Master’s Programs in Agricultural Economics: Situation & Analysis

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Master’s Programs in Agricultural Economics

The study examines Master’s programs in agricultural economics at land grant institutions categorizing:

- Commonalities
- Differences
- Strengths
- Positive Aspects
Background: Agricultural Economics

- Agricultural economics Master’s programs are modifying to align with evolving agri-food supply chain.

- Organized information is needed specifying and characterizing current programs.
Background: Agricultural Economics

An early 1990’s Commission of Graduate Economics evaluation found Agricultural Economics programs are:

– Overly focused on tools & theory
– Limited in interdisciplinary, real-life & problem solving opportunities
Objective of the Study

Identify the key components of Agricultural Economics Master’s programs and develop a guide to be used by:

– Prospective Master’s Students
– Professors
– Professionals in Related Fields
Objective of the Study (2)

Provide a comparative guide with detailed analysis of:

– Size & Quality of Faculty
– Extent of Master’s Degree Offerings
– Whether or not a Ph.D. is Offered
– Existence of a Job Candidates Webpage
– Awards Earned by Faculty & Students
– Interdisciplinary Opportunities & Facilities
Data & Methods

• Data was gathered by accessing websites of identified Master’s programs.
• Data was organized into an inclusive guide.
Data & Methods (2)

The guide provides information in the following categories:

- University & Location
- Master’s Program Department / Ph.D. Offerings
- Core Requirements
- Cross-Educational Offerings
- Faculty & Student Awards
- Facilities
- Additional Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University Agricultural Economic</th>
<th>Master's Program Components</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University &amp; Location</td>
<td>Master's Programs &amp; Dept.</td>
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Results

Commonalities include:

• Core Subject Requirements
• Thesis vs. Non-Thesis Tracks
Results (2)

Core subject requirements:
• Agricultural Economics
• Micro & Macroeconomics
• Marketing & Finance
• Agribusiness
• Econometrics
• Mathematics for Economic Analysis
• Natural Resources
• Agricultural Policy
• Research Methods
Results (3)

Thesis vs. Non-Thesis Track

• Over 90% of the agricultural economics programs offer thesis & non-thesis tracks.

• Non-Thesis tracks commonly require the completion of one of the following:
  – Culminating Exam
  – Research Paper
  – Internship
  – Specialized Project
Unique offerings include:

- Interdisciplinary Opportunities
- Specialized Facilities
- Distance Learning
- Study Abroad & Peace Corps Programs
Results (5)

Interdisciplinary Opportunities

• Cultivate critical thinking & diversity of thought. (Boland & Akridge, 2004)

• Offered in a majority of agricultural economics programs.
Results (6)

Interdisciplinary opportunities include collaboration & class offerings from other university departments:

- Food & Life Sciences
- Soil Sciences
- Urban & Regional Planning
- Forest & Wildlife Ecology
- Environmental & Natural Resources
- Animal Sciences
- Plant Sciences
- Agricultural Education
Results (7)

Facilities

- Research Farms
- Greenhouses
- Experimental Labs
- Soil Science Labs
- Resource Economics & Agricultural Libraries

UC Davis Student Farm

Colorado State Greenhouse
Study Abroad & Peace Corps Programs

• Real world learning experience

• For students interested in the multidisciplinary dimensions of agricultural development in other countries.
Distance Education

Results (9)

- Many agricultural economics Master’s programs incorporate distance learning.
- Designed for working professionals to enhance their managerial & agribusiness skills.
- Case study of the highly regarded Kansas State Univ. distance program provides successful results. (Featherstone & Brummett, 2007)
Faculty & Student Awards

- Higher # of faculty & student awards = stronger programs.
- Study notes awards from organizations including:
  - AAEA
  - WAEA
  - USDA
  - National Association of Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture
- Distinguished departments in this category:
  - UC Berkeley
  - UC Davis
  - Cornell University
  - University of Illinois
  - Purdue University
  - University of Wisconsin

Results (10)
Areas of Future Research

- Geographical impact on the success of Agricultural Economics Programs.
- Examine other Master’s programs, i.e., at non-land grant universities.