Agribusiness Program - Assessment Plan
Year 2011- Spring

Importance of Agriculture to Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest Region

Wisconsin’s agricultural industry generates $59.16 billion in economic activity annually, making it the largest industry in Wisconsin. Wisconsin’s agricultural industry means jobs, 10% of the workforce relies directly on agriculture. Wisconsin dairy industry generates $20.6 billion a year for the state’s economy and accounts for more than 40 percent of the 420,000 job in the agricultural sector. Wisconsin is a diverse agricultural state. Wisconsin is number one in the United States in total cheese production, dry whey, mink pelts, corn for silage, cranberries, and snap beans for processing; and number two in total milk production, butter, oats, and carrots. Besides Wisconsin, our neighbors in Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois, and Michigan add up to a regional agricultural powerhouse of production, processing, manufacturing, distribution, and sales that is unmatched in the world.

The Agribusiness industry is unique in several ways:

- The manufacturing plant of agricultural raw materials such as milk, corn, and meat is alive and perishable.
- The final consumer product of the industry is the building blocks of life itself – food.
- The product is a universally global need, and is supplied globally.
- The supply chain from raw material to food product requires a complex set of specialized activities and skills to deliver a safe and perishable product to the consumer.
- The industry is absolutely dependent on a symbiotic relationship with the natural world.
- The industry must bear unique risks of weather and disease.
- The raw product supply side of the industry, production agriculture, is one of the very few industries that are commodity-based, i.e., no long-run economic profits, falling real prices, and ever thinning margins.

Purpose of the Agribusiness Program

The UWP mission states, in part, “… to serve the people of Wisconsin” by “providing baccalaureate degree programs which meet primarily regional needs.” The purpose of the Agribusiness program is to serve graduates, parents of graduates, employers, and citizens of the state of Wisconsin and Midwest region. With job placement near 100%, the baccalaureate degree program in Agribusiness is a direct feed into the number one industry of the state and region – Agriculture.

For the graduates, parents, and employers, the purpose and obligation of the Agribusiness program at UWP is that graduates will: through the learning and application of business, economic, and agricultural science theories, tools, and processes; and through the development of the “whole” graduate, standout in their preparedness and capacity to compete for desired careers in the agribusiness industry, and be successful at accomplishing both business and personal goals.
The Agribusiness program will accomplish this obligation through a curriculum structure that includes core agribusiness principles required to be taken by all graduates and also allows graduates to specialize in a minor of their choice or in one of the Agribusiness Areas of Emphasis in:

1. Commodity and Price Analysis
2. Communications and Marketing
3. Management
4. Agricultural Engineering Technology
5. International
6. Comprehensive Program of Study

There is also a minor in Agribusiness to serve graduates in other fields of study.

Agribusiness Program Objectives and Graduate Learning Outcomes (SLO)

Graduates will have the capacity to make and implement sound business decisions because they have gained knowledge and comprehension and have the ability to apply, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate as appropriate theories, concepts, tools, and processes in the following overall areas:

- Principles (agribusiness, agricultural science, economic, mathematical, and statistical)
- Communications
- Personal and Professional Development
- Integration and Application

1. **SLO 1 & SLO 2: Principles**
   
   **SLO 1:** Graduates will be able to identify, interpret and explain agribusiness, agricultural science, economics, math, and statistics principles.
   
   **SLO 2:** Graduates will, through a variety of tools and processes, be able to apply the principles in analyzing and making management decisions. Evidence of success includes graduates being able to:

   a) Define, interpret, and implement the functions and roles of management.

   b) Describe and apply commodity marketing and price risk concepts including price fundamentals, basic technical analysis, and strategies of commodity marketing.

   c) Describe and apply identity-based marketing concepts including analyzing customer needs and trends, assessing internal and market characteristics and trends, evaluating firm capacity, and designing and managing market strategy, pricing, distribution, product positioning, and promotion.
d) Illustrate the symbiotic role of the sales person as consultant, learn how to judge and analyze the needs of a specific situation, and develop a long-run strategy of mutual gain.

e) Interpret and use economic theories such as production, consumer, demand, supply, optimization, and marginality to explain price movements, trade, profitability, and other social and business decision behaviors and consequences.

f) Demonstrate the capacity to diagnose and make appropriate management decisions based on an ability to perform and analyze comprehensive financial and investment situations that conforms to GAAP and FFSC standards.

g) Interpret the general principles of soil and crop science, animal science, and agriculture engineering technology.

h) Apply appropriate quantitative tools including but not limited to regression, statistical testing, and variance analysis to assess management challenges and make appropriate management decisions.

