

## UNIT REPORT

**Agricultural Econ & Rural Soc-  
Academic - APR Self-Study Report  
by Academic Unit/Department**

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## Program Mission

### Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Mission

#### Program Mission Statement:

The Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology is a component of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at the University of Idaho, the state's land-grant university. It has the mission to generate and facilitate adoption of knowledge and to develop leadership in applied economics, the economics of agriculture, natural/environmental resource economics and related areas through statewide programs in research, instruction, and extension. The mission includes providing undergraduate and graduate degree programs in agricultural and applied economics, conducting basic and applied research to support Idaho's and the nation's agricultural, natural and human resources and to improve the quality of life for all citizens; and educating citizens, assisting them to apply the latest scientific technology and develop leadership. The AERS department is the preeminent source in the region for excellent education, research and extension programs in agricultural business and finance, agricultural risk management, community and economic development, the economics of food and agricultural markets, trade policy, production agriculture, and natural resource management and policy.

## Program Goal (add a minimum of 3 program goal "plan items")

### Goal 1. Enrollment Growth

#### Goal Statement:

Increase enrollment in the BS Agricultural Economics degree program to over 100 students.

#### Alignment to UI Strategic Plan Goals:

Transform (Goal 3): Increase our educational impact.

Cultivate (Goal 4): Foster an inclusive, diverse community of students, faculty, and staff and improve cohesion and morale.

#### Indicators/Metrics to Evaluate Progress:

Enrollment as indicated by institutional research at the 10 day mark of the semester.

#### List of Actions the Program Will Take to Achieve Goals :

Increase efforts to connect with high school agricultural teachers in Idaho, Washington and Oregon. Increase online and popular press presence with stories about existing programs and people. Encourage faculty and staff to attend professional development activities related to advising. Increase faculty involvement in preparing students for employment by creating critical thinkers who can effectively communicate, work in teams, and respect diversity

**Goal Achievement Level:** In Progress

### Goal 2. Grow the Departmental Research Portfolio

#### Goal Statement:

Increase the department's contribution to disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as the application of knowledge, consistent with our land-grant mission.

#### Alignment to UI Strategic Plan Goals:

Innovate (Goal 1): Scholarly and creative products of the highest quality and scope, resulting in significant positive impact for the region and the world.

Transform (Goal 3): Increase our educational impact.

#### Indicators/Metrics to Evaluate Progress:

Number of faculty, post-docs, research associates; Number of citations and value of h-indices for research output per faculty member; Number and quality of academic journal publications; Number and size of grant proposals awarded for research; Total departmental research expenditures; Number and quality of presentations to scholarly groups in and related to disciplinary research; Participation as a panel member, reviewer, editorial council member, editor, or as a member of professional committees or sections, and other professional opportunities; Participation in professional development opportunities; Number and quality of graduate theses completed; Participation of undergraduate and graduate students in publication, presentation or outreach efforts in applied research; Number and quality of collaborative research publications between research and extension; Recognition by college, university and professional peers of excellence of AERS research program, through awards, elected professional society positions, editorships, communications, and other means

#### List of Actions the Program Will Take to Achieve Goals :

Faculty will be assessed annually according to their progress toward this goal. Each faculty member with a research appointment is responsible for contributing to this goal. We will promote a culture of research and scientific advancement in the disciplines of economics and rural sociology that permeates teaching programs and outreach efforts. We will seek growth in our research capacities exploiting the competitive advantages and areas of excellence within our department to grow our national reputation in focused areas among our peer institutions. We will increase the amount of competitive grant funding obtained by faculty. We will support professional development to improve capabilities and productivity.

**Goal Achievement Level:** In Progress

### Goal 3. Grow the Departmental Program of Outreach/Extension

**Goal Statement:**

Outreach is part of the land grant mission; research has greater value when the knowledge is shared with policy makers, stakeholders, non-governmental organizations, and others. All faculty are expected to engage in meaningful and impactful outreach in some form. Similarly, extension programs are core to our department and college. AERS will maintain high quality extension programs in farm and agribusiness management, community and economic development, and natural resource utilization addressing Idaho's economic and social needs and the well-being of its citizens.

