

Supporting Documentation for Academic Review (THEC)
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics
December, 2013

I. Undergraduate Programs

a. Food and Agricultural Business

i. Program Outcomes (Numbers in parentheses indicate THEC reference.)

1. (1.1) Intended program and learning outcomes are clearly identified. (Table 1, Appendix I)
2. (1.2) The program uses appropriate indicators to evaluate appropriate and sufficient achievement of program outcomes. (Table 1, Appendix I)
3. (1.3) The unit makes use of information from its evaluation of program outcome attainment; student, alumni, and employer surveys; and university research to strengthen the program's effectiveness.

In addition to the information gained from the process outlined in Table 1, the department uses student surveys derived from exit interviews and classroom discussions which feedback into both individual faculty and departmental evaluations. Alumni interaction is more informal, but is utilized more so with alumni guest lecturing in classes. Feedback comes from alumni in response to the departmental newsletter. University research helps strengthen the program via professional development. Departmental staff takes advantage of these opportunities. Faculty members also benefit by attending teaching workshops available at the university and college levels.

ii. Curriculum

1. (2.1) The curriculum is appropriate to the level and purpose of the program. (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I)
2. (2.2) The curriculum content and organization is reviewed regularly.

Departmental curriculum is reviewed continuously, based on feedback from students and faculty. A departmental undergraduate committee reviews and makes suggestions to the department head and faculty regularly based on the feedback. There is also a curriculum review annually at the college level.

3. (2.3) Program requirements include a strong general education component. (Table 2, Appendix I)
4. (2.4) The curriculum includes a required core of appropriate courses in the discipline. (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I)
5. (2.5) An appropriate balance is maintained between courses inside the major and outside the major. (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I)
6. (2.6) Curricular content reflects current standards, practices, and issues in the discipline. (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I)
7. (2.7) The curriculum encourages the development of critical thinking. (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I)
8. (2.8) The curriculum exposes students to appropriate research strategies from the program area and students have the opportunity to participate in research. (Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I)

With two exceptions, departmental courses are taught by faculty members who have active research programs. One instructor has a 100% teaching appointment. However, his experience in the biofuel and production area is very useful in the courses he teaches. Another faculty member has a departmental teaching appointment and also serves as the Undergraduate Coordinator for the Baker Center for Public Policy. Undergraduate students also have the

opportunity to apply for the CASNR Honors program. In this program, students select and conduct a research program, with the guidance of faculty mentors. The project results in an Honors Thesis. Currently, there are two students from the department who are in the CASNR Honors program.

9. 9(2.9) Students have opportunities to apply what they have learned to situations outside the classroom.

The department's internship program has grown since 2008 from 4 undergraduates serving internships to 11 undergraduates in the summer of 2013. Thirty-nine students have served internships over the past 5 years. Companies where students have interned include: Farm Credit Service; Monsanto; Pilgrim's Pride; Tractor Supply; Case-IH; USDA-NASS; Tyson Foods; Pfizer; and many others. While most of these internships involve Tennessee Companies, students have also served internships in Kentucky, Mississippi, Washington D.C. and Hawaii. The students receive college credit for the internships and must complete the course by written and oral presentations. In exit interviews, graduating seniors report that these internships make all the difference in getting the jobs they desire.

10. (2.10) Students are exposed to professional and career opportunities appropriate to the field.

Both college and university resources are available to students. Full time personnel are available for career counseling and there are two annual jobs' fairs – one at the university and one at the institute level, where students can meet with employers. Alumni guest lecture in undergraduate classes during the fall semester. The departmental NAMA team attends two out-of-state venues annually where they gain experience and meet with agricultural industry professionals. Most recently, the department's Farm Credit Scholars' program was begun in 2012. Each year, 5 additional undergraduate scholars are added. The scholars receive scholarships via the Farm Credit System, and then have several in-state and out-of state educational trips. The first class of 2012 toured an in-state agribusiness and later toured Washington D.C. with a Faculty member and Farm Credit representative. The scholars also attend a state-level Ag Leadership Forum, where they are featured and interact with agricultural business leaders from the private, public, and political organizations.

11. (2.11) The program uses appropriate indicators to evaluate appropriate and sufficient achievement in service courses.

Institute department heads meet regularly to discuss inter-departmental issues. Annual curriculum meetings are held at the college level to discuss courses among all departments. Departmental service courses include 201, 212, 315, 342, 350, and 412 (see Table 2, Appendix I). These courses include a majority of non-departmental majors who take the courses as electives or to fulfill a minor requirement in their own department.

