Equine Science and Management
Program Review
University of Kentucky
September 28-30, 2014

Submitted By:
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The Equine Science and Management (ESM) Review Committee met with ESM program members, students, stakeholders, and College of Agriculture, Food and Environment (CAFE) administration from Sunday, September 28th to Tuesday, September 30th. The site-visit agenda and self-study documents are available at http://administration.ca.uky.edu/faculty/reviews. The committee developed the following report after analyzing all of the information provided in the self-study documents and information from committee interviews. The committee also confirmed the validity of the self-study document and noted that three major concerns were articulated:

- **With the continued growth of the undergraduate degree program, we are near the “breaking point” of being able to simultaneously provide a high-quality and hands-on education to our students given our current resource constraints.** Faculty members take on additional sections of classes to accommodate our students in their already-full efforts; burn out and morale are an additional concern as we all continue to do more with less. The faculty who teach have a significant portion of their DOE in some other activity, such as research or extension (only one faculty member has a 100% teaching appointment). As a result, even if faculty are able to teach more sections to accommodate higher numbers of students, they must sacrifice other important areas in which they contribute to the college and university.

- **Even with the addition of the Academic Coordinator and the new advising strategy, growing enrollment numbers have faculty advisors advising large (and sometimes growing) numbers of students.**

- **Classroom constraints extend beyond the ESMA courses, being present college- and university-wide, and are beyond our control. However, we feel obligated to accommodate the students in our major courses in a timely manner. With the current facilities, we are unable to do so.**

These concerns were echoed by a number of individuals interviewed by the committee which corroborates their importance. The self-study document was considered especially important by those committee members not directly affiliated with the University of Kentucky. It was thorough, while still being concise. No discrepancies were noted between information provided in the self-study documents and information gleaned from in person meetings during the review.
Summary of Committee Recommendations:

- The review committee recommends that the current administrative position of the ESM program within CAFE structure be evaluated. Specifically is the program positioned appropriately for continued and future success through its association with the experiment station versus the office of academic programs?
- It is recommended that the existing structure and alignment of the committees and councils within ESM be streamlined and/or consolidated with defined roles for individuals. Also the Equine Programs Organizational Chart is unduly complicated and convoluted, a simpler chart is desirable.
- A strategic plan for the ESM program should be developed with long-term goals and measureable benchmarks. (It is recognized that a number of assessment tools have been implemented to begin this process. However, due to the general youth of the program, there is insufficient data in many cases to decide if benchmarks are being met.) This plan should emphasize a “managed growth” approach to the ESM program in order to protect the quality of the program and avoid outstripping resources.
  - Perhaps a balance should be considered between the desire to increase the number of students in the program and the necessity to maintain the quality of the program. An additional factor would be to ensure that there are sufficient number of opportunities for gainful employment for ESM graduates.
- New course(s) should be created that emphasize business/accounting education as well as presentation/communication skills and interactive skills. The new graduation composition and communication requirement (GCCR) may assist with this recommendation. The committee also recommends that a course in "alphabet organization" be considered to provide insight into the horse industry.
- The review committee recommends that current CAFE administration allocate additional resources to the ESM program in the form of TAs and faculty lines in Animal and Food Science or Veterinary Science. Consideration should also be given in the near future for the addition of an additional Academic Coordinator position.
To accommodate the continued growth in the program additional classroom and farm facilities will be necessary. Perhaps some of the classroom facilities could come from the soon to be vacated BGCTC facilities, but farm facilities are a more difficult issue and best dealt with through the experiment station. Of special note, is the need for restroom and locker-room facilities at the Teaching Pavilion. This appears to be a limitation both for teaching and outreach activities. Though it was not presented as a particular concern, the time involved in students commuting to and from the horse unit would appear to be of concern for the long term. However, the option of busing was mentioned to be a considerable expense.

The review committee recommends that the ESM steering committee review the appropriateness of the ESM courses and make adjustments to minimize redundancy and increase the rigor of upper level classes. Also the non-major restriction in Specialty Support Classes should be eliminated.