**Alignment to UI Strategic Plan Goals:**

Engage (Goal 2): Suggest and influence change that addresses societal needs and global issues, and advances economic development and culture.  
Transform (Goal 3): Increase our educational impact.

**Indicators/Metrics to Evaluate Progress:**

Number and quality of joint outputs and outcomes between research and extension faculty (specialists, area educators, county educators) such as project proposals submitted, project proposals funded, publications, sponsorship of workshops, seminars, conferences, and other outreach activities; Number and quality of joint outputs and outcomes of extension collaborations regionally and nationally, such as project proposals submitted, project proposals funded, joint authorship on publications, sponsorship of workshops, seminars, conferences, and other outreach activities; Documentation of communication with, and programs for, diverse groups.

**List of Actions the Program Will Take to Achieve Goals :**

Raise the profile and value of AERS extension and outreach through high quality and frequent dissemination of relevant educational materials through appropriate channels.

**Goal Achievement Level:**

## Student Learning Assessment Report (add one "plan item" for each major, degree, and/or certificate offered by dept)

### BS Agricultural Economics Agribusiness Emphasis

**Assessment Report Contact:** Katherine Lee

**Program Changes in Past Year:**

We have submitted some minor changes to the program in an effort to better fit the needs of our students. We are changing the course number of AgEc 489 (Understanding and Using Futures and Options Markets) and associated lab (489L) to 389/389L and have dropped the requirement for Acct 482 (Enterprise Accounting) allowing students to take AgEc 414 (Financial Analysis of Agricultural Firms) in its place.

These changes were approved by UCC on October 11, 2021.

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Students in Program (check box if true):**

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Faculty (check box if true):** true

**Optional: Framework Alignment:**

**Import Outcomes Data (from Anthology Outcomes):**

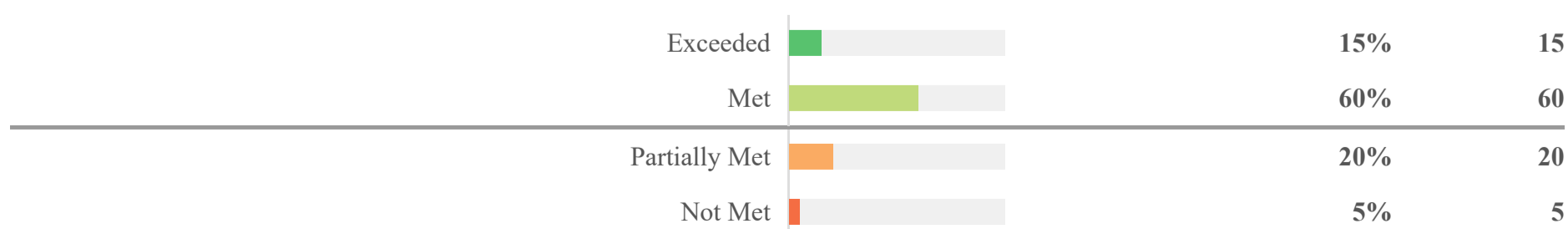
1.

**Identify**

Students will possess ability to identify business management problems related to agriculture and food industries.

Academic Year 2019-2020: Agricultural Economics - Agribusiness Emphasis (B.S.Ag.Econ.)

Term: Overview



**Summary of Student Learning:**

We found that 15% of students exceeded expectations, 60% of students met expectations, and 25% of the students did not meet expectations when put into a situation of having to identify a management problem.

This assessment is based on outcomes collected from the degree capstone class AgEc 478, in which students work with businesses to identify, analyze, and provide a recommendation for solving a business or management problem.

#### **Summary of Faculty Discussion:**

More emphasis will be placed on problem identification in undergraduate courses along the curriculum, where appropriate. Faculty recognize that more points of evaluation are needed through the curriculum and are working with the undergraduate committee to identify touchpoints of evaluation between the courses AgEc 101 and AgEc 478 where progress on this outcome can be assessed.

#### **Summary of Changes/Improvements Being Considered:**

Moving forward, the undergraduate committee will help faculty identify assessment points in their courses and streamline data collection using Canvas and rubrics. More points of data collection will aid the program in understanding where improvements can be made to meet learning outcomes.

In the future, other types of data will be collected in utilized as well. For example, for Spring 2020 feedback from companies that worked on projects with students in AGEC 478 was collected as per our plan. However, the alumni survey was not scheduled for completion this year and the presentation in 101 were not conducted this year due to change in instructional design. An alumni survey is planned for distribution in Fall 2023.

#### **Inter-rater Reliability:**

Faculty discuss learning outcomes and standards at faculty meetings and within the undergraduate committee.

The undergraduate committee and faculty are developing a more extensive evaluation process in which data will be collected at more touchpoints in the program, including a rubric for mapping expected student learning outcomes across the program.

#### **Closing the Loop:**

Recent curricular changes should help focus our curriculum and better align it with our learning outcomes (not just the one mentioned here, but all of them).

We believe increasing the number of internships (or possibly including cooperative credits when that becomes available) will improve students' abilities in this learning outcome. At this time these are being considered for possible future implementation.

## **BS Agricultural Economics Applied Economics Emphasis**

**Assessment Report Contact:** Katherine Lee

#### **Program Changes in Past Year:**

There have been no curricular changes in the past year.

#### **Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Students in Program (check box if true):**

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Faculty (check box if true):** true

#### **Optional: Framework Alignment:**

#### **Import Outcomes Data (from Anthology Outcomes):**

1.

#### **Identify**

Students will possess the ability to identify economic related problems and assess the impact and implications of the problem.

Academic Year 2019-2020: Agricultural Economics - Applied Economics Emphasis (B.S.Ag.Econ.)

Term: **Overview**

*No Results*

#### **Summary of Student Learning:**

No data were collected for majors with the Applied Economics emphasis during the Spring 2020 semester. This means that no students in Applied Economics emphasis took AgEc 478, our point of data collection.

#### **Summary of Faculty Discussion:**

NA. As more touchpoints for assessment are added, we can start to understand where the curriculum can be strengthened to improve student learning.

#### **Summary of Changes/Improvements Being Considered:**

Faculty are working to develop a rubric for outcome assessment and identify touchpoints within courses required for the minor to assess student learning outcomes throughout the emphasis curriculum.

#### **Inter-rater Reliability:**

We are working to develop a rubric for program learning outcomes and specific class outcomes to systematically evaluate student performance in this emphasis area. Once this is developed faculty will individually and collectively evaluate whether desired student outcomes are met and identify potential areas for improvement.

#### Closing the Loop:

While there are generally less students that choose this emphasis area and therefore less data to evaluate outcomes, we recognize that points of evaluation for this emphasis area is important. Moving forward faculty will identify points of evaluation for students who choose this emphasis area.

## MS Applied Economics

**Assessment Report Contact:** Philip Watson

#### Program Changes in Past Year:

None.

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Students in Program (check box if true):**

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Faculty (check box if true):** true

**Optional: Framework Alignment:**

**Import Outcomes Data (from Anthology Outcomes):**

3.

#### Statistical Analysis

Students will demonstrate the ability to quantitatively analyze economic problems and make statistical inferences as to the effects of explanatory variables on dependent variables.

Academic Year 2020-2021: Applied Economics (M.S.)

Term: Overview

Exceeded		0%	0
Met		100%	6
Partially Met		0%	0
Not Met		0%	0

#### Summary of Student Learning:

All graduate students were successful in meeting the program learning outcomes. This is not unexpected with graduate students. As expected only a small percentage exceeded learning outcomes.

#### Summary of Faculty Discussion:

Annual meetings with faculty whos courses are used in the assessment will take place and any proposed changes will be discussed.

#### Summary of Changes/Improvements Being Considered:

We are making some small changes to the program. These include teaching AgEc 529 *Research Methods* at UI (previously this was a WSU co-op class). We feel this will allows us to improve the content and timing of the course.

#### Inter-rater Reliability:

The course used for evaluation has been taught by the same professor and the information is used in all subsequent classes.

#### Closing the Loop:

The graduate program has been very successful over a number of years. Personally, my most reliable measure of success is employment of graduates and/or acceptance into high-quality Ph.D. programs. We are experiencing success for both measures.

## Natural Resource Economics (Minor)

**Assessment Report Contact:** Katherine Lee

#### Program Changes in Past Year:

There have been no changes made to the program in the past year.

