

## Program Discontinuation Proposal

### **1. Name of the administrator, department or group originating the proposal.**

Department of Agricultural Education and Studies.

On December 5, 2001, AGEDS faculty voted to discontinue the program. There were no dissenting votes.

### **2. Name of the program.**

Professional Agriculture - Undergraduate Program

### **3. Name of the department that administers the program.**

Department of Agricultural Education and Studies

### **4. Rationale for discontinuation.**

The ProAg B.S. off-campus distance delivery program was approved in 1990 and had its first graduate in 1991. The original intent was to provide a means for farmers in Iowa to complete their B.S. degree programs without attending classes in Ames. Initially face-to-face workshops, courses and other meetings were held at various locations around Iowa. With the development of the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) in 1995, a different approach was taken to deliver these courses. Additionally, videotape and web-based delivery mechanisms have been used. It should be noted that 42% of the 38 current enrollees are not residents of Iowa. The original intent of the program is not being served to the extent envisioned in 1990.

In contrast to the Master of Agriculture ProAg Program, the B.S. program has never developed the strength and commitment needed for a viable program. The program was intended to focus on the last two years of the B.S. program. The first two years of work were to be completed at colleges near the clients. Unfortunately, this has not always worked well. Many clients either want all their course work from ISU or find it difficult to transfer course credits from local colleges to ISU. Additionally, many departments are having difficulty offering the needed courses for the clients. Consequently getting the courses needed for graduation is becoming increasingly difficult. The availability of instructors, appropriate courses, and the lack of sufficient incentives to teach these courses makes it extremely difficult to meet the needs of this program in general and the students in particular.

This program requires a very significant investment of time and energy, yet annually produces very few graduates. Students rarely complete the program that is on record in the ISU Bulletin. A liberal policy of substituting courses and waiving requirements has been followed over the years. This is at least partly because all courses required in the program are not offered off-

campus and those that are may or may not be offered on a predictable basis. According to the academic advisor assigned to the program, students find it extremely difficult to satisfy certain general education requirements (U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives, for example) because of the final 32 credits rule. They find it equally if not more difficult to satisfy College of Agriculture proficiency requirements in communications, problem-solving, and the environment.

Many of the students who enroll in the program are not committed to completing it in a timely fashion. Many take years to complete the program and require very high maintenance for the results that come out of the program annually.

**5. Availability of similar programs at other Regents’ institutions.**

Neither the University of Iowa nor the University of Northern Iowa offer similar programs.

**6. Enrollment data for current and previous four years.**

*ProAg B.S. degree program enrollment data for current and previous four years.*

Year	Number of Students		
	Men	Women	Total
Current	20 (53%)	18	38
2000-2001	26 (59%)	18	44
1999-2000	25 (64%)	14	39
1998-1999	31 (74%)	11	42
1997-1998	26 (72%)	10	36

***Note: 42% (n=16) of the students currently enrolled in the program are not residents of Iowa, but do not pay out of state tuition.***

*ProAg B. S. degree program graduates by year.*

Year	Number of Graduates
1991	1
1992	2
1993	4
1994	2
1995	3
1996	0
1997	1
1998	7
1999	5
2000	1
2001	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>28</b>

Follow-up studies of ProAg graduates done in 1993 and 2000 indicate that students take an average of six years to complete their degree after enrolling in ProAg.

*Fall 2001 distance education courses available to ProAg B.S. degree program students.*

Course	Number of ProAg B.S. students*	Total Course enrollment
AGEDS 315	5	13
AGEDS 311/590	11	40
AGRON 206	3	15
SOC 415	7	15
HORT 493B	3	37
HORT 493A	6	47
GEN 308/508	1	15
ENT 201	2	19
ECON 563	4	17
ECON 101	0	19
AGRON 541	6	19

\* A specific ProAg student may be enrolled in more than one course.

## **7. Information required by the Board of Regents:**

### **a. Survey of current students.**

A questionnaire was sent to the 38 students who were currently enrolled in the B.S. Degree Program in Professional Agriculture on December 20, 2001. A response deadline of January 9, 2002 was communicated to students in the cover letter. Data analysis began on January 14, 2002 at which time 24 (63%) students had completed and returned the questionnaire. Open ended comments to each of the survey questions are appended to this document.

#### Impact on current students' academic plans

A majority (58.3%, n = 14) of the respondents indicated that discontinuation of the program would have no impact on their academic plans. Several students offered comments on the impact of the proposal. Some expressed a concern as to whether they would be able to finish the program by 2007. Some also expressed concern about whether sufficient course offerings would be available.

