

Department of Animal Sciences

Response to the USDA-CSREES
On-site Program Review Report (10/28 - 11/1/2002)

By: Dr. David W. Libby, Chairperson

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INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The Department of Animal Sciences, as part of its strategic planning process invited the USDA Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service to conduct an On-site Program Review in the fall Of 2002. The review team consisted of a representative from a State Agricultural Experiment Station, a School of Veterinary Medicine, an 1890 Institution, CSREES competitive grants program and a team leader from CSREES Plant and Animal Systems. They did a careful and through job reviewing all aspects of the Animal Sciences programs over a several day period. They met with faculty, grad students, undergraduate students, as well as School and University administrators. They asked insightful questions and gave thoughtful response. We wish to thank the entire team for a job well done. They took the time to understand what we are trying to accomplish and then to give good advice on how to get there. We know that they had a real interest as one of them decided to serve on the Advisory Committee of one of our Masters students. Our faculty spent over 10 hours in a series of meetings considering and discussing the report that the team sent back to us. Each point was carefully discussed and voted on. The following summarizes the results of the faculty responses

1. Faculty workload

The CSREES Review Team raised a concern about the heavy teaching responsibilities. In examining the teaching loads for the past two years, the average teaching load was ____ classes per faculty member, a number that is lower than the University's norm of 8 classes per faculty member. However, because of enrollment growth, the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Dean-School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences have given one tenure tract position to the Department and the Administrator/Associate Dean of the Cooperative Extension Program is presently recruiting for an Extension Animal Science Specialist to complement the departmental research and teaching faculties and to contribute positively to its outreach mission. In addition, within the next two years, another faculty position will be added to the Department. These changes, actual and proposed, will enhance the unit's ability to better discharge its instruction, research and outreach programs.

2. Limit the number of graduate students to a maximum of five per faculty

The department feels that limiting the number of graduate students to five per major Thesis Advisor as recommended is a good idea. However, this recommendation conflicts with the need to grow the program, and does not consider the state's budgetary shortfall and the loss of faculty positions. Faculty want to admit graduate students after identifying colleagues willing to be 'major thesis advisors' for the student. Faculty want to grow the graduate program. However, the minimum of twenty (20) students per graduate program as required by the General Administration does not take into account the limitations in resources including faculty, material, and finance at small departments like ours. To maintain the GA-set graduate student numbers, the introduction of a SAES M.S. program is being discussed at the Associate Dean level. Further, the department is exploring implementing a non-thesis M.S. option.

3. Obtain Computers for Graduate Students

In addition, the School has entered into discussion with the Rural Development state office relative to providing the Department with computers for graduate students. Discussions are underway and an agreement is almost complete.

4. Expand participation in collaborative and Multi-state Research Activities

Faculty are in agreement regarding the focusing of expertise and increasing participation in Multi-state and collaborative research efforts.

5. Re-evaluate Membership on the External Advisory Board

Faculty are in agreement and the department will continue to seek for input from the External Advisory Board and will-re-evaluate membership of the Board to ascertain that the best input and focus are obtained.

6. Help Desk

At the University level, the services provided by Division of Information Technology and Telecommunications have improved and at the School level, plans are underway to hire an additional computer technician.

7. Adequacy of the Swine Facility for Instruction and Research

The plans have been submitted and approved by USDA. Approximately \$80,000 have been earmarked for this project; the work will be completed this year. Additional funds will be made available as needed as the School will incorporate the swine unit into a larger "Renewable Energy and Waste Management Facility."

8. Elimination of the Sheep Flock

Faculty disagree with the recommendation to eliminate the sheep flock as it is a valuable teaching and research resource with a public interest for the SAES especially in outreach programs. Instead, faculty opt to reduce the sheep flock.

9. Expansion of the Goat Herd

At this time, the faculty does not plan to expand the goat herd until the demand for goat research is determined in the state and the availability of faculty and staff resources is assessed.

10. Construct an Equine Facility

Faculty are in agreement with the recommendation and the Dean's Office, through the Farm Task Force, has indicated that resources will be provided to construct a small but decent equine facility at the University farm. Guilford County has the greatest number of horses in the state of North Carolina and such a facility will benefit the unit's programs and the SAES clientele.

11. Inclusion of students in faculty grant proposals.

Faculty are in agreement with this recommendation and are already implementing it.

12. Fostering a relationship with North Carolina State University.

In addition, the agricultural administrators at North Carolina A&T and North Carolina State meet twice per year to discuss collaborative efforts and agricultural issues facing North Carolina. One interesting point that emanated from their last meeting was the idea of joint appointments between the universities.

13. Departmental research to focus on one or two areas.

Faculty agree in principle to this recommendation. However, faculty are also aware that it is difficult to implement the recommendation in view of the different areas of faculty research expertise, and the lack of sufficient faculty numbers to provide the needed critical mass to deepen research in one or two areas. As new faculty are recruited and hired, the new hires' area of expertise may need to be critically considered in view of this recommendation.

14. Improving cooperation between the Department and Cooperative Extension as a way to boost departmental outreach.

The faculty agrees with this recommendation and the unit is working on making a joint appointment with Cooperative Extension; as stated in Item #1, the search for this extension animal science specialist is currently underway. This faculty person will be

housed in Webb Hall and will report to both Cooperative Extension (75%) and to Animal Sciences (25%).

