

PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION DOCTORAL DEGREE
PROGRAM AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
FOR THE PERIOD 1981 TO 1998

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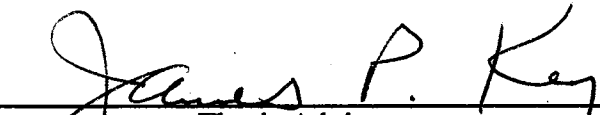
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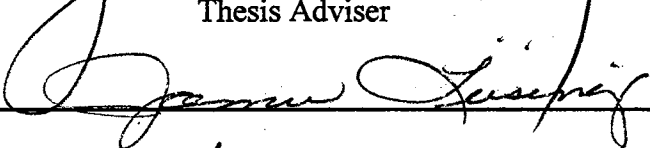
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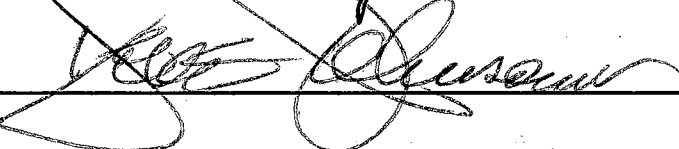
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University began granting doctoral degrees in 1960. Since that time, 118 graduates have completed the doctoral degree program. From 1960 to 1997 the program only offered the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), however, starting in the fall of 1997 the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) replaced the Ed.D. More emphasis is being placed on research in the Ph.D. program.

With the change to the Ph.D. program in Agricultural Education at OSU, and the increasing demand for accountability in higher education, it has become more important to carefully examine the program. By examining the strengths and weaknesses of a program, one can assess the program effectiveness. One means of assessing the overall program merit is a follow-up study of graduates of the program.

Evaluation is the basis for decision-making, and as such, includes description, perceptions, and collection of pertinent data on which to make judgements (Kull & Bailey, 1993). One researcher, Shatte (1970), summed up the importance for evaluation:

It is self-evident that if a social system is to maintain a moving equilibrium it must periodically submit all of its procedures and programs to a rigorous evaluation by all of the personality systems comprising that social system (p.27).

In the evaluation process there are many sources of information to use when appraising the effectiveness of an education program. However, the former student is one of the most useful resources for information in evaluation. Cardozier (1967) pointed out:

Former graduates, having the experience of testing themselves in post-college responsibilities, are in an excellent position to appraise critically certain segments of the program. Perhaps no other group can provide a more valid appraisal to serve as a basis for improving the program.

Former students know better than anyone else does how well prepared they were to make an acceptable beginning as well as advance in a profession. They are the logical source of information for determining the strength and weakness of the program. Perhaps no other group can provide a more valid appraisal to serve as a basis for improving the program (p. 327).

Relevant research indicates that follow-up studies are an important component of any educational evaluation. The Department of Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University has had a policy of attempting to provide students a quality program experience. When providing a quality educational experience, it is important to utilize graduates' perceptions to determine strengths and weaknesses of the program. Walker (1974), indicated that follow-up studies should be performed at 3, 5, and 10 year intervals to gather perceptions of students for improvement of the program.

Statement of the Problem

Conducting a follow-up study of the doctoral graduates in the Agricultural Education graduate program at Oklahoma State University has not been accomplished in the last 20 years. Performing a follow-up study of the perceptions of graduates can provide beneficial data to the department of Agricultural Education at OSU for program improvement (Best & Kahn, 1986). Ascertaining the perceptions of the graduates will

be valuable for program planning, course improvement, and improvement of teachers and administration. In fact, program evaluation is essential for any educational program for planning and program improvement according to Wentling (1980). Potential users of the findings will be the instructors, students, and administrators in the department.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a follow-up study of doctoral graduates from 1981 to 1998 of the Agricultural Education program at Oklahoma State University to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program. The time frame of 1981 to 1998 was utilized to allow the researcher a significant sample size from which to obtain useable data.

Objectives of the Study

The following were the objectives of the study:

1. To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.
2. To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.
3. To identify perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.
4. To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.

5. To determine factors influencing students to select the Agricultural Education doctoral program at OSU.
6. To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

Significance of the Study

Evaluation is a necessary step in all efforts to improve graduate programs. Without an assessment of what one is doing or why one is doing it, and what the actual effects of attempted services are, no informed correction or strengthening of a program can be undertaken (Best & Kahn, 1986).

An in-depth analysis of the perceptions of graduates of the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University will provide valuable information to the department on how well it is meeting its needs. Insight may be provided on the value of the program to its graduates and an information base can be established for administrators, teachers and students. In addition, this study will provide a channel for communications between the graduates and the faculty regarding the extent of the program's effectiveness in preparing individuals for their careers. To be more specific, this study is significant in that it will:

1. Identify career patterns and demographic data of graduates.
2. Provide an information base for educators interested in the evaluation process.

3. Assist in the future improvement of the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University.

Assumptions

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were accepted:

1. The responses, perceptions, and opinions, obtained from the questionnaire were answered truthfully and with considerable care and deliberation.
2. The judgments of students completing the program constitutes one of the most reliable sources of obtaining information regarding strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education at OSU.
3. That students who have graduated from the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education from OSU could accurately recall their experiences and make judgments related to their values.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

1. The scope of this study included all graduates of the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education from 1981 to 1998.
2. The results of this study were completely dependent on the responses of doctoral degree program graduates.
3. No attempt was made to compare aspects of the program by different time periods.

4. No attempt was made to compare domestic with international graduates of the program.

Definition of Terms

OSU – Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma.

Graduate – A person completing the requirements for a Doctoral Degree in Agricultural Education from OSU.

Department – Agricultural Education Department at OSU.

Program – Doctoral Degree Program in Agricultural Education at OSU.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The primary purpose of this chapter was to review the literature relating to the appraisal of graduate schools and educational programs with a particular reference to methodologies that are similar to those employed in this study. The chapter is divided into four sections: (1) Educational program evaluation; (2) Follow-up studies of agriculture graduates at other universities; (3) Follow-up studies of agricultural graduates at Oklahoma State University; and (4) Summary.

Educational Program Evaluation

Historically, the idea of educational evaluation has been around for centuries. In fact, for approximately nine centuries, since European universities began, three major types of assessment have existed in the colleges of the Western world. The first type of assessment utilized were those in which teachers assessed the students. The second type has been those where Western society has assessed its institutions of higher education. The third type used involves students that have assessed their teachers and their

institutions (Harcleroad, 1971, p. 3). It is the third type of assessment mentioned by Harcleroad that was the focus of this study.

Students have long assessed the quality of the education they receive. In the early years of American colleges, students' lives were strictly mandated by the colleges they attended. Everything about college life was tightly controlled based on a combination of scholarship and conduct. As a result of these harsh restrictions, students found it necessary to rebel against their institutions.

One researcher, Donald Williams (1971), described students' assessments in the early years of institutions in a variety of ways including: boycotting classes, harassing professors, forcing out college presidents, and rioting. At many colleges, violent student reactions rose in intensity and frequency. Harvard, for instance, had nine serious rebellions between 1776 and 1843. Also, Yale experienced several rebellions in 1830 (Hughes, 1925). Of course, the purpose of this behavior was to bring about fundamental change in colleges and in many instances, such rebellion did achieve this objective.

With the frequency of student revolt in the late nineteenth century, administrators and faculty came to realize that a more formalized form of assessment should be used. By the early twentieth century, many colleges had started to utilize assessment as a means for change in their institutions. Barnard College during the academic year 1921-1922 utilized a twelve-member student committee to make a complete survey, review and examination of the colleges educational process (Hughes, 1925). Colleges such as Barnard began a program of student ratings of individual faculty members and their courses. Harvard University initiated student evaluations in 1924. (Williams, 1971),

while other types of faculty-originated questionnaires have arisen at most all institutions across the United States.

Over the years, as assessment became more important, educational evaluation became an essential aspect of all educational institutions. As Worthen and Sanders (1987, p. 3-4.) stated, “without careful, systematic inquiry into the effectiveness of either current school practices or new programs, many changes occurring in education become little more than random adoption of faddish innovations.” We live in a society that demands accountability and production. Public image is important because it influences alumni, potential students, and peer-review committees. It is no surprise that administrators, faculty members, and others who play a part in higher education are concerned with their institutions’ public images and, hence prestige. One of the most beneficial ways to help with the image of the university is to ultimately do a good job preparing students for the job world (Stauffer, 1980). Secondly, universities have been concerned with what students think about their programs. According, to many researchers the best way to determine what students think about a program is a follow-up study (Best & Kahn, 1986), (Stauffer, 1980), (Cardozier, 1967), (Shatte, 1970), (Walker, 1974) (Wentling, 1980), and (Heard, 1981).

Early research on educational evaluation was conducted by Troyer and Pace (1944). In this research, Troyer and Pace explained that evaluation is a necessary process of judging the effectiveness of an educational experience. They concluded that the process included gathering and summarizing evidence pertaining to the extent to which educational values were being attained. Troyer and Pace reasoned that several questions

needed to be answered. One question involved the success of the educational program itself. Another question concerned whether teachers, administrators, and students were making value judgements about the effectiveness of their procedures in attainment of their goals. In essence, Troyer and Pace (1944), indicated that evaluation is a continuous ongoing process in education, whether it is recognized or not.

More recent studies have been conducted concerning educational evaluation. One researcher, Walker (1974), indicated that graduates are the end products of the educational process and are uniquely suited to determine the more stable and long run range effects of an instructional program. Graduates are also the best source to discuss the salient strengths and weaknesses of an institution and its various departments. In addition, Best and Kahn (1986, p. 88), stated, "the follow-up study is concerned with what has happened to students and what has been the impact upon them by the institution and its program. By examining their opinions, one may get some idea of the adequacy or inadequacy of the institution's program." Further research by Wentling (1980) suggested five major reasons why educational programs should be evaluated:

1. To aid in planning.
2. To aid in decision making.
3. To upgrade program personnel.
4. To improve programs for students.
5. To ensure the accountability of expenditures.

Follow-up studies also provide important information about the strengths and weaknesses of the program because graduates are in the best position to judge such

characteristics, according to Wentling (1980). It is evident that he strongly believed that educational evaluation is a necessity for improving the quality of educational programming.

Another researcher, Heard (1981), concluded that a follow-up study is the best way to obtain data from former students. In fact, Heard indicated that the roles of follow-up studies in program evaluation are as follows:

1. Program evaluation is vitally important to the decision-making process and to ensure that a quality education is maintained.
2. Follow-up studies of program graduates can provide the graduates with an opportunity to express their perceptions of educational programs, in terms of strengths, weaknesses, and overall value of the program.
3. The follow-up study is a useful tool in determining the accountability of educational programs.

Studies such as Heard's (1981) and more recent research evidence the importance of a follow-up study as a means of evaluation. Another study by Klocke (1986) noted that the follow-up study provides graduates with an opportunity to express their overall satisfaction with a program. Klocke cites Stuffelbeam and Shrinkfield (1985) who indicated that ".....the important purpose of evaluation is not to prove but to disprove." She then added, "evaluation should be used as a tool to help make programs better for the people they are intended to serve."

