

CAFES History Project  
The Extended Degree Program (DRAFT October 2006)

The Extended Degree Program (EDP) was a distance education program of considerable importance to the College during the late 1970's until 2000 when the program was discontinued due to a shortage of university funds.

In 1976 the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents approved four EDPs in the state at UW-Green Bay, Superior, Platteville, and River Falls. The EDP concept was initially recommended by the Kellett commission as a component of the "Wisconsin Idea", and the premise that the boundaries of the state university system were the boundaries of the state.

The EDP at River Falls was initiated in 1978 under a three-year grant from the Kellogg Foundation. Professor and Assistant Dean Roger Swanson was the lead person in obtaining the grant and in launching the program. UWRF alumna, Anne Johnson was the program's first Director. She was assisted in the EDP office by Ron Klietsch and later by Alice Murphy. For the first ten years the EDP was a degree program in Broad Area Agriculture. A second option in Agricultural Business was offered in 1988.

The objective of the program was to provide access to an agricultural degree program for individuals who were unable to attend regularly scheduled classes on campus due to personal restrictions. As such the program, which had requirements identical to the on-campus degree programs, was conducted in an asynchronous or self-paced mode to meet the unique needs of the students enrolled.

The first three years of the program were developmental. Existing courses in the agricultural sciences were prepared in a competency-based format by the teaching faculty. This involved re-writing traditional lecture material and development and acquisition of audio-visual materials. With assistance from a skilled consultant, methods for course competency assessment were developed, and procedures were implemented for assessment of experiential learning, including the evaluation and translation of professional and life experiences into university credit. Approximately 30 faculty members were involved in the program, including two from the College of Arts and Sciences who offered required senior capstone courses.

The program was a quite popular with enrollment peaking at 130 students in 1987-88. Many of the students in the program were not actually seeking degrees, but were taking courses for professional advancement or simply out of personal interest. As such the number of students who actually obtained degrees was not large. By 1992 there were 12 graduates.

Katrina Larsen assumed leadership of the program in 1987 and continued as Program Director until the closure of the program in 2000.