The Assessment Plan for the
UW-River Falls Department of Agricultural Economics

December 2006 Revised Assessment Plan

Compiled by Gregg Hadley, Assessment Coordinator
UW-River Falls Department of Agricultural Economics
I. Introduction

This document contains the December 2006 Revised Assessment Plan for the UW-River Falls Department of Agricultural Economics. It is organized in the following manner:

- Section II. Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes
- Section III. Identification of Where Objectives/Outcomes Are Being Achieved
- Section IV. Assessment Tools Used to Measure Objectives/Outcomes
- Section V. Timetable Indicating the Cycle of Assessment and Continuous Improvement
- Section VI. Data Presentation and Discussion Process
- Section VII. Implementation of Revisions Based on Assessment Results
- Section IX. Results Availability

The section headings correspond to the headings used in the assessment plan evaluation template developed by the University Assessment Committee.

II. Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

The UW-River Falls Department of Agricultural Economics has identified the following learning objectives for students majoring in its Agribusiness program.

Upon completion of their coursework, students majoring in Agribusiness will be able to

1) apply economic theory,
2) apply analytical tools to data and information in order to make appropriate economic and business conclusions,
3) improve oral, written and graphical communication skills,
4) understand agricultural business issues in a broader socio-economic context, and
5) to make ethical business decisions.

III. Identification of Where Objectives/Outcomes Are Being Achieved

Table I displays the UW-River Falls Department of Agricultural Economics curriculum array. The curriculum array identifies where the subject matter needed to achieve a learning objective is introduced (I), emphasized (E), or reinforced (R).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Apply Economic Theory</th>
<th>Apply Analytical Tools to Data and Information Make Appropriate Economic and Business Conclusions</th>
<th>Improve Oral, Written and Graphical Communication Skills</th>
<th>Understand Agricultural Business Issues in a Broader Socio-Economic Context</th>
<th>Make Ethical Business Decisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AGEC 101 Agribusiness Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
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<td>AGEC 230 Microeconomics</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEC 240/ECON 202 Cooperatives</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>I</td>
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<td>AGEC 250 World Food and Population</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEC 305 Accounting</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>AGEC 320 Statistics</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEC 345 Agricultural Law</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEC 355 Agricultural Markets and Prices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEC 360/361 Farm Management / Horticultural Firm Management</td>
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<td>E</td>
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<td>AGEC 365 Agricultural Finance</td>
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<td>AGEC 405 Tax Management</td>
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<td>AGEC 410 Professional Selling</td>
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<td>ACEC 450 Natural Resource Economics</td>
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<td>AGEC 455 Commodity Marketing</td>
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<td>AGEC 460 Firm Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGEC 270/370/490 Professional Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFES 492</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

An “I” indicates where learning objectives are achieved at the introductory level. An “E” indicates where learning objectives are achieved at an emphasis level. A “R” indicates where learning objectives are achieved at a reinforcement level.
IV. Assessment Tools Used to Measure Objectives/Outcomes

The direct and indirect measurement tools used to assess the learning objectives can be seen in Table 2. “Freshman-Senior Assessment Test” refers to a test given to all Agribusiness majors in their freshman year in AGEC 101 and in their senior year in AGEC 460. The current Freshman-Senior Assessment Test can be found in Appendix 1. Results from past implementations of the Freshman-Senior Assessment Test can be viewed in Appendix 2.

“Senior Focus Group” refers to a focus group that is conducted with graduating seniors in their last semester. The Senior Focus Group is facilitated by someone outside of the Department of Agricultural Economics. The Senior Focus Group Question Array can be viewed in Appendix 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Objective</th>
<th>Direct Measurement Tool</th>
<th>Indirect Measurement Tool</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Apply economic theory</td>
<td>1) Freshman-Senior</td>
<td>1) Senior Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>2) Program Review Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Program Review Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Apply Analytical Tools to Data and Information in Order to Make Appropriate Economic and Business Conclusions</td>
<td>1) Freshman-Senior</td>
<td>1) Senior Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>2) Program Review Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Program Review Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Improve Oral, Written and Graphical Communication Skills</td>
<td>1) Graphical: Freshman-Senior Assessment Test</td>
<td>1) Senior Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) Oral: AGEC 101</td>
<td>2) Program Review Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3) Written: AGEC 101</td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AGEC 330</td>
<td>3) Program Review Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4) Written Reports and Presentations in Various Classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Understand Agricultural Business Issues in a Broader Socio-Economic Context</td>
<td>1) Freshman-Senior</td>
<td>1) Senior Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>2) Program Review Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Program Review Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Make ethical business decisions</td>
<td>1) Freshman-Senior</td>
<td>1) Senior Focus Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assessment Test</td>
<td>2) Program Review Alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3) Program Review Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. Timetable Indicating the Cycle of Assessment and Continuous Improvement