Related research concerning the value of follow-up studies on graduates of programs have further demonstrated their use in program review and improvement. A

study by Anderson and Ball (1987) listed five major purposes of evaluation of educational programs to:

1. Contribute to decisions about program installation.
2. Contribute to decisions about program continuation, expansion, or certification.
3. Contribute to decisions about program modifications.
4. Obtain evidence to rally support for a program.
5. Contribute to the understanding of basic psychology, social and other processes.

Above all, most researchers stress the idea that a carefully planned and systematic process will tremendously aid the program itself.

Follow-up Studies of Agriculture Graduates at

Other Universities

A review of follow-up studies of other agriculture programs was undertaken to assist in a better understanding of trends that may be present in this study. The literature review helped identify variables that would be of interest to this study.

There have been a number of follow-up studies of the agricultural and agricultural education programs in the United States. Chlapowski (1987) conducted a 15-year follow-up of master's degree graduates from the Department of Vocational Education at the University of Wyoming. The studies' major conclusions included:

1. The graduates of the program were generally satisfied with most aspects of their current positions.
2. The graduates perceived that they had been adequately prepared for their occupations.
3. Graduates perceived the inadequacy of the facilities to be the major concern.
4. The graduates desired more skill development in the area of public relations.
5. The graduates expressed a need for more continued contacts with the faculty after graduation.
6. The graduates desired more emphasis on placement after graduation.

A recent study in 1990 by McGhee and Cheek involved a follow-up study of Agricultural Education graduates of the University of Florida. The researchers drew the following conclusions:

1. Overall, graduates were satisfied with the adequacy of training and the level of course work in all areas with the exception of technical courses.
2. Overall, graduates were satisfied with the level of training in the areas of pre-professional course work and they felt agricultural education course work should be maintained.

A study by Riesenburger (1981), of the College of Agriculture graduates at the University of Idaho, examined the perceptions of graduates as to the areas that should be emphasized in the curriculum. Riesenburger made the following conclusions:

1. Overall, the graduates felt more emphasis should be placed on decision-making ability, accounting, business and economics, and agricultural marketing.
2. With respect to skills, the graduates felt more emphasis should be placed on oral and written communications skills.
3. Humanities and social sciences were the only areas graduates felt the emphasis should remain the same.

An additional study of College of Agriculture graduates was performed by Byler and Lamberth (1988) at the University of Tennessee. The researchers made the following conclusions:

1. The majority of graduates (61 percent) held jobs related to their majors with management, education, and sales as the most common job tasks.
2. Overall, graduates rated aspects of their education, communication and leadership training first, while aspects of horticulture and agricultural education were rated the lowest.
3. Graduates felt that curriculum improvements needed to take place in science, math, and computer science skills.

Similarly a study by Chizek (1983) concerned a follow-up of Agricultural Education graduates from Iowa State University. The research sought to determine perceptions of the adequacy of the training in the agricultural education curriculum and student teaching. Chizek (1983) utilized questionnaires from 539 graduates from 1964 to 1981 to formulate his findings. The following are the conclusions he postulated:

1. The majority of graduates (61.4 percent) entered the teaching profession upon graduation; however, only 18.6 percent remained in teaching.
2. The graduates who were presently teaching rated the effectiveness of the program lower than those graduates who entered other occupations.
3. A majority of graduates (64 percent) felt the adequacy of training in agricultural education to be excellent.
4. Graduates felt the number of hours in communications and agricultural economics should be increased.

Muller (1990) conducted another study at Iowa State University. His study focused on the perceptions of Agricultural Education B.S. graduates from 1980 to 1989.

The researcher drew the following conclusions:

1. No significant difference between graduates from 1980 to 1989 who had chosen to teach and those who had chosen not to teach as measured by ACT scores, high school rank, and the cumulative grade point average.
2. Graduates were generally satisfied with the overall teacher education program, but found that the teacher education program was not adequately preparing graduates in all areas related to professional teacher education.
3. Graduates perceived a need for additional training in developing and planning instruction, developing interpersonal relationships, and addressing and dealing with learning problems in the classroom.

Evaluating relevant follow-up studies from other universities aided in the design and development of this study. Additionally, relating similar findings helped in the

overall understanding of the importance of follow-up studies as an effective evaluative tool for colleges.

Follow-up Studies of Agriculture Graduates

At Oklahoma State University

A review of follow-up studies conducted by various programs at Oklahoma State University served to identify variables used in this study. In addition, it provided a comparison of the perceptions of graduates from various areas.

Several follow-up studies have been performed at Oklahoma State University within the Department of Agricultural Education. Three studies in particular have focused on the perceptions of graduates concerning their program experience while at OSU.

Powers performed the first follow-up study in 1958. This masters thesis submitted to the Department of Agricultural Education concerned the College of Agriculture. The study was entitled, "Former Students' Opinions Concerning the Relations of Their College Training to Their Careers." Powers mailed questionnaires to 3,000 graduates of the College of Agriculture at OSU and received 509 usable responses. Powers' masters thesis came to the following conclusions:

1. Graduates of the College of Agriculture at Oklahoma State University were gratified in regard to opinions as to the adequacy of their major course work in preparation for their occupations.

2. Professors, advisors, and others had a significant part in helping the graduates make decisions about college and occupations.
3. The most important factor contributing to their first job after graduating was contacts made at the college.
4. Graduates concluded that their fathers did not have the proper information necessary to advise them in selecting occupations.
5. The most important factor for advancement in their present occupation was the ability to get along with others.

The study by Powers was beneficial in that it provided a good design and relevant data for this study.

Paret (1991) conducted a follow-up study of female graduates of the College of Agriculture at OSU from 1985 to 1989. Similar in design to the study by Powers, Paret sought to determine adequacy of training in their various programs with only female graduates' perceptions utilized. The study utilized 192 female graduates (76 percent) from the College of Agriculture at OSU. Paret found that:

1. Females tended to favor majors in agricultural communications, general agriculture, animal science, pre-veterinary medicine, horticulture and landscape architecture.
2. A lower percentage of females choose agricultural education, agronomy and biochemistry and no females majored in agricultural engineering, mechanized agriculture, and plant pathology.

3. Paret found that some female graduates encountered difficulty in finding employment in their major field of study.
4. Most females felt positive about their college education and rated the quality of the course content as good.
5. The female B.S. graduates felt that their program had a moderate to great benefit to them in their careers.

The only follow-up study in the Department of Agricultural Education to deal directly with the perceptions of graduates of the Department was performed in 1976 by Angkasith. The title of the study was "An Evaluation of the Agricultural Education Program at Oklahoma State University by International Students Graduating During the Period 1960 to 1976." Angkasith randomly sampled a population of 254 graduates utilizing 67 graduates for the mailing of questionnaires coming from 16 different countries. The following were the major conclusions observed:

1. Both the programming office of the Agency for International Development and the Head of the Department of Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University were recognized as persons who greatly influenced the decision of many international students to attend OSU.
2. It was concluded that the administration within the Department of Agricultural Education had developed to a point of providing a good atmosphere for foreign student study. Also, the administration had put forth much effort in assuring success of the program for international students.

3. In terms of providing effective advisement and counseling, faculty and staff in the Agricultural Education Department were considered to be well qualified by the respondents.
4. Courses and reference material of the Department were considered to be well organized and properly sequenced.
5. Instructors were considered to be qualified by the graduates, and instructional methods were considered to be up to date by the instructors.
6. The non-academic activities provided at Oklahoma State University were considered to be adequate by the international students.

The study performed by Angkasith contributed greatly to the construction and design of the instrument utilized in this study.

There have been other follow-up studies in the Department of Agricultural Education at OSU that have dealt with topics other than graduates perceptions of their program experience. One such study was conducted by Riley in 1982 and concerned a follow-up study of selected graduates and their employers from three secondary agricultural training centers in Jamaica. This master's thesis by Riley concluded that:

1. The agricultural training centers were achieving their goals in terms of providing leadership, and assistance.
2. The curriculum seemed to be serving the needs of the graduates and employers.
3. Employers were satisfied with the performance of graduates.

4. Graduates were frustrated by not being able to attend an institution of higher education.

Another study was conducted by Cooper in 1994 and concerned a follow-up study of graduates perceptions of the Oklahoma Agricultural Leadership Program (OALP).

The researcher determined that:

1. The typical OALP graduate was a white, married male who lived on a farm and held a B.S. degree.
2. A limited number of qualified females had been through the program.
3. Respondents felt the objectives of OALP to be highly appropriate.
4. Respondents were highly involved in a variety of community activities and associations.
5. Respondents felt the program directly impacted their leadership skills and development.

Cooper's extensive study was well designed and indicated the overall strength of the OALP program.

Summary

Commonality is evidenced through all the studies reviewed in this chapter. First, assessment of college and university programs is almost as old as the institutions themselves. Students have seldom been quiet when disgruntled with their educational services. Second, there have been many attempts to evaluate all aspects of higher institutions of learning on a variety of measures. Third, studies have been designed to

appraise agricultural educational programs, which focus on the graduates of these programs, and these studies have yielded similar results. The specific literature reviewed highlighted the importance of conducting a follow-up study on graduates of educational programs to determine their perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of the program. It is obvious that follow-up studies can provide a wealth information to assist educators in making decisions related to many aspects of the educational experience.

Prospective degree candidates are interested in the reputation and quality of program of the department they wish to do their graduate work at. In fact, with the investment in time and money expected to receive an advanced degree graduates expect a quality program experience. Institutions, such as OSU, have long recognized this importance and have come to view their graduates' evaluations of their programs as vital to the success of such programs. Many important decisions for departmental improvements are predicated upon the results of studies similar to the one undertaken by this researcher.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This Chapter described the methods and procedures employed by the researcher in the conduct of this study. The design and primary research activity was a descriptive study utilizing a mailed questionnaire sent to doctoral graduates of the Department of Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University from 1981 to 1998 to determine their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The intent of this study was to obtain information related to the perceptions of the graduates concerning the doctoral degree program experience. The objectives of the study were the following:

1. To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.
2. To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.
3. To identify perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.

4. To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.
5. To determine factors influencing students to select the Agricultural Education doctoral program at OSU.
6. To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

To collect the necessary data for the study the author had to accomplish the following tasks:

1. Determine the population for the study.
2. Locate addresses of the population.
3. Develop the instrument for collecting the data.
4. Select the method for the analysis of the data.

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Federal regulations and Oklahoma State University policy require review and approval of all studies that involve the utilization of human subjects before investigators can begin their research. The Oklahoma State University Office of University Research Services and the IRB conduct this review to protect the rights and welfare of human subject involved in biomedical and behavioral research. This research project was assigned the project number: AG-98-050.

Population of the Study

The population for the study was all of the graduates of the doctoral program in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University from 1981 to 1998. This time frame was selected to insure a significant number of graduates to utilize for the study. The doctoral graduates were identified by utilizing the graduate college, the OSU Alumni Association, and faculty of the Agricultural Education Department at Oklahoma State University. This number totaled 77. Of the 77 total graduates, 56 were domestic and 21 were international upon entrance into the program. Of the 21 international graduates, 12 currently live internationally and nine currently live domestically.

Design of the Instrument

This study was based on a descriptive design and every effort was made to keep the essential items in the questionnaire clear, sharply defined, and easily understood. The instrument was developed utilizing concepts developed by Angkasith (1976), Matthews (1979), Odom (1979), Heathcott, (1974), and Woody (1982). The questionnaire contained five sections pertaining to graduate perceptions of program experience; research experience; overall evaluation; written comments; reasons for selecting OSU; and background and occupational information.

