

An Investigation of the Nature, Effectiveness and Impact of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education Program

The Final Report



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Executive Summary

John Murray, the State Director of Management Education for Minnesota, commissioned this study to determine the views of students, Farm Business Management Education (FBM) instructors, and agricultural lenders regarding the importance of the current FBM program objectives and selected program activities and features. In addition, the study sought to determine the effectiveness of the FBM program in providing for student needs, to measure student satisfaction with the program, and to ascertain student, FBM instructor and agricultural lender perceptions of the economic value of the program.

Procedures

This descriptive study used respective versions of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education Program Assessment Questionnaire to collect data from the participants. FBM students enrolled in the FBM program for three or more years were randomly selected from Minnesota programs taught by the same FBM instructor for over three years. Six hundred and seventy-two questionnaires were administered to FBM students. Useable questionnaires were received from 84.6% (569) students, 53.9% (166) of the randomly selected agricultural lenders, and 92.6% (88) of the FBM instructors.

Findings

Key findings of the study revealed the following. (1) Students believe they receive an annual increase in net farm income of \$4,966. If all 4,000-4,350 farmers enrolled in the Minnesota FBM program received the average increase, an annual benefit of \$20 -24 million per year could be received by farmers across Greater Minnesota. Benefits to communities may be even greater when the multiplier effect is considered. (2) Students enrolled in the program have greater amounts of annual net farm income than most Minnesota farmers. The respective annual net farm incomes for all Minnesota farmers for 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 were \$26,720; \$12,268; \$18,733; and \$15,522. Respective annual net farm income for students enrolled in the FBM program who completed annual analyses for the same years were \$42,691; \$32,149; \$27,255; and \$48,268. (3) Current

students are very satisfied with the FBM the program as evidenced by the fact that over 60% of the enrollees intend to participate in the program for seven or more years and 89.9% encourage or highly encourage other farmers to enroll in the program. (4) Over 70% of farmers enrolled in the FBM program use computers to maintain their farm business records. (5) The FBM students prefer and value the individualized instruction provided by instructors of the program. (6) The most important instructional topics, activities and benefits of the FBM program, according to student data, are instruction in keeping records; interpretation and understanding farm analysis reports; instruction in the development and use of financial statements; considering the farm as a business; increased earnings; and improved management skills. (7) The current cadre of FBM instructors are effective to very effective in delivering instruction and programming.

The findings also revealed that 90% the agricultural lenders participating in this study work for banks or the Farm Service Agency. Over 75% of the agricultural lenders reported 10 or more years of lending experience. Though nearly 60% of the lenders indicated they understood the features and benefits of the FBM program, nearly 40% acknowledged their lack of understanding. Responding agricultural lenders indicated their farmers benefited from the FBM program by an average annual increase in net farm income of \$4,880. The lender rankings of the importance of selected FBM program features, activities, and benefits as well as the corresponding rankings of the effectiveness of the FBM program differed in a number of cases from the rankings of the FBM students and instructors.

The cadre of Minnesota FBM instructors who responding to this study are highly experienced, with 70% having 11 or more years of experience. Most noteworthy is that 63.9% (30) of the current instructors plan on completing their teaching careers in the next ten years.

Recommendations

The findings of the study led to a number of recommendations. The foremost recommendations include the following. (1) Considering the continued strong student demand, perceived annual returns to the student, and agricultural lender support for the program, financial resources need to be made available to further increase student access to quality FBM programs, instructional materials, and instructors. (2) Expand and strengthen efforts to inform agricultural lenders about the Minnesota FBM program. (3) FBM programs should provide appropriate levels of instruction for students enrolled in expanded levels within the advanced certificate option. (4) Additional curriculum options need to be developed to reflect the changing instructional needs of FBM students as they mature through the business cycles of their farming operations. (5) Establish systematic strategies and programs to identify and prepare individuals to replace the cohorts of FBM instructors who will be retiring annually over the next 10 years. (6) Since learning how to keep and use quality record records and financial statements for making enterprise and whole business decisions are valued FBM program instructional topics and activities, financial resources need to be available and efforts made to continually upgrade instructors' and FBM students' skills and understandings of traditional and emerging record keeping and analysis technologies and practices. (7) Though the FBM students, agricultural lenders and FBM instructors wholeheartedly agree that the current program objectives are useful, on-going efforts must be made to identify relevant goals and objectives for the program. (8) Maintaining an on-going program of inquiry concerning teaching, learning, curriculum and policy issues that can be used to further improve and expand the FBM program will be essential to keeping the FBM program on the cutting edge.

Farm Business Management Education Program Overview

Farm Business Management Education (FBM) has been a part of education programs in Minnesota schools since 1952. From the early cooperative efforts of the State Department of Education and the Department of Agriculture Education (University of Minnesota), the program has expanded to serve over 4,000 farm businesses each year in Minnesota. The programs became course/credit-based in fiscal year 1992. The programs are administered and managed by the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) primarily through local technical and community colleges. See Appendix B for additional details.

Approximately 100 instructors located in over 87 sites across the state serve these farm businesses. Instruction is delivered using individualized or group instructional methods to approximately 40-45 farmers per instructor. Six regional deans and a state director administer approximately 95% of the instruction program through six colleges in the MnSCU system. The colleges include Central Lakes College, Minnesota West Community and Technical College, Northland Community and Technical College, Ridgewater College, Riverland Community College, and South Central Technical College. The remaining 5% of the farm business management program instruction is delivered by instructors through Alexandria Technical College and St. Cloud Technical College.

Farm Business Management education programs are designed to assist business owners/operators/managers in meeting their business and personal goals through sound decision making. The objectives of the FBM program are to (a) understand the functions of management; (b) establish business and personal goals; (c) keep accurate and complete business records; (d) analyze and interpret business records; (e) apply economic principles to management of a business; (f) improve business organization and efficiency; (g) appreciate effects of decisions on the business; (h) understand human resource

management fundamentals; and (i) appreciate the relationship between individual business entities and the economic, social, political and physical environments impacting agriculture. Students enrolled in the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education program are expected to develop the skills, attitudes and understandings for each of the nine program objectives as they progress through courses and activities experienced through the program.

A typical FBM student registers for 10 semester credits per year. (A complete description of the development of the semester courses and course listings for the Diploma, Advanced, and Marketing Certificate programs are found in Appendix A). Students enroll in the FBM program courses that are guided by specific objectives and units of instruction. Individualized instruction occurs primarily at the business site, with the balance of instruction occurring in either a group or classroom setting. Individualized instruction is a trademark form of instruction of the Minnesota FBM program.

The FBM program values (a) a student-centered approach to education; (b) delivery and performance driven by student needs and expectations; (c) access to education that is not hindered by the financial situation of the student, location, time, information, age, prior skills or other potential barriers; (d) a continual focus on the needs of the students; (e) development and respect for individual education plans which enable students to develop and learn skills necessary for the success of their unique businesses; (f) accountability to the student and the public; (g) use of program resources in an efficient and professional manner; and (h) with quality being intentional and expected, on-going improvements are made as student goals and expectations are identified, assessed, evaluated.

An Investigation of the Effectiveness and Impact of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education Program

Introduction

In order to create and maintain vibrant, effective and long-lasting programs, farm business management education (FBM) program administrators and instructors must regularly determine the nature of student needs, experiences and recommendations for program improvement (Joerger & Murray, 1999). The current mission of the FBM program is to teach farmers management principles and practices in a manner they can understand and use so they can meet their personal, family and business goals. Six regional deans of management education and 105 FBM instructors are currently organized into six regions to effectively teach management principles and practices to 4,000-4,350 Minnesota farmers each year.

Scholars and practitioners have long been aware of the importance of gaining student input for delivery and evaluating adult education programs. The benefits of education or the actual content of a program may be better defined by students than by the educational community. Schoenfeld (1955), for example, asserted that adult education is what the adult perceives it to be and learning is what the adult perceives to be the outcome of the learning situation. Weighing both product and process are important aspects of evaluation of educational endeavors. Sutherland (1966) suggested evaluators measure and weigh both the outcomes of programs and the manner in which they are conducted and administered. Findings from statewide studies completed by Richardson (1979) and Persons, Lehto, Casey and Wittenberg (1987) involving students of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education program reflect how students and agricultural lenders value different elements of the FBM program.

The Regional Deans of Management Education, the State Director and the Project Director decided it was also important to gather input from the FBM instructors. Given their close working relationship with FBM students, instructors are in a position to provide invaluable assessments of the program. Agricultural lenders are also an integral and important part of the team that helps farmers supply a low-cost and high quality supply of food. Opinions of students, instructors and agricultural lenders have been an important source of information for strengthening the FBM program over the past 30 years. Program quality can be enhanced through knowledge of the instructional processes, program objectives, educational contexts and financial rewards desired and received by satisfied students and other stakeholders.

Richardson (1979) and Persons, Lehto, Casey and Wittenberg (1987) completed studies that found that assistance in keeping complete and accurate farm records and assistance in interpreting and analyzing farm records were considered the most important objectives of and benefits received from the FBM program. Individualized instruction was the type of instruction that participants gained the most benefit from for better managing their farm businesses. Classroom discussion lectures with visuals also ranked high as a preferred method of instruction.

Persons et al. (1987) reported individual instruction using computers, and consultation with the instructor via telephone were other types of instruction ranked very high by students. Farmers ranked improved management skills, better knowledge of personal capabilities and increased earnings as the three most important benefits of the FBM program.

An earlier study also revealed that farmers enrolled in the FBM program received a variety of financial benefits. Persons, Swanson, Kittleson and Leske (1968) tested the benefit-cost analysis concept developed by Davis on 3,518 records of enrollees of the

Minnesota FBM program. They concluded that the benefit-cost ratio for the FBM program, including opportunity costs of foregone earnings and all public costs, was 2.1:1. Equally important, they found that farmers were often enrolled in the program for four or five years before making substantive changes in their farming operations. They concluded it took an average of four years of well-kept records and analyses to provide the knowledge and foundation for making major changes in the farm business. Others investigated the overall benefits of the FBM program. Probasco (1961) asserted benefits were not restricted to participants. He noted that the benefits received by each farmer are small compared to the aggregate benefits to the community and to the school. He concluded that, in the long run, the school and community are the biggest beneficiaries of a good adult FBM program.

Richardson (1979) reported the average annual monetary benefits for students enrolled from one to three years was \$3,473; from four to six years, \$3,073; and greater than six years, \$4,962. Persons et al. reported that the farmers and agricultural lenders perceived an annual monetary benefit of \$4,381 and \$4,900, respectively.

For the past three decades, agriculture has been a dynamic industry that has included the introduction and expansion of numerous diverse enterprises. Accessible markets and changes in the characteristics of the farmers and the agricultural economy have led to different types and sizes of farm businesses (Hunst, 1997). In the past, the State Director and Regional Deans of Management Education have responded to the changing educational environment by using local and regional information for making changes in the programming. Knowing the need for current information along with a continuous need to enhance the statewide FBM program, the Minnesota State Director of Management Education commissioned this study to determine the perceptions of students, instructors and agricultural lenders regarding the importance of the current program objectives,

selected program features, effectiveness of the FBM program in providing for student needs and perceptions of the economic value of the program.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study was to determine the characteristics of the students, instructors and agricultural lenders, and their perceptions regarding the importance and value of selected features and activities of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education (FBM) Program. The objectives of the study were to describe the following:

1. Characteristics of the students, instructors and agricultural lenders involved with the program;
2. Student and instructor perceptions of the effectiveness of selected instructional methods, media and activities;
3. Student, instructor and agricultural lender views of the appropriateness of the current objectives of the FBM program;
4. Student, instructor and agricultural lender perceptions of the level of importance placed upon selected instructional topics, activities and benefits;
5. Participant views concerning the effectiveness of the FBM program in developing and delivering instruction, activities and benefits of the program;
6. Perceptions of the economic value of the FBM program;
7. Reasons students participate and benefits received from enrollment in the program;
8. Benefits received by agricultural lending institutions; and
9. Recommendations of students, agricultural lenders and FBM instructors for improving the FBM Program.

Methods and Procedures

This descriptive study used survey technologies and sought to describe the perceptions of enrolled FBM students, agricultural lenders and FBM instructors regarding selected

aspects of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Program. The populations of the study were agricultural lenders, FBM instructors and FBM students.

The student population consisted of all students of the Minnesota FBM Program who had completed a minimum of three years of enrollment as an FBM student, and had been students of instructors with three or more years of experience teaching in their current program. The student sample, which was created for each region by the corresponding Regional Dean of Management Education, consisted of eight systematically, randomly selected students for each qualified instructor for 1999. After randomly selecting from 2,503 students, project staff administered 671 questionnaires. There were 567 useable questionnaires returned, yielding a return rate of 84.6%. Of the 318 agricultural lenders randomly selected from a population of 520 Minnesota agricultural lenders, 166 (53.9%) returned useable questionnaires. Eighty eight (92.6%) of the 95 eligible FBM instructors returned useable questionnaires.

The Minnesota Farm Business Management Education Program Assessment Questionnaires—versions S (student), C (agricultural lender) & I (FBM instructor)—were developed by the project director, the State Director of Management Education, Regional Deans of Management Education, FBM instructors and project staff. A student questionnaire is available in Appendix C. The questionnaires consisted of up to seven sections. The sections of the various versions (S, C & I) were selected from the following: a) methods of instruction; b) type of instructional activities and media; c) FBM education program objectives; d) improved farm practices, behaviors and attitudes; e) FBM education program benefits; f) program management; and g) participant profile.

The project director developed questions with input from the State Director and the Regional Deans of Management Education, and practicing FBM instructors. Many of the questions were selected and modified from earlier instruments developed by Richardson

(1979) and Persons, Wittenberg, Casey and Lehto (1986). Likert-like questions were developed for questions of the first four to five sections of the instruments. Sections six and seven consisted primarily of open-ended and forced-response questions. The face and construct validity of the questions of the student version of the instrument were established through evaluative efforts involving the State Director and Regional Deans of Management Education, selected researchers from the Department of Work, Community and Family Education at the University of Minnesota and FBM instructors. The face and construct validity of the lender and instructor versions of the questionnaire were established with input from the Regional Deans of Management Education. The student questionnaires were field tested with a group of seven farmers who made suggestions for enhancing the clarity and usefulness of the instrument. Suggested improvements were incorporated into the instruments.

FBM instructors delivered coded instruments to randomly selected student participants during January, February and March of 2000 after receiving instructions for administration from the project director or a trained designate. Instructors and the Regional Deans of Management Education maintained the records of the names of participants. Instruments were completed by student participants, sealed, given to their FBM instructors, and delivered to the respective Regional Dean of Management Education. The same procedure was used to collect instruments from the agricultural lenders. Instructors submitted their completed instruments to their regional Deans of Management Education in sealed envelopes.

Data was entered into an EXCEL spreadsheet program prior to analysis using SPSS, Version 10 (Norusis, 1999). Descriptive and comparative statistics were generated from the data for the students, agricultural lenders, and FBM instructors. Alpha was established a priori at .05.

Results

The results of the study are divided into six sections: Participant Profiles; Rankings of Preferred Forms of Instruction and Instructional Media; Rankings of the Program Components, Outcomes, and Effectiveness; Recommendations Regarding the Value of the Program; Rationale for Participating and Benefits Received from the FBM Program; and Suggestions and Strategies for Improving the FBM Program. Each of these sections has an analysis of the results including tables of relevant data. Raw data from the study were converted into rankings to make comparison with early findings possible. When applicable, comparisons of data with two earlier studies—Richardson (1979) and Persons et al. (1987)—are integrated in the table and text.