The timetable for the assessment plan implementation can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. Cycle of Assessment Timetable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Component</th>
<th>Assessment Cycle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman-Senior Assessment Test</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Focus Group</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGEC 101 and AGEC 330 Oral Presentations and Written Reports</td>
<td>Annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Review Alumni Survey</td>
<td>Every 7 years as part of the program review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Review Student Survey</td>
<td>Every 7 years as part of the program review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion of Assessment Results</td>
<td>Biannually at the Department of Agricultural Economics retreats or at any of the weekly department meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Consensus Concerning Changes As a Result of the Assessment Results</td>
<td>Biannually at the Department of Agricultural Economics retreat or at any of the weekly department meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. Data Presentation and Discussion Process

The results of the Freshman-Senior Assessment Test, Senior Focus Group, and other sources of direct and indirect assessment measurements are collected and analyzed by the assessment coordinator, the department chair, and by the instructors of AGEC 101, AGEC 330, and AGEC 365. The assessment coordinator organizes the information, makes preliminary evaluations and interpretations, and presents the data and preliminary results to the department at the biannual department retreats and/or at any of the weekly department meetings. The department provides further input on the evaluation, interpretation, and makes recommendations for assessment plan and/or programmatic improvement. Assessment plan or programmatic changes are made based upon department consensus.

The data from the Program Review Alumni Survey and Program Review Student Survey are discussed upon the completion of the 7-year review process at a department meeting or retreat. The data is collected and initially analyzed by the assessment coordinator and the department chair. These preliminary results are presented to the department at the biannual department retreats and/or at any of the weekly department meetings. Different interpretations of the data and potential program review and programmatic improvements are suggested and discussed by department faculty. These changes are made based upon department consensus.
VII. Implementation of Revisions Based on Assessment Results

When possible, programmatic revisions are implemented in the semester following an assessment period. If the programmatic revisions need the approval of other college or university entities, the program revisions are implemented the semester after the proposed revisions have been approved by appropriate college and university entities.

Previous changes that occurred due to following and acting upon this assessment plan have included the creation of a new entry level course – AGEC 101, increasing the usage of Excel in agricultural economics coursework, the development of an agricultural human resource management course, and the creation of the new Agricultural Business and Marketing Society (ABMS). The ABMS is a student organization for the department’s majors, minors, faculty, alumni, and agriculture industry friends.

VIII. Processes/Procedures for Communicating the Assessment Results and Implications

Previous assessment results and any resulting programmatic changes were communicated to the students, alumni, university and other stakeholders by word-of-mouth. In the future, the information will also be communicated via an open letter located on the department website.
Appendix 1

Current Freshman-Senior Assessment Test
Agricultural Business Student Learning Outcome Assessment

Apply economic theory

1. Economics can best be defined as
   a) the study of how prices are determined in the marketing of goods and services
   b) the study of how society maximizes utilization of its limited resources within a given time period
   c) the study of how and why production decisions are made
   d) the study of the allocation of scarce resources among unlimited wants

2. Suppose that consumers become more concerned about animal rights, but laws regarding methods of livestock production and farmers’ attitudes about production methods do not change. The changes in consumer attitudes could be expected to
   a) bring about changes in the supply of livestock products.
   b) bring about changes in the demand for livestock products.
   c) result in a higher price for livestock product.
   d) result in a greater quantity of livestock products sold.

