



UK Equine Programs

2022 Periodic Program Review

Review Committee site visit April 17 - 21, 2022

Review committee Report Submitted on May 10, 2022

Review Committee

Dr. Barry Barnett	Committee Chair and Chair of UK Agricultural Economics Department
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Executive Summary

The University of Kentucky's Ag Equine Programs has the personnel, facilities, and industry support to be a globally recognized leader in equine instruction, research, and Extension. Collaborating with equine professionals around the world will enhance the diversity of perspectives and experiences that are the foundation of the teaching, research, and Extension responsibilities of this program. The program is well positioned to grow in the international arena.

Areas of concern include instructional resources that are stretched to the limit, farm facilities for equine instruction, and some areas of research, that need to be expanded (while other equine farm research facilities seem to be underutilized), and the limited number of total equine research outputs (e.g., journal articles and research reports) that are translated into Extension or industry outreach communications.

Brief description of review committee process

- Prior to the review, all committee members received and studied the Self-study Report submitted by UK Ag Equine Programs.
- The committee received their charge from Dean Cox and Dr. Lee, Associate Dean for Faculty Resources, Planning and Assessment, conducted listening sessions with departmental faculty, staff, students, alumni, stakeholders, and administration from April 17 – 21.
- On Thursday, April 21, the committee held working sessions and drafted talking points about the program's strengths, challenges, opportunities, and potential committee recommendations.
- Immediately following the working sessions, the committee presented draft recommendations to Dean Cox and CAFE leadership.
- The Committee Chair, Dr. Barry Barnett, worked with the committee to prepare this report, which all members of the committee have approved.

We begin this report with a brief list of program strengths, challenges, and opportunities that the committee observed through review of the self-study and listening sessions. This is followed by committee recommendations for the program to consider and act on over the upcoming six-year program review cycle.

Program Analysis

Instruction

Strengths

- Large population of out-of-state students that participate in the instructional program and take advantage of the program's location relative to the equine industry. A large amount of ESMA alumni stay in Kentucky and work within the industry post-graduation.
- Alumni recognize program faculty and staff role in the positive progression of their lives and career choices.
- Internships, career networking, industry support for students all strong and seen as a major contributor to the success of the current program.
- Emphasis on professional development/employability. "Path to Professionalism" program, Career Fair, etc.
- Students are exposed to a wide variety of opportunities in the industry.
- Students feel a sense of ownership over the program, and feel it is invested in their success.
- Students describe feeling a sense of community within the ESMA program.
- Critical skills are integrated across the curriculum, i.e. communications, team work, and DEI. See EEQ certification.

Challenges

- Teaching resources are stretched to a point that is unsustainable. Overload teaching and undergrad peer instruction are already used, so no additional margin is available.
 - Example: Faculty, particularly in Animal & Food Science, are teaching at or beyond the limits of their appointments, risking research and Extension efforts, and allowing no flexibility to handle unforeseen circumstances.
 - Example: If core people leave or go on sabbatical, a crisis will result. There is no redundancy in critical staff positions.
- Realistic expectations of the work/life balance for those seeking careers as equine professionals, understanding that this balance may be very different depending on the particular sector of the industry.
- Industry stakeholders indicate that there may be a lack of understanding by upper administration as to the stresses placed on teaching resources by a program that has grown so rapidly. Academic administrators might say that industry stakeholders do not understand the resources needed to support this program.
- Professional development aspect of undergraduate program emphasizes work/life balance, but the students sense that faculty/staff do not model what they teach in this regard.
- Program student-to-staff ratio is far too large. The workload on those employees is almost beyond realistic when it comes to personal and academic advising.
- Flexibility of curriculum and large student numbers create advising challenges.
- A limited number of TA tuition waivers are available, but they are difficult to use without stipend support.

Opportunities

- TAs, Part-Time Instructors, Instructors, Lecturers, short-term increases in faculty teaching DOE to support teaching efforts. Veterinary Science may be a natural partner for these additional teaching DOE.
- International collaborations for equine programs; for example, equine MBA with French counterpart.
- New or renewed departmental partnerships, i.e. Ag & Biosystems Engineering - welding, engines, arena design, and construction; Plant and Soil Sciences - forage courses, turf expertise; and Gluck - new faculty w/ teaching appointments.
- Consider making greater utilization of the “University Scholars” program to emphasize graduate training in equine areas and help indirectly support the financial component of their graduate degree.
- Consider making better utilization of the farm facilities for equine courses. Students expressed wanting more opportunities for hands-on horse experience.
- Encourage current equine students to visit with high school students and promote Ag Equine Programs and career opportunities in the equine industry.

