

SUMMARY

Experiential Educational Offering in Colleges of Agriculture

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Introduction

Colleges of Agriculture, long comfortable in their role of providing higher education opportunities for sons and daughters of rural America, are finding their clientele to be rapidly changing. A continual decline in the number of Americans living on farms and in rural communities, coupled with an increased awareness by urban dwellers of the value of education linked directly to a vocation, has resulted in growing numbers of "non-traditional" Agriculture students enrolling in Colleges of Agriculture.

Accompanying this shift in student clientele has been an increased emphasis on practical experience activities. The "non-traditional" student, with little or no previous involvement with Agriculture, needs practical experience. Employers expect students to have more career-related experience prior to full-time employment, and students continue to request as much relevancy as possible in their educational programs. Consequently, many Colleges of Agriculture have introduced a variety of experiential education activities (internship, practicum, cooperative education) which occur outside the normal classroom and which provide work experience related to the student's educational program.

The Survey and Results

In an attempt to assess the extent and nature of such programs, a survey instrument was prepared and distributed to the Director of Resident Instruction at each of the institutions listed in the 1979 Directory of Deans and Directors of Resident Instruction in Schools and Colleges of Agriculture, Agriculture and Life Sciences, or Agriculture and Natural Resources. As a result of the mailing and subsequent telephone follow-up, a completed instrument was returned from 63 of the 72 institutions surveyed. Responses to selected questions from 60 of the institutions appear in the accompanying table 1. Three of the respondents asked that their responses not be identified specifically by institution.

The primary objective of the survey was to identify the location and characteristic of experiential education programs currently in operation. A review of related literature conducted prior to the survey had indicated such programs would likely appear under a variety of names and thus, the introductory question was, "Does your College offer supervised practical experience opportunities for your students?" Of the 63 respondents, only

11 answered the question "No." Even with this carefully worded statement, there may still have been some among the eleven who are involved with such a program but who could not give an affirmative response. Clarifying his "No" response, one respondent stated that "work experience is generally not supervised but neither are students abandoned to seek out work experience opportunities on their own. The College Placement Office and faculty in the departments regularly solicit industry and government for practical opportunities which provide the best possible experience for pay."

Among the 52 institutions with identified programs the literature review correctly predicted the variations in the names of the experiential programs. Twenty of the programs were called "internship," nine were called "co-operative education," the second most popular title. Other characteristics of these latter nine programs indicated that all do not fit a common definition of Co-operative Education which generally involves alternating terms of employment and school. Five institutions called their experiential programs "field experience" and four offered a "practicum." Three of the institutions surveyed identified a specific title for their program, thus giving them a measure of uniqueness. The program names at the remaining eleven institutions combine those names commonly cited. Regular course offerings under an independent study or special problems heading are utilized at several of the institutions to describe the experiential opportunity.

Forty-nine of the respondents answered the question "For whom is it (experiential education) available?" Twenty of these respondents indicated experiential education is available to all students with no curricular or class level restrictions. An equal number indicated it is available to all majors, but only to those at specified class levels, e.g., sophomore and junior. Five institutions indicated participation is available to all students enrolled in certain curricula, while the remaining five said restrictions were placed on both level and curricula.

Considerable variation also exists among the institutions as to the percentage of students participating in the programs. The 80 percent noted at Alcorn State University, 60 percent at the University of Puerto Rico, 50 percent at the University of Hawaii, and 50 percent at the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore represent the highest percentages. Thirty-three of the 47 institutions reported participation at 10 percent or less. Although the total number of participants was not specifically requested, a comparison of total enrollment figures with participant percentage figures indicates that largest num-

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bers are likely to be found at the University of California at Davis (18 percent of 4,600 enrollment), Michigan State University (33 percent of eligible juniors and seniors — total enrollment of 3,600) and the University of Wisconsin (30 percent of eligible sophomores, juniors, and seniors — total enrollment of 2,450).

In response to the question "Is participation a graduation requirement?," 40 of the 51 reporting institutions gave a negative response. Among the remaining eleven institutions, four indicated the graduation requirement existed in only one of their curricula, four reported the requirement in two curricula and the remaining three cited it as a requirement in "some" of the curricula but with no indication that this represented a large percentage of the total.

Academic Credit Practices

All but three of the 52 institutions indicated that some credit was awarded for the experience. Variation among institutions again was common with 3-5 credits appearing to be typical. Although the question was not specifically asked, some respondents volunteered that even though credit was awarded, it would not count toward the total hour requirement for graduation. Grading practices employed also showed considerable variation. Twenty of 47 institutions award letter grades for the experience, 17 provide only a Pass-Fail evaluation, and the remaining 10 a combination of the two. (Although no data were collected on requirements for successful completion of such an experience, materials received from several institutions showed students establishing objectives for the experience jointly with the faculty advisor and the cooperator and then submitting periodic reports on the experience and the completion of the objectives.) In response to the question "Is the student charged a fee for participation?," 37 institutions reported "Yes," and 15 stated "No." Since 49 respondents indicated academic credit was being given, it appears that many persons answering "No" to the fee question were considering the question to mean "in addition to tuition."

Only four of the institutions reported that participating students received no salary for their work experience. Of the remaining 48, 23 reported "Yes," 11 indicated "Usually," and 14 indicated a variable situation depending on the individuals involved.

Apparently most students do not enroll in regular classes while participating in a practical experience activity. In response to "Is the student also enrolled in campus classes while participating?," 22 institutional respondents reported "No," and an additional 7 noted "Seldom." Eleven gave a "Variable" response; only 12 answered with a definite "Yes."

An indication of length of the experience was sought in another question. Of the 52 responses, 23 indicated "one term" to be the usual length. An additional 13 persons reported something slightly less than one term, i.e., 6-8 weeks, 10-12 weeks. (Many of the "less than one term" experiences may be summer term experiences

where the fewer number of weeks prevented the respondent from equating it to a full term.) A "variable" response was provided by five persons, and seven others indicated "one or more" terms.

Program Supervision

Information on the supervision and organization of the program was sought in another series of questions on the survey instrument. Faculty members were reported to have the supervisory responsibility for a participating student in 41 of 48 institutions. A variety of College administrative personnel/faculty-shared arrangements existed at the seven other institutions. Respondents from slightly less than one-half of the 52 institutions reported that their College had a staff member responsible for overseeing the program. However, 13 of the 20 persons with such responsibility were shown to devote 30 percent or less of their time to coordinating the experiential education activities. Only four persons were said to devote 100 percent time to these duties.

Those institutions not currently offering experiential education programs were asked the likelihood of such a program being implemented in the near future. Responses from the 11 institutions ranged from "a concerted effort will be made" to "extremely unlikely." Most cited unlikely implementation because of cost and difficulties in getting approval in higher administrative channels. Another respondent shared feelings of reluctance to implement without adequate supervisory staff and observed that the likelihood of funding for such staff seemed remote. Yet another respondent, expressing belief in the value of the practical experience, said their institution was strongly encouraging the participation of students but had no plans to formalize a program.

Summary

Most land-grant institutions and other major colleges and universities having Agriculture programs are likely to make available some form of experiential education to their students. The program may be listed under a variety of titles, with "internships" and "co-operative education" being most common. Whereas such offerings are generally available to all students within the college, participants are usually sophomores and juniors, with somewhat fewer than 10 percent of the students actually participating at most schools. This percentage is held down in part by the fact that required participation occurs only in a few curricula in a small number of schools. The "typical" experience generally lasts one term, generates academic credit for the student, and, for this credit, regular tuition is assessed. Whether or not a salary is paid seems not to follow any definite trend but is negotiated in each situation. Supervision for the project is usually jointly shared by a faculty member and a person at the worksite. If the College Office has a staff member responsible for coordinating experiential education opportunities, chances are that coordinating will not be the person's full-time role.

TABLE 1. SURVEY OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES IN U.S. COLLEGES OF AGRICULTURE¹

Institution	Total Agr. Enrollment	Type of Exper. Educ.	Available to Whom	% of Students Partic.	Partic. Required	Credit Given (S=Sem) (Q=Qtr)	Grading Scale	Salary	Other Campus Enrollment	Length of Exper.	Tuition	Who Supervises?	College Staff Member	% Time Staff Member
ALABAMA, Auburn Univ.	1277	None						Variable	Seldom	10 weeks	Yes	Faculty	Yes	20%
ALABAMA, A & M Univ.	530	Internship	Jr., Sr.	25%	Two curr.	3-6 (S)	Letter	Variable	Yes	1-2 terms	No	Faculty	Yes	
ALASKA, Univ. of	55	Internship	Jr., Sr.	5%	No	3-5 (S)	P/F	Variable	Yes			Faculty	Yes	
ARIZONA, Univ. of	1500	Internship	Jr., Sr.	4%	No	2-8 (S)	Letter	Usually	Seldom	10 weeks	Yes	College Office	Yes	20%
ARIZONA, State Univ.	500	Agric. Practice	All	10%	No	Max. of 6 (S)	Letter	No	Yes	1-2 terms	No	Faculty	No	
ARKANSAS, Univ. of (Fayetteville)	1260	Internship	Jr. Selected Curr.	5%	No	3-6 (S)	Letter	Yes	Yes	6-8 weeks	No	Faculty	No	
ARKANSAS, Univ. of (Pine Bluff)	36	None												
CALIFORNIA, Univ. of (Davis)	4624	Internship	All Students	18%	No	Max. of 12 (S)	P/F	Variable	Variable	1 term	Yes	Faculty	Yes	100%
CALIFORNIA, Univ. of (Riverside)	75	None												
COLORADO, State Univ.	1337	Internship	Jr., Sr. Selected Curr.	10%	No	Max. of 12 (S)	P/F	Usually	No	8-10 weeks	Yes	Faculty	Yes	10%
CONNECTICUT, Univ. of	1198	Internship	All Students	Varies by	No	3-15 (S)	Letter	Variable	Variable	4-14 weeks	Yes	Faculty	No	
DELAWARE, Univ. of	897	None												
DELAWARE, State College	75	None												
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, Univ. of	180	Cooperative Educ.	—	15%	No	6 (S)	Letter	Yes	No	1-2 terms	No	—	No	
FLORIDA, Univ. of	1100	Practical Work Exper.	All Students	10%	No	Max. of 4 (Q)	P/F	Yes	No	3-4 Mo.	Yes	Faculty	No	
GEORGIA, Univ. of	1600	Internship	All Students	10%	No	Max. of 15 (Q)	Letter	Usually	Seldom	3-6 Months	Yes	Faculty	No	
GEORGIA, Fort Valley State College	250	Cooperative Trainer Internship	All Students	30%	No	Variable	P/F	Yes	No	3-6 months	No	Faculty	Yes	20%
HAWAII, Univ. of	450	Internship	All Students	50%	One Curr.	2-9 (S)	Letter	No	Yes	1-3 terms	Yes	College Office	Yes	20%
IDAHO, Univ. of	490	Internship	Jr., Sr.	5-10%	No	Max. of 6 (S)	P/F	Usually	No	1 term	Yes	College Office	Yes	70%
ILLINOIS, Southern Ill. Univ.	1149	Internship Practicum	All	5-10%	No	3-5 (S)	P/F	Usually	Variable	1 term	Yes	Faculty	Faculty	No
ILLINOIS, Univ. of	2450	Internship Spec. Problems	Jr., Sr.	< 5%	No	Max. of 3 (S)	P/F	Yes	No	8-10 Weeks	Yes	—	No	
INDIANA, Purdue Univ.	3502	Cooperative Educ.	Soph., Selected Curr.	2%	No	None	—	Yes	Seldom	4 terms	Yes	Faculty	Yes	30%

IOWA, State Univ.	3732	None															
KANSAS, State Univ.	2209	Internship	Jr., Sr.	8%	Two Curr.	Max. of 6 (S)	Variable	Yes	No	3 months	No	Faculty	Yes	3-4%			
KENTUCKY, Univ. of	1225	Experiential Educ.	Jr., Sr.	10%	No	Max. of 18 (S)	P/F	Variable	Variable	1 term	Yes	Faculty	No				
LOUISIANA, State Univ.	—	Internship; Apprenticeship	Jr., Sr.	—	—	Variable	Variable	Variable	Usually	Variable	Yes	Faculty	No				
MAINE, Univ. of	2350	Cooperative Field Exper.	Soph.	2%	One curr.	Max. of 16 (S)	P/F	Yes	Seldom	6-10 weeks	Yes	Faculty	No				
MARYLAND, Univ. of (College Park)	1523	Internship	Selected Curr.	1%	No	3(S)	Letter	Yes	Yes	1 term	No	Faculty	No				
MARYLAND, Univ. of (Eastern Shore)	40	Workshop	All Students	50%	No	None	—	Yes	Yes	Variable		Faculty	No				
MICHIGAN, State Univ.	3638	13th term	Jr., Sr.	33%	No	Max. of 10 (Q)	P/F	Usually	No	10 weeks	Yes	Dept. Coordinator	Yes	20%			
MINNESOTA, Univ. of	1800	Prof. Exper. Program	Jr., Sr.	20%	No	Max. of 6 (Q)	Variable	Yes	Variable	3 months	Yes	Faculty and Program Coordinator	Yes	100%			
MISSISSIPPI, Akorn St. Univ.	200	Cooperative Educ.	—	80%	No	12(S)	Letter	Yes	Yes	10 weeks	No	Faculty	Yes	30%			
MISSISSIPPI, State Univ.	1553	Cooperative Educ.	All Students	3-4%	No	None	—	Yes	No	1 term	No	—	No				
MISSOURI, Univ. of	2550	Internship	Jr., Sr.	<2%	No	3-8 (S)	Variable	Yes	Variable	3-8 months	No	Faculty	No				
MISSOURI, Lincoln Univ.	85	Cooperative Educ.	Jr., Sr.	10-15%	No	Max. of 9 (S)	Letter	Yes	No	10-18 weeks	Yes	Faculty	Yes	10%			
MONTANA, State Univ.		Internship	All Students	2%	No	3-12 (Q)	P/F	Usually	No	1 term	Yes	Faculty	Yes	25%			
NEBRASKA, Univ. of	1811	Ind. Study	All Students	<10%	One Curr.	Variable	Variable	Yes	Variable	Variable	Yes	Faculty	No				
NEVADA, Univ. of	550	Internship	All Students	1-2%	No	Max. of 3 (S)	P/F	Variable	No	Variable	No	Faculty	No				
NEW JERSEY, Rutgers Univ.	2885	Cooperative Educ.	Soph, Jr.	4-5%	No	Max. of 15 (S)	P/F	Yes	No	3 terms	No	Faculty	Yes	100%			
NEW MEXICO, State Univ.	1268	None															
NEW YORK, Cornell Univ.	2950	Field Study	All Students	1%	No	Variable	Letter	No	Yes	1 term	No	Faculty	Yes	Minimal			
NORTH CAROLINA, State Univ.	2519	External Learning	Jr.	1-2%	No	Max. of 6 (S)	P/F	Yes	Variable	1 term	Yes	Faculty	Yes				
NORTH DAKOTA, State Univ.	1200	Field Experience	All Students	5%	No	Max. of 15 (Q)	P/F	Variable	Yes	1 term	Yes	Faculty	No				
OHIO, State Univ.	4700	None															
OKLAHOMA, State Univ.	2108	Internship	Soph, Jr., Sr.	<10%	No	Max. of 6 (S)	Letter	Usually	Seldom	1 term	Yes	Faculty	Yes	10%			
OREGON, State Univ.	1189	Internship	Selected Curr.	10%	Some Curr.	Max. of 6 (Q)	Letter	Variable	No	10 weeks	Yes	Faculty	No				
PENNSYLVANIA, State Univ.	3550	Internship	Jr., Sr.	3%	No	Max. of 10 (S)	Letter	Variable	No	10 weeks	Yes	Faculty	Yes	20%			
PUERTO RICO, Univ. of	897	Summer, Practicum	Jr. Selected Curr.	60%	Some Curr.	3(S)	Letter	Usually	No	6 weeks	Yes	Faculty	Yes				
RHODE ISLAND, Univ. of	1250	None															
SOUTH DAKOTA, State Univ.	1335	Field Exper.	All Students	1%	No	Max. of 12 (S)	Variable	Variable	Variable	2-3 months	Yes	Faculty	No				
TENNESSEE, Univ. of	1550	Independent Study; Special Problems	Jr., Sr.	20%	No	Max. of 9 (Q)	Variable	Usually	Seldom	1 term	Yes	Faculty	No				
								Yes	No	1 term	Yes	Faculty	Yes	50%			
TEXAS, A&M	4148	Cooperative Educ.	All Students	<1%	No	9(Q)	Letter	Variable	No	1-2 terms	Yes	Faculty	No				
UTAH, State Univ.	524	Various Names	Selected Curr.	15%	Some Curr.	Variable	Variable	Yes	No	2 terms	Yes	—	Yes	50%			
VERMONT, Univ. of	700	Cooperative Educ.	All Students	<1%	No	Max. of 15 (S)	Variable	Yes	Variable	1-2 terms	Yes	Faculty	Yes				
VIRGINIA, Polytechnic Univ.	2347	Cooperative Educ. Field Studies	Selected Curr.	4%	No	Max. of 15 (Q)	Variable										
VIRGINIA, State Univ.	70	Cooperative Educ.	All Students	2%	No	Max. of 6 (S)	Letter	Yes	No	2 terms	Yes	Cooperative Education Supervisor	No				
WASHINGTON, State Univ.	1911	Internship Practicum	All Students	—	One Curr.	Max. of 4 (S)	P/F	Yes	No	2-3 Months	Yes	Faculty	No				
WEST VIRGINIA, Univ.	1707	Field Experience	Soph, Jr.	—	No	Max. of 12 (S)	P/F	Variable	No	1 term	Yes	Faculty	No				
WISCONSIN, Univ. of	2450	Coordinated Internship	Soph, Jr., Sr.	30%	Two Curr.	Max. of 8 (S)	Letter	Usually	Yes	Variable	Yes	Faculty	Yes	100%			
WYOMING, Univ. of	574	None															

1. Survey completed during March, 1979. Agriculture Enrollment referenced is for Fall 1978.