The respondents were assured that their opinions would be held in confidence. Additionally, surveys were coded to identify those who had returned questionnaires. For confidentiality purposes, codes were known only to the researcher and the actual

questionnaire did not contain names of participants. In formulating the statements used on the instrument, the investigator related relevant literature pertinent to this study.

Pilot Study

To test for the construct and content validity of the questionnaire, ten randomly selected graduates from the 77 identified were mailed the questionnaire along with an evaluation sheet which contained the questions: (1) Was the survey too long? (2) Was the survey easy to read? (3) Were there any questions that were vague, or difficult to understand? (4) Did the survey address all the important areas relevant to the doctoral program? and (5) Additional comments. Also, the respondents were encouraged to respond on the survey in any area, which they perceived to need revision. Furthermore, reliability of the instrument was calculated utilizing Cronbach's Alpha test. The test indicated a reliability coefficient of .879, therefore, it was concluded that the questionnaire was reliable.

With all ten pilot surveys returned, the researcher, along with his graduate committee, acting as a panel of experts, reviewed the results of the pilot study. The only revision deemed necessary on the original survey was to add question number seven on Section VI of the questionnaire that concerned background and occupational information of graduates. Question seven simply asked graduates that if their position was neither academic nor administrative to relate the type of position, job responsibilities, and reason for working in the position. With a minimal change in the original survey it was

concluded that the pilot study responses could be utilized for data collection in the final draft of the study.

Collection of Data

The finalized survey was developed and sent via mail on September 7, 1998. The survey was sent to the 67 graduates who had not been utilized in the pilot study. The follow-up mailing was performed on September 28, 1998. The first two mailings were accompanied by a questionnaire explaining the importance of the study. A third reminder was sent on October 12, 1998. An additional mailing was sent on December 21, 1998 to selected international students who had not yet returned their questionnaires. Also, an additional effort to collect data was aided by Dr. James Key, who collected three surveys by e-mail and one by fax. After all efforts to collect data were completed, a total of 45 usable responses were secured.

Response Rate

The sample population contained 77 total graduates. Twenty one (21) of these graduates were international students and 56 were domestic students. A total response rate of 58.44 percent was obtained or 45 total usable responses. By category, 43 responses were obtained from graduates living domestically and two responses were obtained from graduates living internationally. Of the 43 graduates currently living domestically, nine were international students. Of the nine international students living domestically, five questionnaires were obtained for a response rate of 55.55 percent. Of

the 56 domestic graduates, 35 questionnaires were obtained for a response rate of 60.71 percent. Finally, of the twelve international graduates still living abroad only two responses were obtained or a return rate of 16.67 percent.

Early respondents were compared to late respondents and no difference in response was found.

Analysis of Data

The data was compiled and tabulated in a manner designed to disclose findings related to the purpose and objectives of the study. Since the research effort was primarily descriptive in nature, statistics such as averages, percentages, and mean responses were selected as an appropriate means for describing the findings.

Two sections of the questionnaire concerning program experience and overall evaluation contained a five-point Likert-like scale, which was a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The values for the Likert-like scale were as follows: 1.0 for strongly disagree; 2.0 for disagree; 3.0 for neutral; 4.0 for agree; and 5.0 for strongly agree.

Section IV of the questionnaire contained written comments regarding graduates' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program and suggested areas of improvement. To analyze this data the researcher related comments of strengths, weaknesses, and suggested areas of improvement to the following categories: (1) Courses; (2) Instructors and Instruction; (3) Financial Aid; (4) Location; (5) Research;

(6) Unfamiliarity with the program; and (6) Location. The categories were developed in accordance with major components of the survey.

Data concerning background and occupational information was placed in tables where descriptive statistics were utilized to determine numbers, frequencies, and averages.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The information presented in this chapter represented the data that was attained from the questionnaire sent to the doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at Oklahoma State University for the period 1981 to 1998. The study was aimed at identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the program as well as achievements attained by the graduates. Additionally, the data was organized according to and corresponding with the objectives of the study.

Findings Related to Objectives

Objective 1

To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.

Questionnaire: Section I –Program Experience – The following data illustrated information related to the academic component of the doctoral graduates program experience. This data included perceptions of course work, instructors and instruction, advisement, financial aid, and the written and comprehensive examinations.

The data in Table 1 indicated responses of graduates concerning the course work component of the program experience. All five questions attained at least an average rating of 4.00 (agree) on a five-point Likert-like scale. The question stating that “there was a sufficient number and variety of the courses available in the department” received the highest rating of 4.22 (agree) on the five-point Likert-like scale, demonstrating that 39 (86.67 percent) of the graduates at least agreed with this statement. The statement indicating that “overall, the courses in the department were beneficial and helpful in my plan of study,” received an average rating of 4.25 (agree). The lowest average rating of 4.00 (agree) was given to the statement “courses in the department were well organized and properly sequenced.” Only one response was found that strongly disagreed with any of the five statements concerning the course work component of the program experience.

The data in Table 2 concerning perceptions of graduates about the instructors and instruction attained at least an average rating of 4.34 (agree) on a five-point Likert-like scale. This indicates that the majority of graduates either strongly agreed or agreed that the instructors and the instruction were effective in the program. The highest average rating of 4.61 (strongly agree) or 26 (57.78 percent) of the graduates, strongly agreed with the statement, “instructors were fair and objective in evaluating their classes.” At the same time, the lowest rating of 4.34 (agree) was given to the statement, “instructors used relevant and pertinent material relevant to their classes” still agreed. No disagree or strongly disagree responses were found on any of the four statements pertaining to instructors and instruction.

TABLE 1
 PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE
 COURSE WORK COMPONENT OF THE
 DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM
 EXPERIENCE

Statement	Student Response										Tot .	Ave.	Rank	Category
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
1. There was a sufficient number and variety of research methods and statistics courses available to me.	21	46.67	18	40.00	2	4.44	3	6.67	1	2.22	45	4.22	1	A
2. There was a sufficient number and variety of courses available in my specialization area.	18	40.00	19	42.22	2	4.44	6	13.33	0	0.00	45	4.09	3	A
3. There was a sufficient number and variety of courses in the department available to me.	15	33.33	22	48.89	4	8.89	4	8.89	0	0.00	45	4.07	4	A
4. Courses in the department were well organized and properly sequenced.	13	28.89	21	46.67	9	20.00	2	4.44	0	0.00	45	4.00	5	A
5. Overall, the courses in the department were beneficial and helpful in my plan of study.	17	37.78	23	51.11	2	4.44	2	4.44	0	0.00	45	4.25	2	A

SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

TABLE 2
 PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE
 INSTRUCTORS AND INSTRUCTION COMPONENT
 OF THE DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM
 EXPERIENCE

Statement	Student Response										Tot.	Ave.	Rank	Category
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
1. Instructors were fair and objective in evaluating their classes.	26	57.78	16	35.55	3	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.61	1	SA
2. Instructors utilized relevant and pertinent material related to their class.	15	33.33	26	57.78	4	8.89	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.34	4	A
3. Professors clearly explained the goals and objectives of their courses and seminars.	22	48.89	19	42.22	4	8.89	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.50	2	SA
4. Overall, the instructors in the department were effective, qualified and prepared.	22	48.89	18	40.00	5	11.11	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.48	3	A

SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

The data in Table 3 concerning perceptions of graduates concerning the advisement component of the doctoral degree program experience attained the highest ratings of all five categories related to the academic component of the program experience. Each statement attained at least an average rating of 4.60 (strongly agree) on a five-point Likert-like scale. This placed the category of statements concerning advisement above all other academic components.

The highest rating of 4.78 (strongly agree) was given to the statement, “advisors and faculty members were friendly and cooperative in working with students.” In fact, 38 (84.44 percent) of the graduates strongly agreed with this statement. The lowest rating of 4.60 (strongly agreed) was given to the statement, “advisement from my graduate committee was effective and beneficial.” Additionally, no responses were found that either disagreed or strongly disagreed with any of the five statements.

The data in Table 4 concerning the financial aid component of the doctoral degree program experience received the lowest average ratings of all five categories concerning the academic component of the program experience. The highest average rating of 3.83 (agree) was given to the statements, “assistantships were readily available to graduate students,” and “out-of-state fee waivers were readily available to graduate students.” In fact, 57.8 percent of the graduates either agreed or strongly agreed with these statements. The lowest rating of 3.03 (agree) was given to the statement, “fellowships were readily available in the university.” According to the data, 27 graduates (60.0 percent) gave this statement a neutral response. Overall, the financial aid component received the only

TABLE 3

PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE
ADVISEMENT COMPONENT OF THE
DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM
EXPERIENCE

Statement	Student Response										Tot.	Ave.	Rank	Category
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
1. Advisors and faculty members made themselves available to students outside of class.	34	75.55	9	20.00	2	4.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.71	2	SA
2. Advisors and faculty members were friendly and cooperative in working with students.	38	84.44	4	8.89	3	6.67	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.78	1	SA
3. Advisors and faculty members made an effort to become acquainted with all students.	32	71.11	11	24.44	2	4.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.67	3	SA
4. Advisement from my graduate committee was effective and beneficial.	29	64.44	14	31.11	2	4.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.60	5	SA
5. Overall, advisement in the department was effective and beneficial.	31	68.89	12	26.67	2	4.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.64	4	SA

SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

TABLE 4
 PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE
 FINANCIAL AID COMPONENT OF THE
 DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM
 EXPERIENCE

Statement	Student Response										Tot.	Ave.	Rank	Category
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
1. Assistantship were readily available to graduate students.	14	31.11	14	31.11	5	11.11	5	11.11	2	4.44	45	3.83	1	A
2. In-state fee waivers were readily available to graduate students.	14	31.11	8	17.78	12	26.67	4	8.89	2	4.44	45	3.70	2	A
3. Out-of-state fee waivers were readily available to graduate students.	15	33.33	9	20.00	12	26.67	2	4.44	2	4.44	45	3.83	1	A
4. Fellowships were readily available in the university.	2	4.44	5	11.11	27	60.00	4	8.89	2	4.44	45	3.03	4	A
5. Overall, the financial aid available in the department was sufficient and beneficial in covering the cost of attending graduate school.	7	15.56	13	28.89	9	20.00	8	17.78	3	6.67	45	3.33	3	A

SA=5, A=4, N=3, D=2, SD=1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

neutral responses of any of the five categories concerning the academic component of the program experience.

The data in Table 5 concerning the written and oral comprehensive exams component of the program experience attained at least an average rating of 3.68 (agree) on a five-point Likert-like scale. The first statement, “the written comprehensive examination helped me synthesize information and bring together all components of my course work,” received the highest average rating of 3.70 (agree). Thirty (34) graduates (75.55 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. The second statement, “the oral comprehensive examination was beneficial and aided in my overall understanding of the various areas of study,” received a rating of 3.68 (agree).

Objective 2

To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.

Questionnaire: Section II – Research Experience – The purpose of objective three was to measure perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program. This section of the questionnaire contained three questions related to the research component of the program experience. From these three questions three tables were constructed for analysis of the data.

The data in Table 6 clearly indicated that the majority of graduates selected their dissertation topic with the help of their advisor. According to the respondents, 31 graduates (68.89 percent) selected the category, “you and your advisor jointly selected it.”