Participant Profiles

This section of the report presents the profiles of students enrolled in the FBM program, FBM instructors and agricultural lenders. The profiles are based on the responses obtained from the surveys returned by the participants. Information on the type of farms, financial characteristics, and the number of acres owned by FBM students was obtained from the FBM Program website, www.mgt.org. This section also has information on the enrollment tenure, enrollment influences and computer use, based on the responses of FBM students.

Profile of FBM Students

The profile of FBM students reveals the variety in their age, educational background, type of farm enterprise and how they operate their farms. The typical FBM student who has completed a minimum of three years enrollment in the FBM program is a fifty four year old male who is either a high-school graduate or has a post-high-school associate degree, runs his farm as a sole proprietorship, and operates the farm either by himself or

with the help of a spouse. Table 1 shows that 88.1% of the students are between the ages of 30 and 60, with 83% of them being male. Comparative data from Table 1 indicate that the average age of the FBM student has increased by fifteen years since the 1987 study conducted by Persons et al. The educational background of the students shows that 47% of them are high school graduates and about 51% have post-high-school degrees. The majority of farms (82%) are run as sole proprietorships with the farms being run predominantly by the student (28%) and/or the student's spouse (60%), or in conjunction with a business partner (7.2%).

The data in Table 2 illustrate the types of farms of farmers who received an annual analysis of their farm business for the 1999 business year. Annual analyses are usually completed for FBM students who have been in the program for more than 2 or 3 years. In order, the largest numbers of farms are dairy, crop, or farms with a combination of a variety of enterprises and/or non-traditional enterprises. Crop acres of different types of farms are supplied to enable comparisons.

Students enrolled in the FBM program are, indeed, different than the average Minnesota farmer who is characterized in the Minnesota Agricultural Statistics 2000 Handbook (Hunst, 2000). Eighty-one and one-half percent (81.5%) of the farmers enrolled in the FBM programs who completed annual analyses in 1999 produced yearly sales of over \$100,000. Slightly more than 53% of the farmers generated sales of \$200,000 or more in 1999. Comparatively, only 25% (20,000) of all Minnesota farmers have annual sales of \$100,000 or more (Hunst, 2000). The respective annual net farm incomes for all Minnesota farmers for 1996, 1997, 1998, and 1999 were \$26,720; \$12,268; \$18,733; and \$15,522. Respective annual net farm income for students enrolled in the FBM program who completed annual analyses for the same years were \$42,691; \$32,149; \$27,255; and \$48,268.

Table 1

Profile of FBM Students (n=569)

Descriptors	f	%	1987 study
Age of FBM students			
< 30	27	4.9	
31-40	140	24.6	
41-50	214	37.6	
51-60	128	22.5	
61-70	33	6.0	
> 71	5	0.9	
No response	22	3.9	
Mean age	54.12		38.9
SD	9.51		
Gender of students			
Male	457	80.3	
Female	91	16.0	
No response	21	3.7	
Highest level of education			
8 th grade or less	2	.4	
9 th -11 th grade	8	1.5	
High school graduates	258	45.3	
1 year post high school	131	23.0	
Associate degree	85	14.9	
Bachelors degree	61	10.7	
Graduate degree	5	.9	
No response	19	3.3	
Form of farm business organization			
Farms run as sole proprietorships	449	78.9	
Farms run as partnerships	73	13.0	
Farms run by corporations	25	4.4	
Other	3	.5	
No response	19	3.3	
Persons operating the farms			
FBM students	151	26.5	
Student and/or spouse	327	57.5	
Student and business partner	39	6.9	
Student's spouse & partner	15	2.6	
Other	10	1.8	
No response	27	4.7	

Table 2

Primary Types of Farms of FBM Students for 1997-1999 and 1999 Cropping Acreages

Year	Type of Farm ¹									
	Avg. all farms	Crop	Dairy	Hog	Beef	Crop+ Dairy	Crop+ hog	Crop+ beef	Crop+ sheep	Other
1999	2452	513	516	82	44	145	164	110	5	873
1998	2317	754	548	85	32	129	222	107	-	436
1997	2440	913	510	126	38	207	219	94	-	331
Crop Acres 1999 ²										
Total acres owned	265	251	208	184	451	252	223	277	48	315
Total crop acres	652	916	249	339	362	518	698	651	584	793
Total crop acres owned	207	216	135	135	186	206	191	192	80	257
Total crop acres cash rented	407	635	111	185	158	306	460	370	385	493
Total crop acres share rented	39	65	4	19	19	6	48	89	118	43

Notes: Data derived from students who completed annual farm analyses. These figures include FBM students not involved in this study.

¹ Designated by enterprise(s) that produce 70% or more of the income.

² Provided for 1999 only to give reader a sense of the nature of the cropping acreages of FBM students.

Table 3

Number of Farms of FBM Students by Gross Farm Sales 1997-1999

Year	Annual gross revenue					
	Avg. all farms	\$0-40K	\$40- 100K	\$101- 200K	\$201- 500K	>\$500K
1999	2452	117	336	693	954	352
1998	2317	108	308	717	912	272
1997	2440	119	351	832	888	250

Note: Data derived from students who completed annual farm analyses. These figures also include FBM students not involved in this study.

Enrollment Tenure, Enrollment Influences and Computer Use

The data in Table 4 reveal that 69% of the students have been in the program for more than six years. Forty-five percent of students intend to continue in the program for over ten more years while 36% intend to continue for four to ten years. In terms of individuals or agencies that influenced farmers to enroll in the program, an instructor influenced 40.3% of students, while a lender influenced 34% of the students to enroll in the program. This finding reinforces the importance of collecting input and feedback from both instructors and lenders as done in this study.

Table 4

Enrollment Tenure, Enrollment Influences and Computer Use

Descriptors	f	%
Years of enrollment in the FBM program		
3 years	51	9.3
4 years	25	4.6
5 years	50	9.1
6 years	42	7.7
> 6 years	380	69.3
Intended additional years of enrollment		
1-3 years	105	19.3
4-6 years	111	20.4
7-10 years	84	15.4
> 10 years	245	45.0
Individuals or agencies that influenced FBM students to enroll in the FBM program		
FBM instructor	212	40.3
Outside agency, lender	179	34.0
Family, friends or peers	101	19.2
Other	34	6.5
Methods used by FBM students for maintaining farm business records		
Computerized	378	71.5
MN farm account book	138	26.1
Accountant	11	2.1
Other	2	0.4

The data also reveal that 72% of the FBM students in this study maintain computerized records for their farming operations. This percentage is much larger than the estimated 26% of all Minnesota farmers who reportedly used computers for farm business in 1999 (Farm Computer Usage and Ownership, NASS, 1999).

Profile of Agricultural Lenders

The data in Table 5 show that 77% of agricultural lenders included in this study have 10–15 or more years of lending experience, with over 60% of the lenders having more than 15 years of experience. A majority of the lenders (78%) reported that personnel within their institutions work with up to two hundred farmers while 22.4% work with more than two hundred farmers. Most of the lenders (75%) have a bachelors degree. A majority of them (68%) represent banks, 23% represent farm services agencies, and 7% represent farm credit services. The data further show that 83% of the agricultural lenders have loan portfolios of less than twenty million and 17% of them have loan portfolios that are greater than twenty million.

Table 5

Profile of Agricultural Lenders (n=166)

Descriptors	f	%
Level of education		
Diploma Degree/ Associate Degree	18	10.9
Bachelors Degree	123	74.1
Graduate Degree	16	9.8
Other	7	4.3
No response	2	1.2
Years of experience as an ag lender		
1-9 years	37	22.5
10-15 years	24	17.0
> 15 years	99	60.4
No response	6	3.61
Type of lending institutions		
Bank	110	66.7
Farm Credit Services	11	6.7
Farm Services Agency	42	22.5
Other	2	1.2
Size of ag loan portfolio		
\$0 – 9.99 million	68	41.0
\$10 – 19.99 million	47	28.3
\$ 20 million and more	23	13.9
No response	28	16.9
Number of farmers who do business in corresponding numbers of agricultural lending institutions		
0-99	65	39.2
100-199	56	33.7
>200	35	21.1
No response	10	6.0
Number of FBM students in corresponding numbers of agricultural lending institutions		
0-19 students	79	47.6
20-39	42	25.3
40-59	14	8.4
60-79	6	3.6
More than 80	5	3.1
No response	20	12.0

The Agricultural Lenders' Level of Knowledge About the FBM Program

Table 6 shows that a majority (76.3%) of the lenders ranked their knowledge of the FBM program as four or higher on a scale of one to seven. A large number of lenders perceive themselves to have an average to high level of knowledge about the FBM program.

Table 6

The Agricultural Lenders' Level of Knowledge About the FBM Program (n=165)

Level of knowledge	f	%
1 No knowledge of the program	1	0.6
2	2	1.2
3	19	11.5
4	42	25.1
5	50	30.3
6	39	23.6
7 Extremely knowledgeable	12	7.3
Mean	4.84	
SD	1.20	

Profile of FBM Instructors

Data in Table 7 show that the average age of the Minnesota FBM instructors is 49 years. Over half (53%) of the instructors are over the age of 50 while 38% of them are between the ages of 40 and 50. The instructors in the program are highly experienced with the average length of experience being 15 years. Over 70% of the instructors have more than 20 years of teaching experience. Forty-two percent of the current instructors indicated they will be teaching for no more than 5 years and another 24% will teach up to 10 years.

Table 7

Profile of the FBM Instructors (n=88)

Descriptors	f	%
Age of instructors		
< 30	2	2.3
31-40	7	8.1
41-50	33	37.5
51-60	42	47.7
61-70	1	1.1
No response	2	2.3
Mean	48.9	
SD	7.2	
Gender of instructors		
Male	87	98.9
Female	1	1.1
Highest of Level of education		
Bachelors degree	55	63
Graduate degrees	33	37
Years of experience as FBM instructor		
1-5 years	15	17
6-10 years	11	12.5
11-15 years	21	24
16-20 years	16	18.2
21-25 years	13	14.7
26-30 years	10	11.4
No response	2	2.3
Additional anticipated years of teaching the FBM program		
0-5 years	34	38.6
6-10 years	21	24.4
11-15 years	16	18.2
16-20 years	9	10.5
21-25 years	3	4.7
> 26 years	2	2.3

Rankings of Preferred Methods of Instruction,

Instructional Media and Communications Media

Importance of Instructional Methods

The data in Table 8 show the ranking of the importance of the three methods of instruction. Individualized instruction is the most important followed by small group instruction and then large group instruction.

Instructional Approaches, Methods, Media and Aids

The following section shows the ranking of the perceived effectiveness of various instructional approaches, methods, media and aids. Data for this part were collected from students and instructors. This study used 19 items, which have broadly been divided into two areas: Instructional Approaches and Methods, and Instructional Media and Aids. The 1979 study used seven items and the 1986 study used nine items in this section. Comparative data are provided from previous studies wherever relevant.

Table 8

Comparison of the Rankings of the Perceived Importance of Selected Methods of Instruction

Methods	Total	Student	Instructor	Ag lender
Individualized	1	1	1	1
Small group	2	2	2	2
Large group	3	3	3	3

Note: small group = approximately 20 students; large group = greater than 20 students

Instructional Approaches and Methods.

The data in Table 9 show that individualized instruction is perceived to be the most effective method of instruction across the three studies. Question-answer sessions and use of a guest speaker and demonstrations are the other instructional approaches and methods ranked highly by students and instructors. Both students and instructors rank classroom instruction with groups of instructors and panel discussions the lowest.

Instructional Media and Aids.

Among instructional media and aids, students and instructors ranked communication with the instructor by telephone the highest. The data in Table 9 show that use of a monthly newsletter is perceived to be highly effective by students. Instructors also find this a valuable tool, ranking it fourth on the list of items. The use of quality worksheets and handouts is also perceived to be highly effective by both students and instructors. The lowest ranking among the items was received by the use of video films/slides and multimedia presentations.

Table 9

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Effectiveness of Selected Instructional Activities and Media in Helping FBM Students Learn to Better Manage Their Business

Nature of instruction and media	2000	2000	1986	1979
	Students	Instructors	Students	Students
Instructional approaches and methods				
Individualized instruction	1	1	1	1
Question and answer sessions	2	3	-	-
Demonstrations	3	5	-	-
Guest speakers	4	2	-	-
Field trips or tours	5	7	9	4
Large seminars with featured speaker	6	4	-	-
Case studies	7	6	-	-
Classroom instruction with groups of instructors	8	8	-	-
Panel discussions	9	9	-	-
Classroom meetings	-	-	4	3
Instructional media and aids				
Communication with the instructor by telephone	1	1	5	6
Monthly newsletter	2	5	-	-
Use of quality worksheets & handouts	3	2	-	-
Farm demonstration plots	4	9	8	5
Use of computer-generated presentation	5	3	-	-
Sample problems/simulations	6	6	-	-
Use of the Internet	7	4	-	-
Communication with instructor by e-mail and/or Internet	8	7	2	-
Newspaper articles prepared by instructor	9	11	7	7
Viewing videos, films and/or slides	10	10	-	-
Multimedia presentations	11	8	-	-

Rankings of the Program Components, Outcomes and Effectiveness

Rankings of the FBM Program Objectives

The program objectives guide the programming priorities and the efforts of the statewide FBM program. This section provides information on how the program objectives were ranked by the students, instructors and the agricultural lenders. The ranking was done based on the mean scores of each participant group for each of the program objectives. Comparative rankings are provided from the studies done in 1987 and 1979. This section of the survey had nine items as compared to the 1987 study, which had six items. Two of the items used in previous surveys that were not included in this study are found at the bottom of Table 10.

As shown in Table 10, the objective that was ranked the highest on all the studies was keeping accurate and complete business records. Analysis and interpretation of business records was ranked second in all the studies. There were slight variations in the rankings among the participants of the 2000 study. All the participants in this study gave almost the lowest rank among the objectives to understanding the fundamentals of human resource management.

Improved Farm Practices, Behaviors and Attitudes

Tables 11 and 12 show rankings of the amount farm practices, behaviors and attitudes have improved with enrollment in the FBM program, and the effectiveness of the program in developing the selected farm practices, attitudes and behaviors. The data for this part of the study were collected from students, instructors and the agricultural lenders.

Table 10

Comparison of the Ranking of the Views of Students', Instructors' and Ag Lenders'
Regarding the Appropriateness of the FBM Education Program Objectives

Program objectives	2000 Students	2000 Instructors	2000 Ag Lenders	1986 Students	1979 Students
Keep accurate and complete business records	1	1	1	1	1
Analyze and interpret business records	2	1	2	2	2
Understand the functions of management	3	5	5	-	-
Improve business organization and efficiency	4	6	4	-	-
Establish business and personal goals	5	3	3	4	4
Apply economic principles to mgmt of a business	6	7	7	-	-
Appreciate effects of decisions on the business	7	8	6	-	-
Appreciate the relationship between individual business entity and economic, social, political and physical environments impacting agriculture	8	9	9	3	3
Understand human resource management fundamentals	9	3	8	-	-
Technical assistance relative to crops, livestock, buildings and equipment	-	-	-	5	5
Improved family and community life through development and application of sound management decisions and practices	-	-	-	6	6

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks.