- It was brought up several times that assessing students’ skill levels would be helpful in most appropriately placing students in the hands-on horses classes that are available. However it was also noted that even students who “place out” of these classes would likely want to avail themselves to the hands-on opportunities anyway. Personnel limitations at this time would likely restrict the opportunity to teach multiple sections at varying levels of skill.
- It is of some concern that students are entering upper-level courses without the desired pre-requisites, potentially forcing ESM instruction to become remedial.
- Some concern was noted associated with students’ feeling the need to graduate early. This may demonstrate that they are not fully aware of the added benefit of taking advantage of the learning processes available to them only in this program.

The ESM Director position should be considered as a full time appointment as the program continues to expand, and the Co-Director position should have a more well-defined set of responsibilities as well as an administrative stipend.
• The ESM faculty should consider developing a University Scholars Program in conjunction with the graduate programs in the Departments of Animal and Food Science and Veterinary Science.

• Efforts should be made to promote the tremendous equine reproduction opportunities available to undergraduates at the Gluck Center and for students with an interest in the science of horses, other well-known research programs in Veterinary Sciences, Animal and Food Sciences and Plant and Soil Sciences.

• At the moment almost all advising is performed by either the academic coordinator or by faculty in Animal and Food Sciences. Spreading the advising load among faculty in other departments would enhance the interdisciplinary nature of the program, particularly in regard to students who focus on the business of the equine industry rather than the science of managing horses.

Recommendations Comments:

The review committee’s recommendations are meant to provide the ESM Program with both an external and internal perspective regarding the quality and effectiveness of its programs, services, resources, processes, and operations. Without exception the committee felt that from some very modest beginnings the ESM Program has grown to become one of the most successful Equine Programs at a national level, due in large part to the support and investments by CAFE administration, and the dedication of faculty and staff in the ESM Program. As the program continues to grow more support and investments will be necessary, especially if the quality of the program is to advance along with its size. This will require a “managed growth” approach from all involved. Although some uncertainty exists about future funding models for the program, in lieu of the new budget model at the University of Kentucky, the interdisciplinary nature of the ESM Program is a strength which may contribute to its future success. However, horse programs are inherently expensive and the department of Animal and Food Science continues to support the ESM Program by subsidizing the Horse Unit. This does create a concern over whether or not new budget model will enhance equine program opportunities or actually create problems.

Summary of Program Strengths:
• Comprehensive program with outstanding breadth and depth in equine education.

• Outstanding curriculum recently modified that allows students to select between four areas of emphasis; Equine Science, Equine Business, Community Leadership and Development, and Forages & Pastures.

• Location in Lexington at the University of Kentucky. Many would call this the heart of horse country, particularly for the Thoroughbred industry; close location to a wide variety of horse industry opportunities, both for hands-on and more peripheral industry positions.

• Strong and amazing level of industry support indicative of the high level of stakeholder commitment to and interest in the ESM Program.

• Dedicated, well trained and passionate faculty and staff with outstanding commitment to student success through personal attention during advising, coursework and internships.

• Interdisciplinary engagement with multiple units and departments with college-wide support.

**Program Strengths Comments:**

The Equine Science and Management Program is one of only a few undergraduate programs in the United States that offers students the opportunity to graduate with a standalone degree in Equine Science. The program is truly interdisciplinary with faculty participation in teaching and committee work from several departments in CAFE.

Growth in enrollment has steadily increased since the degree became official in 2009 and is already poised to become the largest major in CAFE. The popularity of this multi-disciplinary major in CAFE which attracts students nationally and fits well with the proposed university budget model for growth and graduation rates, easily justifies university level administrative support (and attention) for infrastructure development. These needs are certainly evident across CAFE in classroom space, faculty support, laboratory and farm facilities which have been outlined in the report, but could be emphasized in the program's enhancing role for
the University of Kentucky’s profile. Located in the epicenter of the horse industry, this program provides a unique opportunity in supplying the next generation of leaders in its own backyard with stakeholders engaged in its continued success.