TABLE 5

PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE
WRITTEN AND ORAL COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS
COMPONENT OF THE DOCTORAL DEGREE
PROGRAM EXPERIENCE

Statement	Student Response										Tot.	Ave.	Rank	Category
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
1. The written comprehensive examination helped me synthesize information and bring together all components of my course work.	15	33.33	19	42.22	3	6.67	7	15.56	1	2.22	45	3.70	1	A
2. The oral comprehensive examination was beneficial and aided in my overall understanding and comprehension of the various areas of study	16	35.56	18	40.00	4	8.89	6	13.33	1	2.22	45	3.68	2	A

SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

The next highest category, with seven respondents (15.56 percent), indicated they selected their dissertation topic independently. Ranking third with five responses (11.11 percent) was, “your advisor selected it,” and ranking fourth with two responses (4.44 percent) was the category, “other.” The two responses listed in the “other” category were; “myself and my committee;” and “State Department of Education.” No responses were indicated for the selection, “a member of your dissertation committee selected it.”

TABLE 6

HOW GRADUATES SELECTED THEIR
DISSERTATION TOPIC

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. You selected it independently.	7	15.56%	2
b. You and your advisor jointly selected it.	31	68.89%	1
c. Your advisor selected it.	5	11.11%	3
d. A member of your dissertation committee selected it.	0	0.00%	5
e. Other (specify)	2	4.44%	4
Total	45		

The data in Table 7 specifies that 29 respondents (64.44 percent) did their dissertation research “at the University.” This data would point out that the majority of graduates did their research while at the University. The second largest response of 14 (31.11 percent), did their research “not at the University but in close contact with their

dissertation advisor.” The final category, “not at the university and not in close contact with my dissertation advisor,” only had two responses (4.44 percent).

TABLE 7
WHERE DISSERTATION RESEARCH WAS
CONDUCTED BY GRADUATES

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. At the University.	29	64.44%	1
b. Not at the University but in close contact with my dissertation adviser.	14	31.11%	2
c. Not at the University and not in close contact with my dissertation adviser.	2	4.44%	3
Total	45		

The data in Table 8 reflects a tight grouping of responses on the perception of how graduates feel about their dissertation in terms of an important piece of research. An average mean response of 2.22 was attained. This would indicate an average response of somewhat satisfied. Responses indicated, 16 graduates (35.56 percent) are very satisfied with their dissertation as an important piece of research. In addition, 12 graduates (26.67 percent) were satisfied, and 10 graduates (22.22 percent) were somewhat satisfied with their dissertation as a piece of research. This would mean that a large majority of graduates 38 (84.44 percent), are at least satisfied, somewhat satisfied, or very satisfied

with their dissertation as piece of research. Seven graduates (15.56 percent) were somewhat dissatisfied, but no respondents indicated they were very dissatisfied with their dissertation as an important piece of research.

TABLE 8
PERCEPTIONS OF HOW GRADUATES FEEL ABOUT
DISSERTATION IN TERMS OF AN IMPORTANT
PIECE OF RESEARCH

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
1. Very Satisfied	16	35.56%	1
2. Somewhat Satisfied	10	22.22%	3
3. Satisfied	12	26.67%	2
4. Somewhat Dissatisfied	7	15.56%	4
5. Very Dissatisfied	0	0.00%	
Total	45		

The data in Table 9 concerned how the graduates felt about their dissertation experience. The table illustrates that almost half of the respondents, 22 (48.89 percent), felt that it was an “enlightening intellectual experience” while 13 respondents (28.89 percent) felt that it was “in-between one and two --- elements of both.” An additional, 13 graduates (28.89 percent) were unsure of the dissertation experience. The statement, “tedious drudgery, not worth the effort itself, but necessary for the degree,” received seven responses (15.56 percent). Listed in the “other” category were the following: “a good practical research experience, but not enlightening,” “definitely worth the effort. It

was a good experience, however, it should have extended beyond its scope to make it a more desirable piece of research for the discipline of agricultural education outside of Oklahoma”; “if not for Dr. Key’s help, would not have finished the work.”

TABLE 9
PERCEPTION OF HOW GRADUATES FELT
ABOUT DISSERTATION EXPERIENCE

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
1. Enlightening intellectual experience.	22	48.89%	1
2. Tedious drudgery; not worth the effort itself, but necessary for the degree.	7	15.56%	3
3. In between one and two – elements of both.	13	28.89%	2
4. Other (specify)	3	6.67%	4
Total	45		

Objective 3

To identify perceptions of graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.

Questionnaire: Section III – Overall Evaluation – The purpose of objective three was to identify the perceptions of graduates with respect to the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program. Section III of the questionnaire contained four statements related to the overall effectiveness of the program. The statements were formulated on a five-point Likert-like scale identical to that in Section I of the questionnaire.

The data in Table 10 concerned an overall evaluation of the program experience. The statement, “overall, I believe the faculty and staff of the Department of Agricultural Education were concerned about me as an individual,” received the highest rating of 4.58 (strongly agree). Thirty respondents (66.67 percent) strongly agreed with the preceding statement and 13 respondents (29.55 percent) agreed. Thus, the vast majority of 43 respondents (95.56 percent) perceived the faculty and staff were concerned about the graduates. Both statements, “as a whole, the total pattern of administration and organization for the Department was appropriate”; and “overall, I believe the quality of my educational experience in the Agricultural Education doctoral degree program at OSU as rewarding,” received identical average ratings of 4.27 (agree).

The lowest average rating of 3.97 (agree) was given to the statement, “if I had to start over, I would still pursue a doctorate in Agricultural Education from OSU.” Of some concern was the fact that seven respondents disagreed with the statement that they would pursue a similar program if given the opportunity to do it over while two respondents strongly disagreed.

Objective 4

To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.

Questionnaire: Section IV - Written Comments – In order to gain additional insight into the perceptions of individual graduates about the doctoral program in Agricultural Education at Oklahoma State University, the responses to three open-ended

TABLE 10
OVERALL EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

Statement	Student Response										Tot.	Ave. Rank	Category	
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
1. As a whole, the total pattern of administration and organization for the Department was appropriate.	18	40.00	25	55.56	1	2.22	1	2.22	0	0.00	45	4.27	2	A
2. If I had to start over, I would still pursue a doctorate in Agricultural Education from OSU.	26	57.78	8	17.78	2	4.44	7	15.56	2	4.44	45	3.97	3	A
3. Overall, I believe the quality of my educational experience in the Agricultural Education doctoral program at OSU was rewarding.	26	57.78	15	33.33	3	6.67	1	2.22	0	0.00	45	4.27	2	A
4. Overall, I believe the faculty and staff of the Department of Agricultural Education were concerned about me as an individual.	30	66.67	13	28.89	0	0.00	2	4.44	0	0.00	45	4.58	1	SA

SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

questions on Section IV of the survey were examined. Those questions were: (1) What were the major strengths of the program; (2) What were the major weaknesses of the program, or areas which need the most improvement; and (3) What suggestions do you have for changes or improvements in the program. The actual written responses are included in Appendix F of the study.

To analyze the data, the researcher related the open-ended responses to categories of courses, instructors and instruction, advisement, financial aid, location, and overall evaluation. The overall evaluation category included all responses that mentioned a variety of strengths of the program. These headings were formulated by relating the written comments to the individual sections contained in the questionnaire.

Responses to Question 1: *What were the major strengths of the program?*

The first open-ended question asked the graduate to list the major strengths of the program. There were a total of 59 responses on 34 surveys to open-ended question one. Conversely, 11 surveys of 45 did not respond.

The data illustrated that 25 of the responses to open-ended question one related to the instructors and instruction. Seventeen (17) responses concerned the general strengths and overall impression of the program. Nine (9) responses contained specific comments related to the strength of advisement. Six (6) responses concerned the course work, and one (1) response was directed to the financial aid and location of the university.

Responses to Question 2: *What were the major weaknesses of program, or areas which need the most improvement?*

The second open-ended question concerned the major weaknesses of the program, or areas, which need the most improvement. In question number two, there were a total of 38 responses on 34 surveys. Ten (10) of the 45 surveys did not contain a response to open-ended question number two. Compared to the number of responses on open-ended question number one, question two received considerably fewer comments. One could conclude that responding graduates were more likely to write comments relating to strengths of the program than comments containing criticisms or weaknesses of the program.

To analyze the comments from graduates as to the weaknesses of the program, the researcher categorized the open-ended responses in the following categories: courses, instructors and instruction, advisement, financial aid, overall evaluation, unfamiliarity with the program, and research. The responses to question number two concerning weaknesses of the program contained two categories not included in the responses to question number one related to the strength of the program, unfamiliarity with the program and research.

Fifteen (15) respondents wrote comments that reported courses as a weakness of the program. Five (5) responses declared instructors and research a weakness of the program. Four (4) responses contained an overall description of their perceived weaknesses of the program. Three (3) responses reported weaknesses in advisement. Three (3) responses referred to unfamiliarity of the doctoral program. Two (2) responses

reported that financial aid is a weakness of the program and one graduate's comment encompassed a broad, overall evaluation of the university rather than the program specifically.

Responses to Question 3: *What suggestions do you have for changes or improvements in the program?*

The third open-ended question concerned suggestions for changes and improvements in the program there were a total of 44 responses on 34 surveys. Ten (10) graduates did not respond to open-ended question number three. This would rank open-ended question number three second in terms of number of responses compared to question number one and two.

Again, to analyze the data the researcher related the open-ended responses to categories concerning courses, instructors and instruction, financial aid, overall evaluation, unfamiliarity with the program, and research.

The researcher found 13 responses related to change and improvements for the course work component of the program. Ten (10) responses related to overall evaluation. Eight (8) responses related to instructors and instruction. Six (6) responses related to unfamiliarity with the program. Four (4) responses related to research, and three to financial aid.

In summary, of the three open-ended questions asked on Section VI of the survey the following was observed. Question one concerning "what were the major strengths of the program" received the most responses, 58. Question three, "what suggestions do you have for change or improvements in the program," received 44 responses. Question two,

“what were the major weaknesses of the program, or areas, which need the most improvement,” received only 38 responses. To summarize, the respondents perceived that there were more strengths to the doctoral degree program than either, suggested areas of improvement, or weaknesses, simply on the number of responses obtained.

Objective 5

To determine factors influencing students to select the agricultural education doctoral degree program at OSU.

Questionnaire: Section V – Reason for Selecting OSU – Objective five sought to obtain data concerning factors that influenced students decision to select the Agricultural Education Doctoral Degree Program at OSU.

The data in Table 11 illustrated that the most significant factor that motivated graduates to select agricultural education as their primary area of study did not vary significantly among the choices listed. “Greater role in education” received the most responses with 10 graduates (22.22 percent) selecting this option. The second greatest number of responses were attained for “needed a terminal degree,” which received nine responses (20.0 percent). The third greatest number of responses were listed in the “other” category. The eight responses listed in the “other” category were; “needed a terminal degree in horticulture and they did not have assistantships”; “felt like the thing to do”; “professional preparation”; “offered courses in summer”; “all of above reasons”; “allowed for broad studies”; “recommended by alumnus”; and “necessary to become a teacher educator.” The next largest number of responses were listed in “advancement and

salary increase,” which received seven responses (15.56 percent). This was followed by “recruited by a professor” which received six responses (13.33 percent). Finally, “seeking a different job,” received the fewest responses (5) (11.11 percent), as a primary motivator for students selecting agricultural education as a course of study. Also, with the relatively even distribution of responses, and the large number of “other” factors listed, it could be assumed that graduates had a variety of reasons for selecting Agricultural Education as their primary area of study. This data would also suggest students of the program wanted to continue to pursue a career related to Agricultural Education.