The data from Table 11 show that all participants agree that the farm practice that has benefited the most from enrollment in the program is the keeping of accurate business records. Involvement in income tax planning, constructing periodic cash flow projections, using farm records for decision making, improved relationships with lenders and the improved use of technology are the other items ranked at the top of this list of 14 items by at least one of the participant groups. The items ranked the lowest are the social aspects, more involvement in the community and more enjoyment of leisure time. Table 11 shows that the participants by and large agree with each other in ranking the improvement seen in farm practices, behaviors and attitudes as a result of enrolling in the FBM Program.

Table 11

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Amount that Farm Practices, Behaviors and Attitudes Improved as a Result of Enrollment in the FBM Program

Practices/behaviors/attitudes	Student	Ag Lender	Instructor
Keeping an accurate set of business records	1	1	1
Involved with income tax planning	2	4	6
Using farm records as the basis for decision making	3	6	3
Constructing periodic cash flow projections	4	2	2
Improved relationship with lenders	5	3	4
Improved or increased use of technology	6	5	5
More satisfied with the farm business I have	6	9	9
Increased net worth	8	8	7
The attitude of my family and myself towards education	9	7	8
Using improved marketing methods	10	10	10
Greater income for family living	11	11	11
Subscribe to and read more farm publications	12	12	14
More involved in community as a member and leader	13	13	12
Enjoying more leisure time	14	14	13

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks.

The rankings from Table 12 showing the perceived effectiveness of the program indicate that instruction in keeping accurate business records is a big strength of the program. It is important to note here that instructors perceive constructing periodic cash flow projections, and using farm records for decision making to be the more effective aspects of the program. The other items ranked in the top three correspond to the items ranked the top three in Table 11. While families assigned a fairly high dollar value to their FBM participation (\$4,966 – see Table 19), they ranked greater income only 11th of the 14 choices in Table 12. Here again, the social aspects and more involvement in the community receive the lowest rankings, along with subscription to and reading of more farm publications.

Table 12

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Effectiveness of the FBM Program in Developing Selected Farm Practices, Behaviors and Attitudes

Practices/behaviors/attitudes	Student	Ag Lender	Instructor
Keeping an accurate set of business records	1	1	3
Involved with income tax planning	2	3	6
Constructing periodic cash flow projections	3	1	1
Using farm records as the basis for decision making	3	6	2
Improved relationship with lenders	5	4	4
More satisfied with the farm business I have	6	10	9
Improved or increased use of technology	7	5	5
Increased net worth	8	8	8
Using improved marketing methods	9	9	10
The attitude of my family and myself towards education	10	7	7
Greater income for family living	11	11	10
Subscribe to and read more farm publications	12	12	14
More involved in community as a member and leader	13	13	12
Enjoying more leisure time	14	14	13

Note: some items in the table are tied at the same ranks

Rankings of the Importance of
FBM Education Program Instructional Topics, Activities and Benefits

The tables in the following section present the rankings of the importance of FBM program instructional topics, activities and benefits. The participant perceptions of the effectiveness of the program are subsequently presented. Each category has 31 items and is divided into three tables based on the rankings – top 10 items, middle 10 items and the bottom 11 items. Tables 13, 14 and 15 represent the rankings of the perceived importance of the FBM program topics, activities and benefits.

Table 13 shows that keeping accurate farm records is ranked the highest among all items. Interpretation and understanding of farm analysis reports and instruction in the development of cash flow forms, balance sheets and income statements are the items ranked second and third. Data from this table show that two items are ranked much lower by the agricultural lenders as compared to the students and the instructors: providing an impartial view of the farm business and creating a feeling of greater security in business decisions.

Data from Table 14 reflect notable differences among the rankings of the participants on the perceived importance of some items. The data indicate that both instructors and lenders perceive the instruction of credit use in farm business to be a more important program benefit than the students perceive it to be. Students ranked exchange of ideas, skills and techniques fairly high (13) while both instructors and lenders ranked it fairly low (22 & 25). Instruction in establishing family and business goals was given a much higher rank (9) by instructors as compared to students (18) and lenders (14). Development and effective use of marketing plans was given much higher ranks by lenders and instructors as compared to students.

Table 13

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Importance of FBM Instructional Topics, Activities and Benefits: Top Ten Items

Instructional topics, activities & benefits	Students	Ag Lenders	Instructors
Instruction in keeping accurate farm records	1	1	1
Interpretation and understanding of farm analysis reports	2	3	3
Instruction in development & use of cash flow forms, balance sheets, income statements	3	2	2
Consider the farm as a business	4	4	7
Increased earnings	5	13	8
Improved management skills	6	10	6
Instruction in managing crop enterprises	7	12	15
Provides an impartial perspective of the farm business	7	19	4
Instruction in developing farm business plans	9	8	12
A feeling and belief of greater security in business decisions made	10	20	13

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks.

Table 14

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Importance of FBM Program Instructional Topics, Activities and Benefits: Middle Ten Items

Instructional topics, activities & benefits	Students	Ag Lenders	Instructors
Instruction in credit use in the farm business	11	5	5
Informed about the business opportunities in farming	12	15	23
Exchange of ideas, skills and techniques	13	22	25
Instruction in managing livestock enterprises	13	16	21
Better knowledge of my personal and business capabilities	15	23	20
Instruction in effectively using government farm programs	16	17	11
Belief that I can accomplish greater goals	17	24	19
Instruction in establishing family and business goals	18	14	9
Instruction in risk management	19	11	15
Development and effective use of marketing plans	20	6	10

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks

Table 15 shows that instruction in personal expenditures and budgeting and increase in understanding of farm marketing options is ranked fairly high by the lenders but fairly low by both students and instructors. All participants in this study ranked social activities within the program the lowest. This is consistent with the results of the previous section on the importance and effectiveness of farm practices, behaviors and

attitudes, where all participants ranked the social aspects of the program the lowest. Instruction in legal and tax aspects of foreclosures, bankruptcy and financial crisis and instruction regarding environmental issues were the other two items ranked the lowest by all participants. The only item that differs by a number of rankings between the participants is the communication among and between family members. Instructors ranked this item much higher than both students and lenders.

Table 15

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Importance of FBM Program Instructional Topics, Activities and Benefits: Bottom Eleven Items

Instructional topics, activities & benefits	Students	Ag Lenders	Instructors
Instruction in organization and management of farm office including computer/software selection	21	18	17
An increase in my understanding of the options for marketing farm commodities	22	8	18
Instruction in personal expenditures and budgeting	23	7	22
Communication among and between family members	24	20	14
Instruction in personnel management	24	26	27
Instruction in farm transfer and operating agreements	26	27	26
Instruction in estate planning	27	28	29
Strategies for coping with mental stress and pressure	28	25	24
Instruction regarding environmental issues	29	29	28
Instruction in the legal and tax aspects of foreclosures, bankruptcy & financial crisis	30	30	30
Social aspects within the program and course activities	31	31	31

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks.

Rankings of the Effectiveness of the FBM Education Program in
Addressing Selected Instructional Topics, Activities and Benefits

Tables 16, 17 and 18 present the data on the ranking of perceived effectiveness of the FBM program in addressing instructional topics, activities, and benefits. Data from Table 16 indicate that students and the lenders believe the FBM program is most effective in teaching students how to keep accurate farm records. Instructors differ in their initial ranking, as they perceive the FBM program to be most effective in the instruction and development of cash flow forms, balance sheets and income statements. Other areas where participants perceive the FBM program to be effective is in the interpretation and understanding of farm records and in considering the farm as a business. The data suggest that the FBM instructors also believe that the FBM program is effective in providing an impartial perspective of the farm business. With one exception, all the groups placed the same five alternatives in the top five ranks.

Table 16

Comparison of the Rankings of the Effectiveness of the FBM Program in
Addressing Selected Instructional Topics, Activities and Benefits: Top Ten Items

Instructional topics, activities & benefits	Students	Ag Lenders	Instructors
Instruction in keeping accurate farm records	1	1	3
Interpretation and understanding of farm analysis reports	2	4	4
Consider the farm as a business	3	3	5
Instruction in development and use of cash flow forms, balance sheets, income statements	4	2	1
Provides an impartial perspective of the farm business	5	7	2
Instruction in developing farm business plans	6	13	13
A feeling and belief of greater security in business decisions made	7	17	10
Improved management skills	8	11	7
Instruction in managing crop enterprises	9	6	14
Exchange of ideas, skills and techniques	10	14	24

The data in Table 17 reflect some notable differences in the rankings between the lenders, students, and FBM instructors. Instruction in managing livestock enterprises and being informed about business opportunities in farming are benefits that are perceived to be far more effective by the lenders than by the students and the instructors. Instruction in establishing family and business goals is an area that the instructors perceive to be more effective than student and lenders.

Table 17

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Effectiveness of FBM Program in Developing FBM Program Benefits and Outcomes: Middle Ten Items

Benefits and outcomes	Students	Ag Lenders	Instructors
Instruction in credit use in the farm business	11	8	6
Better knowledge of my personal and business capabilities	12	19	22
Increased earnings	12	14	8
Instruction in effectively using government farm programs	14	10	12
Belief that I can accomplish greater goals	15	16	16
Instruction in managing livestock enterprises	16	9	22
Informed about the business opportunities in farming	17	5	17
Instruction in the organization and management of the farm office including computer and software selection	18	12	8
Instruction in establishing family and business goals	19	20	11
Instruction in risk management	20	18	18

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks

The data in Table 18 indicate that the benefits and outcomes ranked least effective by the participants are instruction in the legal and tax aspects of foreclosures, bankruptcy and other financial crisis situations, strategies for coping with mental stress and pressure and

social aspects within the program and course activities. There is also a difference in the ranking of the increase in understanding of options for marketing farm commodities.

Instructors ranked this item more highly than the other participants did.

Table 18

Comparison of the Ranking of Perceived Effectiveness of FBM Program in Developing FBM Program Benefits and Outcomes: Bottom Eleven Items

Benefits and outcomes	Students	Ag Lenders	Instructors
Development and effective use of marketing plans	21	23	19
Instruction in personnel management	22	25	25
An increase in my understanding of the options for marketing farm commodities	23	22	15
Instruction in personal expenditures and budgeting	23	21	19
Social aspects within the program and course activities	25	30	31
Instruction in farm transfer and operating agreements	26	29	26
Communication among and between family members	27	23	19
Instruction regarding environmental issues	28	27	28
Instruction in estate planning	29	28	30
Strategies for coping with mental stress and pressure	30	26	27
Instruction in the legal and tax aspects of foreclosures, bankruptcy and other financial crisis situations	31	31	29

Note: Some items in the table are tied at the same ranks

FBM Students' Perceptions of the Value of the FBM Program

Modern farmers are astute and insightful businesspeople who must get a good rate of return on their investment of time and money. Because of the slim profit margins in production agriculture, they are open to learning about new ideas and technologies.

Increase in net farm income and enrollment recommendations to others were two measures used to assess the perceptions of the students regarding the perceived financial value and overall satisfaction with the FBM program.

The average annual out-of-pocket investment for the FBM program for a student is between \$600-\$650. The data in Table 19 indicate that over 80% of the students reported an average increase in annual net farm income of \$2,000 or more per year, 57.7% an increase of \$4,000 or more per year, and 35.1% an increase of \$6,000 or more per year. Over 25% of the farmers indicated they believed they received an annual increase in net farm income of over \$8,000 per year. The mean gain in annual net income was \$4,996.

Eighty-five percent of the lenders that responded to this question indicated their clients who had enrolled in the program experienced an annual increase in net farm income that ranged from \$2,000 to more than \$8,000 per year. Nearly 30% of the agricultural lenders indicated their farmer clients that were enrolled in the FBM program experienced an annual average in net farm income of over \$6,000.

Data from Table 19 indicate that 47% of the instructors believed their students experienced an annual average increase in net farm income that ranges from \$2,000 to \$6,000. Fifty-four and 29.8% of the instructors, respectively, believe their students experience an annual increase in net farm income of \$6,000-\$8,000 or more than \$8,000.

The perceived mean increase in average net farm income for students that was attributable to enrollment in the FBM program by responding students, instructors and lenders was \$4,966, \$6,333, and \$4,880 respectively. Richardson (1979) and Persons et al. (1987) reported a perceived increase in annual weighted net farm income of \$4,081 and \$4,381, respectively.

Table 19

Perception of the Annual Average Increase in Student Net Farm Income as a Result of Enrollment in the FBM Program

Interval	Students (n= 536)		Instructors (n= 84)		Ag Lenders (n= 134)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
\$0 – 2,000	104	19.4	-	-	20	14.9
\$2,001 – 4,000	123	22.9	14	16.7	32	23.9
\$4,001 – 6,000	122	22.8	25	29.8	42	31.3
\$6,001 – 8,000	52	9.7	20	23.8	16	11.9
>\$8,000	135	25.2	25	29.8	24	17.9
Mean ¹	\$4,966		\$6,333		\$4,880	

Note: ¹ Calculated by taking the midpoint of each interval and a value of \$9,000 as a midpoint for the highest interval midpoint.

An additional measure used to assess participant satisfaction in the 2000, 1987, and 1979 studies was the question “If you were visiting with your neighbors, relatives and/or friends about the FBM program, what would you recommend them to do (if they were not yet enrolled in the program)?” Word of mouth is still one of the best forms of advertising in the world of agriculture. The findings presented in Table 20 suggest the current students are very satisfied with the program. Ninety percent of the farmers indicated they would encourage to strongly encourage other farmers to enroll in the FBM program. Forty-four percent of the students said they would strongly encourage other farmers to enroll. A cautionary note: not all students would give the program a positive recommendation. One out of ten students would either be neutral (neither encouraging or discouraging) or negative in their responses.

Table 20

Student Recommendations to Neighbors, Relatives, &/or Friends Concerning Enrollment in the FBM Program (n=547)

Recommendations	f	%
1 Strongly Discourage Enrollment	11	2.0
2	10	1.8
3	5	.9
4 Neither Discourage or Encourage Enrollment	29	5.3
5	73	13.3
6	178	32.5
7 Strongly Encourage Enrollment	241	44.1
Mean	6.00	
SD	1.29	

Rationale for Participating and
Benefits Received from Enrollment in the Program

This section summarizes written responses made by students, agricultural lenders and FBM instructors to open-ended prompts or questions. An extensive amount of participant comments are included as they further reflect participant beliefs, understandings and attitudes in a way that can only be partially presented in tables. The goal of this and subsequent elements of this section of results is to help us more fully understand what the participants felt and believe about the features and value of the program.

The data in Tables 21 and 22 and the accompanying text summarize the responses of students to two questions concerning the reasons for enrollment and what they like best about the program. The student prompts were (a) "In your own words, list two reasons why you decided to enroll in the Farm Business Management Education Program" and (b) "In your own words, list two of the things you like best about the Farm Business Management Education Program."

Tables 23 and 24 and the corresponding text summarize the responses of the agricultural lenders. They responded to the prompt “List the two primary benefits your lending institution receives when your clients are enrolled in the Farm Business Management Program.”

Tables 25 and 26 and related text summarize the responses of the FBM instructors to two prompts. They were (a) “List the top four reasons farmers decide to enroll in your Farm Business Management Education Program” and (b) “List three of the key benefits your students receive from enrollment in the Farm Business Management Education Program.”

Tables 27, 28 and 29 and the related text summarize the responses of students, instructors and lenders to the prompt “How can the FBM program be improved?”