12. (2.12) Courses are offered regularly to ensure that students can make timely progress.

Courses are offered to allow students to graduate in a timely fashion. If courses were to be cancelled due to any reason, advisors would work with students to arrange for alternate courses which would convey similar educational opportunities. Since 2008, no required undergraduate class has been cancelled.

iii. Teaching and Learning Environment

1. (3.1) The program's instructional practices are consistent with the standards of the discipline.

Departmental instructional practices include traditional classroom lectures, with homework, quizzes, papers, and testing used to provide students with opportunities to learn course material. Some faculty members provide students with notes to supplement the course textbook and student-taken notes. On-line instructional websites (provided via Blackboard) are utilized to post course notes, assignments, syllabi, and other course material. Textbooks are evaluated annually to make sure they are relevant and current.

2. (3.2)As appropriate to the discipline, the program provides students with the opportunity for interaction with one another, faculty, and professionals in the field.

In addition to the opportunities cited in the answers to I.a.ii.9 and 10, the department sponsors an undergraduate "Ag Business Club". The club meets regularly during the semester, with invited speakers present at some of the club meetings. The NAMA club also is an important part of the department's support of undergraduate students. Alumni guest lectures also allow students interaction with professionals.

3. (3.3)Effective advising is provided by well-informed faculty and/or professional staff.

With the passing of one of our 100% teaching faculty in September, 2013, we have asked more of our named undergraduate student faculty advisors. Two full and one Associate professor provide advising to undergraduate students. Support is also provided by administrative assistants who work with the university software system to ensure students' coursework records are accurate. Another faculty position will be advertised this fall/winter to fill the position recently vacated. The position description will include an expectation for student advising.

4. (3.4)Library holdings are current and adequate to meet students' needs. (Appendix III)
5. (3.5)The program seeks to include the perspectives and experiences of underrepresented groups through curricular and extracurricular activities.

Including underrepresented groups in curricular activities is more readily apparent in the range of courses taught (see Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I). Courses include perspectives from the farm and non-farm economies, including policy, production, and environmental subjects. They also include domestic and international perspectives. From an extra-curricular perspective, the department sponsors two social events annually where faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students attend.

6. Students have the opportunity to regularly evaluate faculty relative to the quality of their teaching effectiveness.

All courses and instructors are evaluated each semester using a university on-line system. Both faculty and the department head receive the aggregate evaluations. The department head also visits classes near the end of the semester; with the instructor not present, to conduct a separate evaluation of the course and instructor. Senior exit interviews are also conducted with graduating seniors, where graduates can evaluate instructors, courses, and the overall program of instruction.

iv. Faculty

1. (4.1)The faculty is adequate in number to meet the needs of the program with efficient teaching loads. (Table 4, Appendix I)
2. (4.2)As appropriate to the demographics of the discipline, faculty members are diverse with respect to gender, ethnicity, and academic background. (Tables 5 and 6, Appendix I)

3. (4.3) Faculty are appropriately prepared for the level of the program, at least meeting SACS requirements for faculty preparation.

All of our faculty members were certified via SACS guidelines in 2013. As of December, 2013, of our 18 faculty members, 17 have PhDs. One instructor holding an M.S. degree was hired in 2013.

4. (4.4) Faculty are engaged in scholarly, creative, professional association, and service activities that enhance instructional expertise in their areas of specialty. (Table 7, Appendix I)

In addition to the information in Table 7, faculty members are engaged in professional service both inside and outside the university. For example, in the past five years, faculty members have served as journal article reviewers for American Agricultural Economics Association; Journal of Agriculture and Resource Economics; Land Economics; Western Agricultural Economics Association; Southern Agricultural Economics Association; Energy Economics, and many more.

5. (4.5) Adjunct faculty meet the high standards set by the program and expected SACS qualifications and credentials.

The department has three active adjunct faculty currently. All three have terminal degrees (Agricultural Economics; Energy and Environmental Economics; and Business Administration). As such they would qualify via SACS credentials. Their support has been mostly in bio-energy. Most recently, a jointly (Departmental Faculty and Adjunct) developed grant proposal was submitted by the department.

6. (4.6) The unit uses a faculty evaluation system to improve teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service.