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Students in Program (check box if true):** false

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Faculty (check box if true):** true

**Optional: Framework Alignment:**

**Import Outcomes Data (from Anthology Outcomes):**

1.

#### Identify

Students will understand and apply economic and business principles along with analytical methods to practical issues and problems in food, agriculture, business, community vitality, and natural resources.

Academic Year 2020-2021: Natural Resource Economics (Minor)

Term: Spring 2021

Exceeded		100%	1
Met		0%	0
Partially Met		0%	0
Not Met		0%	0

1.

**Identify**

Students will understand and apply economic and business principles along with analytical methods to practical issues and problems in food, agriculture, business, community vitality, and natural resources.

Academic Year 2020-2021: **Natural Resource Economics (Minor)**

Term: **Overview**

Exceeded		100%	1
Met		0%	0
Partially Met		0%	0
Not Met		0%	0

**Summary of Student Learning:**

During the 2020-2021 academic year, there was just one student who took a course used in assessment of program learning outcomes for this minor.

The assessment criteria is the final grade in AGECE 451 (Applied Environment and Natural Resource Economics). The final grade for this course assesses students' ability to apply economic theory and tools to environment and natural resource issues and introduce students to current issues in the subject area and analyze them through the lens of economics.

**Summary of Faculty Discussion:**

The faculty discussed that the current cohort is strong and has performed well in all courses in the minor curriculum.

Moving forward faculty will identify other touchpoints in the curriculum for assessment.

Faculty also discussed ways to advertise the minor to increase students.

**Summary of Changes/Improvements Being Considered:**

Moving forward students learning outcomes will be assessed at multiple touchpoint along the curriculum.

**Inter-rater Reliability:**

Faculty ensure that students are evaluated consistently by using consistent concepts in economic theory from introductory and intermediate classes in economics to advanced classes that apply concepts to the field of natural resources.

**Closing the Loop:**

This is the first assessment of the minor that has been conducted. Historically, the natural resource economics has had low enrollment. We see opportunities to advance enrollment in this minor by advertising in CNR.

**Agricultural Commodity Risk Management (UG Certificate)**

**Assessment Report Contact:** Katherine Lee

**Program Changes in Past Year:**

We have submitted some minor changes to the program in an effort to better fit the needs of our students. We are changing the course number of AgEc 489 (Understanding and Using Futures and Options Markets) and associated lab (489L) to 389/389L and have dropped the requirement for Acct 482 (Enterprise Accounting) allowing students to take AgEc 414 (Financial Analysis of Agricultural Firms) in its place.

These changes were approved by UCC on October 11, 2021.

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Students in Program (check box if true):**

**Learning Outcomes are Communicated to All Faculty (check box if true):** true

**Optional: Framework Alignment:****Import Outcomes Data (from Anthology Outcomes):**

2.

**Critical Thinking**

Analyze supply and demand factors- locally, regionally, and globally to develop strategies to risk manage the agricultural supply chain from farm to fork.

Academic Year 2020-2021: **Agricultural Commodity Risk Management (UG Acad Cert)**

Term: Spring 2021

Exceeded		100%	4
Met		0%	0
Partially Met		0%	0
Not Met		0%	0

**Summary of Student Learning:**

The data used in this assessment are the final grades from AGEC 490 (Commodity Price Analysis). This overall course grade includes assessment of students' understanding of concepts in price analysis and risk management through market data collection, interpretation, assembling written reports and oral presentations.

**Summary of Faculty Discussion:**

From faculty discussion of the outcome, faculty felt that the cohort who took AGEC 490 in Spring 2021 on a whole was a very professional, career ready cohort with a few standouts who took particular interest in the subject.

Faculty agreed that students improved significantly in their ability to present market reports, but saw lesser improvement in their written market reports. Technical writing is an area that can be improved across most students.

Faculty recognizes that the certificate has heavy emphasis on producer end of supply chain and would like to create curriculum changes/additions that introduce students to complete supply chain from farm to fork, including analysis of wholesale markets and consumers.

