

**STUDENT OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
Spring 2008**

EDUCATIONAL MISSION AND PHILOSOPHY

The Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics (ACE) equips undergraduate students for careers in many areas of business, public policy, and consumer affairs, as well as for advanced studies in applied economics, business, law, applied finance, policy analysis or public policy. The unit is unique in that it applies economics to both commerce and public policy with emphasis on the agribusiness, consumer, and environmental sectors.

The majority of ACE undergraduates come from urban or suburban households, although students from small towns and rural locations comprise a significant minority. Most of them pursue careers in the private sector while a substantial minority matriculates into graduate and professional degree programs. The Department also prepares masters and doctoral students for research-based careers in business, government, nongovernmental organizations, and academic settings. A majority of the graduate students comes from abroad.

The educational philosophy of the Department of ACE combines theoretical/conceptual learning with applications of concepts to real world problems. The goal is to prepare students to be immediately effective and successful in their chosen pursuits. The approach is adaptive, involving regular assessment of the relevance of the curriculum and the learning outcomes of students. It focuses on the following core competencies:

- Conceptual reasoning through Quantitative Analysis – the ability to organize, analyze, and draw conclusions from data and to apply conceptual models to real world facts
- Effective communication – the ability to express ideas clearly and logically
- Global awareness – the ability to make connections between local and global economic, cultural, and political phenomena

In addition to assessments focusing on these core competencies, the Department also seeks to ensure a high quality undergraduate experience.

ASSESSMENT PROCESS, DATA, AND OUTCOMES (1999-2008)

The Department of ACE last prepared a formal student outcomes assessment plan in 1999. In that report the department indicated that an ongoing outcomes assessment process of undergraduate programs in ACE would be managed by the Director of Undergraduate Programs, with input from the Undergraduate Programs Committee. Annual review of outcomes assessment data would be conducted and reported to the Department Head. As appropriate, the results would be shared with the faculty, the External Advisory Committee (EAC), and external review panels. Each of these groups could make specific recommendations regarding course and program improvements to improve student outcomes. Since 1999, the ACE Department has undertaken the assessment activities listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1. UNDERGRADUATE OUTCOMES ASSESMENT ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL AND CONSUMER ECONOMICS, 1999-2008

Core Competencies/ Objectives	Measureable Outcomes	Data	Assessment Process	Action Process
Conceptual Reasoning through Quantitative Analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of ACE students taking 400-level data-oriented courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and faculty opinions about Quant II requirement • Course syllabi • Enrollment data • Feedback from employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty strategic planning retreat • Conduct special survey of faculty and students concerning Quant. II • Review enrollment data • Query graduating seniors in exit focus groups • Invite feedback from employers and External Advisory Committee members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal to faculty to modify Quant. II requirement (2008) • Three new advanced data-oriented classes offered (2007-08)
Effective Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of students taking ACE 400-level courses with Adv. Comp. components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course syllabi • Enrollment data • Feedback from guest evaluators of student presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct exit interviews of seniors & alums regarding educational experience • Observe student presentations associated with internships • Review senior surveys • Faculty strategic planning retreat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised curriculum to require completion of Adv. Comp. by beginning 7th semester (2005-06) • Expanded list of courses satisfying Adv. Comp. (2005-06) • Encouraged faculty to implement individual, cumulative writing assignments (2006-07)
Global Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of graduates with international experience during college • International coursework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrollment data for study abroad, international courses, language, & area studies courses, and international minors • Employer advice on desirable candidate profiles • Systematic data collected from study abroad students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review senior surveys • Review course enrollments • Feedback from ACE External Advisory Committee & ACES Career Services • Assessment of study abroad feedback by IBIP and ACES Study Abroad • Faculty strategic planning retreat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified international course requirement (2003-04) • Developed the International Business Immersion Program (2002-ongoing)

<p>High Quality Undergraduate Experience</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic credentials of student body • Student placement • Student satisfaction • Number of capstone courses developed • Number of students participating in honors program • Number of students participating in faculty-mentored research activities • Number of students receiving academic credit for internships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACT & high school rank data • Placement data • Senior survey data on student satisfaction • Data on student/faculty ratios from peer departments • Faculty participation in teaching workshops and teaching improvement grant programs • Peer reviews of faculty teaching • Data on honors program and internship participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review admissions and transfer data • Review placement data • Review senior survey responses • Review curricular offerings in light of student interests & opportunities • Faculty strategic planning retreat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented higher admission requirements for freshman (2007-08) • Increased efforts to recruit freshman and transfers • Introduced special section of ACE 100 for honors students (2007) • Restructured B.S. degree (2006) • Introduced new concentrations in Public Policy & Law (2005-06) and Financial Planning (2008) • Eliminated concentration in Consumer & Textile Marketing (2004) • Development of ACE 447 as a capstone course
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FUTURE ASSESSMENT PROCESS, DATA AND OUTCOME PLAN

Looking forward, the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics will continue to assess student outcomes as follows [data sources and frequency are noted in brackets]:

- (a) Review of graduating senior feedback on advising, internships, international experience, and placement [ACES Senior Survey; annual]
- (b) Debriefing of graduating seniors for feedback on student experience [Comments in informal voluntary focus groups; annual]
- (c) Review of graduating student placement [ACES Career Services Office survey data; annual]
- (d) Review of participation in study abroad and other international experiences [enrollment data; annual]
- (e) External Advisory Committee feedback [EAC meetings; annual]
- (f) Review and improvement of pedagogy [Faculty participation in the ACES teaching academy and campus teaching workshops and retreats and college and departmental teaching grant programs; ICES course evaluations; ongoing]
- (g) Review and improvement of courses and curricula [Review by Department Undergraduate Programs Committee, Courses and Curricula Committee, and ad hoc faculty groups interested in specific areas of study; ongoing]
- (h) Assessments of student participation in off-campus internships [Selected site visits; ongoing]
- (i) Review of admissions, enrollment, and student/faculty ratio trends [ACES Office of Academic Programs, University Division of Management Information (DMI), peer institution data; ongoing]

OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsibility for ongoing assessment of undergraduate student outcomes is assigned to the Director of Undergraduate Programs. The current report has been prepared by: John B. Braden, Professor and Director of Undergraduate Programs; and Ann Butler Finnegan, Academic Advisor, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics.