

Educational Enrichment Programs For Colleges of Agriculture

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Abstract

Philosophy, justification, objectives, responsibilities, and grading procedures are covered in this unique guide established under the auspices of the Southern Regional Education Board, Atlanta.

Examination of the profiles of students currently enrolled in colleges of agriculture indicates that about two-thirds of the students are from urban backgrounds, and over one-fourth are women. Of those students with farm backgrounds, increasing numbers are coming from specialized farms and therefore lack the diversity of experience of students of former years. Over 20 percent of agricultural graduates continue their education in graduate school; and upon completion of their terminal degree, large numbers are being employed in agricultural extension, research, and teaching. Therefore, many new faculty members are more limited in agricultural experiences than their predecessors. Such a changing profile necessitates the continuous review and revision of educational programs, including the addition of enrichment programs both on and off campus to broaden the base of practical experience for both students and faculty.

Such efforts require the development of institutional or regional offerings to involve faculty and students in effective enrichment programs including experiential learning programs and travel courses. Offerings should be for students and faculty, with or without college credit, and should be designed so that principles in the agricultural sciences can be effectively applied to the world of work.

Recognizing the need for guidance in developing programs for enrichment education, the Council of Higher Education in Agricultural Sciences of the Southern Regional Education Board recommended that a workshop be conducted in the region to formulate guidelines for such programs. A workshop involving 32 deans and directors of resident instruction and faculty representatives of colleges of agriculture in the region was conducted in Atlanta, Georgia, May 28-30, 1975. This workshop, partially supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, was planned to develop guidelines for the development of educational enrichment programs for students and faculty of colleges of agriculture. Since the majority of faculty members are not in degree programs, participants agreed that offerings for faculty would be non-credit. The offerings could be available as needed by the colleges

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of agriculture with minor modification of guidelines for credit courses. The following provides guidelines for credit offerings of experiential learning and travel courses.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Philosophy

Curricular offerings in experiential education are encouraged to supplement existing programs in colleges of agriculture in the Southern region to more effectively encompass the function of the complex interrelationships of agriculture in the economic, political, and social life of the community, state, and nation. Such offerings provide on-the-job learning experiences not earlier obtained by students and not received in usual classroom and laboratory courses. Learning is the primary objective of experiential education. It provides an opportunity to put principles and theory into operation in the development of technical skills, improvement of communication skills, participation in the interactions involved in the decision-making process, association with professionals in the major discipline, exploration and preparation for career opportunities, service to a community or agency, living and working as a professional, enhancement of employability, and evaluation of personal strengths and weaknesses.

Although learning is the primary purpose of experiential education, the varied backgrounds of agriculture students, the diversity of careers in agriculture, and the financial consideration involved in the experiential programs developed to service varied academic areas of the colleges of agriculture may require diverse offerings. Every program should be designed as an integral part of the educational experience of the individual student.

Justification

Agriculture is the foundation upon which any nation's successful economic, political, or social structure is based. Its importance in local, state, national, and world affairs is becoming more apparent each year. Professional agriculturists need to become aware of the contribution their specialty is making to the welfare of mankind.

The diversity of students enrolling in agriculture is increasing. Urban students with no agricultural background are developing interest in agriculture. More rural students come from specialized crop or livestock operations and, therefore, have limited experiences and concepts of agriculture. More women with limited or no agricultural experience are electing careers in agriculture.

Entering college students are often better prepared academically than their predecessors and have a broad interest in all aspects of contemporary problems and human welfare, but most have a limited concept of the impact agriculture exerts on their daily lives.

College courses provide much of the theory and most of the principles basic to understanding and acquisition of technical agricultural skills, but they do not equip students with practical application and working interrelationships. Experiential learning is a mechanism for providing students with opportunities for relating their college experience to the world of work in practical on-the-job situations.

Objectives

The objectives of such a program are to develop the student's ability to:

Apply principles and theories of the major disciplines to practical applications in a job-related work experience;

Make valid personal judgments in the decision-making process used on the job;

Further develop and apply technical skills acquired in the discipline;

Apply effective communicative skills in a professional speciality;

Perform job proficiencies in a manner that earns satisfactory or better rating from the employer;

Analyze individual strengths and weaknesses in terms of the specific work experience;

Match individual characteristics with professional job requirements when seeking career employment following graduation.

Responsibilities of College of Agriculture

The college of agriculture is responsible for leadership and coordination of the program. The program should be administered by the dean or director of resident instruction or a designated individual responsible to him. As the number of experiential education programs increase, it may be necessary to establish an administrative unit within the university to coordinate the programs. The college should obtain university approval for a specific identifiable course listing for experiential education. Such a listing should be uniformly applicable to all majors in the college. The listing could carry a sequential number such as Argon. 301, Argon. 302, Argon. 303. (three courses for the quarter system, two courses for the semester system) to fit the university numbering system of quarter or semester credits. Credits allowed toward a degree should not exceed 10 semester hours or 15 quarter hours, with the total being variably divided between the sequential course listings and not over 5 credits allowed for one course. Students should be permitted to enroll in one, two, or three of the sequential experiential learning courses as deemed appropriate for the individual student. A sound administrative guideline for academic credit allowance is 1 credit hour for each 8

hours of productive full-time work performed each week through either a quarter or semester. A student could earn 5 credits a 40-hour work week throughout a quarter or semester.

The course description should clearly and concisely identify the work responsibilities and the range of credits to be earned. The student's transcript should carry the same title with a concise statement of experiential learnings acquired and credits and grade earned. Such courses should be transferrable between universities, maintaining comparable standards with other academic credit.

The college should recognize experiential education as an integral part of the work load of its faculty. Faculty work load should be assigned on the basis of four student contact hours for each credit hour a student enrolls in experiential education.

Responsibilities of Department

The department or subject matter area is administratively responsible for control of the program. Experiential learning programs originate with the student and his advisor and are planned to supplement students' college experiences. Such offerings are approved by the department and transmitted through authorized academic channels to the college and university. Scheduling and assigning student advisors is a department or subject matter area responsibility. Financial support for conducting a meaningful educational experience with adequate supervision by department faculty should be included in the department's teaching budget.

Responsibilities of Faculty

Advising students, planning learning to be obtained, supervising experiential education, preparing evaluative criteria, and evaluating students are major faculty responsibilities. These responsibilities include the following:

1. Selecting students who will participate in the program.
2. Assisting the student in preparing a written program or contract of learning to be obtained. It should include:
 - a. Learning objectives cooperatively determined by student advisor and host agency.
 - b. Each party's responsibilities
 - 1) student
 - 2) advisor
 - 3) host agency
 - c. Description of learning experiences
 - d. Supervision to be provided by advisor and host agency
 - e. Reports and term papers required
 - f. Evaluation procedures
3. Obtaining departmental approval of the student's program.
4. Instructing and supervising students.
5. Maintaining official university or college liaison with the host agency.
6. Awarding final grade based upon evaluation criteria.

Responsibilities of Student

Effective planning and participating as a learner are the student's major responsibilities. Included are the following:

1. Preparing a written program or contract of learning experiences to be obtained:
 - a. Learning objectives cooperatively developed by student, advisor, and host agency
 - b. Each party's responsibility
 - 1) student
 - 2) advisor
 - 3) host agency
 - c. Description of learning experiences to be obtained
 - d. Supervision to be provided by advisor and host agency
 - e. Reports and term papers required.
 - f. College credit to be awarded as determined by advisor
 - g. Evaluation procedures
2. Cooperating with the faculty advisor in selection of host agency.
3. Carrying out assignments, both academic and work, in a satisfactory manner.
4. Recognizing responsibilities to host agency, including confidentiality and integrity of host agency information.
5. Participating in the experiential learning program as a university student, subscribing to its rules and regulations, and conducting himself/herself in the highest ethical and moral manner that reflects credit upon the university and the college of agriculture.
6. Providing for health care liability coverage, etc. if not provided by the university or host agency.
7. Arranging with host agency for working hours, salary, travel reimbursement, fringe benefits, etc.
8. Arranging for housing during time away from campus.

Responsibilities of Host Agency or Firm

The major responsibilities of the host agency or firm are to provide realistic experiences and on-the-job supervision for the student. Included are the following:

1. Providing training experiences included in the student's program or contract.
2. Providing a work plan for the student.
3. Assigning a supervisor to assist the student in attaining the learning experiences and achieving an acceptable standard of proficiency.
4. Compensating the student as previously arranged in the planned program.
5. Providing for work-related expenses.
6. Accepting the legal status of the student as a regular employee.
7. Providing the faculty advisor with periodic evaluation of the student's progress in his program of experiential learning. (This should not be a grade for the student. Grading is the faculty advisor's responsibility.)

Grading

Experiential education is a valid learning experience involving academic credit; therefore, evaluation should use grading practices followed by the college of agriculture. Competency of skill developed, quality and quantity of work performed, time required, and quality of final report should be considered in grading.

Note

Experiential learning is a planned educational experience. It is not intended to award credit for past experiences or work on home farm, ranch, or in family business operation.

Compliance with equal opportunity employment regulations must be considered in developing relationships with university, student, and host agency or firm.

TRAVEL COURSES

Travel courses usually consist of those experiences planned to enhance the learner's education through observation and discussion of emerging developments; new or unusual applications; organization and operation of businesses, industries, or agencies; facilities or equipment; management procedures; natural phenomena; environmental conditions; and cultures different from those to which students have been previously exposed. Such experiences are not usually available in the immediate vicinity of the university.

Well planned programs usually require an organized movement of participants to the learning site to achieve one or more of the following purposes:

- Strengthen the foundation for increased specialization;
- See the multi-faceted agricultural disciplines function in operation of a successful program;
- Increase the breadth of the educational experiences;
- Provide a means of interaction and direct communication between professionals and participants.

Responsibilities of College of Agriculture

The college of agriculture is responsible for providing leadership and coordinating the courses. The program should be administered by the dean or director of resident instruction or, where the scope justifies, a designated individual responsible to him. Since travel courses are designed to enhance the learner's experience, they should be offered at the level that will be of greatest value to the students. The college should obtain university approval for a specific identifiable course listing for travel courses. Such a listing might be for the college as Agriculture 300 or a uniform listing for all curricula as Agricultural Sciences 300, Horticulture 300, and should fit the university system of quarter or semester credits. Credits allowed toward a degree should not exceed 6 semester hours or 9 quarter hours, with the maximum

allowance given only to international travel courses. A sound administrative guideline for academic credit allowance is one credit hour for each week of travel experience planned and conducted under the supervision of an assigned faculty member.

The course description should clearly and concisely identify the student's travel assignments and the credits to be earned. The student's transcript should carry the same title with a concise statement of travel learnings acquired and credits and grade earned. Since travel courses are recognized learning experiences involving university credit, standard grading practices followed by the college should be used. Courses should be transferable between universities in compliance with university standards for awarding academic credit.

The college of agriculture should recognize travel courses as part of the work load of its faculty. Faculty work load credit should be allowed on the basis of three student contact hours for each credit hour a student is enrolled in a travel course.

Responsibilities of Department

The department or subject matter area is administratively responsible for control of travel courses. The courses originate with the student and his advisor and are planned to enhance the student's college experiences. Such offerings are approved by the department and transmitted through authorized channels, with recommendation for approval, to the college and university. Scheduling and assigning faculty leaders is a department or subject matter area responsibility. Financial support for providing adequate faculty supervision of travel courses should be included in the department's teaching budget. Student costs are usually borne by the individual student or obtained from non-college sources. **Note.** For such sources all university legal requirements should be met and cleared with the legal authority of the university before the class leaves the campus.

Responsibilities of Faculty

Planning, supervising, and evaluating student travel experiences are major faculty responsibilities. They include the following:

1. Develop an itinerary of learning experiences and transmit it to the department for approval. It should include the following:
 - a. orientation
 - b. travel
 - c. daily activities
 - d. discussion groups
 - e. meals
 - f. lodging
 - g. student costsUpon approval transmit a copy to all personnel involved.
2. Compile a roster of participants and transmit through the department for approval. Be sure

participating students are registered for appropriate college credit.

3. List student responsibilities and evaluation criteria. Conduct orientation sessions to familiarize students with requirements prior to departure from campus.
4. Evaluate students and report grades upon completion of the program.
5. Prepare recommendations for improving future programs.

Responsibilities of Student

Cooperatively planning, participating as an effective learner, preparing required reports, and managing personal affairs are major student responsibilities. These include the following:

1. Assist the faculty representatives and student participants and host representatives (when appropriate) in planning and organizing the travel experiences.
2. Register for college credit before departure.
3. Cooperatively participate in travel experiences to maximize individual and group learnings.
4. Prepare required reports and submit to faculty representative on time.
5. Dress and act in a manner that reflects credit upon the individual and the university.
6. Obtain health care, trip, and baggage insurance when not provided by the university or obtained for the group.
7. Prepare individual budget and manage personal finances during the trip.
8. Care for personal belongings and follow time schedule promptly.

Responsibilities of Participating Agency, Firm or Institution

The primary responsibility of the participating agency, firm, or institution is to cooperate with the university in providing learning opportunities for the students. Included are the following:

1. Scheduling the tour of the agency, firm, or institution.
2. Providing assembly rooms for group meetings and discussions.
3. Providing tour guides and discussion leaders to explain operations, facilities, procedures, new developments, as appropriate.

Grading

A travel course that is well planned and conducted to achieve specific objectives is a valid learning experience worthy of academic credit and should be evaluated by the faculty who plan and conduct the tour. Grades should be awarded in accordance with university and college of agriculture grading policy. Consideration should be given to pre-planning, participation, notebook, final report, and seminar participation in awarding a student's final grade.