Table 21

Reasons Why Students Decided to Enroll in the FBM Program

Reason for enrolling	f (n = 809)	%
Record keeping, computerized accounting	261	32.2
Lender encouragement, request or requirement	114	14
Impartial enterprise, whole farm analysis	61	7.5
Independent opinion, advice, sounding board, management help and challenges by the instructor	57	7.0
Better understanding of records, analysis, trends and farm as a business	39	4.8
Tax planning, estimating and filing	36	4.4
More current farm information, education and learning	34	4.2
Desire to improve management skills, decision-making and decisions	33	4.0
Better financial information for decision making	30	3.7
Improve income and profitability	21	2.5
Recommendations of friends relatives and spousal influence	17	2.1
Availability of comparative data on like farms and enterprises	16	2.0
Cash flow planning and budgeting	12	1.5
Marketing programs and assistance	12	1.5
Data to improve livestock and crop management and farming practices	9	1.1
Opportunity to develop a business plan for growth and farm change	9	1.1
Become informed about agricultural issues; up-to-date information	5	0.6
Actively recruited by the instructor	4	0.5
Personality, resources, reputation of the instructor	4	0.5
Access to computers and technology	4	0.5
Relating to other farmers, sharing ideas	4	0.5
Consult about the present and future family situation	3	0.4
Assistance and information to facilitate goal setting	3	0.4
Enrollment coincided with start-up in farming	3	0.4
Miscellaneous (1-2 responses per reason)	18	2.2

Students' Reasons for Enrolling in the FBM Program

Some individuals did not respond, and some gave only one response, but the vast majority provided at least two written reasons for enrolling in the FBM program. The data in Table 21 summarize the responses of the students. By far the most common reason given for enrolling in the FBM program was associated with farm records. Some needed a system, some wanted more accurate information, and some were looking for an easier, simpler way to gather information. Almost one third of the respondents named record keeping as a primary motivation for enrollment. Getting up to speed with computerized farm records was often mentioned. This reference to records was tied closely to the encouragement, request or requirement of their lenders for better, more accurate records, reports and analyses for lending purposes.

Lenders had a big influence on the decisions to enroll. Some typical responses were:

I wanted to be able to do all accounting, balance sheets, analysis and interpretation of these records at home
Our lender suggested it and it sounded very interesting
It was a FSA requirement for the loan program

The value of the farm business analysis was recognized by many as a good reason to enroll. It made otherwise elusive information readily available for use in decision making. Specially mentioned was the value of enterprise analysis reports in determining break-even points and distribution of costs and returns. Being able to compare one enterprise with another was mentioned several times as an important motivator.

To organize records for enterprise analysis
To find break-even on livestock and crop enterprises
The analysis documents are great!
The business analysis and comparisons

The recognition of the role of the instructor as an independent, impartial observer who could provide advice, challenge the farm operator for better performance, and provide help with management decisions was reported by many as being influential on their

decision to enroll. Some specifically mentioned the need to have someone other than the lender familiar with the business and able to offer advice on management and financial considerations.

The instructors' role was typically described as:

To get an independent opinion about farm decisions

A dedicated, knowledgeable person to bounce ideas off of instead of the banker

A professional consultant to help me make farm management decisions

To get another person's perspective

Developing a better understanding to the tools they had—records, analysis, production and financial trends—was high on the list of reasons for enrollment. Some typical responses were:

Analyzing one or more years to give a better picture of farm health

Learn about management tools, records

To understand our records and analysis better

Assistance in tax estimating, planning and filing was also a consideration for some. More were concerned with tax planning and estimating than were concerned with filing, although in describing the need for better records, tax concerns were sometimes mentioned. Some specific responses were:

To help organize records for tax estimating

Quicker, easier tax preparation

Characteristics or Features of the FBM Program Students Like Best

Students were requested to list two characteristics or features of the FBM program they liked best. The data in Table 22 reflect the 784 responses from 547 students.

Assistance with farm records in one form or another was a major benefit from enrollment in the FBM program. Respondents used terms like timely, complete, accurate, detailed and compact to define the benefits they derived. Other record-related benefits, such as

Table 22

Characteristics or Features FBM Students Liked Best about the FBM Program

Characteristic or feature	f (n=784)	%
Farm records: accuracy, completeness, timeliness	135	17.2
The instructor: willingness to help, knowledge, advice, understanding, dedication, availability, friendliness, source of information and answers to questions	98	12.5
Information gained through the annual business analysis	99	12.6
One-on-one personalized instruction, on-farm visits	69	8.8
Assistance with income tax planning, estimating and preparation	49	6.3
Financial reports including cash flow analysis, personal spending, farm planning information	40	5.1
Source of unbiased, timely information; idea development, discussion of issues	39	4.9
The business approach to analyzing financial records, control of the farm through knowledge and understanding of finances and the production operation	32	4.1
Comparison of one business with another	27	3.4
An unbiased second opinion, an assessment of management	25	3.2
Computer expertise; software availability and instructions in its use	24	3.1
Classes, seminars, group meetings, guest speakers	20	2.6
Marketing meetings, seminars, advice and assistance	19	2.4
Opportunities to exchange ideas in informal settings: tours, demonstrations, banquets; exchange of ideas with other farmers and peers	18	2.3
General learning, management skills learned	13	1.7
Flexibility, help when needed, variety of topics that meet personal needs	13	1.7
Advice on management practices, technology adoption, enterprises and financial affairs	8	1.0
Knowledge of and access to government programs	7	0.9
Enterprise analysis with costs, returns and breakeven analysis	7	0.9
Lender satisfaction	7	0.9
Security, confidence that comes with knowing that records are complete and accurate	6	0.8
Resources available	6	0.8
Help in goal setting	4	0.5
Increased income, net worth and farm efficiency	4	0.5
Instructor observations of fields, plants, weeds etc.	4	0.5
Program responsible for being able to stay on the farm	3	0.4
Whole farm planning and projections	3	0.4
Miscellaneous	5	0.6

information gained through the annual analysis and the financial reports, reinforced the value of farm records for the participants. Respondents said:

The analysis tells you if you are making it or not
The analysis at year end turns some lights on
The business analysis to help plan the next year management changes
I like to get information from the analysis to know how I do from year to year
More condensed, accurate, easy to read records
Better record keeping and awareness of what you spend and why
Records tell me my weak and strong points in farming
Unlimited financial reports that I can supply to lenders

The instructor was the focus of many comments on benefits. He/she was thought to be very knowledgeable, very understanding and very friendly. The farmers viewed him/her as a good source of information and a likely place to seek answers to questions they had about their farm business, issues or relationships. They were complimentary of his/her availability and dedication to the job. A number of instructors were mentioned by name.

The instructors' willingness to help and advise us
The knowledge and patience the instructor has with his clients
Instructor knowledge on current issues

The personal nature of instruction through the on-farm visit was high on the list of benefits. Both the personalized nature of the contact and the fact that the farmer could participate without leaving home were mentioned frequently. These ideas are captured by:

One-to-one personal touch
One-on-one business management instruction in my own home
The convenience of having the instructor come to my home and working with me one-on-one

Dealing with taxes is an area where farmers saw big benefits in planning, estimating and preparation. Some related the ease of tax work directly to the accurate, timely, and complete records they had available. Tax benefits were expressed as:

Books are ready for income tax and you have accurate year to date info
Income tax estimate and keeping current with tax laws

Respondents appreciated the unbiased, timely information they were able to receive through the program, and the opportunity to discuss issues with the instructor. Several mentioned the notion that they enjoyed the opportunity to test and develop ideas in a non-threatening, safe environment, depending upon the instructor for an unbiased assessment of their plan. A sample of responses is:

Our instructors' ability to see out operation from the outside
We receive an impartial analysis of the potential problems with the options
we are considering
Discussing new ideas with the instructor

Having control was a big issue. With a wealth of information about their finances and general farm operation that they understood, they expressed the benefit of having control of what they were doing. The business approach to analysis and interpretation was beneficial. Respondents expressed these benefits by:

The business approach to analyzing financial records
More effective control of my farm
I like the fact that I am accurately tracking my costs of production
Projected farm plan
Knowing where we came from, where we are headed and how to reach our
goals

Being able to compare to other competing businesses was cited frequently as a benefit. Specifically mentioned were enterprise comparisons and the general question of "How are we doing?" Benefits pointed out were:

Great info on comparing our business to others and where they are
Computer generated comparisons with other farms
I can compare my costs of production with other similar agricultural
ventures

While respondents sought unbiased information, they also sought unbiased second opinions after or in the process of making decisions.

Agricultural Lenders: Primary Benefits Received by the Institution when Clients Enrolled in the FBM Program

The data in Tables 23 and 24 were derived from the responses of 160 agricultural lenders who elected to respond to the open-ended prompt "List two primary benefits your institution receives when your clients enroll in the FBM program."

Table 23

Primary Benefits Your Credit Institution Receives when Your Clients are Enrolled in the FBM Program: First Response

Response	f (n = 160)	%
Better records, net worth, cash flow, analysis	53	33.1
Accurate, consistent, records	20	12.5
Spend less time with clients because documents are already completed	16	10
Client has complete balance sheet, earnings and other financial statements	15	9.4
Client has increased understanding of finances	11	6.9
Client has dependable historical analysis with trends.	7	4.4
Client has an annual analysis	5	3.1
Cash flow planning can be done more accurately	4	3.1
Focus on farm as a business	5	3.1
Financial statements are more timely	3	1.9
Access to better information and analysis	3	1.9
Better decision making skills and information	3	1.9
Outside, independent analysis of financial progress	3	1.9
Clients view farm as a business	3	1.9
Meets borrower requirements for FSA loan	2	1.3
Common format for statements	2	1.3
Tax planning	2	1.3
Miscellaneous	8	5

Table 24

Primary Benefits Your Credit Institution Receives when Your Clients are Enrolled in the FBM Program: Second Response

Response	f (n = 155)	%
Clients have a better understanding of their personal, financial, business and farm operation	26	168.0
Cash flow projections; planning	25	16.1
Essential documents completed: saves time	24	15.5
Enterprise analysis, comparative information, profitability of practices	8	5.2
Year end analysis data available	7	4.5
Better farm records	7	4.5
Accurate records for decision making	7	4.5
Client has had unbiased assistance, consultation	7	4.5
Focus on farm as a business	5	3.2
Better grasp of borrower/lender relationships	4	2.6
Better planning	4	2.6
Better management decisions	4	2.6
Better tax planning	3	1.9
Farmers are more pro-active, confident and comfortable	3	1.9
Farmers have better financial management and business skills	3	1.9
Analysis provides history on new borrower clients	2	1.3
Farmer has a better handle on goals; bank makes better decisions	2	1.3
Risk management	2	1.3
Better communication between client and lender	2	1.3
Shifts time from records and statements to analysis and planning	2	1.3
Miscellaneous	7	4.2
Program has no benefit to the institution	1	0.6

The first and second responses from lenders were analyzed separately. The logic was that the first response might be a more powerful or accurate indicator of the benefits lenders

perceived to gain from the FBM program. As expected, there is a different response pattern between the first and second responses.

Almost half of the first responses were directly related to records, using such terms as better, more accurate, and more consistent. The rather cryptic responses given to the inquiry by most respondents did not elaborate on those terms, so it is assumed the common meanings apply. Typical responses were:

They generally keep much better records
We get very good reports
Accurate income and expense numbers on the farm unit

The respondents spend less time with clients because the client has a complete balance sheet. Much of the paperwork associated with loan servicing had been done through the FBM program and thus less time was required by the lender to service the loan.

Responses included:

We spend less time with financial statement preparation
Full set of financials and cash flows prepared

Increased understanding of finances shifts the focus from the tools of financial decision making to the perception that FBM students are more knowledgeable about their finances than are other lender clients. This statement was reinforced later by the notion that FBM clients have better decision-making information and better developed skills in using it.

Samples of the responses are shown below.

Understanding (by borrower) of appropriate financial information--
financial statements, cash flow, etc.
Farmers can understand and answer questions
We can better discuss balance sheet & cash flow issues
They understand the concepts

Some respondents emphasized the benefits of a historical analysis with trends as well as the current information and pointed out the access to better information. Some responded with:

The client has accurate historical production and financial information
Client has year end analysis and historical performance information

The benefit of having an outside independent analysis of financial progress was also recognized.

Client has had benefit of an outside, independent analysis of financial progress

Third party review of the farming business

In the second response, the better understanding of personal, financial, business and farm operations was the most frequently reported benefit, followed closely by two benefits directly related to farm records and reports. Respondents were specific in mentioning cash flow planning, projections, and actual performance as being beneficial to the institution. Better, more accurate records and the fact that the FBM instructor played a role as an unbiased helper/consultant were still mentioned in the second responses. Two different concepts were introduced in the second set of responses: a grasp of lender/borrower relationships and better communications. These concepts shift away from the mechanics of financing toward the understanding necessary for a smoother working relationship.

Better communications because of FBM instruction

They have a good grasp of a lender-borrower relationship and have done their homework

Lenders also recognize the benefit of having clients who are pro-active, confident and comfortable with financial management, who understand their goals, and who focus on the farm as a business rather than as a job. Better financial and business skills are a recognized benefit. Typical responses were:

The producer begins to look at his farm more as a business

Clients are pro-active rather than reactive

In summary, examining both the first and second responses to the inquiry on institutional benefits, it is obvious that lenders look at better, more accurate records as a primary FBM program benefit. Having clients who are better skilled in management decision making and who understand the financial, personal, business, and farm operations are high on lender

lists of benefits. Expressed in different ways, lenders recognize that the FBM program saves them both time and effort by assisting farmers in completing the documents needed for financing decisions, thus leaving more time for planning and situational analysis with their clients.

Lenders also recognize that FBM clients are a source of information for enterprise comparison and farm practice profitability assessment, citing information sharing as a program benefit. The recognition of benefits is not unanimous. One respondent reported that the program was of no help, contending that the bank already did the things the program claimed to do and had done so for many years. Another pointed out that the programs are not of uniform quality by noting that the lender would use information from some programs but not from others.

FBM Instructors' Beliefs about Students' Reasons for Enrolling

The 74 instructors responded to two prompts. The data in Table 25 resulted from 270 responses to the prompt "List four reasons farmers decide to enroll in your FBM program."

Farm records and accounts top the list as reasons to belong to the FBM program, as perceived by FBM instructors. Lenders reinforce that reasoning since they demand schedules and reports based upon good, accurate records in consideration of requests for loans. Enrollment is driven not only by the desire to have a better record system, but also by the demands of creditors.

Farm record keeping skill development
Bankers' influence
Encouragement by lenders
Need better methods of record keeping

Table 25

FBM Instructors' Views of the Reasons Farmers Decide to Enroll in Their FBM Program

Reason	f (n=270)	%
Learn record keeping skills, computerized accounting, personal assistance	42	15.6
Lender requirements, encouragement	37	13.7
Whole farm analysis, enterprise profitability, instruction in how to analyze	28	10.4
Assistance with cash flow planning, projections	17	6.3
Assistance with tax planning, estimating	17	6.3
Financial planning, organization and structure; build better relationship with lender	17	6.3
Want to improve profitability, net worth, better management skills, need information for decision making	16	5.9
Increase knowledge of farm business, know financial position, learn business principles	15	5.6
Gain an independent, unbiased perspective of business operation	13	4.8
Recommendations of other students to enroll	12	4.4
Help in setting goals, developing farm business plans	10	3.7
Marketing; information, education and advice	10	3.7
Computer information, instruction, assistance	9	3.3
Program and instructor(s) reputation in the community	7	2.6
Keeping abreast of new technology	3	1.1
Help solve financial problems	3	1.1
Develop confidence in decision making	2	0.7
Resource networking	2	0.7
Learn about new technology	2	0.7
Unduplicated miscellaneous responses	8	2.9

Some perceive the primary reason tied not to the tools (records) but to the management information the tools can provide, such as an annual analysis of the whole farm and of the individual enterprises. The whole farm/enterprise analysis is still just a tool in management of the farm, but it is at a much more sophisticated level than just the raw financial and production record.