#### Number of students wishing to complete the program

Most (91.7%, n = 22) of the respondents expressed interest in completing the program even if plans to discontinue are approved.

#### Number of students wishing to transfer to other programs at ISU

Only 12.5% (n = 3) of the respondents expressed interest in transferring to another program at ISU if this program discontinuation proposal were approved.

#### Number of students wishing to leave ISU

Only 25% (n = 6) of the respondents would consider leaving ISU if this program discontinuation proposal were approved.

#### Graduation plans

Students were asked to report their planned graduation date as a final question on the questionnaire. Of the 19 students who reported a planned graduation date, only one was later than 2007. Under this discontinuation proposal, summer 2007 would be the latest date at which students currently in the program would be able to graduate with a B.S. Degree in Professional Agriculture.

**b. On the basis of the data collected, a projection of faculty and staff needed to accommodate student needs in order to maintain program quality, and both a time frame for, and the costs of program phase-out.**

Currently, one staff member serves as the academic advisor to the program. This staff member's work in this area is supervised by the coordinator of the Pro Ag Program. The Masters Program is being retained. It is very successful. The B.S. program has not fulfilled its promise to be a well articulated program with community colleges. The problem is not the community colleges. Too many off-campus students want to by pass the community college and take the whole four-year program via distance from ISU. This is, of course, not feasible or even possible. Consequently many people unnecessarily prolong or drag out the program. This is a luxury we can no longer afford.

**c. A description of the amount of money, if any, that would become available for redirection under the institutions' strategic plan as a result of the discontinuance of the program.**

No money will become available for redirection. However, some faculty and staff time within the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies will be refocused on higher priority curriculum areas. Nearly 45% of one advisor's time is used to accommodate a very low number

of people actively involved in this undergraduate off-campus degree program. Staff time could be better used to concentrate on problems and concerns of students in our regular programs.

**d. A description of the impact the discontinuance will have on other programs offered by and the overall mission of the institution.**

We anticipate no negative impacts on other programs or the institutional mission. However, there may be some positive impact on other programs in the department. Academic advising of on-campus undergraduates will be enhanced because of the increased availability of an advisor's time (40-45%) that has been heavily invested in dealing with a very low number of students. Off-campus undergraduate students demand a lot of time commitment over a very long period of time.

**e. A description of the impact on minorities and women.**

A majority of students who have enrolled in the program since 1997 were male. The proportion of students who were male ranged from 53% currently to 74% in the 1998-1999 academic year. No minorities were enrolled in the degree program in the 1997-1998 and the 1998-1999 academic years. Two students of minority status were enrolled in the program during the 1999-2000 and the 2000-2001 academic years. Two students of minority status are currently enrolled in the program. Anyone currently in the program will be allowed to complete the program if they plan and do complete it in a reasonable length of time. This time period would expire in the summer of 2007.

**f. A description of the potential faculty and staff reductions or reassignments that would result from discontinuance.**

No faculty and staff reduction would result from discontinuance.

Eventually, the advisor currently assigned to the program will be reassigned to on-campus undergraduate students in Agricultural Studies. All advising loads in the department (faculty and staff) are now much too high. Eventual reassignment of one staff member will help adjust advising loads accordingly.

**g. A description of how existing facilities and equipment freed by discontinuance would be utilized.**

No facilities and equipment would be freed up by discontinuing the program. However, storage of files will be enhanced. Additionally, mail, telephone, and e-mail correspondence will be reduced considerably.

## **Student Comments - Program Discontinuation Proposal - BS Degree Program**

Note: Numbers alongside respondent comments connect the comment back to a specific question on the survey.  
Questions included:

1. Would the proposed discontinuation of the BS Degree Program in Professional Agriculture as described in the cover letter impact your academic plans?

If we proceed with our plans to discontinue the program:

2. Would you be interested in completing the program?

3. Would you prefer to transfer to another program at ISU?

4. Would you consider leaving ISU?

5. When do you plan to graduate?

### **Respondent 2**

1. Probably not, if it allows me to graduate by 2007.

4. Probably not.

### **Respondent 3**

1. I continue taking courses towards a BS in Pro Ag. I have 50 credits to go. I work full-time and farm. I am unable to come on-campus to take courses. I would like to see this degree program continue!

2. But it would be hard to finish by 2007 without quitting my job.

3. If I did, I would have to be sure it could be finished off-campus.

4. As a last resort.

### **Respondent 4**

1. I should be able to finish by December 2003. I enjoy the program, and would hate to see it discontinued. It is a nice way to get an education, since I "try" to apply it to my farm and the job place.