3. Agribusiness managers face greater challenges than managers in most other sectors for all but which of the following reasons?
   a) the biological process
   b) involves macro and micro-economics
   c) agriculture's heavy reliance on export markets
   d) market instability

4. As an individual’s income increases, his/her income elasticity is expected to:
   a) Increase at an increasing rate for all types of food products
   b) Decrease at a constant rate for all types of food products
   c) Decrease by more for meats than for carbohydrates
   d) Decrease by more for carbohydrates than for meats

5. On January 1, 2004 DS Farms purchased a machine that cost $14,000 and recorded $2,000 of depreciation on 12/31/2004. The Book Value at the end of 2004, would be:
   a) $14,000
   b) $ 2,000
   c) $12,000
   d) None of the above

6. One would expect the biggest price rise for a product when:
   a) inelastic demand increases and inelastic supply increases
   b) elastic demand decreases and inelastic supply increases
   c) elastic demand increases and elastic supply decreases
   d) inelastic demand increases and inelastic supply decreases
7. Knowing that beef and chicken are substitute goods, if the retail price of beef products increased and all other relevant factors remained the same, consumers’ purchases of chicken would likely
   a) increase.
   b) decrease.
   c) remain the same.
   d) change but the direction of change cannot be determined.

8. The budget best suited to assisting a grain producer in making a decision whether to purchase a combine or hire a custom operator for harvesting is:
   a) An enterprise budget
   b) A whole farm budget
   c) A partial budget
   d) A cash budget

9. A producer who was concerned about production risk may use which of the following risk management tools:
   a) futures
   b) irrigation
   c) options
   d) all of the above

10. With respect to the relationship between cash and futures prices for a storable commodity, one would normally expect
    a) cash price to be greater than the futures price by the cost of storing until the futures delivery month, after adjusting for transportation and quality differences
    b) cash price to fall as the delivery month approaches
    c) cash price to be less than the futures price by the cost of storing until the futures delivery month, after adjusting for transportation and quality difference
    d) the basis to widen as the delivery month approaches.

**Improve oral, written, and graphical communication skills**

11. The null hypothesis is a claim regarding the value of a:
    a) population mean.
    b) sample statistic.
    c) sample mean.
    d) Type II error.

12. A farm business manager analyzing the financial performance of the farm business would likely select which of the following measures to meet the profitability criterion?
    a) Current Ratio
    b) Percent Owner Equity (%OE)
    c) Rate of Return On Assets (RROA)
    d) Debt-to-Asset Ratio
13. Family Living Expenses can be found on what type of financial document:
   a) Balance sheet
   b) Income statement
   c) Statement of cash flows
   d) Both a and c

14. A selling point is a tool a professional salesperson would most likely use during
   a) the opening
   b) the closing
   c) the presentation
   d) the pre-call planning

15. Given the following graph, please describe an event that could cause this shift to occur

   ![Graph of supply and demand](image)

   Cause of shift:
Understand agricultural resource management in a broader socio-economic context

16. Increasing incomes in less developed countries will have a profound influence on our future ability to adequately feed the worlds population over the next 25 years for all of the following reasons except:
   a) Increasing income will expand “effective” demand
   b) Increasing income will cause the birth rate to increase
   c) Increasing income will cause people to upgrade their diet by consuming more “grain-intensive” products such as meat
   d) More than 90 percent of births will take place in less developed countries where there is substantial pent-up demand.

17. One feature that distinguishes cooperatives from other forms of business is that:
   a) By law they must treat all customers equally
   b) They only operate in the agricultural sector
   c) They distribute profits based on use rather than investment
   d) They have a board of directors

18. Suppose John Book contracts for painting his barn, and the painter makes an honest mistake and paints Lydia Shade’s barn instead. This may be viewed by the courts as:
   a) A written contract
   b) An express contract
   c) Partial performance
   d) An implied contract

19. Which of the following is not a reason for increased farm size?
   a) pecuniary economies;
   b) high commodity prices;
   c) technological economies;
   d) technical economies.