Annual faculty evaluations include areas of teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service. Each faculty member creates an evaluation report, which gives three years of data on each topic in the evaluation document. The faculty member then meets with the department head in an evaluation session to discuss how well the faculty member has fulfilled his/her appointment and job description. Evaluation data include student course evaluations. The department head also visits courses to seek additional input into how well courses and instructors are teaching material. Junior faculty members also have peer teaching evaluations at least twice in their first six years on the job. Junior faculty members are also assigned a mentor to assist them. Faculty members are given opportunities to serve on departmental committees and many serve on college and institute committees.

v. Support

1. (5.1) The unit regularly evaluates its equipment and facilities, encouraging necessary improvements within the context of overall college resources. (Ongoing faculty/staff upgrade program)

For Ag Economists, equipment is basically limited to computers and printers, plus the accompanying software. Historically, faculty members with teaching appointments qualified for computer upgrades every 4 years. This program allowed the department to efficiently utilize other resources to upgrade computers for all faculty members. The same program has also been available for staff. The program has been suspended for 2013/14, and it is not known if it will be reinstated for 2014/15. If the program is not reinstated, it will put more strain on departmental operating and F&A funds. The department has a staff member who is an excellent resource for IT support. He continually maintains equipment and software.

2. (5.2)The program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program. (Tables 10a – 10c, Appendix I)
3. (5.3)The program has a history of enrollment and graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost-effectiveness. (Table 8, Appendix I)

b. Natural Resource and Environmental Economics

Much of the information cited in this section will come from the same tables in Appendix I and contain the same text as the previous section, as both undergraduate degrees utilize the same resources. However, some sections, such as learning outcomes and curriculum are specific to the NREE major and will be contained in Appendix II.

- i. Program Outcomes (Numbers in parentheses indicate THEC reference.)
 1. (1.1)Intended program and learning outcomes are clearly identified. (Table 1, Appendix II)
 2. (1.2)The program uses appropriate indicators to evaluate appropriate and sufficient achievement of program outcomes. (Table 1, Appendix II)
 3. (1.3)The unit makes use of information from its evaluation of program outcome attainment; student, alumni, and employer surveys; and university research to strengthen the program's effectiveness.

In addition to the information gained from the process outlined in Table 1, the department uses student surveys derived from exit interviews and classroom discussions which feedback into both individual faculty and departmental evaluations. Alumni interaction is more informal, but is utilized more so with alumni guest lecturing in classes. Feedback comes from alumni in response to the departmental newsletter. University research helps strengthen the program via professional development. Departmental staff takes advantage of these opportunities. Faculty members also benefit from teaching workshops available at the university and college levels.

- ii. Curriculum
 1. (2.1)The curriculum is appropriate to the level and purpose of the program. (Table 2, Appendix II; Table 3, Appendix I)
 2. (2.2)The curriculum content and organization is reviewed regularly.

Departmental curriculum is reviewed continuously, based on feedback from students and faculty. A departmental undergraduate committee reviews and makes suggestions to the department head and faculty regularly based on the feedback. There is also a curriculum review annually at the college level.

3. (2.3)Program requirements include a strong general education component. (Table 2, Appendix II)
4. (2.4)The curriculum includes a required core of appropriate courses in the discipline. (Table 2, Appendix II; Table 3, Appendix I)
5. (2.5)An appropriate balance is maintained between courses inside the major and outside the major. (Table 2, Appendix II; Table 3, Appendix I)
6. (2.6)Curricular content reflects current standards, practices, and issues in the discipline. (Table 2, Appendix II; Table 3, Appendix I)
7. (2.7)The curriculum encourages the development of critical thinking. (Table 2, Appendix II; Table 3, Appendix I)
8. (2.8)The curriculum exposes students to appropriate research strategies from the program area and students have the opportunity to participate in research. (Table 2, Appendix II; Table 3, Appendix I)

With two exceptions, departmental courses are taught by faculty members who have active research programs. One instructor has a 100% teaching appointment. However, his experience

in the biofuel and production area is very useful in the courses he teaches. Another faculty member has a departmental teaching appointment and also serves as the Undergraduate Coordinator for the Baker Center for Public Policy. Undergraduate students also have the opportunity to apply for the CASNR Honors program. In this program, students select and conduct a research program, with the guidance of faculty mentors. The project results in an Honors Thesis. Currently, there are two students from the department who are in the CASNR Honors program.

9. 9(2.9) Students have opportunities to apply what they have learned to situations outside the classroom.