2. I want to finish this program instead of switching majors or even schools.

3. Yes, but I would have to pay the out-of-state tuition. I would look into the Ag Studies major. I like that I pay in-state tuition right now.

4. I don't want to leave ISU, even if that means paying out-of-state tuition. ISU is a great place to learn and excel yourself. I want to learn about agriculture. And I plan on graduating from ISU. I want to be able to graduate from this institution.

### **Respondent 6**

1. When looking at other degrees this one allows me to use most if not all my credits so far. I would like a Degree in Agriculture if possible.

3. Not unless I have too.

### **Respondent 9**

1. It puts pressure on me to finish by Summer 2007 - how can I be sure the courses I need will be offered through extended degree throughout the time remaining? I can only take 1 course per semester, so I have to wait for courses to "come around" through extended degree. How does discontinuing this degree fall into the mission of Land Grant Universities?

**Respondent 10**

1. It would make it very difficult if not impossible for me to finish my degree given my current job.

**Respondent 11**

1. I think this program was a wonderful idea. It gives people who need to work their way through school to get a good 4-yr education for one of the nation's leading agricultural colleges. I am a student that fails in that category. I am able to work full-time to support myself and take classes to get a four-year BS degree with the convenience of taking classes at one's own pace. I hope I will graduate by the summer of 2007. If not, I guess I will have an incomplete degree, which would really not do me much good.
2. I would be very interested in completing the program.
3. I would like to stay in the Professional Agriculture program.
4. If I would not be able to complete my degree, I would find another school with a distance ag program and complete it there.

**Respondent 12**

1. I don't know, if the courses I need are not offered I will have a hard time completing my degree. I am disappointed that you will discontinue this program. I thought it was a great program and because of it I recently accepted a job with the USDA that I would not have gotten otherwise. My new job is as a Plant and Animal Quarantine Officer.

**Respondent 13**

1. This would not effect my plans as long as it was not implemented before the date given in the letter. I would hope that the MA program would stay intact so that I could move into this later on.

**Respondent 14**

1. Yes, only if the courses were unavailable for me to complete by the Summer 2007 deadline. I will have approximately 64+ credits by May 2002. Once I received by Associates I had intended to not go full-time in the following semesters. I would need to know what's offered so I didn't miss a class I needed to get my ag degree.
2. I have a young family and the opportunity to take classes on-line, and not having to drive great distances for quality course work.
3. What are the other options available? (I am interested in Agriculture, Horticulture, Conservation and farming practices.)
4. Only if it were possible for me to continue similar program thru NWMSU or other university on-line.

**Respondent 15**

1. I had planned on receiving my bachelors in this manner. Very convenient with my schedule, considering my work and so forth. Not sure how quickly I would actually be able to finish, that is by 2007. Will have to talk to Helen. Of course was considering dropping anyway due to disappointment in program.



2. Possibly.
3. Probably not.
4. Have not had good luck anyway.

**Respondent 17**

1. But only because I will graduate before 2007.
2. I will complete the program as long as the classes that I need are still available.
4. If the classes that I need or want to take are not offered any more, I would have to start looking at other colleges.

**Respondent 18**

Please see letter attached to survey.

**Respondent 20**

1. If you plan to discontinue the above degree program I hope the number of classes offered stay the same or increase during its remaining time. Also, I would hope you would be more lax on the number of transfer credits one can transfer in or eliminate the restriction on number of credits you must take.
2. What other distance degrees are offered through ISU?
3. If no distance programs, no.

**Respondent 21**

1. I don't know. Having just been accepted into the program this month, this comes as quite a shock.
2. Assuming that you would continue to offer the classes I need and want to take.
3. Only if it were an off-campus program and in a closely relaxed field.

**Respondent 22**

1. I decided to return to college at ISU for the reason that I could complete my agriculture degree on-line. I would not move to finish a degree on-campus.

**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY  
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

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**INTEROFFICE COMMUNICATION**

**DATE:** February 20, 2002

**TO:** Dr. Robert Martin  
Head, Agricultural Education & Studies

**FROM:** Catherine E. Woteki  
Dean, College of Agriculture

**RE:** Program Discontinuance Proposal

I support the recommendation for the discontinuance of the following two programs in the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies:

1. Secondary major and Minor in Agricultural Extension Education
2. Pro Ag Distance Education Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture

These programs would be discontinued by Fall 2007. Please proceed following the ISU guidelines for discontinuance of programs.

CEW:jfs