

## **Re-examining the Growth of Leadership Programs in Departments of Agricultural Education**

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### **Introduction**

In 1991 Brown and Fritz (1994) conducted a national study, which established the breadth of leadership and human resource management/development (HRM/D) offerings in post-secondary departments of agricultural education. Since this study, the call for leadership and human resource management/development inclusion in informal and formal education contexts has heightened. Have these calls impacted the offering of leadership and HRM/D courses by departments of agricultural education, faculty redirection and hiring, and other related issues?

### **Methodology**

During spring 2000 heads and chairs of departments listed in the 1999-2000 AAAE Directory (Dyer, 1999) were contacted by e-mail. Text introducing the purpose of the study, directions for participation and assurance of confidentiality accompanied a slightly modified version of the Brown and Fritz (1994) 22-item instrument. Respondents were encouraged to respond electronically (or to fax the completed instrument) within two weeks. Two non-respondent e-mail follow-ups were conducted. This procedure yielded 41 respondents or 45% of the 92 departments contacted. Data were coded and entered into Microsoft Excel. Frequencies, means and standard deviations were calculated for the 22 items.

### **Results**

Twenty-eight of the 41 respondents said their department currently offered leadership and (HRM/D) courses. Those 13 departments not offering leadership and HRM/D courses cited lack of resources (7) as the primary reason for not offering courses, while lack of student demand was cited by two respondents, and institutional impediments and resistance, and discontinuation of these courses were cited by one department each.

Two of the departments not currently offering leadership and HRM/D courses plan to offer the courses in the future while eight others have no plans of offering the courses in the future. For those departments offering leadership and HRM/D courses, more than half (15) require the courses of their department majors. They have been offering these courses for an average of 17 years (range 2- 50 years, mode 15 years).

Course offerings were relatively evenly split between undergraduate and graduate levels. Respondents reported offering 38 undergraduate, 34 graduate and 10 cross listed (undergraduate/graduate) courses. Ten respondents reported offering one course (nine undergraduate, one both undergraduate and graduate) while one respondent reported his/her department offered twelve different leadership and HRM/D courses.

Twenty-five percent of the respondents (7) said students from outside of the college of agriculture take undergraduate-level leadership and HRM/D courses, 43% responded occasionally (12), while 32% responded almost never (9). However, only 4% (2) respondents said students from outside of the college of agriculture take graduate-level leadership and HRM/D courses, 36% said occasionally and 60% said almost never.

Nearly half of the respondents (14) are not considering adding a faculty member in the area of leadership and HRM/D, while seven plan to hire faculty to teach these courses in the next several years, four plan to hire a faculty member with a majority appointment in another area of their program with less than half of his/her teaching responsibilities in this area, and two plan to redirect appointments of faculty members to teach leadership and HRM/D courses.

Faculty currently teaching undergraduate leadership and HRM/D courses are predominately in the professorial ranks (40% assistant professors, 36% associate professors, and 2% full professors) with one department responding it employed an adjunct (part-time) faculty. Faculty currently teaching graduate leadership and HRM/D courses are in the professorial ranks as well (27% assistant professors, 41% associate professors, 32% full professors).

The majority of the respondents (19) offer leadership and HRM/D training in settings other- than-for-credit courses, with workshops (19) being the dominate setting, followed by individual consulting projects (11) and Cooperative Extension activities (8).

### **Implications/Future Plans**

Preliminary analysis of these findings indicate the Agricultural Education profession needs to continue tracking the extent of offerings of leadership and HRM/D courses nationally. Perhaps this tracking could be modeled after the Agricultural Education teacher supply and demand report. Because of the broad involvement of departments nationally, it is recommended that the American Association of Agricultural Educators support leadership and HRM/D through professional development and research. (The researchers intend to continue analysis of the findings that will enhance the implications of and future plans for this study.)

## References

Brown, F. W. & Fritz, S. M. (1994). Determining the breadth of leadership and human resource management/development offerings in post-secondary departments of agricultural education. Journal of Agricultural Education, 35(3), 1-5.

Dyer, James E. (Ed.). (1999). AAAE directory of university faculty in agricultural education. U.S. Department of Education: Washington, DC.