2. **SLO 3: Communications**
Graduates will be known by the industry to be ahead of their peers in their ability to effectively communicate orally, in writing, and with and through teams. Evidence of success include graduates being able to:

a) Appraise and evaluate the functioning of a team and make conclusions as to how it could have functioned better.

b) Analyze and differentiate effective oral and written communications, both their own and of others, and assess how the communication could have been more effective.

c) Demonstrate the capacity to effectively use technology in communications including but not limited to powerpoint and other visual aids, web page design and development, audio, video, and graphics.

3. **SLO 4: Personal and Professional Development**
Graduates will have consciously mapped their future professional goals, have prepared themselves professionally to meet their goals, and have prepared themselves to integrate social and professional ethics and etiquette behavior into all professional relationships. Evidence of success include graduates having:

a) Completed a resume and career development plan, and have had it professionally reviewed, by the end of their sophomore year.

b) Completed a personal portfolio for employment by the end of their junior year that includes writing samples, internships and other selected experiences,
and examples of leadership, teamwork, developing and carrying out a vision, and independently completing an objective.

c) Completed a professional internship experience.

d) The ability to define and evaluate ethical behavior, and be known in the industry for their high value of respect, integrity, and politeness in the work place.

4. **SLO 5: Integration and Application**

Graduates will be able to integrate general education and disciplinary competencies in the analysis and formulation of appropriate business decisions. Key to this is experiential “crash-site” experiences in decision-making including but not limited to case studies, industry interaction, a capstone experience, extracurricular club activities and competitions, and an on-campus student-managed business. Evidence of success include graduates being able to:

a) Interpret and explain how the global nature of agriculture and current trends of agriculture will impact agribusiness decisions. This will be accomplished through classroom activities, national student exchanges, and study abroad programs.

b) Envision a future direction and make business decisions based on sound strategic assessments of internal and external environments.

c) Describe, construct, and implement the component parts of management planning and the integrative role and value of each component including but not limited to strategic, business, commodity marketing, and identity-based marketing plans.

**Table 1: Assessment Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool 1</th>
<th>Tool 2</th>
<th>Tool 3</th>
<th>Tool 4</th>
<th>Tool 5</th>
<th>Tool 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completion of Required Curriculum</td>
<td>Senior Exit Survey</td>
<td>Alumni Survey</td>
<td>Employer Internship Survey</td>
<td>Student Internship Survey</td>
<td>Capstone &amp; Comprehensive Class Project Ratings and Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO-1</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO-2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO-3</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLO-4</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>SLO-5</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The program has used all tools except tool 3” Alumni survey”.

4
Table 2: Findings summary table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Assessment Practices</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Purpose of the assessment</th>
<th>How it is used to improve your program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Senior Exit Survey</td>
<td>Each semester</td>
<td>Determine strengths and areas of concern with courses, content, and teaching.</td>
<td>By taking into consideration the recommendations for improvement of agribusiness program area made by the graduating seniors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Employer Internship Survey</td>
<td>Every summer</td>
<td>Determine the performance level of student intern compared to first year employee and to assess the intellectual, professional growth of the student during the internship period.</td>
<td>To determine the strengths and weaknesses of the students coming out of agribusiness program and to seek the input derived from employers to strengthen the program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Student Internship Survey</td>
<td>Every summer</td>
<td>Determine the level of satisfaction with internship experience and also to assess how well the students applied various skills developed while studying the agribusiness areas.</td>
<td>To identify the degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the mandatory internship experience. Improve the course content and teaching methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
<td>Capstone Projects</td>
<td>Every Spring</td>
<td>Determine students’ ability to synthesize subject matter taught throughout the program.</td>
<td>Provides each graduate with a culminating capstone project experience that integrates several components of agribusiness degree program.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment of Agribusiness Program
1. What evidence do you have that students achieve your stated learning outcomes?

