

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO TERMINATE THE MASTER OF AGRICULTURE IN PROFESSIONAL
AGRICULTURE AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Action Requested: Consider recommending approval of the request by Iowa State University to terminate the Master of Agriculture in Professional Agriculture in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Executive Summary: The request to terminate the Program resulted from significantly reduced interest in the program. This request was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

Background:

- ◇ Description of program. The Master of Agriculture Program in Professional Agriculture began in 1981. It was designed for off-campus students interested in production agriculture and the businesses that serve production agriculture; at the time, it was the only distance learning program offered by the college. This non-thesis program is available to students who want to pursue graduate study in agriculture without taking formal coursework on campus. It is administered by the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies whose focus is the teaching and learning processes in a variety of settings including education, extension, public and private agencies, and business/industry training and development.
- ◇ History of program. In the early years, the program was guided by a supervisory committee of faculty from departments across the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The program has had a coordinator and a staff member assigned to manage the records and provide student support.
- ◇ Reason for proposed termination. Since the inception of the program, departments in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences have developed and supported new distance learning programs. They no longer provide representatives to the professional agriculture supervisory committee and fewer courses have been available to students in the program. Staff are no longer dedicated to the program. Faculty and staff in the Department of Agricultural Education and Studies manage the interdepartmental program as an add-on to their departmental responsibilities. The expertise of the faculty in the department is not compatible with administering a broad-based technical agriculture degree program at the graduate level.

Currently, students have a wider range of program options. There are now graduate programs available through distance learning in Agricultural Education, Agronomy, Community Development, Plant Breeding, and Seed Technology and Business. There is also a graduate certificate program in Food Safety and Defense. These programs are more compatible with the missions of the respective disciplines in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Therefore, lack of faculty interest and the availability of other program options for students led the college to request terminating this program.

- ◇ Impact of proposed termination on programming. Termination of the program may lead to increased enrollments in more focused graduate programs available in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Distance education students have alternative options available to meet their needs for graduate education in agriculture. Termination of the program is not expected to have a negative impact on the overall mission of the university.
- ◇ Three-year trend of enrollments and graduations. Between 2008 and 2012, there were 95 students enrolled; the annual average enrollment was 19 students. Currently there are 26 students enrolled in the professional agriculture program; approximately half of the students are women. Between 2009 and 2013, there were 32 graduates; the annual average number of graduates was 6.
- ◇ Impact on resources. No faculty or staff reductions are anticipated as a result of terminating the program. However, faculty and staff will be able to devote additional time and effort to delivering the newer, more focused distance education programs in agriculture that are more consistent with their departmental missions. A .25 FTE will be redirected to support expanding the Master of Science Program in Agricultural Education; there is an anticipated enrollment growth projected with the addition of an industry option for that program.
- ◇ Impact on workforce. The proposed program termination is not expected to affect the workforce needs of the state because alternative programs are available at ISU to serve the needs of Iowans.
- ◇ Alternative programming. There is no graduate program in Professional Agriculture available elsewhere in Iowa. However, students who have an interest in this type of distance education program can be served through a variety of other programs in the College.
- ◇ Effect on current students. Currently, there are 26 students in the program. These students were surveyed to determine their intention to complete the program. Twenty-four students (82.8%) responded that planned to complete the program. They will have the opportunity to complete their degree under the requirements of the program. The required coursework will be offered for a five-year period.
- ◇ Effective date of termination. If the proposed program termination is approved by the Board, suspension of admissions to the program will become effective immediately and will be reflected on the department website and University Catalog. Termination of the program will become effective upon completion of the program by the students who are currently enrolled and/or a determination is made about their intention to complete the program within a five-year period.