Know where they are financially as well as know how well, or how poor, they are doing

They want a better handle on enterprise profitability

Enterprise analysis and interpretation

Cash flow planning and projections are also cited as reasons for farmers to enroll. As with whole farm/enterprise analysis, records play a key role in being able to accomplish this task accurately. The cash flow plan is often demanded by the lender, so that also plays a role in the lenders encouragement to enroll.

They seek cash flow planning for lender, mediation, etc.

Assistance with cash flow

Assistance with tax planning and estimating is high on the list of reasons to enroll. While farmers often have tax consultants/preparers to assist them with the actual filing, advice and counsel on the tax consequences of day-to-day management decisions is not provided. The FBM program fills that role. The tax emphasis is again related to the need for good records.

Assistance with tax planning and tax management

Improve income tax planning

Seeking help in planning is a reason perceived by many instructors. Financial planning with some attention to financial structure is a key activity for which farmers seek advice and assistance.

They need financial plans made

Directional planning with goals

Some potential enrollees recognize that the FBM program has a history of helping farmers improve income, profitability, and management skill. With improved management

skill and better information, they can more easily and confidently make sound business decisions. Knowing more about the business and gaining some insight about management principles is encouragement to enroll.

Helping solve financial problems
Need information for decision making
Improve financial management skills
Improve their farming practices

Gaining an unbiased second opinion about proposed decisions and having an outside person evaluate the way in which the business is operated were major encouragements for some potential enrollees.

Independent perspective on their operation
Need another unbiased interpretation

There were many other reasons for enrollment listed. It is probably unlikely, given the large number of reasons perceived to be operating, that any one reason dominated the decisions of farmers, but it is likely that many reasons reinforced others.

Three Key Benefits Students Receive from Enrolling in the Program

The data in Table 26 resulted from the prompt “List three benefits your students receive from enrolling in your program.” Improved records topped the list of perceived benefits to farmer enrollees. Understanding of the records and the relevancy of the records to the farm business expanded upon the theme of simply keeping records. Using the records and analysis system as a source of information for management was perceived as a major benefit. This activity helped farmers retain control of their business and improved their confidence in decision making. They could get a better “big picture” perspective on their farm operation.

Table 26

FBM Instructors' Views of the Key Benefits FBM Students Receive from Enrolling in the FBM program

Key benefits	f (n =193)	%
Improved records with better understanding of record, relevancy to farm	35	18.1
Accurate whole farm and enterprise analysis, financial reports	26	13.5
Learn more about their business, develop confidence in decision making, better sense of control, develop better business perspective	21	10.9
Marketing information, development of better marketing skills	11	5.7
Cash flow planning	11	5.7
Improved financial condition	9	4.7
Learn about new technology, cutting edge ideas	9	4.7
Improved management skills and better decision making	8	4.1
Better understanding of business and personal goals	7	3.7
Better planning skills and business plan development	7	3.7
Information and advice on tax planning, estimating and filing	6	3.1
Improved computer skills	5	2.6
Better relationship with lender	5	2.6
Improved financial management	5	2.6
Better information for decision making, improved confidence	4	2.1
Opportunity to communicate business ideas with others	3	1.6
Impartial review of business operation, sounding board for decisions	3	1.6
Education on specific topic relevant to individual farmer	3	1.6
Keeps farmers current on technology	2	1.0
Provides advocacy and encouragement	2	1.0
Unduplicated miscellaneous benefits	11	5.7

Gaining skills in marketing was an important program attribute beneficial to farmers. Planning, especially cash flow planning was perceived as a benefit for many. This attribute could be tied directly to the better relationships developed with lenders, since farmers become more knowledgeable about their business. One benefit, later reinforced by farmer responses to the question about how much they perceived the management program added to their income, was the suggestion that farmers improved their financial position as a result of program participation.

Learning about new technology was also a perceived benefit. The opportunity to hear about and discuss cutting edge ideas was mentioned. Computer skills could be placed in this same category as a technology new to a number of students.

Planning skills play an important role in tax management; financial management and business plan development. A variety of planning skills were thought to accrue as a result of program participation. Communicating business ideas with others and using the program instructor as a sounding board both convey the idea that second opinions are useful, and that farmers can gain those attributes in the FBM program. In total, the instructors listed 31 different duplicated and unduplicated benefits they perceived farmers gained as a result of program participation.

Student Suggestions for Improving the FBM Program

The 331 responses to the query “Suggest ways the FBM program could be improved” fell into 72 different and distinct categories. For 46 of the categories, only one or two respondents used the same descriptors to answer the question. A summary is presented in Table 27.

Table 27

Students' Views of How the FBM Program Can Be Improved

Suggested improvements	f (n= 331)	%
Program is O.K. as is, meets my needs, no suggestions for improvements	63	19.0
Employ more one-on-one instruction, particularly in summer and during the winter analysis season	32	9.7
Instruction in marketing: classes, seminars, individual assistance and information	30	9.1
Control tuition costs, continue subsidies	27	8.2
More computer decision aids, computer instruction and training in software use	13	3.9
More classes, guest speakers, enterprise analysts, and experts in stress management	12	3.6
More staff; more FBM programs where farmers are not now being served	9	2.7
Better instructor support with clerical help, assistants, better facilities and improved instructor access	8	2.4
Revise, update and standardize record system; use windows platform	8	2.4
Expand efforts to keep good instructors; emulate those with excellent performance	6	1.8
For older farmers, expand training in estate planning, property transfer, leasing, etc.	6	1.8
Provide assistance, increase emphasis on goal setting	6	1.8
Increase use of Internet	6	1.8
More small group meetings, tours, demonstrations, roundtables and events for farmers with like kinds of enterprises to allow more interaction	6	1.8
Better communication with politicians and the general public about the economic and production status of agriculture	5	1.5
More instructor training to improve instructor confidence, expand enterprise expertise	5	1.5
Adjust meeting times to accommodate those who work off the farm	5	1.5
Bolster class attendance by emphasis on husbands and wives, family members	4	1.2
Improve recruiting, increase numbers	4	1.2
Be alert to and bring information about new technology	4	1.2

Make modifications in the analysis program: content and frequency	4	1.2
Expedite student contact with instructor through better office hours, cell phones	3	0.9
Hold meetings and engage instructors closer to home	3	0.9
Continue/increase program funding	3	0.9
Apply self more, accept individual responsibility for program improvement	3	0.9
Shift more responsibility for records and reports to farmers, freeing up instructor for more important things	3	0.9
Miscellaneous (1-2 responses to 46 separate and distinct suggestions)	53	16.0
Note: Many of those queried did not respond to this question, but a number gave multiple responses, all of which were recorded.		

Of those responding, 63 expressed satisfaction with the program the way it is currently organized and operated. They used terms like satisfied, can't think of anything I would change, fits my operation well, and I need it just the way it is. Comments were usually only one or two words expressing the idea of student satisfaction.

Students had suggestions about instruction: what kind, where it should be, and what the content should focus on. The most frequent suggestion was for the program to include more on-farm, one-on-one instruction. Timing seemed to be important for some as well, with suggestions that there be more instruction in the summer and in the early winter period during the analysis season. These suggestions were sometimes accompanied by the realization that more staff would be required for this to happen, or that staff would need more support in the form of professional or clerical assistance. Having instruction closer to home and an instructor who was in close proximity to the farm families were also noted as possible program improvements.

The suggested topics of instruction, while not very numerous, were wide-ranging, with the most suggestions for more computer instruction, particularly in the use of computer

decision making aids. Some suggested more classes where guest speakers, enterprise experts and experts in more personal instruction such as stress management could be used. There was a plea for diversity of topics so that there would not be a singular focus on enterprises that all students did not have. Specifically mentioned were classes other than grain production and classes that satisfied a variety of livestock interests. Some farmers thought classes in things such as estate planning and land transfer would be beneficial.

Less formal instruction through small group meetings, tours, demonstration plots and roundtable discussion groups were called for. These kinds of activities, it was noted, allow farmers to exchange ideas with others in similar kinds of business endeavors.

Tuition costs were a concern. Mentioned often as a possible program improvement was the suggestion that tuition be reduced or that subsidies be continued and improved. Some suggested that the program be removed from the college system and put on its own to avoid the "round-peg/square-hole" syndrome. The tuition issue was often accompanied by alternative solutions to the problem: pro-rate on farm size, pro-rate on basis of services used, seek support from the lending industry and increase program funding by government sources.

Both the records systems in use and the analysis system should be carefully scrutinized to determine if improvements could be made that would make them more standardized and more acceptable to the lenders. Several suggestions for more frequent analyses and more up-to-date records, using the windows platform for the record program were received.

Communication was important. Some suggestions were better use of the Internet; mailings, including newsletters; and communication with policy makers and the general

public. Telling the story of the farm business operations, financial status and progress in use of technology surfaced in several comments.

Retaining good instructors and avoiding turnover was high on some lists of suggestions. Several instructors were mentioned by name with the idea that new instructors should be just like him or her to be most successful. One respondent said, “Our instructor is just about perfect!” However, it was noted that some instructor training could and should be made available. The lack of instructor knowledge about some specific enterprises, and the lack of confidence displayed by some working in unfamiliar territory were tied to instructor training.

It was suggested that improved class attendance should be a goal of some programs. Making a special point to have husbands and wives attend, sometimes having classes for women only, and making sure the class time is convenient, especially for those who work off the farm were mentioned as strategies to improve attendance. Simply getting more people involved through an active recruiting program was also deemed important.

A few suggested that more responsibility could be shifted to the students—especially for record keeping and developing reports—to free up more time for the instructor to do other more important tasks. And some suggested that program improvement lies with themselves: accepting more responsibility, taking advantage of what was offered, and applying themselves more to the business of management.

Agricultural Lenders’ Suggestions for Improving the Program

Improving recruitment and expanding program enrollments topped the list of suggestions in Table 28 for improving the FBM program. A general view was that more staff and staff support would be necessary for this to happen. Improved staffing and staff support

were mentioned as necessary if spending more time on one-on-one instruction were to occur, recognizing the time limitations for the current staff. A partial solution was noted in the suggestion to extend teacher contracts so that more contact time was available.

Table 28

Agricultural Lenders' Views on How the FBM Program Can Be Improved

Improvement suggestion	f (n=139)	%
Improve recruitment; expand number of clients	19	11.9
More staff and more staff support	14	8.8
Spend more time on one-on-one instruction; improve client understanding of reports and analysis	14	8.8
Expand marketing: classes, seminars, advice and planning	13	8.2
Improve historical 5-year financial and production information for more accurate, realistic and verifiable forward planning projections.	12	7.5
Develop sound attainable business plans; work on goals and goal setting	7	4.4
Assist with records, aim toward compatibility with lenders' needs	7	4.4
Improve farmer computer competency	6	3.8
Provide more tuition assistance; reduce program costs	6	3.8
Improve communication among clients, lenders and FBM instructors; joint meetings	5	3.1
Improve instructor quality and consistency; more emphasis on agricultural competency	4	2.5
Inform lenders and agribusiness about FBM program: what it is, how it functions and the program benefits to students and others	4	2.5
Make improvements and adjustments in financial reports	3	1.9
Program is O.K. as is	3	1.9
Increase number of classes and seminars on a wide range of topics	3	1.9
Be more aggressive in offering advice	2	1.3
Miscellaneous (single, unduplicated responses)	17	10.7

Typical suggestions were:

- More clerical assistance**
- Emphasize FBM value on talk shows**
- Spend more time with the client discussing the analysis of year-end performance**
- Spend more time with the client so they can understand what the client sees or wants**
- Need to get the larger operations enrolled plus specialty and integrated livestock enterprises**
- Allow longer contracts for instructors—this is a year-long position**

The need to improve marketing skills is embedded in the suggestion that more marketing classes, seminars, advice and planning be part of the FBM programs of the future. The suggestions for increased attention to marketing followed these lines:

- Help in establishing more marketing groups**
- Marketing will need to be a key focus in the Ag industry**
- Increase group marketing classes**

Several commented in different ways about the need to improve the accuracy and realism of farm projections. The most common was the suggestion that a five-year historical record be developed on which projections could be based and information verified. The need for longer and more accurate financial and production histories was expressed by:

- Include five-year history for a comparison with how realistic the projections are**
- Need to have five-year historical income and expense cash and accrual reports on all customers**

Working on business plans, goals and goal setting were suggested program improvements. Goal development and monitoring was suggested by:

- Put very high priority on developing sound, attainable business plans which reconcile with past/current performance data**
- More goal setting and monitoring to see if they meet goals**

The emphasis on farm records was clear, with a suggestion that farm record improvements were a desirable focus for instruction. Several mentioned making records compatible with lender needs. Two suggestions that focused on this theme were:

The primary goal is to keep accurate and complete records
Computer records that are compatible with lender analysis systems

Some recognized the important role computers play in farm management and urged programs to work on improving farmer competence in computer use. Respondents remarked:

Computer technology is the key
Computer training

Providing more tuition assistance and/or reducing program costs was on the list of suggested improvements. Concerns for costs were expressed by:

Educational costs need to be subsidized to keep the program costs low
Lower cost if possible; low cost FinPack for farmer use only

Better communication surfaced as one program improvement activity, suggesting that three-way meetings between lenders, clients and FBM instructors would be useful. Communication in a different sense was part of the notion that lenders and agribusinesses need to be better informed about program operation, benefits and functions. Better communication was woven through many suggestions. A few of the more direct were:

Perhaps have a client/lender/FBM instructor meeting every other year
Frankly, I am not that well informed about what you offer
Although I get the monthly newsletter, no instructor has stopped to visit about the program

Instructor quality, consistency and background were all mentioned as areas of possible improvement. One noted that it was very important that instructors have some training and experience in production agriculture so that he/she understands farmers. Old as well as new instructors need to be more aggressive in offering advice to farm students.

Respondents pointed out:

I think FBM should be more aggressive about making suggestions about the farm operation
Quality instructors make the program
In certain locations the FBM program is not doing well because of poor instructors
More consistent quality of instructors

More instructors who have hands-on experience in farming

Increasing the number of learning opportunities in classes, seminars and meetings surfaced. The topics for such events varied widely. A few suggestions were:

More access to generational transfer experts
Need more small group classes on a variety of topics
More instruction in risk management

A small number said the program was O.K. as it stands.

I hesitate to recommend any additions to the FBM program; it already is quite good
Program in our area is excellent
Does well to continue on its present course

There were 17 unduplicated suggestions with a wide range of themes. Some would be fairly easy to implement, such as better use of the Internet, while data privacy laws would make suggestions like send printouts straight to the lender almost impossible. Even though there was no agreement on any of these 17 items, they should be examined since they may contain some clues as to program improvements that are easily put in place and improve program quality.

Suggestions from lenders should be examined in light of the philosophy and operational procedures established for the FBM program. Some of the lender suggestions are contrary to established program parameters. Some of the suggestions shift the focus of the farm management program from the farmer student to the lender and lender's institution.

FBM Instructors' Suggestions for Improving the FBM Program

Table 29 shows instructors' suggestions for FBM program improvement. Instructors had many good suggestions. Topping the list was more in-service education. Topics suggested varied from emerging technologies to record keeping and accounting principles. Marketing tools and strategies were frequently mentioned.