Research

Strengths

- Faculty across multiple departments that are contributing towards equine research results in a breadth of results and application that set UK apart.
- Monthly Equine Forum - a mechanism for interdisciplinary communication and collaboration amongst equine researchers.

Challenges

- Animal & Food Science equine faculty with research appointments are challenged to effectively conduct research due to resource allocations (time, facilities, animals) towards teaching.
- Graduate student metrics are unclear. Communication about graduate student success unclear.
- Some farm facilities are underutilized while others are overused and need expansion.
- Limited opportunities for federally funded equine research (e.g., NSF or NIFA).

Opportunities

- A small grant program that provides funding for small pilot grants could help to stimulate interdisciplinary research collaborations.
- Climate change emphasis presents an opportunity for further collaboration between equine researchers in Plant & Soil Science and Animal & Food Science.
- Equine is not a keyword checkbox on the eIAF for proposals. Having that added would increase the visibility of equine research campus-wide to understand breadth and facilitate collaborations.
- Engage young alumni that are immersed in the industry to partner on the latest research and development projects as they relate to the industry.

Extension

Strengths

- Adult Extension programs such as Horse College, Equine Farm and Facilities Expo, Pastures Please, and Hay Field Days are helping horse owners attain the knowledge needed to improve horse health and performance.
- ANR agent working group very strong and active.
- County 4-H Extension programs across the state are very active with excellent leadership as noted by activities in the report.
- Extension specialists are very active and responsive with agents and clientele across the state.
- Communication footprint is large for a small team. Current distribution channels target a variety of stakeholders.
- UK's strength in Plant & Soil Sciences, particularly applied forage research and extension, is a doorway to many horse operations across the state.

Challenges

- Some concern from Extension that Ag Equine Programs takes credit for equine activities that would be happening anyway.
- Extension specialist time is stretched extremely thin trying to cover large course loads and provide support to agents across the state.
- Numerous CAFE research projects being conducted that are not translated and communicated through Extension channels.
- Need for more Extension information to be developed for social media, YouTube videos etc. for use at the county level.

Opportunities

- Integrating county agents more in Extension equine programming. Improving bi-directional communication to the benefit of those on campus and across the state.
- Greater Equine Programs brand recognition as a partner with UK Extension may lead to greater public support, both financial and political.
- Financial support for undergraduate extension interns, perhaps one-half summer stipend. These internships could go through county agents and Extension specialists.
- Solicit ideas from the equine agent working group for relevant and up-to-date articles in the Equine Science Review and other publications.
- Expand successful Extension programs like Pastures Please and Farm and Facilities Expo to other regions of the state.
- Replicate current successful programs such as Mercer County Backcountry Horsemen.
- Encourage current equine students to take part in job-shadowing with county ANR and 4-H agents.
- Extension efforts also provide an opportunity to promote the advantages of the UK Equine undergraduate program in comparison to programs offered at other universities in the state.
- Expanded efforts for faculty associated with Equine Programs to train county agents and other stakeholders within their areas of expertise (such as pasture evaluation, dry lots, erosion control, facility construction, farm layout, equine nutrition, equine health, toxicology etc.)

Facilities

Strengths

- Extensive land and animal resources.
- Newer renovations to some farm facilities have significantly improved facility usefulness.
- Access for students to a variety of facilities.

Challenges

- Some farm facilities are under-utilized or in need of renovation.
- Undergraduate equine classes place strain on facilities and crowd out research.
- Transportation to and from farm facility.

Opportunities

- All season (climate controlled) intensive research barn at Maine Chance.
- Explore opportunities to optimize use/sharing of farm facilities (e.g. Veterinary Science & Animal & Food Science).

Administration

Strengths

- Ag Equine Programs appears to have a cohesive and productive administrative team with a passion and dedication to the program mission.
- Staff feel empowered in their areas of responsibility.
- Staff described a collegial work environment and stated that they feel supported by colleagues.

Challenges

- Staff are overtaxed and often wearing many hats (teaching, administration, coordination, event planning, career advising, academic advising).
- Part-time director. Turn-over in directors can create lack of continuity and changing unit priorities.