As shown in the assessment matrix (table 1) we have employed variety of tools to assess the student learning objectives. We have completed senior exit surveys, student internship surveys, and employer internship surveys. We also assessed the students’ strength through the mandatory capstone course project.

2. What have you learned as a result?

Following are the major findings from the survey reports and capstone project:

Senior Student Exit Survey findings:

- Agribusiness major prepared them well in the development of communication, managerial, professional, leadership and personal skills, understanding current status, trends in the local and global agriculture & food systems, problem solving techniques by acting individually or using team oriented approaches.
- Agribusiness program area provided opportunities to work in teams and participate in team based projects.
- Strengths of the agribusiness program identified were good people and resources, diversity of teachers and teaching styles, knowledgeable and helpful faculty and staff members, small class size and personal interaction with the professor, ease of the transfer of credits and mandatory internship experiences, real world examples used in the classes and relevant projects.
- Weaknesses of the agribusiness program are lack of classes offered during certain terms (fall only or spring only) and sequencing of the classes, not able to get into the required courses due to scheduling conflicts, lack of help to find an internship position, growing class size and limited space.
- Suggestions to improve the agribusiness program are to incorporate farm enterprises with classes, have more labs and real life experiences to facilitate practical learning, assist students in finding internship opportunities, use of D2L in all of the classes, remove the redundancies in the course materials and streamline the course content in various courses, managerial accounting should be removed from required course as most of that material is being covered in farm management course and recruit more qualified teachers by spending more money.
- Major experiences that standout in their mind while pursuing the agribusiness program are one on one connection with the faculty and working with other students in various projects and get to know each other well, great internship experience (required internship is a good thing), preparing marketing plan and one on one sales presentation, field trips and FFA contest, group presentations and SOA club events, one on one International exchange with Dronten, lots of hands on and applied class projects, and over all development as a professional.
• With regards to the benefits that the students received by participating in various activities that student clubs sponsor, many expressed about the significant benefits to them such as net working, knowing people, leadership, and organizational skills, teamwork, and development as a professional.

• Few suggestions were also made with regards to internships such as helping the student with finding an internship (especially during difficult time periods) and showing the resources to find one.

1) Student Internship Survey findings:

• It is noteworthy to state that many students felt above average in their acquisition of business skills, understanding of agri-business areas, organizational skills etc, while pursing internship.
• However, in the areas of written communication skills and effectiveness as a leader many rated themselves to be on an average category.
• Students felt strongly that the internship experience had enabled them to apply, improve their managerial skills & problem solving ability in the real work situations, work in teams and develop leadership skills.
• There was a very strong agreement on the effectiveness of internship as an educational experience among all the internship experienced students. They recommend that it was an invaluable experience and every student must undergo such training.
• Students provided several constructive comments to improve their internship experiences. Some of their suggestions were as follows:

   i. Student should be given opportunities to work in several departments of the respective businesses to get complete overview of the operations. A well structured internship will enable to do so.

   ii. An orientation program about internship will be beneficial. Some training before heading out to the field and about what to expect should be provided.

   iii. Interns should be notified in advance about getting the internship position.

   iv. More information should be given before starting an internship. Revision and distribution of internship guidelines book will be helpful.

   v. Students work more number of hours and hence internship should be worth more credits. Employers should let the student clearly know about the number of hours of commitment on the job.
vi. Match professors or supervisors to students that are in the same field of study. This would help with the visits as there would be more to talk about.

vii. Early contact with the student and employer by the SOA staff/supervisor will be helpful to reduce the initial stress or anxiety while starting the internship.

2) Internship Supervisor Survey findings:

• With regards to theoretical understanding of economic, business principles and concepts, and organizational skills, students were rated very well by their supervisors.

• With regards to written communication skills, ability to manage people at workplace, and professionalism in regards to appropriateness of dress, proper personal hygiene and language were some below average ratings.

• Many indicated that the students performance was very good to excellent as a first year employee and indicated the willingness to hire them if the student is available.

• Some of the favorable characteristics of interns include: strong work ethic, good team player, well prepared to handle the job, punctuality, upbeat attitude, excellent customer relationship skills, and outgoing personality, open minded, not afraid to ask questions, friendly nature, good sense of humor, dependability etc.

