Graduate Program Review
April 2007

Masters of Agriculture Program
College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources

Review Committee:
James Smith (Chair) Industrial Engineering
Joseph King, Economics
Phillip Johnson, Agricultural and Applied Economics

Program Overview and Vision (Rating: Satisfactory)

The program was instituted in the late 70's to provide a flexible, diverse graduate program in Agriculture. Data provided from the self-study indicate that the program was minimal during the evaluation period. The documentation discussed plans to expand the program in several areas, including distance learning. Enrollment comparisons to Iowa State and Texas A&M show the program to be relatively very small. Program history shows 11 degrees awarded in the 6 year review period, with only 1 degree awarded in the past 3 years and no degrees awarded for the past 2 years. Program goals anticipate much greater activity levels than those presented for the past 6 years.

Dr. Norm Hopper, Associate Dean for Academic and Student Programs in the College of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources, indicated an expectation of increased enrollment due to the development of the distance learning component of the program. The Master of Agriculture @ a Distance was not fully implemented during the period covered by the self assessment. Present enrollment in the program is seven students (two resident and five at a distance).

The college expects growth in the program due to the implementation of the Agricultural Education option with Principal Professional Certification and the Master of Agriculture International option with the Peace Corps. In addition, there is a market for distance graduate degree programs from Cooperative Extension Agents and Vocational Agricultural Teachers for professional development.

Faculty Productivity (Rating: N/A)

Since the program resides in a variety of departments within the College of Agriculture Sciences and Natural Resources, there are no faculty members dedicated specifically to the Masters of Agriculture program.
Quality and Quantity of graduate Students and Graduates (Rating: Poor)

The quantity of graduate students in the program has been meager for the past 6 years. During the 6 year analysis period, 31 students applied (including 13 in 2005), 14 were accepted, and 6 enrolled (1 in 2003 and none in 2004 or 2005). From the data provided, the average GRE scores of enrolled graduate students were 434V and 560Q.

Placement information provided for 5 students indicate reasonable job placement for program graduates. It was noted that the majority of program students were off-campus students who did not require financial assistance. The self study reports that “students in the program are highly motivated to stay in the program and graduate because of the need for the advanced degree in their professional development and advancement”. This statement indicates a need and demand for the program that is not born out in the enrollment data. There appears to be a disconnect between perceived need and program enrollment.

The poor rating reflects the decrease in enrollments and apparent decrease in interest in the Masters of Agriculture degree program. However, the enrollment numbers reported in the self assessment do not reflect any impact of the distance component of the program. The quality of students described in the self study is satisfactory.

Curriculum and Programs of Study (Rating: N/A)

Since the program actually resides in five different departments, there is no specific curriculum and programs of study.

Facilities and Resources (Rating: N/A)

Since the program actually resides in five different departments, there is no specific facilities and resources allocated to the program.

Summary

The Masters of Agriculture is a small interdisciplinary program within the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Productivity from the program has been meager over the six year review period. If there were not plans to expand the program through distance learning efforts and targeted partnerships, such as the one proposed with the Peace Corps, the review committee would have to question the rationale for the programs continuation. The self study proposed several new programs to be carried out under the Masters of Agriculture program, but provided no evidence of demand for those programs. Since the program consumes no additional resources beyond the departmental support already in place for other masters degree programs in the College, the review committee recommends retention of the program, but also recommends that the program be terminated if future program productivity is similar to that shown in the current 6 year analysis period.