The department's internship program has grown since 2008 from 4 undergraduates serving internships to 11 undergraduates in the summer of 2013. Thirty-nine students have served internships over the past 5 years. Companies where students have interned include: Farm Credit Service; Monsanto; Pilgrim's Pride; Tractor Supply; Case-IH; USDA-NASS; Tyson Foods; Pfizer; and many others. While most of these internships involve Tennessee Companies, students have also served internships in Kentucky, Mississippi, Washington D.C. and Hawaii. The students receive college credit for the internships and must complete the course by written and oral presentations. In exit interviews, graduating seniors report that these internships make all the difference in getting the jobs they desire.

10. (2.10) Students are exposed to professional and career opportunities appropriate to the field.

Both college and university resources are available to students. Full time personnel are available for career counseling and there are two annual jobs' fairs – one at the university and one at the institute level, where students can meet with employers. Alumni guest lecture in undergraduate classes during the fall semester. The departmental NAMA team attends two out-of-state venues annually where they gain experience and meet with agricultural industry professionals. Most recently, the department's Farm Credit Scholars' program was begun in 2012. Each year, 5 additional undergraduate scholars are added. The scholars receive scholarships via the Farm Credit System, and then have several in-state and out-of state educational trips. The first class of 2012 toured an in-state agribusiness and later toured Washington D.C. with a Faculty member and Farm Credit representative. The scholars also attend a state-level Ag Leadership Forum, where they are featured and interact with agricultural business leaders from the private, public, and political organizations.

11. (2.11) The program uses appropriate indicators to evaluate appropriate and sufficient achievement in service courses.

Institute department heads meet regularly to discuss inter-departmental issues. Annual curriculum meetings are held at the college level to discuss courses among all departments. Departmental service courses include 201, 212, 315, 342, 350, and 412 (see Table 2, Appendix I). These courses include a majority of non-departmental majors who take the courses as electives or to fulfill a minor requirement in their own department.

12. (2.12) Courses are offered regularly to ensure that students can make timely progress.

Courses are offered to allow students to graduate in a timely fashion. If courses were to be cancelled due to any reason, advisors would work with students to arrange for alternate courses which would convey similar educational opportunities. Since 2008, no required undergraduate class has been cancelled.

iii. Teaching and Learning Environment

1. (3.1)The program's instructional practices are consistent with the standards of the discipline.

Departmental instructional practices include traditional classroom lectures, with homework, quizzes, papers, and testing used to provide students with opportunities to learn course material. Some faculty members provide students with notes to supplement the course textbook and student-taken notes. On-line instructional websites (provided via Blackboard) are utilized to post course notes, assignments, syllabi, and other course material. Textbooks are evaluated annually to make sure they are relevant and current.

2. (3.2)As appropriate to the discipline, the program provides students with the opportunity for interaction with one another, faculty, and professionals in the field.

In addition to the opportunities cited in the answers to I.a.ii.9 and 10, the department sponsors an undergraduate "Ag Business Club". The club meets regularly during the semester, with invited speakers present at some of the club meetings. The NAMA club also is an important part of the department's support of undergraduate students. Alumni guest lectures also allow students interaction with professionals.

3. (3.3)Effective advising is provided by well-informed faculty and/or professional staff.

With the passing of one of our 100% teaching faculty in September, 2013, we have asked more of our named undergraduate student faculty advisors. Two full and one Associate professor provide advising to undergraduate students. Support is also provided by administrative assistants who work with the university software system to ensure students' coursework records are accurate. Another faculty position will be advertised this fall/winter to fill the position recently vacated. The position description will include an expectation for student advising.

4. (3.4)Library holdings are current and adequate to meet students' needs. (Appendix III)
5. (3.5)The program seeks to include the perspectives and experiences of underrepresented groups through curricular and extracurricular activities.

Including underrepresented groups in curricular activities is more readily apparent in the range of courses taught (see Tables 2 and 3, Appendix I). Courses include perspectives from the farm and non-farm economies, including policy, production, and environmental subjects. They also include domestic and international perspectives. From an extra-curricular perspective, the department sponsors two social events annually where faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students attend.