TABLE 11

MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT MOTIVATED
GRADUATES TO SELECT AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION AS THEIR PRIMARY
AREA OF STUDY

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. Recruited by a professor	6	13.33%	5
b. Seeking a different job	5	11.11%	6
c. Advancement and salary increase	7	15.56%	4
d. Needed a terminal degree	9	20.00%	2
e. Greater role in education	10	22.22%	1
f. Other (Specify)	8	17.78%	3
Total	45		

The data in Table 12 reflected the perceptions of graduates concerning the most important factor that influenced their decision to attend OSU. Eighteen graduates, (40.0 percent) indicated that the “reputation of the department” was the most significant factor that influenced their decision to attend OSU. The second greatest responses given by graduates, 11 (24.44 percent), was the “location of the university.” The third greatest responses were listed in the “other” category, and contained the following responses; “former staff and former graduates spoke highly of Ag. Ed”; “a and c of choices listed”; “lived in state”; “availability, I was on the faculty”; “opportunity and faculty”; “advise of other alumni”; “faculty and sincere interest in me”; “did undergraduate work near OSU”; “from where OSU has great influence – Ethiopia.” Two responses (4.55 percent) were given in the categories, “special program of interest, and “did undergraduate work at the university.” Also, one response (2.27 percent) was given to “prestige of the university.” Furthermore, one non-response was indicated on this question.

TABLE 12
 MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR THAT INFLUENCED
 GRADUATES DECISION TO ATTEND OSU
 FOR DOCTORAL WORK

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. Location of the university	11	24.44%	2
b. Reputation of the department	18	40.00%	1
c. Financial support from the university	2	4.44%	4
d. Prestige of the university	1	2.22%	5
e. Special program of interest to you	2	4.44%	4
f. Did undergraduate work at the university	2	4.44%	4
g. Other (Specify)	8	17.78%	3
h. Non Response	1	2.22%	5
Total	45		

The data in Table 13 indicated a vast majority of graduates felt that the entrance requirements at the time they were admitted to the program were “adequate.” In fact, 41 respondents (91.11 percent) perceived entrance requirements to be “adequate.” Only three respondents (6.67 percent) felt the entrance requirements “should have been more restrictive,” and only one graduate felt that requirements were, “unduly restrictive.”

TABLE 13

GRADUATES FEELINGS REGARDING THE ENTRANCE
REQUIREMENTS AT THE TIME THEY WERE
ADMITTED TO THE PROGRAM

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. Unduly restrictive	1	2.22%	3
b. Adequate	41	91.11%	1
c. Should have been more restrictive	3	6.67%	2
d. Other (Specify)	0	0.00%	4
Total	45		

Objective 6

To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

Questionnaire: Section IV – Background and Occupational Information – The purpose of objective six was to determine selected demographic characteristics of graduates and profile their achievements. Section VI of the questionnaire contained nine questions concerning background and occupational information. Respondents were asked to list information regarding present position, other positions held before completing doctorate, accomplishments, how they obtained present position, satisfaction with current position, and current salary.

The data in Table 14 indicated that graduates of the Agricultural Education doctoral degree program at OSU from 1981 to 1998 had a variety of current positions In

fact, graduates listed 21 different positions currently held. The largest group of graduates were currently working in higher education which could be expected for individuals with degrees in education. Furthermore, 12, graduates currently hold some type of professor position at a university. Four (4) graduates each were found as; program directors, superintendents, and department heads. Again, these positions all function within the scope of education. Other positions listed outside of education included; engineer associate, sales, and owner consultant. Even though the vast majority of graduates were working in an educational capacity a diverse set of occupations were listed indicating the flexibility of the degree program.

TABLE 14
GRADUATES CURRENT POSITIONS

Position	N	Position	N
Assistant Professor	7	Associate Professor	4
Chair of Department	2	Principal	2
Computer Support Specialist	1	Dean	2
Department Head	4	Extension Livestock Specialist	2
Engineering Associate	1	Non-response	1
Executive Secretary FFA	1	University Instructor	1
Owner/Consultant	1	Sales	1
Program Director	4	Executive Professor	1
Regional Manager	1	Retired-Associate Professor	1
Senior Project Manager	1	Teacher/Educator	2
Superintendent	4	Total	45

The findings in Table 15 demonstrated that the Agricultural Education doctoral degree program at OSU received students from a variety of occupations. In reality, 25 different positions were listed as being held by graduates before entering the program. Of the 51 total responses listed the majority of responses, 45, were educational in nature. The positions listed varied from vocational agriculture teacher (seven), to farm manager (one). Again, as with Table 14, the data revealed that graduates come from a diverse variety of occupations and entered into a diverse set of occupations after leaving the program.

TABLE 15
POSITIONS HELD BY GRADUATES BEFORE
OBTAINING DOCTORATE

Position	N	Position	N
Ag Consultant	1	Extension Specialist	3
Assistant Dean	1	Farm Manager	1
Assistant Director	1	Floral Design	2
Assistant Professor	1	Horticulture Manager	2
Assistant Researcher	1	Professor	2
Associate Professor	3	Program Specialist	1
Data Collection Coordinator	1	Project Coordinator	2
Dean of Instruction	2	Superintendent	3
Department Chair	2	Supervisor	2
Department Head	2	Teacher	4
Director	2	University Instructor	2
Executive Specialist	1	Vo Ag Teacher	7
Extension Agent	2	Total	51

The findings in Table 16 concerned the graduates "satisfaction with current position." The data would indicate that a majority of graduates are "satisfied" with their present positions. In essence, 26 graduates (57.78 percent) are "very satisfied" with their present position. Eight graduates (17.78 percent) are "satisfied," and seven graduates (15.56 percent) are "somewhat satisfied" with their present positions. This would indicate that 41 graduates (91.91 percent) are at least "somewhat satisfied" with their present positions at this point in their careers. Only three graduates indicated they were "somewhat dissatisfied," and one graduate indicated they were "very dissatisfied" with their present positions.

TABLE 16
GRADUATES SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT POSITION

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
Very Satisfied	26	57.78%	1
Somewhat Satisfied	8	17.78%	2
Satisfied	7	15.56%	3
Somewhat Dissatisfied	3	6.67%	4
Very Dissatisfied	1	2.22%	5
Total	45		

The data in Table 17 pointed out that 32 (71.11 percent) graduates obtained their current position on their own. This easily ranked as the first choice and indicated that the

majority of graduates found their current positions on their own. A distant second choice, six graduates (13.33 percent), indicated they obtained their job before they got their doctorate. Also, three graduates (6.67 percent), indicated they “obtained job by chance,” and three graduates (6.67 percent) selected the “other” category. The listings found in the “other” category included; “friend owns company”; “faculty member advised me of opening”; and “appointed by governor.” Perhaps surprising is the fact that only one graduate obtained their job through the placement office of the institution.

TABLE 17
PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING
HOW THEY OBTAINED PRESENT POSITION

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. Obtained the job before I got my doctorate	6	13.33%	2
b. Obtained primarily on my own	32	71.11%	1
c. Obtained through the placement office of the institution	1	2.22%	4
d. Obtained job primarily through the placement office	0	0.00%	5
e. Obtained job by chance	3	6.67%	3
f. Other (Specify)	3	6.67%	3
Total	45		

Section IV of the questionnaire also contained three general questions relating to type of position, achievements, and reason for working in position. Only two graduates

of the 45 who returned surveys elected to leave blank the boxed set of questions in Section IV of the questionnaire.

Responses to Question 5 – Academic/Teaching Position

The data in Table 18 reported data concerning professional achievements attained by graduates in academic or teaching positions. The following are the findings presented in Table 18: Thirteen (13) graduates listed numbers of refereed publications varying from one to 28, with an average of eight. Seven graduates indicated they had either authored or co-authored a book. Three graduates had either authored or co-authored three books, while one graduate indicated they had authored or co-authored 17 books. In fact, 12 graduates, as listed in Table 18, indicated that a variety of awards have been bestowed upon them. These 12 awards varied from; “award of excellence” to a “visionary leadership award.”

Responses to Question 6 – Administrative Position

Twenty graduates held administrative positions from eight to 14 years for an average of over seven years. Fourteen graduates indicated they supervised an average of 90.92 employees, with responses ranging from 14 to 375 employees. Sixteen (16) graduates indicated they supervised budgets ranging from \$50,000 to \$6.9 million, with an average budget size of \$501,250. This would indicate that graduates are in many instances in charge of relatively large budgets. Also, the data listed five administrative awards won. Included in these awards were; “outstanding alumni regional junior

TABLE 18

PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENTS OF GRADUATES
IN ACADEMIC POSITIONS

Number of Responses	<u>Academic/Teaching Position</u> <u>Professional Achievements</u>	Research or Extension Awards
1	Award of Excellence	
1	Outstanding Journal Article 1990-AAAE	
1	1991 College of Industry and Tech, Outstanding Teaching Excellence Award	
1	Outstanding Professor of Agriculture Department 1995	
1	Outstanding Post-Secondary Teacher for Arizona 1997	
1	Outstanding Poster Presentation Western Region Conference 1998	
1	National Epsilon Sigma Fi Program Award	
1	Visionary Leadership Award	
1	1 N&S Research Fellowship Fullbright Research Scholarship	
1	National Extension Leadership Development Award	
2	Excellence in Teaching Awards	
12		

college,” “NCA accreditation,” “Chair of National Organization of Extension Administrators,” “Agriculturist of the Year,” and “Head of Education for the State of Chiuawa.”

Responses to Question 7 -- Positions other than Academic or Administrative

This category had the fewest responses of the three-boxed questions, which could be expected since the position was neither administrative nor academic. The occupations listed included; research engineer, material specialist, regional manager, sales, ag. specialist, and missionary. Job responsibilities included; “manage client accounts in Northern U.S.,” “develop application systems for use with crop protection product,” “director for all CRW, leadership and volunteer development,” and “facilitate marketing – financial management program.” Common reasons listed by graduates for working in these positions included; “enjoy agribusiness,” “intellectual challenge,” “work I enjoy,” “qualifications and experience,” “former position was eliminated,” and “pay.”

Findings in Table 21 indicate that a variety of salary ranges can be found among graduates of the program. The largest groups of graduates were in the middle ranges of salary with a median salary around \$50,000. Nine graduates (20.0 percent) were making between \$40,000 and 49,999, while eight graduates (17.78 percent) were making between \$50,000 and 59,999. Also, 33 (73.34 percent) of the graduates are making at least \$40,000 a year, with only 12 (26.66 percent) making less than \$40,000 a year.

TABLE 19
PRESENT SALARY RANGE OF GRADUATES

Answer Choices	Responses	Percent	Rank
a. Less than \$29,000	6	13.33%	4
b. \$30,000 to 39,000	6	13.33%	4
c. \$40,000 to 49,000	9	20.00%	1
d. \$50,000 to 59,000	8	17.78%	2
e. \$60,000 to 69,000	5	11.11%	5
f. \$70,000 to 79,000	7	15.56%	3
g. \$80,000 to 89,000	2	4.44%	6
h. \$90,000 or more	2	4.44%	6
Total	45		

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter of the study presented a summarized form of the (1) purpose and objective of the study, (2) major findings of the research, (3) conclusions, (4) recommendations, and (5) suggestions for additional research.

