

## ***UCEA/Peterson's Most Innovative Program in the Nation 2001***

### **Master of agribusiness program named most innovative in nation.**

MANHATTAN: K-State's Web-based master of agribusiness program has been honored as one of the nation's best distance education programs.

The program, offered through the department of agricultural economics, has received the University Continuing Education Association/Peterson's Award for most innovative distance education program.

The award was presented at the association's annual meeting April 7 in Philadelphia.

In addition, the master in agribusiness program also has received honorable mention honors from the American Distance Education Consortium's National Excellence in College and University Distance Education awards program. That honor was presented in early March.

The program, launched in 1998, was the first graduate agribusiness program in the nation to be offered through distance education.

The program allows agribusiness professionals to earn an advanced degree without career interruption, said Allen Featherstone, director of graduate studies for the department of agricultural economics.

"We have developed a program that meets students educational needs and we deliver it in a format that meets their schedules," Featherstone said. "Students can access the program regardless of where they are."

The program, which has a 96 percent student retention rate, currently has students from 25 states, as well as Argentina, Australia, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, Singapore and Uruguay.

Students come from all facets of the agribusiness industry, including multinational agricultural corporations, crop and livestock production, banking, extension, state governments and educational institutions.

"The quality and innovation of this program is derived from the interaction of students with a passion for the food and agribusiness industry, a curriculum designed entirely for working professionals and a faculty committed to excellence in scholarship," Featherstone said.

Students average about two hours a day on homework assignments, online lectures and chats and course reading. They also attend one-week sessions at K-State twice a year to meet with faculty, give presentations and attend guest lectures given by leading agribusiness professionals.

After completing the course work, students spend about six months on a company-related research project that is conducted under the guidance of agricultural economics faculty members.

The program is coordinated through the Division of Continuing Education, which also provides technical and administrative support.

“The strong and creative team effort between the Division of Continuing Education and the department of agricultural economics has resulted in this outstanding program that continually earns national and international recognition,” said Dave Stewart, assistant dean of continuing education.

The master in agribusiness program also was named the best new for-credit education program by the University Continuing Education Association in 2000.

The University Continuing Education Association is an international association of more than 400 accredited universities and colleges which provide undergraduate, graduate and professional education via the Internet, satellite television, independent study and other methods.

The American Distance Education Consortium for National Excellence in College and University Distance Education award supports and strengthens distance education to create wider and more diverse access to higher education programs in food, human and agricultural sciences.

Master of agribusiness program on the Web: <http://www.mab.ksu.edu>

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