6. Students have the opportunity to regularly evaluate faculty relative to the quality of their teaching effectiveness.

All courses and instructors are evaluated each semester using a university on-line system. Both faculty and the department head receive the aggregate evaluations. The department head also visits classes near the end of the semester; with the instructor not present, to conduct a separate evaluation of the course and instructor. Senior exit interviews are also conducted with graduating seniors, where graduates can evaluate instructors, courses, and the overall program of instruction.

iv. Faculty

1. (4.1)The faculty is adequate in number to meet the needs of the program with efficient teaching loads. (Table 4, Appendix I)

2. (4.2)A As appropriate to the demographics of the discipline, faculty members are diverse with respect to gender, ethnicity, and academic background. (Tables 5 and 6, Appendix I)
3. (4.3)Faculty are appropriately prepared for the level of the program, at least meeting SACS requirements for faculty preparation.

All of our faculty members were certified via SACS guidelines in 2013. As of December, 2013, of our 18 faculty members, 17 have PhDs. One instructor holding an M.S. degree was hired in 2013.

4. (4.4)Faculty are engaged in scholarly, creative, professional association, and service activities that enhance instructional expertise in their areas of specialty. (Table 7, Appendix I)

In addition to the information in Table 7, faculty members are engaged in professional service both inside and outside the university. For example, in the past five years, faculty members have served as journal article reviewers for American Agricultural Economics Association; Journal of Agriculture and Resource Economics; Land Economics; Western Agricultural Economics Association; Southern Agricultural Economics Association; Energy Economics, and many more.

5. (4.5)Adjunct faculty meet the high standards set by the program and expected SACS qualifications and credentials.

The department has three active adjunct faculty currently. All three have terminal degrees (Agricultural Economics; Energy and Environmental Economics; and Business Administration). As such they would qualify via SACS credentials. Their support has been mostly in bio-energy. Most recently, a jointly (Departmental Faculty and Adjunct) developed grant proposal was submitted by the department.

6. (4.6)The unit uses a faculty evaluation system to improve teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service.

Annual faculty evaluations include areas of teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service. Each faculty member creates an evaluation report, which gives three years of data on each topic in the evaluation document. The faculty member then meets with the department head in an evaluation session to discuss how well the faculty member has fulfilled his/her appointment and job description. Evaluation data include student course evaluations. The department head also visits courses to seek additional input into how well courses and instructors are teaching material. Junior faculty members also have peer teaching evaluations at least twice in their first six years on the job. Junior faculty members are also assigned a mentor to assist them. Faculty members are given opportunities to serve on departmental committees and many serve on college and institute committees.

v. Support

1. (5.1)The unit regularly evaluates its equipment and facilities, encouraging necessary improvements within the context of overall college resources.(Ongoing faculty/staff upgrade program)

For Ag Economists, equipment is basically limited to computers and printers, plus the accompanying software. Historically, faculty members with teaching appointments qualified for computer upgrades every 4 years. This program allowed the department to efficiently utilize other resources to upgrade computers for all faculty members. The same program has also been available for staff. The program has been suspended for 2013/14, and it is not known if it will be reinstated for 2014/15. If the program is not reinstated, it will put more strain on

departmental operating and F&A funds. The department has a staff member who is an excellent resource for IT support. He continually maintains equipment and software.

2. (5.2)The program's operating budget is consistent with the needs of the program. (Tables 10a – 10c, Appendix I)
- (5.3)The program has a history of enrollment and graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost-effectiveness. (Table 8, Appendix I)

II. Graduate Programs

a. Agricultural and Resource Economics – M.S.

i. Student Experience

1. There is a critical mass of students to ensure an appropriate group of peers. (Table 9, Appendix I)
2. Prudence is exercised in the number and type of short courses accepted toward the degree.

There are no short courses offered per se, but AREC 593 (Special Topics in Agricultural Economics) is offered. It can be customized to fit the need of one or a few graduate students. Hours from AREC 593 are restricted to three hours within the 31 hours required for our MS degree. Students can take more than three hours of AREC 593 if approved on Form B by the Faculty Committee and the Department Head.

3. Programs offered entirely through distance education technologies are evaluated regularly to assure outcomes at least equivalent to on-campus programs.

There is one departmental distance educational course which graduate students take. Students evaluate the course, teacher, content, and quality each semester.

4. There are adequate enrichment opportunities, such as lecture series, to promote a scholarly environment.

There are no departmental lecture series offered currently. Graduate students are encouraged to attend departmental seminars. We also have faculty involved in the Baker Center for Public Policy. Their lecture series are made available to graduate students, as many of the lectures are relevant to our areas of study. In November, Dr. Bruce McCarl, Department Of Agricultural Economics, Texas A&M University, was a Baker Center Lecturer. He met with Graduate Students from the department in a separate session.

