss of materials sent to the graduate school is a continuing problem as well as responsiveness to emails and phone messages. This seems a problem for the Master’s program materials, not doctoral program materials doctoral. We recognize however that departmentally we need to be more timely and thorough in our submission of forms and information to the Graduate School.

Again thank you for the opportunity to respond to the reviewers and the Graduate School. We strive to have a nationally-recognized outstanding program and opportunities such as this are important for our continued growth and success. Any further suggestion will be appreciated.

xc: Dr. Clifford Fedler, Ms. Marlene Kenady, Dr. John Burns, Dr. Kevin Pond