Table 29

Instructors' Views on How the FBM Program Can Be Improved

Improvement suggestion	f (n=105)	%
More in-service training for instructors in emerging technologies, marketing, record and accounting principles, work on quality improvement	14	13.3
Better marketing of the FBM program on statewide basis, more promotional materials, appeal to larger farms, specialty farms	11	10.5
Provide for local support staff	8	7.6
Keep program costs low	8	7.6
Require fewer students per instructor	8	7.6
Reduce paperwork, administrative details, and number of meetings	8	7.6
Offer more classes for farmers with shared instructors, shared curriculum, better lesson plans and more instructional support such as PowerPoint	6	5.7
Allow more time for individual management instruction	5	4.8
Incorporate new technology such as internet in program delivery	5	4.8
Establish better information delivery system between deans, state office and instructors	3	2.9
Better identification, training and mentoring of new FBM instructors	3	2.9
Use expert, state subsidized instructors for special topics	2	1.9
Keep computers and instructional equipment updated	2	1.9
Reward aggressive instruction	2	1.9
Remove enrollment limits, increase flexibility	2	1.9
Add more staff	2	1.9
Miscellaneous unduplicated responses	16	15.2

Specific suggestions were as follows.

More in-service training for instructors on new, emerging technologies
More local educational seminars to keep us updated on farming practices
Stay on top of new technology so we know more about it and can bring it to our students
Keep all instructors prepared to teach management and management principles
Upgrade technology information: GPS/GIS

Better marketing of the FBM program statewide was thought to be of benefit. More promotional materials, a statewide marketing campaign, and devising appeals to special audiences such as large farms or specialty farms were deemed beneficial.

Better marketing of our programs

Statewide advertising

Public knowledge: let the people know we exist

Establish statewide program recognition so that FBM becomes a household word

Two suggestions could be viewed as an either-or proposition: provide for support staff or require fewer students per instructor. Some suggested that adding more staff would also help.

Provide local clerical support staff

Lower number of students required so we have time to better serve our students

Have some clerical help to allow more time to work with students

The concern over costs was a primary response, with many urging to keep cost low, reduce tuition, or put a cap on tuition increases.

Keep program affordable for those who do not qualify for financial aid

Keep tuition costs down

There were several suggestions to reduce the amount of administrative duties and paper work instructors were required to either complete or supervise (student enrollment). This suggestion may be tied to the suggestion that more time be allowed for individual instruction.

Hold fewer regional meetings

Less time shuffling paper and more time on technology updates

Improving the delivery of instruction for groups was also suggested. More cooperation among teachers in the form of team teaching, more sharing of curriculum, better lesson plans, and more shared PowerPoint support materials were all suggested. A suggestion of

a few was to add some specialized instructors with statewide responsibility to augment the current teaching cadre.

More uniform programs developed and better instructor training
More large group classes with better attendance
Use more specialized help in instruction
More detailed lesson plans for the FBM curriculum; kept updated
Develop some Freelance or PowerPoint presentations we can use

Incorporating Internet instruction in the educational mix was offered as a means to improve program delivery. It was also suggested that better use should be made of the Internet in general communication between the instructors and their deans and state staff.

Incorporate new technology into program delivery
A more timely and consistent flow of information between the state, deans and instructors

A concern for new instructors was voiced. Early identification of potential new instructors along with good pre-service training was thought to be one means of insuring that instructor quality would be maintained or improved.

FBM professor in AgEd fulltime
Mentor new FBM instructors
Identify potential instructors in advance of position needs

Keeping computers and instructional supporting equipment on the cutting edge of technology was thought to be important for the future.

Keep computers and other equipment updated

Some program incentives, such as rewarding aggressive instruction, increasing local program flexibility, and removing enrollment tenure restrictions were all thought to be positive adjustments for the future.

Employ findings of task force of FBM to reward aggressive instruction

There were many suggestions for which there was no duplication. While these are not reported in this table, it may important to examine each one carefully since it is quite

possible that given the opportunity, there would be general agreement among instructors as to the value of the suggestion.

Conclusions

The most noteworthy conclusions are presented in the same order as the results, which followed the order of the stated objectives of the study. The findings from the responses of the FBM students, agricultural lenders, and FBM instructors led to the following conclusions:

1. The typical FBM student is well-educated and is somewhat older than the FBM farmer that participated in the Persons, Lehto, Casey and Wittenberg (1987) and Richardson (1979) studies.
2. The students enrolled in the FBM program are different than the majority of Minnesota farmers in that 87% of them have annual receipts of more than \$100,000, while 80% of Minnesota farmers have annual receipts of less than \$100,000. Likewise, farmers enrolled in the FBM program generate more net farm income than most farmers. However, it is important to recognize that statistical data for Minnesota farmers from the Department of Agriculture include farms of all sizes ranging from only a few acres to mega-farms with thousands of acres under their control.
3. The largest share of FBM students have been enrolled in the program for six or more years. This suggests that they are satisfied with, and see an on-going need for the program. For over 20 years, farmers have believed there is real value in staying in the program beyond the initial six-year period (Persons et al., 1987; Richardson 1979). Persons et al. reported that FBM students were enrolled for an average of 9.1 years. Richardson (1979) found that the participants, FBM instructors, and program administrators of his study believed they added value to themselves from the program from more than 6 years of participation.
4. There continues to be a strong demand for the program from the current FBM students just as there was from FBM students in the late 1970s (Richardson, 1979) and mid-1980s (Persons et al., 1987). Over 60% of the students intend on participating in the program for seven or more additional years if the opportunity continues to exist.
5. A larger share of the Minnesota FBM students own and use computers to keep farm records than the general population of United States farmers. Over 71% of FBM students use computers to keep farm records; only 26% of farmers in Minnesota use computers for farm business (Farm Computer Usage and Ownership, NASS, 1999).

6. FBM instructors, agricultural lenders and persons from related agencies, along with family members and friends continue to be strong influencers of new farmers considering enrolling in the FBM program.
7. The agricultural lenders who have FBM students as clients are well experienced and well educated. These lenders are employed primarily in banks and the Farm Service Agency.
8. While there are a large number of lenders that acknowledge the lack of knowledge about the FBM program, the majority of agricultural lenders believe they are very knowledgeable about the program.
9. Over 60% of the current FBM faculty will be retiring in the next five to ten years. The exodus of this group of well-educated and experienced group of professionals reflects the same retirement patterns of many teachers in the public education systems.
10. There may be a direct annual impact of over \$20-22 million for the 4,000–4,350 farmers enrolled in the Minnesota FBM program. The financial and social impact upon the local and state economy extends beyond the financial benefits of the farmers. The perceptions of the FBM students, agricultural lenders, and FBM instructors of this study reveal that farmers enrolled in the FBM program experience an increase in net farm income of nearly \$5,000 or more each year. FBM students have acclaimed the value of the program for over 20 years. Farmers and lenders of the Persons et al. (1987) study, for example, perceived the annual monetary benefit from participation to be \$3,000 and \$5,000, respectively. Richardson (1979) reported FBM students, instructors, and program administrators estimated an average increase of \$3,073 to \$4,962, \$4,769, and \$5,400, respectively, for students enrolled in the FBM programs.
11. FBM students agree that keeping accurate farm records; analyzing, interpreting and using records; and establishing business and personal goals; understanding the functions of management; and improving business organization and efficiency are the five foremost program objectives that should be met by the FBM program. The common objectives remain high priorities among the FBM students, FBM instructors, and agricultural lenders.
12. FBM students and instructors agree that individualized instruction is the most important and effective form of instruction from the learning standpoint.

13. FBM students believe the traditional forms of instructional media and aids are the most effective in helping them learn so that they can meet their business and personal needs.
14. FBM students, instructors, and agricultural lenders indicate that learning to keep farm records is the practice that has improved the most for students enrolled in the FBM program.
15. The most frequently cited FBM program instructional topics, activities or benefits are those that have the greatest immediate impact upon the farming business. FBM students, instructors and agricultural lenders agree that instruction relating to record keeping practices, interpretation and use of analyses and financial statements are the highest ranking benefits.
16. Study participants agree that the least important FBM program instructional topics, activities or benefits are those that have a limited or deferred impact upon the current success of the farming business. A limited value is placed upon emerging concerns such as instruction related to environmental issues and practices, stress management, and personnel management strategies.
17. Participants agree the FBM instructors are most effective when teaching about instructional topics and benefits that have the greatest immediate impact upon the farm business and family. FBM instructors are highly effective in teaching record keeping skills, the interpretation and use of annual analyses, development and use of financial statements, and treating the farm as a business.
18. FBM students are highly satisfied with the FBM program as evidenced by their intent to continue enrollment and highly recommend the program to family, friends, and neighbors.
19. The major reasons FBM students decide to enroll in the FBM program relate to learning how to keep and use records, the nature and expertise of the FBM instructor, and the requirement of their agricultural lender. FBM students value greatly the perspectives offered by the FBM instructor.
20. The features the FBM students liked best about the FBM program were learning how to keep and use records for decision making and access to a qualified FBM instructor who willingly and skillfully delivered individualized instruction.
21. The primary benefit received by agricultural lenders and their institutions from farmers enrolled in the FBM program was time savings when servicing the loan portfolios of the farmers. Time savings resulted from farmers who submitted

accurate and consistent records and financial statements that reflected their understanding of business, financial and farm operations.

22. FBM instructors believe students enroll in their programs to learn how to keep accurate records; interpret, analyze, and use the records for decision making, and because of enrollment mandates from their lending institutions.
23. FBM instructors believe the key benefits the FBM students received from enrolling in the FBM program relate to learning how to keep and use accurate farm records for making management decisions and to develop their confidence in the process of making decisions.
24. Though FBM students had a limited number of suggestions for improving the FBM program, their concerns centered on gaining access to the FBM program. FBM program leaders were encouraged to increase the amount of individualized instruction offered during the slow months of the summer and winter seasons and provide more instruction relating to marketing.
25. Agricultural lenders suggested current FBM students and potential students need greater access to the FBM instructors and their programs. Recognizing the current limitations, the lenders suggested increasing the availability of FBM instructors and support staff to accommodate the expanding needs of current and future students on a year-round basis.
26. FBM instructors believe the best ways to improve the FBM program are to further invest in measures that can increase the efficiency, effectiveness, program awareness, and access to the FBM program and the instructor. FBM instructors desire increased access to in-service education programs, program marketing that focuses on a wider variety of non-traditional farms, resources for support staff, lower student tuition costs, and less paperwork.

Recommendations

1. Considering the continued strong student demand, perceived annual returns to the student, and agricultural lender support for the program, resources need to be made available to increase student access to quality FBM programs, instructional materials, and instructors. Specific recommendations include:
 - Adequate fiscal resources need to be available to conduct a needs assessment of instructional needs of students enrolled in the beginning six-year program and the advanced certificates options.
 - FBM instructors need to be convinced of the value of and the need for year-round instruction.
 - Increase amount of funds available for upgrading the knowledge and skills of the FBM instructors relating to technical agriculture, management information systems, electronic communications, and teaching management education to students with diverse characteristics and needs.
 - Sufficient resources to be used for upgrading existing course materials need to be provided on a yearly basis. FBM students need timely access to the best and most recent instruction. To take advantage of the widespread computer use among FBM students, funds need to be made available annually to the statewide program to develop 2-3 certificate courses (two basic and one advanced certificate) that are available for online Internet access
2. Establish systematic strategies and programs to identify and prepare individuals to replace the cohorts of FBM instructors who will be retiring annually over the next 10 years. Specific recommendations include:
 - Produce a quality recruiting program at the regional and state levels that includes materials and approaches to gaining the interest of potential candidates.
 - Provide and/or secure funds to enable potential instructor candidates to complete internships with existing FBM instructors. Identify the skills, knowledge and attitudes that are needed by instructors to ensure success as a FBM instructor.
 - Develop and offer in-service courses on a systematic and on-going basis for existing instructors and potential instructor candidates.

3. Findings from this study should be used to inform stakeholder groups about the benefits received by students and agricultural lenders.
4. Strategies suggested by study participants for improving the FBM program should be closely examined and implemented when warranted.
5. FBM programs should provide appropriate levels of instruction for students enrolled in expanded levels within the advanced certificate option.
6. Additional curriculum options need to be developed to reflect the changing instructional needs of FBM students as they mature through the business cycles of their farming operation.
7. Since learning how to keep and use quality records and financial statements for making enterprise and whole business decisions are valued by students, instructors and lenders, resources need to be available, and efforts need to be made to continually upgrade instructors' and FBM students' skills and understandings of traditional and emerging record keeping and analysis technologies and practices.
8. Expand and strengthen efforts to inform agricultural lenders about the Minnesota FBM program. This may be accomplished through many ways including:
 - Create or strengthen alliances with Minnesota Bankers Association, Farm Service Agencies and other lender organizations.
 - Inform lenders about the location and content of the Minnesota FBM website.
 - Make available paper copies and/or easy access to electronic annual reports such as provided at the FBM website.
 - Provide special seminars for agricultural lenders designed to inform them about the program and annual analysis summaries.
 - Meet with agricultural lenders to discuss strategies for better meeting the needs of the farmers, agricultural lenders, and FBM instructors.
 - Enlisting lenders' participation as guest presenters in workshops and classes.
 - Continue to improve communication and sharing with lenders.

9. Instructors need to model skillful use of digital-based technologies (e.g., Internet, CD-ROMS, computer-generated multimedia presentations) as well as traditional instructional media and aids. Likewise, students should be encouraged to use the technologies for making business presentations to customers, agricultural lenders and others.
10. Instructors must enhance their teaching effectiveness by participating in workshops and seminars that focus upon instructional strategies for teaching farmers.
11. Instructors need to continue to offer instruction on topics that are having an impact upon the farm businesses of a number of farmers (i.e., personnel management, estate transfer strategies, and environmental issues that impact agriculture) even if those topics are currently viewed as unimportant.
12. The FBM program should establish a marketing strategy for the statewide FBM program that focuses on the benefits farmers receive from participation in an effort to improve the recruitment of new students and inform the public of the value of public program investments.
13. The current enrollment is not representative of the broad scale of farm sizes and complexities. Special efforts should be made to recruit students from among the large specialty farms so that the whole range of agriculture is represented in the student membership.
14. Since it is known that it takes four or more years to accumulate the knowledge, skills, and data to make strategic changes in the farm business, continual efforts must be extended at the local, regional and state level to retain new students so they have the needed tools to make strategic changes in their operations.
15. Though the FBM students, agricultural lenders and FBM instructors wholeheartedly agree that the current program objectives are useful, on-going efforts must be made to keep goals and objectives relevant to and focused on the intended farm audience.
16. Maintain an on-going program of inquiry concerning teaching, learning, curriculum and policy issues that can be used to understand and improve the FBM program.

Epilogue

Students enrolled in the farm business management education (FBM) programs, agricultural lenders and farm business management instructors have spoken. In the words of Regis Philbin, this is their “final answer!” They have responded to the questions put to them about the management and operation of the Minnesota FBM programs. We should thoughtfully listen to their responses. The authors have tried faithfully to follow the practice of listening, analyzing, and interpreting the responses so that the conclusions and recommendations are logical and supported by the evidence provided by the respondents.

Like all studies that involve the perspectives of stakeholders, many questions and concerns surfaced after the initial conclusions of this study were drawn. For example, “Were the right questions asked?” “Have the more difficult parts of management instruction that focus on long range business development and business planning and decision making been brushed aside to concentrate on financial reports that might be most immediately useful?” “Is the focus too heavy on the tools of management and too light on the management functions that can make the difference between success and failure?” “Is the emphasis too strong on the financial tools sought by the creditor at the expense of more advanced management instruction?” “Who and/or what is driving the content of the curriculum? Students? Agricultural Lenders? Others?” These are important questions to respond to if the Minnesota FBM program is to be of maximum benefit in this century!