20. Which of the following is not a tool typically used to restrict imports of agriculture related products:
   a) Tariffs
   b) Quotas
   c) Subsidies
   d) Health restrictions

21. The unemployment rate is defined as
   a) the number of unemployed divided by total population
   b) the number of people not looking for jobs divided by the labor force
   c) the fraction of the labor force who are looking but cannot find jobs
   d) the fraction of total population that cannot find jobs
22. In natural resource economics, the “best use” of scarce natural resources is primarily concerned with the issue of:
   a) conservation
   b) preservation
   c) equity and efficiency
   d) maximizing benefits and costs

**Apply analytical skills/tools appropriately to data and information to draw economic and business conclusions**

23. If the cost for the last pound of fertilizer (one unit) added is $.54, and it produced 3 pounds of snap beans, what price must the grower receive per pound to justify the last pound of fertilizer being added?
   a) $.18 per pound
   b) $.54 per pound
   c) $.27 per pound
   d) can't tell without additional information

24. Given the following data, calculate the mean and median:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Somatic Cell Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15</td>
<td>163,000</td>
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<td>April 30</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
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<td>May 30</td>
<td>193,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>June 15</td>
<td>210,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 30</td>
<td>181,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

   Mean = __________________  Median = ___________________

25. If a farm has a net farm income of $25,000, a depreciation expense of $3,000, interest expense of $2,000, hired labor expense of $10,000 and its value of unpaid family labor was $5,000 and an average total farm asset value of $200,000– the farm’s return on assets was:
   a) 11.0 percent
   b) 2.5 percent
   c) 12.5 percent
   d) 10.0 percent

26. When a manager talks about a product’s contribution to overhead, they are referring to:
   a) the difference between the sales price and the total variable costs.
   b) the total variable costs.
   c) the total fixed costs.
d) the difference between the sales price and the cost of goods sold.

27. A cattle feeder anticipating filling his/her lot in a few months, attempting to reduce price risk, might:
   a) take a long position in the feeder cattle futures market.
   b) take a short position in the live cattle futures market.
   c) take a long position in the corn futures market.
   d) all of the above.

28. If 3 out of 5 consecutive tax years are profitable, then a farmer:
   a) doesn't owe any tax
   b) does not have to make regular estimated payments of income tax during the year
   c) must make quarterly estimated tax payments
   d) none of the above.

**Develop the ability to make ethical business decisions**

29. Ethical business practices are important for agribusiness managers for all of the following except to:
   a) reduce “transactions costs” between buyers and sellers
   b) facilitate risk-taking by entrepreneurs
   c) to attract and retain high quality employees
   d) deal with the explosive growth in U.S. domestic demand for agricultural products

30. Ethical decisions can be based on internally determined standards (depending on people to act according to fundamental moral considerations such as honesty and loyalty) or on externally enforced standards (compliance with laws and regulations). Which of these is most effective in your view – explain.

31. When evaluating a business decision that has potentially important ethical ramifications, what are some guides (or questions you might ask yourself) to help you determine if your proposed course of action is ethical?
Appendix 2

Previous Results of the Freshman-Senior Assessment Test
## Ag Econ Student Learning Objectives - Pre and Post Test Results

### Pre-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Apply Econ Theory</th>
<th>Communicate</th>
<th>Ag in Socio-Economic Context</th>
<th>Use Data</th>
<th>Business Ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Post-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Apply Econ Theory</th>
<th>Communicate</th>
<th>Ag in Socio-Economic Context</th>
<th>Use Data</th>
<th>Business Ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>43%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 3

Senior Focus Group Question Array
Ag Business/Mar Com (ag-emphasis) Focus Group Questions

1. What would you tell an incoming ag business/mar com freshman about the next four years?
2. What would you say about the classes and professors in ag econ or in the mar com program?
3. If you were starting your degree now, would you do anything differently? What?
4. What makes you confident/nervous about your skills for starting your first job?
5. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of the ag business or mar com program?
6. What changes do you think either of these programs (ag business or mar com) should consider making over the next 3-5 years?
7. What would you say about the academic advising you received?
8. What outside activities (clubs, work study, special projects, etc.) were you involved in and what was good/bad about these experiences?

Any final comments?