Opportunities

- Incentivize faculty participation in Equine Programs - for example, have resources to reimburse departments for additional Equine Programs faculty teaching DOE.
- As leaders in equine programming in Kentucky, USA and world, help other universities and organizations move forward.
- Make intentional efforts to increase numbers of underrepresented students in Equine Programs. This could be facilitated through youth programs like 4-H and FFA.

Committee Recommendations

- 1. The brand “Ag Equine Programs” needs further definition. 6-12mo (UK SP Goals II3, TTA4 and MPOC2)**
 - a. Update mission statement to be inclusive of current teaching, extension, and research efforts. Consider if the “Ag” is necessary in the name. It may be time to allow for expansion beyond just CAFE.
 - b. The Senior Director of Philanthropy & Equine Philanthropy Director need to know main priorities for UK Ag Equine Programs 5, 10 & 20 years into future

- 2. Additional teaching/advising resources or else limit enrollment. 6mo-2 yr (UK SP Goals SF1&2, SF4, and OP1)**
 - a. TAs, Part-Time Instructors, Lecturers, short-term increases in faculty teaching DOE.
 - b. Director of career development/lecturer.
 - c. Help academic departments with financial costs associated with maintaining horses, personnel costs associated with the ESMA major.

- 3. Full-time Staff Administrative Director 2-3yr (Feeds all UK SP Goals by enhancing unit-level operations)**

- 4. Create and maintain inventory of funding sources, facilities, and personnel that support equine research/teaching/extension. 6mo (UK SP Goal OP4, II1-3, and TTA2)**
 - a. Add “Equine” keyword checkbox on proposal routing (eIAF) to increase visibility of equine research campus-wide to understand breadth and to facilitate collaborations.

- 5. Discretionary funds to incentivize participation in multidisciplinary research and extension efforts. 6mo-3yr (seed grants, extension materials distribution, etc.). (UK SP Goal OP4)**
 - a. Example: Expose students to extension by developing stipend options for summer internships with county agents and specialists.
 - b. Example: Drive future collaborative efforts and rewarding existing exemplary multidisciplinary efforts.

- c. Example: Provide support for Extension associates so that grant funds are not needed to fund these positions (this is how the Pasture Evaluation option is currently funded),
 - d. Example: Graduate student stipends (TA and RA).
- 6. Advocate capital infrastructure investments 3-5yr that support equine science productivity and foster shared facilities 6mo-1yr and collaboration across land-grant research, extension, and teaching missions. (UK SP Goal II3)**
 - a. Example: Work to develop a compelling vision and resource plan for a nutrition research building, considering public funds, grants and philanthropy.
 - b. Example: Medium size classrooms.
 - c. Example: Optimize equine farm facility utilization across units.
- 7. Better tailor and distribute communication efforts across multiple channels to effectively communicate with stakeholders across Kentucky, nationally, and internationally. 6mo - 2yr (UK SP Goal TTA4)**
 - a. Example: Equine Science Review to extension agents in multiple useable formats.
 - b. Additional content for public deployment (short form, easy to understand, flyers, multimedia, social media).
- 8. Ag Equine Programs should develop a University Scholars Program in conjunction with the graduate programs in collaborating/member academic departments. 1 - 3yr (UK SP Goal SF4)**
 - a. Example of possible collaborations: Agricultural Economics, Veterinary Science, Animal & Food Sciences, Plant & Soil Science, and programs in other colleges.
- 9. Intentionally incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion at multiple levels. 6mo - 2yr. (UK SP Goals SF1 and MPOC1-4)**
 - a. For example: Intentional efforts to hire and recruit lecturers and graduate students from underrepresented groups. These are models for undergraduates and youth and help to make a more welcoming culture in the program.
 - b. For example: Youth programs, i.e. 4-H and FFA, in the equine areas can make an intentional effort to reach out to underrepresented groups.
 - c. Deliberately weaving DEI into the curriculum. For example, inviting guest lecturers that are from underrepresented groups.

10. Develop a more recognized international footprint for Ag Equine Programs. 1 - 5 yrs. (UK SP Goals II1-3)

- a. International exchange and/or collaborative efforts. Examples are currently developing in France, Ireland, and other countries.
- b. This international effort can be administered through Ag Equine Programs.