It seems clear from the finding of this study that some types of farms and farmers are under-represented in the FBM enrollment. Again, important questions surface. For example, “Should the program take additional steps to include the operators and owners of small, specialized and large farms and ranches?” “Is recruitment of current and these new target audiences crucial to the future of the FBM program?” “If so, are we prepared to invest the resources needed for promotion, curriculum development, and enhancement

of the knowledge and skills of the instructors?” “Are the annual costs for the participants fair?” Are these additional questions and issues that should be re-addressed by the FBM leaders and stakeholder groups?

There is also the question of how farm management education is being delivered. Farmers place high value on the individualized nature of the instruction, ranking it as the most preferred form of instruction. Though there is great preference for delivering courses in a one-to-one format, group instruction can still serve an important role in management education. There are, indeed, some common management principles and skills needs among students that they need to understand and be able to effectively apply. Therefore, it seems logical that the common need be met at least in part, by proven and innovative forms of small and large group activity. Do farmers prefer it? The study results indicate group instruction is their second or third preference. Yet, many FBM instructors currently run many successful small and large group classes for farmers who faithfully attend. It is acknowledged that it is more convenient to receive education at home in a friendly one-on-one exchange. Some experimentation with farm management instruction using distance delivery technologies may satisfy the need for some at-home instruction. However, an instructional plan that requires more group instruction for common objectives and content can emphasize the education part of farm management education. Group instruction can free the instructor to deliver higher quality one-to-one personalized instruction in an effective and efficient manner. Finding ways to successfully interact with groups may be the most profitable and feasible way to stretch farm management instruction into topic areas that require more study, planning and educational development on the part of the instructor.

In addition to offering high quality record keeping and annual analyses instruction, FBM instructors must place greater emphasis on the other objectives of the FBM program which are viewed to be somewhat insignificant by many farmers. Many vendors,

including agricultural lenders, now offer competitive record keeping and analysis packages and services that often compete with the FBM program offerings. Along with record keeping and analysis instruction, the FBM program needs to further feature and showcase its ability to effectively teach farmers basic and advanced managing principles and strategies for running their operations. This approach may, indeed, open the doors to many farm operations, that to date, have not yet been entered.

Is the future of the FBM program bright? Definitely! Any public education program that consistently receives such high marks from the participants, major secondary stakeholders and those who are in charge of operating it must be doing something right. Can it be improved? Definitely! All of the groups surveyed offered worthwhile suggestions for improving the FBM program if it is to provide exemplary service to the farm population in the 21st century. However, some of the suggestions may not be very easy to implement. They will require stakeholders to rethink how FBM programs are presented to their students. Some will require that instructors be better trained in areas where they are not now competent. Others will involve the use of new instructional, teaching and social technologies. However, some may be quite simple and easy to put in place!

Management is about making adjustments to continual change. Success is marked by the ability to effectively respond to changes. The ultimate key to successful change is the ongoing involvement of stakeholders and a dynamic action plan that is informed by accurate information and guided by a challenging and attainable vision. The Minnesota FBM program must embrace orderly, thoughtful change to meet the management needs of the present and potential clients!

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Appendix A

Semester Conversion

FBM Curricula: Diploma, Advanced, and Marketing Certificates

Semester Conversion

In 1995, the Minnesota State Legislature passed legislation stating that by 1998 all public colleges and universities in the state must be on semester calendars. With this action, the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, including community and technical colleges, joined the majority of private colleges and universities nationwide that are on a semester calendar.

The Farm Business Management programs started the semester conversion process in May of 1996, with a committee of twelve farm business management instructors and the Regional Deans of Management programs, under the leadership of the MnSCU Director of Management Education.

The resulting benefits of the semester curriculum for farm business management programs are:

1. A statewide curriculum with fewer courses, broader course goals and the flexibility to adapt course content to any given area.
2. Provides students and instructors longer periods of uninterrupted study offered by a semester calendar.
3. Registration, payment of fees, and other administrative activities will be reduced from four times a year to three.

This Farm Business Management semester curriculum includes: an FBM program plan listed by semester and year, course syllabus for each course, and a conversion grid of quarter credit courses that makeup each of the new semester courses.

Farm Business Management Semester Curriculum

AWARD: Diploma

LENGTH: 60 Credits

Program Description:

The Farm Business Management Education Program is concerned with the organization of a farmer's resources in such a way as to assist the family in meeting their family and business goals. Often these goals involve generating new profit. Good management requires a sound knowledge of economic principles because they are the framework for

farm operation and organization. Good management ties all sections of a farm business together. It provides a perspective, showing the relationship of all parts to one another, and to the whole farm business. Good management also requires a knowledge of farm practices and agriculture science, as well as new developments in the field. Management must understand various alternatives that can be used in decision making. Farm business management instruction is concerned with the development of a farmer's knowledge of economic principles and with the decision-making process. The object of the instruction is to help farmers apply these approaches or sets of principles to their business in such a way as to meet their goals. For information on these classes, you can contact us by email!

PREREQUISITES: To be eligible for enrollment in Farm Business Management courses a student must be a farm business operator or manager or must secure the consent of the instructor.

FBMT 1211 Introduction to Farm Business Management

This course introduces basic farm business management concepts. Students will study the farm management planning cycle and develop an understanding of its relationship to: family and farm business goal setting, cash and enterprise accounting principles, and tax planning. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 1112 Foundations for Farm Business Management

This course is an overview of the Farm Business Management Program. The student will be introduced to goal setting, self and business assessment, record keeping, and business projections to provide the foundation for personal and business management progress. Current issues affecting business management are an integral part of the course. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 1213 Managing a Farm System in a Global Economy

This course assists the students in achieving awareness of development in agricultural policies and practices throughout the world and assessing the impact of these policies and practices on the profitability and viability of their farm business. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 1121 Preparation for Farm Business Analysis

This course will take the student through a step by step procedure to close out a complete year of farm business records. This course will emphasize tax planning, completing inputs to livestock and crop enterprises, and emphasizing cash and liabilities accuracy. A completed business and enterprise analysis will be the course focus. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 1122 Implementing the System Management Plan

This course continues to build on the foundation of farm business management. The student will complete a farm business financial and enterprise analysis. Sound financial record keeping is an integral component. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 1223 Using System Analysis in Total Farm Planning

This course enables study of concepts related to farm business analysis, and exploration of possible implications and/or solutions to these concepts. A systematic method to assess farm business strengths and weaknesses based on the analysis will be used. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 1131 Managing and Modifying Farm System Data

This course will help the student refine their farm business data system and assist them in applying year end procedures for farm business analysis. Students improve accuracy in the following: farm enterprise analysis, tax planning and filing, and cash and liabilities checks. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 1132 Interpreting and Using Farm System Data

This course provides an opportunity for the student to view the farm business and its various components through a number of vehicles such as balance sheets, farm personal and managerial inventories, enterprise reports and historical data. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 1233 Application of Productive Enterprise Information

This course describes procedures for applying enterprise information provided by computerized analysis of farm business accounts. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2141 Interpreting and Evaluating Financial Data

This course continues to expand on preparation and evaluation of the farm business analysis. This course provides continued guidance and perfection of business record close out procedures, tax implications of management decisions, and continues to monitor farm business and family goals. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 2142 Interpreting Trends in Business Planning

This course examines whole farm, enterprise, balance sheet, and inventory trends. Current analysis data are compared to historical data in making future farm business planning decisions. Financial ratios are used to indicate the farm financial structure. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 2243 Using Financial Instruments in Farm System Management

This course integrates the application of various financial instruments used in acquiring capital for use in the business and investigates the way in which both earnings and financial progress can be measured. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2151 Strategies in Farm System Data Management

This course will help the student focus on long term strategies necessary to maintain and enhance the farm business and personal future financial goals. The student will complete the year by developing an accurate, usable business analysis. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 2152 Integrating System Information for Financial Planning

This course uses farm system information to develop a farm financial plan. Interpretation and analysis of the farm system data will enhance the reliability of the farm plan. The comprehensive farm plan will integrate historical trends, farm and personal goals, financial and enterprise performance of the farm business. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 2253 System Plans and Projections

This course enables the combination of concepts for preparing farm system plans and projections, and the interaction of possible implications and/or solutions of these concepts. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2161 Examination of the Context of Farm System Management

This course is designed to assist students in preparation of improved farm system management procedures. Students in this course will evaluate several years of an improved farm system analysis. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 2162 Refining Farm System Management

This course is the culmination of activities designed to enable the student to develop and implement a comprehensive farm business strategic plan. The student will use the components of the Farm Business Management Program to develop and support a farm business strategic plan. Prereq: None. (4C/0 lect, 0 lab, 4 other)

FBMT 2263 Evaluating Farm System Programs

This course develops an awareness of individuals and agencies, both public and private, which have expertise available to assist the farm operator to solve farm systems problems. It enables study and application of farm business evaluation concepts, and exploration of possible implications. Exact subject matter and time spent per topic will vary depending on student need, location, and time. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2300 Computer Applications in Farm Management

This course will discuss basic computer literacy, identify commonly used software, and demonstrate the uses of commonly used software. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2325 Ethics in this Business of Agriculture

This course will explore the various ways in which a farm business conducts business and address their proper conduct. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2305 Legal Issues in Agriculture

This course will examine rental contracts, liability insurance, purchase agreements, and farm transfer issues. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2330 Business Math Principles

This course will establish methods in determining inventory, calculating acreages, determining yields, calculating fixed and variable costs, and assist in understanding depreciation methods. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2310 Environmental Interactions in Agriculture

This course will examine a variety of environmental issues related to agriculture and suggested ways in which to address the issues. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2335 Labor Economics and Management

This course will address the use of labor in agriculture, labor work agreements, hired labor tax issues, and the evaluation of labor useage in a business. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2315 Effective Time Management

This course will explore various time management principles and their utilization within the farm business. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2340 Rural Leadership

This course will examine various farm organizations, the USDA, and local political systems. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2320 Family Wellness and Business Relationships

This course will study rural health issues and their effects on successful business ventures. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2345 CPR and First Aid

This course will assist the student in understanding proper procedures for handling wounds and injuries, and in performing CPR. Prereq: None. (2C/0 lect, 0 lab, 2 other)

Advanced Farm Business Management Curriculum

AWARD: Diploma

LENGTH: 30 Credits

Program Description:

Advanced Management Certificate

The Advance Management Certificate is designed to provide education in the areas of: Risk Management, Strategic Planning, and Business Plan Development. The program will primarily be for students who have completed the Farm Business Management program, but are currently involved in expanding, reorganizing, diversifying, and/or specializing their business. A sound record base is necessary for success in this program.

PREREQUISITES: To be eligible for enrollment in Advanced Farm Business Management courses a student must be a farm business operator or manager or must secure the consent of the instructor.

FBMT 3100

Fundamentals: Risk Management

3 Credits

This course is intended to have the student enhance their decision-making skills relating to business risk management. This course will have the student further investigate tools available to their business that would be effective in reducing potential risk for their operation. Emphasis will be placed on having the student research risk management options that will meet their business, family, and personal needs.

FBMT 3101

Applications in Risk Management

3 Credits

This course is intended to have the student apply concepts in financial management that can be used in the development of a business risk management program. The student is to implement risk management tools that will assist in meeting their business, family and personal needs.

FBMT 3110

Fundamentals: Strategic Planning

3 Credits

This course will enable students to identify the elements necessary to evaluate and create a strategic plan for the business. Determining uses for the plan today and tomorrow and developing a plan to locate those team members necessary for strategic plan creation.

FBMT 3111

Applications in Strategic Planning

3 Credits

This course will provide practical application of strategic planning skills. Application skills will be practiced upon and applied to the student's business and business plan.

FBMT 3120

Fundamentals: Business Plans

3 Credits

This course will provide practical application of the business plan. Application skills will be practiced and applied as the student's business plan is prepared and implemented.

FBMT 3121

Applications in Business Plans

3 Credits

This course will provide the necessary instruction to put together and implement a business plan for the farm business.

FBMT 3130

Directed Study: Decision Making

2 Credits

This course will examine the individual, family and farm business decision-making process with emphasis on upgrading and improving decision making resources, tools and skills. Particularly, this course will lead the student to critically analyze information, applications and implications of decision-making as it relates to their own situation. Students will evaluate their own decision making process.

FBMT 3131

Directed Study: Advanced Communications

2 Credits

This course will assist the student in further acquiring and developing a higher level of communication skills. Students will review and evaluate various communication methods and techniques in dealing with and relating to individuals in both the public and private sector. Students will use this information in formulating an effective communication method and style. Additional course content may include student initiated or group activities.

FBMT 3132

Directed Study: Technology Issues

2 Credits

This course will deal with experiencing modern agricultural technological changes and determining if they fit into an individual's farming operation.

FBMT 1193 Directed Study – Evaluating Marketing Tools

This course will allow the student to implement and use the marketing tools appropriate to the current marketing situation. Prerequisite: FBMT 1190. (2 C/ 0 lecture/pres, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2170 Monitoring Farm Commodity Marketing Plans

This course is designed to teach students to monitor and refine current farm commodity marketing plans. Emphasis will be placed on current market conditions and pricing opportunities. (3 C/ 0 lecture/pres, 0 lab, 3 other)

FBMT 2173 Directed Study – Monitoring Marketing Plans

This course will provide activities directed toward monitoring and refining the student's farm commodity marketing plan. Prerequisite: FBMT 2170 (2 C/ 0 lecture/pres, 0 lab, 2 other)

FBMT 2180 Strategies in Farm Commodity Marketing

This course is designed to help students plan marketing strategies necessary to achieve farm business and personal goals. (3 C/ 0 lecture/pres, 0 lab, 3 other)