15. Concerns on security at the University Farm.

Faculty recognize that the farm is administered as a separate entity. The issue of Farm Management is being addressed at the School level and a new organization and management structure has been put in place.

16. Employment of University Veterinarian

The faculty does not agree that a university veterinarian needs to be employed. The Department will put favorable consideration on the qualification of a licensed Veterinarian when searching for new faculty. However, it is not considered as a high priority item. There are costs to having a university veterinarian and in the long run it may be cheaper to hire this service even if a veterinarian is added to the faculty.

17. Genomics/Molecular Biology Research Programs

The faculty agreed that the genomics/molecular biology research programs needed more space and these programs have been moved into a larger laboratory and two other labs, a micro-array lab and a genomics computer lab have been rededicated for use in these research efforts.

18. Support of International Programs

The faculty supports involvement in international programs. One faculty, Dr. Worku serves on an international advisory board concerning genomic research in Africa. A graduate student is just starting a thesis project that will examine internal parasite control protocols applicable to Jamaica. Several of our undergraduate students are participating in international study opportunities, We work closely with the international opportunities office and through its director, Minnie Battle-Mays, have access to the opportunities for study abroad offered by the UNC System.

19. Graduate Students and Teaching

The faculty agrees that graduate students should teach, not just to provide help to the faculty, but mainly so they may get the experience afforded by teaching. Unfortunately the stipends available all come from research funds and the policy is that the students can only do work associated with that research effort and not spend time teaching. Until teaching assistantships can be established or the policy changed this recommendation cannot be addressed.

20. Graduate Student Accessibility to Building

The faculty is in favor of graduate students being issued keys to the building, associated labs and the graduate student office. University policy forbids issuing keys to graduate students so while it makes good sense until the policy is changed this recommendation cannot be met. There was a concerned mention about the security of the graduate student office it is now locked 5pm to 8am Monday through Friday and 24 hours a day on the weekends and holidays.

21. Faculty Advisors for Undergraduates

The faculty agrees that the students should keep the same advisor for their entire career in the department and that policy has been implemented. Starting with the incoming fall 2003 class.

22. Exit Interviews for Graduates

The faculty agrees that exit interviews yield useful data. Every attempt is made to conduct interviews. We are making an effort to develop an exit questionnaire so the information gathered has a somewhat standard format so that it can be more easily analyzed. While information gathered from exiting students is useful and may be more reliable than that gathered from current students an attempt is made to query the student body on an ongoing basis to detect any trends or concern so that they may be addressed in a timely manner.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The B.S. Degree in Animal Science and B.S. Degree with a concentration in Animal Industry should be consolidated to form one B.S. Degree in Animal Science with two concentrations, one in Science and one in Industry.

The department is working towards strengthening the Animal Industry option.

2. The B.S. Degree in Laboratory Animal Science should place more emphasis on pre-medicine, especially since there is not a pre-medicine program in the Department of Biology. This is in addition to emphasis on pre-veterinary medicine and laboratory animal care.

The faculty thinks that this is an excellent recommendation and has begun discussions on the feasibility of its implementation. This may be an excellent opportunity to increase our collaboration with the Department of Biology.

3. Most courses should be offered every other semester or possibly once every other year to increase the number of students per class in lower enrollment courses. This will also help reduce some of the faculty teaching load and allow for the development of new innovative courses.

The department started implementing this strategy to increase student numbers in courses well before the USDA-CSREES Review and has adopted the university-wide recommendation not to offer classes with less than five students. This recommendation has already been phased in and is impacting positively by increasing enrollment in courses and saving faculty time.

4. All full-time researchers should be assigned some teaching responsibility and full-time teachers be encouraged (e.g., be given release time) to be involved in research.

Faculty agree with this recommendation as they seek to fulfill the department's mission and faculty's expected responsibilities in instruction, research, and outreach.

5. Semester faculty workload should be clearly defined to provide consistency and accountability.

Faculty are in agreement with this recommendation the department has been working towards achieving the goal, well before the program review.

6. Re-evaluate the required courses in each program. For example, determine whether students need all farm species production courses or should be required to take two production courses with the option to take more electives. It is also recommended that ANSC 611, Principles in Animal Nutrition, be included in the Animal Industry curriculum.

As the curricula review process continues faculty will determine the courses required for departmental programs. The incorporation of ANSC 611 in the Animal Industry curriculum was already under discussion in view of the central role nutrition and nutritional sciences play in animal and laboratory animal sciences and animal production.

7. Allow students greater flexibility in choosing courses involving contemporary issues such as animal well-being, environmental management of livestock, use of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), etc.

The chair suggested the introduction of contemporary courses into the curriculum in 2001. However, with the dwindling faculty numbers it was understandable that the department resolved to revisit this topical issue after new faculty are hired.

8. The faculty should give serious consideration to the development of a senior capstone course to foster integration of disciplines and develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

The need for a capstone course was raised and discussed at a departmental faculty meeting in 2001. As presented under recommendation #7, faculty think that this noble goal would be difficult to implement with declining faculty numbers. The department will revisit this issue during the fall semester 2003.