Purpose and Objective of the Study

The purpose of this study was to conduct a follow-up study of doctoral graduates from 1981 to 1998 of the Agricultural Education Doctoral Degree program at Oklahoma State University to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the program.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

1. To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.
2. To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.
3. To identify perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.

4. To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.
5. To determine factors influencing students to select the Agricultural Education doctoral program at OSU.
6. To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

Summary of Major Findings

Objective 1

To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The findings revealed that graduates of the program rated advisement the highest of all categories related to the academic component of the program. In fact, advisement received an average rating of 4.68 (strongly agree) the highest of all academic components. Also, 42.8 graduates (97.28 percent) either agreed or strongly agreed with all five statements related to advisement.
2. Instructors and instruction received an average rating of 4.48 (agree). This placed instructors and instruction second amongst the five categories related to academic component. The data showed that 41 graduates (93.19

percent) either agreed or strongly agreed with all four statements related to instructors and instruction.

3. Courses and course work received an average rating of 4.13 (agree) placing it third overall among the academic component categories.
4. Written and oral comprehensive exams received an average rating of 3.69 (agree) placing it fourth overall in the academic component.
5. Financial aid received the lowest ranking of all academic component categories with a 3.50 (agree).
6. Overall statements regarding the academic components were compiled and listed in Table 20. The data illustrates that graduates rated advisement, instructors and instruction, and courses with at least an average rating of 4.25 (agree) on a five point Likert-like scale. Financial aid received the lowest rating of 3.33 (agree).

Objective 2

To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The study indicated the majority of graduates, 31 (68.89 percent), selected their dissertation topic jointly with their advisors. Additionally, seven graduates (15.56 percent) selected their dissertation topic independently, while five graduates (11.11 percent) indicated their advisors selected it.
2. The majority of graduates, 29 (64.44 percent), conducted their research “at the university.” In addition, 14 graduates (31.11 percent), conducted their

TABLE 20

ACADEMIC COMPONENT OF PROGRAM EXPERIENCE
OVERALL EVALUATION STATEMENTS

Program Experience- Overall Evaluation	Student Response										Tot.	Ave.	Rank	Category
	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree					
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%				
Overall, advisement in the department was effective and beneficial.	31	68.89	12	26.67	2	4.44	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.64	1	SA
Overall, the instructors in the department were effective, qualified and prepared.	22	48.89	18	40.00	5	11.11	0	0.00	0	0.00	45	4.48	2	A
Overall, courses in the department were beneficial and helpful in my plan of study.	17	37.78	23	51.11	2	4.44	2	4.44	0	0.00	45	4.25	3	A
The written comprehensive examination helped me synthesize information and bring together all components of my course work.	15	33.33	19	42.22	3	6.67	7	15.56	1	2.22	45	3.70	4	A
The oral comprehensive examination was beneficial and aided in my overall understanding and comprehension of the various areas of study	16	35.56	18	40.00	4	8.89	6	13.33	1	2.22	45	3.68	5	A
Overall, the financial aid available in the department was sufficient and beneficial in covering the cost of attending graduate school.	7	15.56	13	28.89	9	20.00	8	17.78	3	6.67	45	3.33	6	A

SA = 5, A = 4, N = 3, D = 2, SD = 1

Note: Percentages do not necessarily equal 100 because of non-response.

research “not at the university but in close contact with their dissertation advisor.”

3. In terms of how the graduates felt about their dissertation as an important piece of work there was an evenly distributed response rate. Sixteen (16) graduates (35.56 percent) were “very satisfied,” 12 graduates (26.67 percent) were “satisfied,” 10 graduates (22.22 percent) were “somewhat satisfied,” and seven graduates (15.56 percent) were “somewhat dissatisfied.”
4. With respect to how graduates felt about their dissertation experience as a whole the largest number, 22 graduates (48.89 percent) felt it was an “enlightening intellectual experience.” Seven graduates (15.56 percent) felt it was “tedious drudgery; not worth the effort itself, but necessary for the degree.” Fourteen (14) graduates (28.89 percent) indicated it was in-between the two previously mentioned options.

Objective 3

To identify perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The study showed that the graduates gave the highest average rating of 4.58 (strongly agree) to the faculty and staff of the department.
2. Graduates gave both the total pattern of administration and the overall quality of their educational experience a 4.27 (agree) average rating.

3. The lowest average rating of 3.97 (agree) in the overall evaluation of the program was attributed to the statement, “if the graduates had to start over they would still pursue a degree in Agricultural Education from OSU.” Nine (9) graduates (20.46 percent) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
4. As a whole, all four general statements related to the overall evaluation of the program received at least an average rating of 3.97 (agree) on a five point Likert-like scale..

Objective 4

To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.

1. The study revealed more comments, 58, were written on the major strengths of the program than either major weaknesses, or suggested areas of improvement. In fact, 25 responses were related to strength of the instructors and instruction. Seventeen (17) graduates indicated comments related to the overall impression of the program. Nine (9) responses were related to strength of advisement. Six (6) responses were noted on course work, and one response related to both financial aid and location of the university.
2. The data indicated that the second greatest number of responses, 44, were written on the question concerning suggestions for improvements or changes in the program. Thirteen (13) responses were related to the course

work component. Ten (10) comments were related to an overall evaluation of the program. Eight (8) comments were noted relating to instructors and instruction. Six (6) comments were found relating to unfamiliarity with the program. Four (4) comments related to suggested changes in the research component, and three comments related to financial aid.

3. The open-ended question concerning the major weaknesses of the program, or areas, which needed the most improvement, received a total of 38 responses, the fewest of the three open-ended questions. The largest number of responses, 15 were related to course work. Five (5) responses were found related each to instructors and research. Four (4) responses were noted on weaknesses related to overall evaluation. Three (3) responses were found each on advisement and unfamiliarity with the program, and one response was noted concerning an overall evaluation of the program.

Objective 5

To determine factors influencing students to select the Agricultural Education Doctoral Degree Program at OSU.

1. The study revealed that factors that determined student's decision to select Agricultural Education as their major area of study were fairly diverse. Ten (10) graduates (22.22 percent) wanted a "greater role in education," while nine graduates (20 percent) "needed a terminal degree." Eight (8)

graduates specified “other” reasons including “allowed for broad studies” to “offered courses in the summer.” Seven (7) graduates (15.56 percent) wanted an “advancement and salary increase.” Six (6) graduates (13.33 percent) indicated they were “recruited by a professor,” and five graduates (11.11 percent) were “seeking another job.”

2. The “reputation of the department” received the most responses 18 (40 percent) of the factors listed that influenced graduates to attend OSU for doctoral work. Eleven (11) graduates (24.44 percent) felt “location of the university” to be the most important factor. Eight (8) graduates specified “other” reasons such as “opportunity and faculty” to “former staff recommended program.” Two (2) graduates each (4.44 percent) determined that “financial support,” “special program of interest,” and “did undergraduate work at the university” were the most important factors, and one graduate (2.22 percent) felt it was the “prestige of the university.”
3. The data regarding how graduates felt about the entrance requirements at the time they were admitted to the program indicated a large majority 41 (91.11 percent) of graduates felt they were “adequate.” Only three graduates (6.67 percent) felt they “should have been more restrictive” and one graduate (2.22 percent) felt they were “unduly restrictive.”

Objective 6

To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

1. It was determined that graduates held a diversified set of current positions. In fact, 21 different types of positions were listed. Most graduates, 12, were professors, while four were department heads, superintendents, and program directors. Two (2) graduates held positions as deans, principals, extension livestock specialist, chairs of departments, and teacher educators. Also listed were computer support specialist and sales positions.
2. A diversified set of 51 different occupations were listed as positions held by graduates before obtaining doctorate. The largest number, seven, were indicated for vocational agricultural teacher. Four (4) indicated they were teachers (other than vocational agriculture), and three indicated they were superintendents, associate professors, and extension specialist. Additionally, a variety of other positions were listed including supervisor and farm manager.
3. The majority of graduates, 26 (57.78 percent), were “very satisfied” with their positions, while eight (17.78 percent) were “somewhat satisfied.” Seven graduates (15.56 percent) indicated they were “satisfied,” with their present positions while only three graduates (6.67 percent) are “somewhat

dissatisfied.” Just one graduate (2.22 percent) indicated they were “very dissatisfied” with their present position.

4. The majority of graduates, 32 (71.11 percent) “obtained their present position on their own.” Six (6) graduates (13.33 percent) “obtained their job before they received their doctorate,” and three graduates indicated they “obtained job by chance” or mentioned “other” factors including “faculty member advised me of opening.”
5. It was discovered that 13 graduates are working in academic/teaching positions. The graduates indicated a range of one to 28 refereed publications, with an average of eight. Also, eight graduates had authored or co-authored an average of 4.6 books, with a range of responses from zero to 17. Furthermore, 12 graduates specified a variety of awards won.
6. Fourteen (14) graduates listed they are working in administrative positions. The graduates indicated they supervised a range of 14 to 375 employees with an average of 90.92 employees. Sixteen (16) graduates supervised budgets with a range of \$50,000 to \$6.9 million with an average budget size of \$501,250. Twenty (20) graduates had a range of 8 months to 14 years in administrative positions with an average of 7.27 years. Also, five graduates listed a variety of awards won.
7. Several graduates were working in positions other than administrative or teaching. Seven (7) graduates listed a variety of positions from research engineer to computer specialist as occupations. Also, five graduates listed

a variety of responsibilities including “manage client account” to “facilitate marketing – financial management program.” Additionally, seven graduates listed a number of reasons for working in the position including “enjoy agribusiness” and “pay.”

8. The findings of the study indicated a median salary of about \$50,000. Also, 33 graduates (73.34 percent) are making at least \$40,000 a year.

Summary of Major Conclusions

Objective 1

To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. As a whole, the graduates of the program agreed that the academic component of their program was beneficial and helpful.
2. The advisement component of the academic program experience was perceived to be the strongest by the graduates. In fact, all five statements related to advisement received high ratings by the graduates.
3. The graduates of the program had positive feelings towards the instructors and instruction within the department.
4. Graduates perceived the course work component of the academic program experience to be beneficial.
5. The financial aid component of the academic program experience was perceived to be the weakest by the graduates.

Objective 2

To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The study revealed that the majority of graduates selected their dissertation topic with the aid of their advisor and conducted their research at the university.
2. Graduates varied on how they felt about their dissertation as a piece of research, however, most indicated they were at least “satisfied” with their research.

Objective 3

To identify perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. Graduates perceived all four statements related to the overall evaluation of the program experience to be positive or beneficial to themselves.
2. Graduates felt the faculty in the Department of Agricultural Education to be the greatest strength of the overall program experience.
3. The graduates perceived the total pattern of administration and the overall quality of their educational experience to be beneficial.

Objective 4

To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.

1. Overall, the graduates perceived that there were more strengths than weaknesses in the program. Of the strengths the majority of graduates indicated that the faculty or instructors and instruction were the most favorable component of the program experience.
2. Graduates perceived the largest area of weaknesses to be related to the course work component of the program.
3. Graduates perceived course work to need the most change or improvement.