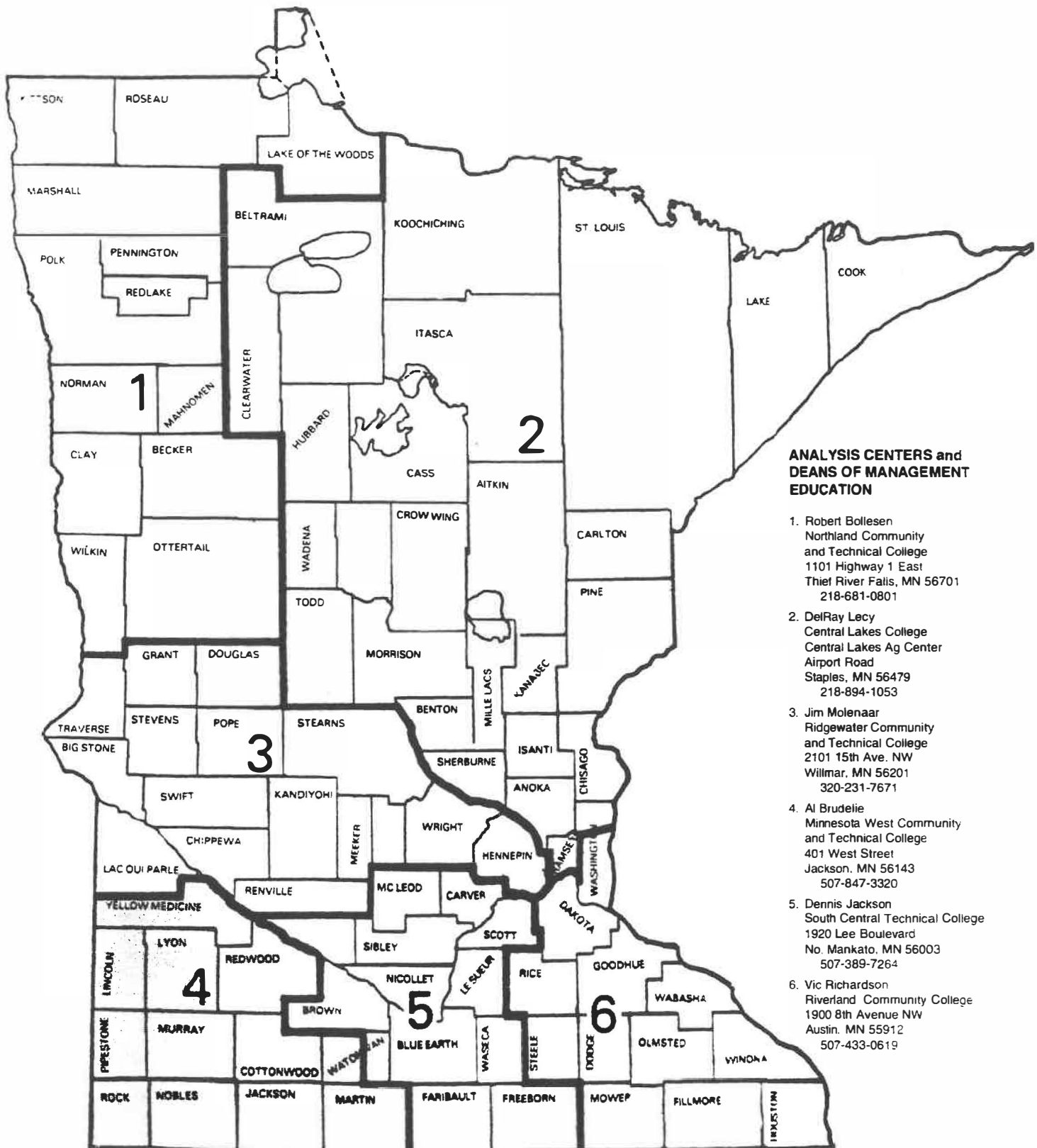
FBMT 2183 Directed Study – Strategies in Farm Commodity Marketing

This course will help students identify and implement marketing strategies necessary to achieve their farm business and personal goals. Prerequisite: FBMT 2180 (2 C/ 0 lecture/pres, 0 lab, 2 other)

Appendix B

Map of Minnesota FBM Regions and Programs

MANAGEMENT EDUCATION REGIONAL AREAS



ANALYSIS CENTERS and DEANS OF MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

1. Robert Bollesen
Northland Community
and Technical College
1101 Highway 1 East
Thief River Falls, MN 56701
218-681-0801
2. DelRay Lecy
Central Lakes College
Central Lakes Ag Center
Airport Road
Staples, MN 56479
218-894-1053
3. Jim Molenaar
Ridgewater Community
and Technical College
2101 15th Ave. NW
Willmar, MN 56201
320-231-7671
4. Al Brudeliie
Minnesota West Community
and Technical College
401 West Street
Jackson, MN 56143
507-847-3320
5. Dennis Jackson
South Central Technical College
1920 Lee Boulevard
No. Mankato, MN 56003
507-389-7264
6. Vic Richardson
Riverland Community College
1900 8th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
507-433-0619

Appendix C
Student Questionnaire

Minnesota Farm Business Management Education Program Assessment Questionnaire

Version S



John Murray, State Director of Farm and Small Business Management Programs
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities
Rochester, MN

Richard Joerger, Project Director
Department of Work, Community, and Family Education
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, MN

Letter of Introduction

Dear Participant,

You were selected by your Regional Dean of Management Education to participate in a study designed to assess the effectiveness of the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education (FBM) Program. Because you have been enrolled for at least three years, we believe you are familiar with your instructor and have a very good idea about the operation and benefits of the FBM program.

Your input is invaluable since we have not completed a state-wide review since the mid-1980s. Findings from the study will be used to inform instructors, regional deans, educators, program participants, and policy-makers how to better support and structure the FBM instructional programming.

Your Regional Dean of Management Education selected you through a random selection process. Only the Dean and your instructor are aware that you are participating in this important study. Because the project director and staff are unaware of participant names, your FBM instructor and Regional Dean will be instrumental in assisting in administering and collecting this questionnaire. Please give them your timely cooperation with this important task that will benefit thousands of Minnesota farmers! An identification number may be located upon this questionnaire. It will be used solely to facilitate data collection and analysis.

Data from this study will be summarized and reported as group data. Under no circumstances will data from individuals be reported. The project director does not have any way of knowing participants, therefore, be assured no reports will be generated for individuals.

We know it will take you 25-30 minutes to complete this questionnaire. Please provide thoughtful responses to each of the questions. **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU PROVIDE A RESPONSE FOR ALL ITEMS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE** even though a few may seem repetitive. Once you have completed the questionnaire in its entirety, please place it in the envelope, seal the envelope, and return it to your FBM instructor or Regional Dean.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact your FBM instructor or Regional Dean of Management Education. If you prefer, contact the project director at 612-624-4298. Thank you very much for assisting us with information that will surely benefit thousands of farmers and consumers!

Sincerely,

John Murray
State Director
Rochester Community
and Technical College

Dick Joerger
Project Director
University of Minnesota

Del Lecy, Dean
Central Lakes
College

Dennis Jackson, Dean
South Central
Technical College

Bob Bolleson, Dean
Northland Community &
Technical College

Al Bruderie, Dean
MN West Community
and Technical College

Vic Richardson, Dean
Rochester Community &
Technical College

Jim Molenaar, Dean
Ridgewater College

PART I METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

Instructions: Fill in the circle in the left-hand column that **best reflects your perception of the level of importance for each method of instruction described in the middle section.** Then fill in the circle in the right-hand column that **reflects the degree to which the method is meeting your personal needs.**

How important is each type of instruction?						How well does each method meet your needs?					
Extremely Important	Very Important	Important	Somewhat Unimportant	Minimal Importance	Not Important	METHOD OF INSTRUCTION					
6	5	4	3	2	1	Extremely Well	Very Well	Well	Poor	Very Poor	Extremely Poor
6	5	4	3	2	1	Individualized Instruction					
6	5	4	3	2	1	Large Group Instruction					
6	5	4	3	2	1	Small Group Instruction					

PART II TYPE OF INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND MEDIA

Instructions: Fill in the circle that *best reflects how effective each type of instruction is for helping you learn to better manage your business.* Fill in the "NA" circle if you have not experienced the instruction.

Type of Instructional Activities and Media							Extremely Effective.....		Extremely Ineffective		N/A
1. Case studies	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
2. Classroom instruction with groups of students.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
3. Use of quality worksheets and handouts.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
4. Demonstrations.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
5. Sample problems/simulations.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
6. Individualized instruction	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
7. Panel discussions.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
8. Farm demonstration plots.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
9. Field trips or tours.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
10. Question and answer sessions.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
11. Guest speakers	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
12. Large seminars with featured speaker (i.e., marketing specialist).....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
13. Newspaper articles prepared by instructor.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
14. Monthly newsletter	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
15. Use of computer-generated presentations	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
16. Use of the Internet.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
17. Viewing videos, films, and/or slides.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
18. Multimedia presentations.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
19. Communication with the instructor using the telephone.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				
20. Communication with the instructor using e-mail and/or internet.....	6	5	4	3	2	1	0				

PART III FBM EDUCATION PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Instructions: Listed below are the stated objectives that guide the Minnesota Farm Business Management Education Program. Are these the appropriate program objectives for the FBM program? Indicate your level of agreement by filling in the circle that best reflects your opinion.

Program Objectives	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	No Opinion
1. Understand the functions of management	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
2. Establish business and personal goals	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
3. Keep accurate and complete business records	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
4. Analyze and interpret business records	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
5. Apply economic principles to management of a business	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
6. Improve business organization and efficiency	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
7. Appreciate effects of decisions on the business	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
8. Understand human resource management fundamentals	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦
9. Appreciate the relationship between individual business entity and economic, social, political and physical environments	⑥	⑤	④	③	②	①	⑦

PART IV IMPROVED FARM PRACTICES/BEHAVIORS/ATTITUDES

Instructions: Fill in the circle in the left column that best reflects the amount each farm practice, behavior, or attitude described in the middle column has improved as a result of your participation in the Farm Business Management Education program. Fill in "NA" if you have not experienced the stated farm practice, behavior or attitude. After completing the left column, fill in the circle in the right column that reflects the effectiveness of the FBM program in developing each practice, behavior, and/or attitude.

Amount improved?	Improved Farm Practices, Behaviors and Attitudes	Effectiveness in Developing?
Extreme.....None	NA	Extremely Effective Extremely Ineffective
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 1. Keeping an accurate set of business records	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 2. Using improved marketing methods	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 3. Constructing periodic cash flow projections	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 4. Improved relationship with lenders	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 5. Involved with income tax planning	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 6. Using farm records as the basis for decision making	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 7. More involved in community as a member and leader	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 8. Subscribe to and read more farm publications	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 9. The attitude of my family and myself towards education	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 10. More satisfied with the farm business I have	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 11. Enjoying more leisure time	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 12. Greater income for family living	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 13. Increased net worth	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①
⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①	⑦ 14. Improved or increased use of technology	⑥ ⑤ ④ ③ ② ①

PART V FBM EDUCATION PROGRAM BENEFITS

Instructions: Fill in the circle in the left column that best reflects the importance of the program activity and/or benefits listed in the middle column. After completing the responses in the left column, fill in the circle in the right column that best reflects how effective the FBM program has been in providing for the stated program benefits or activities for meeting your business, family or personal goals. If you have not experienced the program benefit or activity, fill in the "N/A" circle and move on to the next question.

How important?								Effectiveness of the FBM Program in developing the benefit?						
Extremely Important.....	5	4	3	2	1	NA		Extremely Effective.....	5	4	3	2	1	Extremely Ineffective
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	1.	Instruction in keeping accurate farm records	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	2.	Interpretation and understanding of farm analysis reports	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	3.	Instruction in managing livestock enterprises	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	4.	Instruction in managing crop enterprises	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	5.	Instruction in credit use in the farm business	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	6.	Instruction in the development and use of cash flow forms, balance sheets, income statements	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	7.	Instruction in estate planning	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	8.	Development and effective use of marketing plans	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	9.	An increase in my understanding of the options for marketing farm commodities	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	10.	Instruction in establishing family and business goals	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	11.	Instruction in farm transfer and operating agreements	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	12.	Instruction in effectively using gov't. farm programs	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	13.	Strategies for coping with mental stress and pressure	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	14.	Instruction in the legal and tax aspects of foreclosures, bankruptcy and other financial crisis situations	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	15.	Communication among and between family members	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	16.	Instruction in personal expenditures and budgeting	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	17.	Instruction in the organization and management of the farm office including computer and software selection	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	18.	Provides an impartial perspective of the farm business	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	19.	Instruction in personnel management	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	20.	Instruction regarding environmental issues	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	21.	Instruction in developing farm business plans	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	22.	Instruction in risk-management	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	23.	Improved management skills	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	24.	Better knowledge of my personal and business capabilities	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	25.	Exchange of ideas, skills and techniques	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	26.	Social aspects within the program and course activities	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	27.	Belief that I can accomplish greater goals	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	28.	Consider the farm as a business	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	29.	A feeling and belief of greater security in the business decisions made	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	30.	Increased earnings	6	5	4	3	2	1
6	5	4	3	2	1	0	31.	Informed about the business opportunities in farming	6	5	4	3	2	1

PART VI PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

1. If you were visiting with your neighbors, relatives and/or friends about the Farm Business Management Education program, what would you recommend to them? (Fill in the number of your response.)

- | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| ① | ② | ③ | ④ | ⑤ | ⑥ | ⑦ |
| Strongly
Discourage
them from
Enrolling | | | Neither
Discourage
nor
Encourage | | | Strongly
Encourage
them to
Enroll |

2. How often do you feel the instructor should make on-farm/in office individualized visits?

- ① Monthly
- ② Five to Six times yearly
- ③ Eight to Nine times yearly
- ④ Twice yearly plus necessary analysis visits
- ⑤ Only necessary visits to complete the analysis
- ⑥ Only when requested

3. If useful and interesting classes were held at convenient times and places, how many classes would you likely attend?

- ① 10 or more
- ② 5 to 10
- ③ 1 to 4
- ④ none

4. What is your perception of the average increase in net farm income you have experienced as a result of your participation in the Farm Business Management Education program?

- ① 0 – \$2000
- ② \$2001 - \$4000
- ③ \$4001 - \$6000
- ④ \$6001 - \$8000
- ⑤ Greater than \$8000

5. In your own words, list two reasons why you decided to enroll in the Farm Business Management Education program.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

6. In your own words, list two of the things you like best about the Farm Business Management Education program.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

7. How can the Farm Business Management Education program be improved?

- _____
- _____

PART VII PARTICIPANT PROFILE

Instructions: Fill in the circle of your response or write in the information requested. Thanks!

1. What is your gender?

- ① Male
- ② Female

2. In what year were you born? 19 _____

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ① 8th Grade or less
- ② More than 8th grade but less than 12th grade
- ③ High school graduate
- ④ Diploma Degree (1 year post-high school)
- ⑤ Associates degree
- ⑥ College Bachelors degree (B.A./B.S.)
- ⑦ Graduate degree (Masters, Ph.D.)

4. Is the farm business operated by:

- ① You
- ② You and your spouse
- ③ Your spouse
- ④ You and (a) business partner(s)
- ⑤ Your spouse and business partners
- ⑥ Other: _____

5. Which of the following best describes the form of your farm business?

- ① Sole proprietorship
- ② Partnership
- ③ Corporation
- ④ Other: _____

6. How long have you farmed on your own and/or in partnership with someone else?

Number of years _____

7. How many years have you been a member of the Farm Business Management Education program?

- ① 3 years ④ 6 years
- ② 4 years ⑤ More than 6
- ③ 5 years

8. Who most influenced you to become involved in the Farm Business Management Education Program?

- ① Influence of FBM Instructor
- ② Influence of an outside agency, lender, etc.
- ③ Influence of family, friends or peers
- ④ Other: _____

9. How many additional years do you anticipate enrolling in the Farm Business Management Education program?

- ① 1 to 3 ③ 7 to 10
- ② 4 to 6 ④ Over 10

10. Which of the following do you think best describes your farm? (Check all that apply).

- ① Dairy
- ② Beef
- ③ Crops
- ④ Hogs
- ⑤ Sheep
- ⑥ Fruit/Vegetable
- ⑦ Other: _____

11. How many generations of your family have farmed the land you now farm?

- ① One ④ Four
- ② Two ⑤ Five
- ③ Three

12. How do you keep your farm accounts?

- ① Computerized record system
- ② MN Farm Account Book or other paper system
- ③ Hire accountant
- ④ Other: _____

13. The number of farm analyses completed by the FBM instructor for my business operation is/are:

- ① 1 - 3
- ② 4 - 6
- ③ 7 - 9
- ④ More than 9

14. How many total acres did you have in your farm business in 1999? (Count all acres, even those in woods, waste, farmstead, etc.).

_____ Total Owned Acres
_____ Total Owned Crop Acres
_____ Total Rented Crop Acres

15. What is your perceived value of the financial benefits you received each year as a result of your involvement in the Farm Business Management Education program?

\$ _____

☐ Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire!!
Place it in the envelope and seal the envelope before giving it to your FBM instructor or Regional Dean of Management ☐