• Few undesirable characteristics of few interns are poor oral communication skills (timid and afraid to speak up), and written skills.

• Course work that was suggested by supervisors to improve the student intern’s employability were business management, science courses (agronomy), communication courses, sales training, social media classes, and writing courses.

3) Capstone Course Experience:

In our program’s capstone course AGIND 4500: Agribusiness Management, every student is required to complete a capstone project. We felt it was necessary to develop a culminating experience for all of our agribusiness majors. This course enabled the development of a capstone experience that requires students to integrate knowledge, writing, communication and critical thinking learned throughout their degree program and experiences within the context of a current agribusiness project.
The definition of a capstone course is a planned learning experience requiring students to synthesize previously learned subject matter content and to integrate new information into their knowledge base for solving simulated or real world problems (Crunkilton, Cepica, and Fluker). Additionally, a capstone course provides assistance to students in applying and completing their academic experiences. A capstone course aids students in connecting theory and practice and is completed by students nearing the completion of an undergraduate degree.

Students in the previous three years have completed capstone course projects related to renewable energies, marketing plans, business plans, entrepreneurship in agriculture and international trade. All of these projects have included the following components: problem-solving, decision-making, critical thinking, collaborative/professional relationships, oral communications, and written communications. These educational outcomes have been commonly accepted and used by educators and instructors of capstone courses and provide the framework for capstone course development.

Specific evaluation rubrics and peer evaluation forms have been developed and used in the course for grading and student assessment. Overall, the addition of capstone course projects in the Agribusiness Management course has provided a culminating experience for our agribusiness major and another means for us to assess the learning objectives and outcomes of our program.

3. Document specific changes that have resulted from your assessment efforts.

Following are the specific changes that resulted from various assessment efforts:

- Review of the course materials: Students expressed their concern that the upper level courses seemed to teach about the same things as the lower division courses and there is repetition of materials. Faulty members are engaged in streamlining the course contents in each course by reviewing all the courses starting from the lower division classes. So far three courses were reviewed during special meetings. Review of various courses is ongoing.

- Update of the course catalog with modified course descriptions was done to reflect the changes brought into several courses.

- Agribusiness major areas of emphasis were reviewed and changes were made to few emphasis areas with regards to course structure and requirements.

- Agribusiness course check sheet was revised to reflect all the changes (courses and emphasis).

- New emphasis area: International area of emphasis was incorporated in addition to five other existing areas of emphasis in agribusiness program.
• Technology training by the faculty members: All the courses at various levels use more up to date technologies such as D2L. Faculty members participate in D2L and technology learning activities.

• Agribusiness program area has grown significantly, mostly because of the tri-state initiative and currently a new faculty member hiring process is underway. This will address the current concerns of increased load and course scheduling issues.

• Revised Internship Guide Book: Internship committee had reviewed and updated the internship guide and developed new forms. This will address the student concern with regards to expectations of interns and the procedures to be followed.

• Review of writing and oral communications projects: Many courses in agribusiness require several writing projects and oral presentations. The writing components in each course are being reviewed.

• Incorporate many writing intensive projects into the agribusiness courses and possibility of requiring students to take a business writing course is under consideration (as a general education component).

• During regular advising sessions and academic orientation programs students are being encouraged to develop their leadership skills by actively participating in student club, extra-curricular activities, and to attend workshops that address to develop the leadership skills.

• PDI and PDII courses are under review and changes will be brought to address the issues of professionalism at workplace, business etiquette etc.

• Commodity and Price Analysis emphasis area was reviewed. AGIN 4620 - Price Forecasting course was completely restructured and modeled after the curriculum of NFA (National Futures Association). This enabled the students to take the commodity brokerage exam – Series 3, upon the completion of this emphasis area and get the national certificate. So far three students were successful at getting their Series 3 license and were successfully employed.

• Faculty-led short-term international program to Ghana: The course allows students to explore different aspects of agriculture, geography and women’s livelihoods (how they earn a living) in rural and urban contexts of Ghana. In Ghana, students worked on agricultural projects with Cocoa farmers (women).

• International Emphasis: New emphasis area was developed. Agribusiness faculty members are actively involved in developing new faculty led international experiences to countries such as Brazil, India etc.,