Objective 5

To determine factors influencing students to select the Agricultural Education doctoral degree program at OSU.

1. Graduates selected Agricultural Education as their program area of study for a variety of reasons.
2. A majority of graduates selected the OSU Agricultural Education department because of the “reputation of the department.”
3. An overwhelming majority of the graduates felt that the entrance requirements were adequate at the time they were admitted to the program.

Objective 6

To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

1. The study showed that graduates of the program held a number of different positions with the most prevalent being a university professor. Also, graduates entered into the program from a diverse set of occupations with vocational agricultural teachers being the most common.
2. A vast majority of graduates were at least “satisfied” with their present positions, and obtained their current positions on their own.
3. The study revealed that graduates work in academic, administrative, and other types of positions. Also, they have published books, refereed articles, supervised large numbers of employees and are responsible for large budgets.

Summary of Major Recommendations

Objective 1

To assess perceptions of doctoral graduates regarding the academic component of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The department of Agricultural Education should continue to provide the resources and support to provide quality faculty and instruction.

2. Financial aid should be evaluated by the administration to consider if changes or improvements are necessary. Specifically, if more assistantships should be made available within the department.

Objective 2

To determine perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the research component of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The faculty and staff should continue to provide graduate students the support necessary to conduct meaningful research.
2. The administration in the department should consider evaluating research based courses to determine if a sufficient number and variety are offered.

Objective 3

To identify perceptions of doctoral graduates concerning the overall evaluation of the doctoral degree program experience.

1. The administration, faculty, and staff, should continue to provide a good overall program experience to graduate students.
3. The administration, faculty, and staff, should continue to convey a caring attitude towards the graduate students in the program.

Objective 4

To identify areas of strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral degree program and describe suggestions for improvement of the program.

1. The faculty within the department should continue to provide excellent advisement and instruction.
2. The department should investigate and review the course work component of the program to determine if improvements and changes, should be in order, specifically, with regard to technology and research based courses.

Objective 5

To determine factors influencing students to select the Agricultural Education Doctoral Degree Program at OSU?

1. The administration, faculty and staff of the department should continue to provide a quality education for their graduates to maintain the reputation of the department and program.
2. Admission requirements of the doctoral program should remain constant.

Objective 6

To profile achievements of doctoral graduates of the Agricultural Education program at OSU from 1981 to 1998.

1. The department should continue to prepare graduates for a diverse set of occupations.

2. The department should continue to offer flexibility in the program for students with diverse backgrounds and occupational experiences.
3. The administration should investigate the assistance given to graduates when obtaining positions after receiving doctorate.

Recommendations for Additional Research

1. A study investigating the perceptions of international graduates compared to those of domestic graduates could be undertaken to provide input to the department concerning differences between the two groups.
2. A study investigating ways to increase response rate of international students living abroad needs to be done.
3. A study performed 10 years after the inception of the Pd.D. program to compare and contrast Pd.D. graduates to Ed.D graduates is recommended.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

STATEMENT

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 06-22-98

IRB #: AG-98-050

**Proposal Title: A FOLLOW-UP STUDY OF GRADUATES OF THE DOCTORAL DEGREE
PROGRAM IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY FROM
1981 TO 1998**

Principal Investigator(s): James Key, James Leising, Mark H. Allen

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

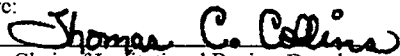
ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
APPROVAL PERIOD.

APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.

ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

=====
Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:

Signature:



Interim Chair of Institutional Review Board

cc: Mark H. Allen

Date: June 23, 1998

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

September 7, 1998

Dear Graduate:

You, as a graduate of the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education at OSU, can make a valuable contribution in our continuing efforts to update some of the personal demographic information and to receive input concerning your perceptions of the program at OSU. Further, your recommendations for improvement of the program are sought.

Would you join us in our effort by sharing a little of your time to complete and return the enclosed form? We have provided a addressed, stamped envelope for your convenience.

The information you provide on this mail survey will be kept strictly confidential. A coding system will be used for follow-up purposes only and will be used only by the researchers. The information will be reported in the aggregate with no identification of you in the thesis which will be a result of this study. Any risk involved with this research will be minimal. An executive summary of the results of this project will be made available to you at the completion of the project. If you have any questions concerning this research, you may contact any of the researchers at the above address or phone, Gay Clarkson, the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board Executive Secretary at 305 Whitehurst, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078, ph. (405) 744-5700.

Thank you in advance for your considerate attention to this project.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Allen
Graduate Research Assistant
Ag Ed Comm & 4-H Yth Dev

Sincerely,

James P. Key
Professor
Ag Ed Comm & 4-H Yth Dev

APPENDIX C

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM AT OKLAHOMA STATE
UNIVERSITY FOR THE PERIOD 1981 TO 1998.

Directions: Please respond to the following statements in relation to the doctoral degree program in Agricultural Education at OSU. Please use the scale below to respond to each of the statements by circling the response that most clearly expresses your opinions on each individual statement.
SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree

Section I — Program Experience

I. Courses

- There was a sufficient number and variety of research methods and statistics courses available to me. SA A N D SD
- There was a sufficient number and variety of courses available in my specialization area. SA A N D SD
- There was a sufficient number and variety of courses in the department available to me. SA A N D SD
- Courses in the department were well organized and properly sequenced. SA A N D SD
- Overall, the courses in the department were beneficial and helpful in my plan of study. SA A N D SD

II. Instructors and Instruction

- Instructors were fair and objective in evaluating their classes. SA A N D SD
- Instructors utilized relevant and pertinent material related to their class. SA A N D SD
- Professors clearly explained the goals and objectives of their courses and seminars. SA A N D SD
- Overall, the instructors in the department were effective, qualified and prepared. SA A N D SD

III. Advisement

- Advisors and faculty members made themselves available to students outside of class. SA A N D SD
- Advisors and faculty members were friendly and cooperative in working with students. SA A N D SD

Section I — Program Experience (cont.)

Advisors and faculty members made a effort to become acquainted with all students. SA A N D SD

Advisement from my graduate committee was effective and beneficial. SA A N D SD

Overall, advisement in the department was effective and beneficial. SA A N D SD

IV. *Financial Aid*

Assistantships were readily available to graduate students. SA A N D SD

In-state fee waivers were readily available to graduate students. SA A N D SD

Out-of-state fee waivers were readily available to graduate students. SA A N D SD

Fellowships were readily available in the university. SA A N D SD

Overall, the financial aid available in the department was sufficient And beneficial in covering the cost of attending graduate school. SA A N D SD

V. *Written and Oral Comprehensive Examinations*

The written comprehensive examination helped me synthesize Information and bring together all components of my course work. SA A N D SD

The oral comprehensive examination was beneficial and aided in my overall understanding and comprehension of the various areas of study. SA A N D SD

Section II — Research Experience

With respect to your dissertation, how was your dissertation topic selected?

- a. You selected it independently.
 b. You and your advisor jointly selected it.
 c. Your advisor selected it.
 d. A member of your dissertation committee selected it.
 e. Other (specify) _____

Did you conduct all or a major part of your dissertation research:

- a. At the University
 b. Not at the University but in close contact with my dissertation advisor
 c. Not at the University and not in close contact with my dissertation advisor

Your dissertation has been completed. How do you feel about your dissertation in terms of an important piece of research to your field of study?

1 2 3 4 5
 very satisfied-----somewhat satisfied-----satisfied----somewhat dissatisfied----very dissatisfied

Which of the following statements most accurately describes the way you feel about your dissertation experience?

- ____ 1. Enlightening intellectual experience
 ____ 2. Tedious drudgery; not worth the effort itself, but necessary for the degree
 ____ 3. In between one and two --- elements of both
 ____ 4. Other (specify) _____

Section III — Overall Evaluation

As a whole, the total pattern of administration and organization for the department was appropriate. SA A N D SD

If I had to start over, I would still pursue a doctorate in Agricultural Education from OSU. SA A N D SD

Overall, I would rate the quality of educational experience in the Agricultural Education doctoral program at OSU as excellent. SA A N D SD

Overall, I believe the faculty and staff of the Department of Agricultural Education were concerned about me as an individual. SA A N D SD

Section IV — Written Comments

What were the major strengths of the program?

What were the major weaknesses of program, or areas which need the most improvement?

What suggestions do you have for changes or improvements in the program?

Section V — Reason for Selecting OSU

Please check the most important factor that motivated you to select agricultural education as your primary area of study for your doctoral degree. (Please only check one reason)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Recruited by a professor | <input type="checkbox"/> d. Needed a terminal degree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Seeking a different job | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Greater role in education |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Advancement and salary increase | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Other (specify) _____ |

Please check the most important factor that influenced your decision to attend Oklahoma State University for your doctoral work.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Location of the university | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Special program of interest to you |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Reputation of the department | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Did undergraduate work at university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Financial support from the university | <input type="checkbox"/> g. Other (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. Prestige of the university | |

What were your feelings regarding the entrance requirements at the time you were admitted to the program?

- | |
|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Unduly restrictive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Adequate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Should have been more restrictive |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. Other (specify) _____ |

Section VI — Background and Occupational Information

Title or present position: _____

Other positions held since completing your doctorate, beginning with the most recent:

Title: _____
 Year(s) Employed: _____
 Title: _____
 Year(s) Employed: _____

Positions held before doctorate, beginning with most recent:

Title: _____
 Year(s) Employed: _____
 Title: _____
 Year(s) Employed: _____

How satisfied are you with your present position at this stage of your career?

1 2 3 4 5
 very satisfied----somewhat satisfied----satisfied----somewhat dissatisfied----very dissatisfied

Directions: If your position is academic please answer question 5. If your position is administrative, please answer question 6. If your position contains elements of both, please answer both. If your position is outside education please answer Item 7.

If Your Position Is Academic (Teaching), Describe Professional Achievements:

- a. Number of refereed publications?
- b. Number of books authored or co-authored?
- c. Teaching, research, or extension awards: Please list.

If Your Position Is Administrative, Describe Professional Achievements:

- a. Number of employees supervised:
- b. Size of budget:
- c. Years in administrative position:

Other awards:

If Your Position is Neither of the above, please answer below:

Type of position:

- a. Job responsibilities include:
- b. Reason for working in this position:

How did you obtain your present position? (x)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Obtained the job before I got my doctorate | <input type="checkbox"/> e. Obtained job by chance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. Obtained primarily on my own | <input type="checkbox"/> f. Other (specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. Obtained through the placement office of the institution | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. Obtained job primarily through my major professor | |

What is your present salary range?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> a. Less than 29,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> e. 60,000 to 69,999 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> b. 30,000 to 39,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> f. 70,000 to 79,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> c. 40,000 to 49,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> g. 80,000 to 89,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> d. 50,000 to 59,999 | <input type="checkbox"/> h. 90,000 or more |

The information you provide on this mail survey will be kept strictly confidential.

APPENDIX D

FIRST REMINDER

September 21, 1998

Dear Graduate:

We are attempting to conclude our research concerning the doctoral graduates' perceptions of the Agricultural Education program at OSU, and we need your input to increase the validity of our study.

You should have received a questionnaire packet approximately 2 weeks ago. If it has not been misplaced, please take a few minutes to complete it and return it as soon as possible. If you did not receive your packet, or it has been misplaced, please call.

