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OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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MEMORANDUM

DATE: April 15, 2002

TO: Board of Regents

FROM: Ken Moore, Chair
Master of Science in Agronomy

RE: Post-Audit Review of the Master of Science in Agronomy
distance education program.

The Master of Science in Agronomy distance education program was developed to serve the educational needs of professionals working in agronomy and related fields. It was specifically designed to provide this audience of learners with the technical knowledge and professional skills necessary to be successful in a highly competitive industry.

The Master of Science in Agronomy program exemplifies the engagement envisioned in the university strategic plan. The desired outcomes for the curriculum were developed through interaction with clients of the Department of Agronomy. Each course in the curriculum was developed specifically for the program and designed to provide the identified outcomes. The delivery methods were designed to enable working professionals access to the program while maintaining employment and are an outstanding example of student-centered learning approaches. The program is a leader in the application of asynchronous learning technologies in distance education and is contributing significantly to the scholarship of teaching and learning at a distance. Most importantly, the program is fulfilling the fundamental Land-Grant promise of providing educational opportunity to the people of Iowa.

Considerable effort has been made to ensure that progress towards meeting specified outcomes and educational goals have been met. Early in the development of the program a unique, and eventually a very productive, collaboration was developed with the Center for Technology in Learning and Teaching in the College of Education. A Program Evaluation Team led by Dr. Ann Thompson, professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, was developed to assess effectiveness of instructional materials and delivery technologies. The team has used a variety of evaluation instruments to assess performance including standardized course evaluations, learning journals, and focus groups with students, stakeholders, and faculty members. The result has been a documented improvement in performance for each year the program has been offered.

Interest in the program has exceeded expectations. Enrollment trends in the Master of Science in Agronomy continue to be positive. The program is having a major impact on graduate enrollment in the Department of Agronomy and College of Agriculture. Based on present and anticipated future success, it is my pleasure to recommend that the program be continued.

Attached is the post-audit report for the program. Included in the appendices are electronic copies of three reports pertinent to the review of the program. Printed versions of these reports are available on request.