**Summary of Changes/Improvements Being Considered:**

Moving forward, students may benefit from more structure and guidance in creating market reports. Last year let students were allowed to find their own style, find own sources but resulted in some confusion about expectations and some students missing the mark early in the semester. Next year will give some examples/templates for written reports. Most likely will develop a rubric

Instructor is also considering ways to increase student engagement in lectures and feedback to peers. May make participation in feedback to peers graded by requiring non-presenting students to read written draft of report to be presented in class and prepare 1-2 questions for a grade.

**Inter-rater Reliability:**

The certificate is a relatively new program, therefore curriculum and content has been fairly well thought out and has not changed much since inception. Course sequencing and introduction of topics has been fairly well mapped and still relevant.

The curriculum for the certificate has been mapped such that all courses cover aspects of the learning outcomes.

**Closing the Loop:**

This is the first required assessment of the certificate. Faculty identified some places within specific courses where evaluation can be improved. Faculty also would like to expand course offerings to cover supply chain from farm to fork. Development of Ag Commodity Risk Management minor (proposal in preparation) can enable expansion of course offerings.

## Student Achievement

**Student Achievement****Student Retention:**

Our retention rate is high with over 95% of undergraduates returning in the spring following fall semester. Though the data indicates only 90% of graduate students continue from fall to spring, I believe the 10% loss is due to fall graduations. Since graduate cohorts are small and most students are funded monitoring continuation is relatively easy. We track undergraduates using information provided by the CALS Associate Dean for Academic Programs.

**Student Persistence:**

There is currently no data in the dashboard to indicate persistence from Spring 2021 to Fall 2021. Current enrollment as indicated by the dashboard shows 74 undergraduates enrolled in Spring of 2021. The 10-day enrollment numbers for fall of 2021 indicate our enrollment has grown to 91 undergraduate majors plus six double majors.

**Student Completion:**

AERS advisors monitor the completion for their advisees. We examine the overall data when it becomes available.

**Student Postgraduate Success:**

We haven't done a survey of graduates for a few years, but anecdotally we can say that our students are highly successful in finding careers. Exit interviews with graduating seniors indicate that typically 100% are employed prior to graduation.

**Identify Equity Gaps:**

Dashboard data indicate that females have a higher cumulative GPA in our program than do males, in spite of their incoming GPA's being roughly equal. First generation college students have slightly lower incoming GPA and cumulative GPA than do not first generation students.

#### **Effective Learning Environment and Closing Equity Gaps:**

We strive to provide an effective learning environment for all students. Students who seek additional academic help will find it regardless of gender, ethnicity, or first generation status.

## **Demand and Productivity**

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#### **External Demand:**

Undergraduate enrollment has grown from Spring 2021 to Fall 2021 by around 14%. This is not reflected in the APR dashboard, but was evidenced by the 10th day fall enrollment data. Graduate enrollment has stayed steady.

#### **Internal Demand:**

Combined graduate and undergraduate course offerings were 292 credits in the Fall of 202 and 360 credits during Spring 2021.

#### **Credit Productivity:**

COVID and demographics combined to result in a drop in enrollment. This is our biggest opportunity and threat. We are working through ways to increase program visibility (see goal 1) and therefore increase enrollment. This includes development of a new Risk Management Minor. The strength of our program is that we have high-quality instruction and coursework that is both rigorous and relevant. A threat and weakness of the program lies in the lack of mathematical preparation on the part of many students in CALS.

## **Financial Health and Resources**

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#### **Financial Health:**

The financial health of the department is good. Concerns include the relative lack of reserves to cover needs that might arise such as covering graduate student stipends. The bulk of our discretionary dollars comes from F&A return. While this allows us to get by, it is totally dependent on faculty research expenditures and may not be sustainable.

On additional threat to our continued success and frankly UI's ability to achieve R1 status is the poorly calibrated "market based compensation" system. This system consistently returns values well below true market levels. Recent advertisements in the Job Opening for Economists set salaries for beginning assistant professor to be higher than some of our associate professor (individuals that the market based compensation algorithm says are overpaid.)

#### **Efficient Use of Resources:**

All budgets are closely monitored by the department head who monitors expenditures and tracks long term budget balances. Decisions regarding large departmental resource allocations are made by the department head in consultation with the faculty.

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