Thank you in advance for helping with our research.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Allen
Graduate Research Assistant
Ag Ed Comm & 4-H Yth Dev

Sincerely,

James P. Key
Professor
Ag Ed Comm & 4-H Yth Dev

APPENDIX E

SECOND REMINDER

December 21, 1998

Dear Graduate:

We are attempting to conclude our research concerning the doctoral graduates' perceptions of the Agricultural Education program at OSU, and would appreciate your input to increase the validity of our study.

You should have received a questionnaire sometime in September. We understand that you may or may not have received the original mailing. If you would please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it as soon as possible we would appreciate it.

Thank you in advance for helping with our research.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Allen
Graduate Research Assistant
Ag Ed Comm & 4-H Yth Dev

Sincerely,

James P. Key
Professor
Ag Ed Comm & 4-H Yth Dev

APPENDIX F

SECTION IV - OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written Comments to Open-Ended Question 1: *What were the major strengths of the program.*

Instructors and instruction:

1. "Dedication of the faculty to student success."
2. "Caring faculty and staff with a few exceptions."
3. "Focus on preparing good teachers."
4. "Quality faculty and caring people."
5. "Faculty" (two responses).
6. "Caring faculty."
7. "The faculty at the time seemed to care it was like family – that attitude does not seem to be as strong now."
8. "The individual attention of the faculty – really liked Dr. White's extension courses."
9. "The instructors plan of curriculum structure."
10. "Faculty encouraged students to be creative and in our intellectual development."
11. "The support and leadership of the Ag. Ed. faculty."
12. "The manner in which the faculty could take the course work and relate it to the real world."
13. "Very good courses and good instructors - challenging pursuit of knowledge and thinking skills including problem solving greatly encouraged."
14. "The people: Dr. Key, Dr. Terry, and the late Dr. Finley, and Dr. Schriener at Ag Economics."
15. "Dr. Key, Dr. Terry Sr., Dr. Pritchard, and Dr. White."
16. "Willingness of faculty to help and their expertise."

17. "It had a family feel to the department – everyone seemed to care."
18. "Faculty were genuinely concerned about the growth and development of doctoral students."
19. "Faculty – student interaction etc."
20. "Knowledge of Professor."
21. "The down to earth easy going faculty who made a commitment and followed through on the commitment."
22. "Staff concerned for the graduate students."
23. "The people were supportive and encouraging."
24. "Professors did what they said they would do so I could graduate in a specific time frame."

Overall evaluation of the program:

1. "Variety of courses to select from outside the department, friendly environment with staff and students."
2. "Ag. Education, leadership knowledge, and expertise."
3. "The departments commitment to quality education."
4. "One of the major strengths of the program (especially my thesis program) were to participate with many international scientist and specialist abroad."
5. "Individual collaboration - strong focus on individual needs, interests - spirit of inclusion."
6. "Opportunity to develop strengths in areas formerly foreign to me."
7. "Department did a good job of preparing students to be assistant professors – i.e. -courses in which grad students assisted, work load."
8. "OSU was recognized as having one of the top 3 Ag. Ed. programs in the nation, Jim Key, Bob Terry, and James White took a personal interest in you."

9. "For me OSU is it, I Bleed Orange."
10. "Selection of high quality graduate student."
11. "Warm atmosphere."
12. "Flexibility and variety - Doctoral program can be tailored to individual need."
13. "Graduate assistants were treated as a part of the faculty."
14. "General caring nature."
15. "Overall, good program."
16. "Dissertation, comps., and oral exam/defense of dissertation."
17. "The overall quality of the program is high."

Advisement:

1. "Quality and caring advisors."
2. "Advisement."
3. "My committee and especially my advisor Dr. Weeks were extremely helpful."
4. "Advisor support of research program."
5. "Close relationship with advisors and students."
6. "Graduate advisor."
7. "Advising."
8. "Some of the advisors and faculty were exceptional caring individuals (there will never be another Eddy Finley.)"
9. "Advisors had a true concern for students."

Course work:

1. "The courses were applicable but not outstanding."
2. "Had a lot of freedom to choose and structure the program even though I didn't come from a traditional Ag. Ed. Program."
3. "Practical research courses."
4. "Leadership courses and research methodology."
5. "Research and design class."
6. "Diversified course offerings."

Financial Aid:

1. "Financial assistance."

Location:

1. "The only strength of the program was location."

Written Comments to Open-Ended Questions 2: *What were the major weaknesses of program, or areas which need the most improvement?*

Course Work:

1. "Most students did not have a firm grasp of advanced statistical analysis."
2. "Courses on extension education were limited."
3. "Course work could have been better organized."
4. "There were insufficient multimedia instructional tools."
5. "Core program did not reflect the impact of computer technology."
6. "Course selections – needed updating, more technology used in a course."

7. "Lack of graduate courses in the department."
8. "The extension courses probably needed to be updated some."
9. "Not a great deal of direct expertise in my specific area of interest – international Ag."
10. "Weak curriculum on international extension part."
11. "The link between courses were weak."
12. "Agricultural extension education."
13. "Course options limited by size of department."
14. "I was studying in a limited area of extension education so there was a limited number of courses."
15. "Ag. Mech. program needed updating."

Instructors or Instructions:

1. "Faculty had little extension experience."
2. "Other faculty members not in touch with the needs of agriculture education teacher in the field."
3. "Sometimes faculty had too much school pride to admit that maybe other ways of doing things were just as effective as Oklahoma's."
4. "Some weak faculty."
5. "Sometimes doctoral students did not get the support we needed from courses in which we assisted."

Research:

1. "Lack of funding towards help in compliance of reference data."
2. "Research" (two responses)
3. "Needs stronger research base."

4. "I felt I left with many weaknesses in my research abilities."

Overall evaluation of the program:

1. "You need to do it to get into higher education."
2. "Students were not helped to get jobs after graduation, especially foreign students."
3. "Placement, after completion."
4. "Communication area to have more input in the graduate program."

Advisement:

1. "Our faculty members were not team players."
2. "Extra duties that were not academic in nature, for example: working concession stands at football games."
3. "For a program the size of the one at OSU – there needs to be more advisors and faculty."

Unfamiliarity of the Program:

1. "Needs to be a Ph.D. program."
2. "If there was a weakness it was lack of computer access (81-82), it's sure a different world today."
3. "The extension courses in Ag. Ed. needed serious help, but that was 16-18 years ago."

Financial Aid:

1. "Expand opportunities for graduate assistantships."
2. "No financial support for students with financial difficulties."

Overall Evaluation:

1. "You need to do it to get into higher education."

Written Comments to Open-Ended Question 3: *What suggestions do you have for changes or improvements in the program?*

Course Work:

1. "More field experience in classes."
2. "More computer experience."
3. "Upgrade content of classes."
4. "Regain focus of classes on preparing secondary teachers."
5. "Offer more courses that will focus on facilitation skills."
6. "Weak curriculum on international extension part."
7. "Broader range of graduate courses."
8. "More up to date courses."
9. "Move more in to the technology age, computer, Internet, etc."
10. "Require a course in non-parametric statistics and survey design."
11. "Possibly have more inter-department cooperation and courses in agriculture."
12. "Increase lab instruction, expansion content of the program."
13. "Ag Mech. Program updating, more Ag. Mech. courses needed."

Overall Evaluation of the Program:

1. "Look at the individual student: Please distinguish between a student working on a masters degree that has never taught and ran an Ag Ed

department and a man/woman that has done so.”

2. “If its just a teacher ed. its probably ok, but to generate world class quality, a lot needs to be done such as, value density of cultures and thinking. As a Native American, the professor’s We are all white right attitude is a bit intimidating.”
3. “Strong linkage with other departments in the college.”
4. “I think it does a good job it may be too inclined to admit about anyone – seem to want numbers not too much concern about quality.”
5. “I think a formal grad student mentoring programs – graduates can learn more from other grad students about OSU, Ag Ed communities, etc.”
6. “An excellent experience.”
7. “Keep the flexibility for all coming students to specialize on field which is their career goal and objective.”
8. “It is necessary to prepare enough educational technology and instructional technology. It is also necessary to offer a teaching method course using multimedia.”
9. “Increase FTE.”
10. “Feel proud of your graduates and promote them and help them obtain a job.”

Instructors and instruction:

1. “Continue with the tradition of students centered Faculty who are looking for more than just using graduate students.”
2. “More attention needs to be given to teaching discipline strategies and how to deal with diverse culture.”
3. “The program tended to be very inbred, could benefit from fresh scholars/faculty.”
4. “Select only highly qualified faculty.”
5. “Have professors be more organized and prepared.”

6. "Some instructors taught the same materials that they had been teaching for years. You could prepare for their class by borrowing materials from past doctoral students and it was all the same."
7. "Utilize extension staff in ext. ed. courses, or use eremitic faculty with extension experience."
8. "Require more time in the field by faculty members."

Unfamiliarity with current program:

1. "I don't know about the current program; maybe an emphasis on international and global perspective."
2. "Make program offer Ph.D."
3. "The program has changed since I graduated. I only hope the quality is as good or better because I could not have had a better terminal degree experience."
4. "I have heard the program is becoming to research focused."
5. "I would have preferred a Ph.D. program instead of an Ed.D. program."
6. "Would like Ph.D. option."

Research Component:

1. "Creative options in regards to dissertation."
2. "Increase the number of research methods sources and strongly encourage candidates to begin submitting articles for publication early on."
3. "Must reinforce research."
4. "More research focus."

Financial aid:

1. "No financial support for students with financial difficulties."

2. "If possible, more financial support so that doctoral students can travel to Regional and National research meetings."
3. "Qualified graduates should be employed in the department; provision of assistantship and fellowship to qualified students."

VITA²

Mark H. Allen

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: PERCEPTIONS OF GRADUATES CONCERNING THE AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION DOCTORAL DEGREE PROGRAM AT OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY FOR THE PERIOD 1981 TO 1998.

Major Field: Agricultural Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Coffeyville, Kansas, December 30, 1960, the son of Mary Alice and Jack T. Allen.

Education: Graduated from Field Kindley Memorial High School, Coffeyville, Kansas, May, 1979; received the Bachelor of Science degree in Animal Science from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, May, 1983; received the Masters of Science degree in Agricultural Education from Kansas State University, Manhattan, Kansas, July, 1985; received a Masters in Business Administration from Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, Kansas, May, 1989; completed requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Agricultural Education from Oklahoma State University, July, 1999.

Professional Experience: Instructor of Agriculture, Coffeyville Community College, Coffeyville, Kansas, August 1998 to present; Graduate Research Assistant, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, January 1997 to August, 1998; Computer Lab Instructor, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, August 1996 to December 1996; Instructor of Agriculture, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Alva, Oklahoma, August 1991 to July 1996; Technical Marketing Representative, Eagle-Picher Industries, Quapaw, Oklahoma, August 1989 to August 1991; Southeast District Livestock Extension Specialist, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, December 1985 to May 1987;

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Kansas State University, Manhattan,
Kansas, August, 1983 to July, 1984.

Professional Organizations: Member Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association;
National Angus Association; Gamma Sigma Delta; Agricultural Education
Graduate Student Association; HEACO; Delta Mu Delta; Business
Honorary Society; KSU Alumni Association; Alpha Zeta.