5. There are adequate professional development opportunities, such as encouraging membership in professional organizations, participation in conferences and workshops, and opportunities for publication.

Graduate Students are encouraged to author/co-author papers based on their research topics. If a paper authored by a graduate student is accepted to be presented at a professional meeting, funds are made available to support student travel to the meeting. Support for graduate student travel to the SAEA (Southern Agricultural Economics Association) and AAEA (American Agricultural Economics Association) professional meetings is the most typical.

ii. Graduate Faculty Quality

1. Faculty hold terminal degrees in the appropriate discipline. (Table 5, Appendix I)
2. Faculty academic credentials correspond to the concentrations in which they teach. (Tables 4 & 5, Appendix I)
3. Faculty scholarly activity is sufficient to serve as effective mentors for graduate

students. (Table 7, Appendix I)

4. Faculty have sufficient practical/professional/academic experience to serve as effective mentors for graduate students. (Tables 4 & 5, Appendix I)
5. Faculty have regular opportunities for professional development, including travel and participation in professional organizations, workshops, and other learning activities.

Faculty present papers, attend workshops and professional meetings throughout the year. International travel includes (most recently) professional development activities in Africa, South America, Europe, and China. Travel funds are available through the department, but much of the travel funds are generated via grants and contracts, or through the hosting organization.

6. Faculty teaching loads are consonant with the highly individualized nature of graduate instruction, especially the direction of theses or dissertations. (Tables 4 & 5, Appendix I)

iii. Teaching/Learning Environment

1. There are ample materials and secretarial support to encourage research and publication.

Each graduate student has UT Library access and has an individual computer at his/her work station to use at any time. While graduate students are not assigned to an administrative assistant, there is an administrative assistant who keeps graduate students informed of any reporting requirements necessary. She also apprises students of job opportunities and keeps track of graduates after they leave UT.

2. There is adequate library support. (Appendix III.)
3. There is adequate and accessible computer support.

Each graduate student is given a computer to use while she/he is a student in the department. The departmental IT person keeps computers maintained. Students are allowed to use printer and paper from departmental resources.

4. There are adequate lab facilities.

There are no lab facilities per se in the department, except for computers, which each graduate student is supplied.

5. There is adequate office space.

Each graduate student has a full sized desk, equipped with a computer.

iv. Program Evaluation

1. Follow-up data on graduating students are regularly and systematically collected.

Beginning in 2012 (entering class of 2010), the department began collecting a more complete set of graduate data, including employer (or school, if advanced degree sought); type of position; location; and starting salary. The data is updated each semester and as updates are received.

2. The curriculum is evaluated periodically.

The departmental Graduate Committee evaluates and suggests changes as necessary. In 2013, several changes to the testing procedures were brought forward to the faculty, discussed, and voted upon.

3. Evaluation of placement of graduates is regular and systematic.

In addition to the student data collected , each semester the department head meets with graduating M.S. students. The discussion centers on the students' experiences while at UT and what their future holds. Notes are recorded and any necessary follow up is made with faculty.

4. Completion rates are at an acceptable level.

With a rigorous student selection process which includes input from the graduate school, the departmental graduate committee, and the department head, student success is high. Occasionally students leave the program. Over the past 5 years, two M.S. students were dismissed (taken off assistantship). One M.S. student left the program due to personal reasons. One non-assistantship student left the program, and another student left after one semester to accept a job offer. One additional student left without a degree completion, but is still in hopes of completing the degree. With 53 M.S. degrees conferred over the past five years, completion rates are at an acceptable level.

While the department does not have its own Ph.D. program, we accept and fund Ph.D. students through the Natural Resources Ph.D. program in the department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries. Students' major professors and graduate committees originate from the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics. Typically, there are not many students in the program. In the fall of 2013, four Ph.D. students were admitted into the program, making it the biggest class in the past 5 years. Two Ph.D. students began the program in 2012, but both failed the comprehensive first-year exam, and are no longer in the program. Due to the lack of comparative success data in the program, it is not clear if the two students' lack of success is indicative of a need for change, or if it was just coincidental. The graduate program director, along with the department head and graduate committee have discussed the entrance screening procedure for Ph.D. students and continue to monitor it to make sure standards are sufficient.