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K-STATE'S MASTER IN AGRIBUSINESS PROGRAM BEST IN NATION

MANHATTAN — From the corporate boardrooms of the United States to the rice fields of Cambodia, food and agribusiness professionals from around the world are using the Internet and CD-ROM technology to earn a master's in agribusiness from Kansas State University.

Now K-State's Web-based master in agribusiness program has been honored as the best new for-credit educational program in the nation by the University Continuing Education Association.

"This award recognizes new, innovative programs in distance learning," said K-State President Jon Wefald. "K-State is a proven leader in the use of computer technology to enhance learning, both on campus and off. So it is wonderful to know that others recognize K-State's outstanding programs in this new arena. Congratulations to Dr. Daniel Bernardo and all the talented faculty who work to make this program real for people in 15 states and six foreign countries."

The Program of Excellence award is given annually to a credit and a non-credit distance-delivered instructional program, one in each category, that is exemplary in meeting the needs of students. Last fall the K-State program was named the winner of the 1999 University Continuing Education Association Region V award for a new credit program.

The K-State master in agribusiness program provides food and agribusiness professionals the knowledge and skills to excel in today's rapidly changing and increasingly complex food and agricultural economy, Wefald said. It is the first graduate agribusiness program in the nation to be offered through distance education. Launched in 1998, the program now has 58 students from 15 states and six foreign countries — Argentina, Cambodia, China, Ecuador, Puerto Rico and Uruguay.

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

(more)

"One reason for our success is that the program allows agribusiness professionals to earn an advanced degree without career interruption," said Allen Featherstone, director of graduate studies for K-State's department of agricultural economics. "We have developed a program that meets students' educational needs and we deliver it in a format that meets their schedules. Because it is a Web-based course, students can access the program regardless of where they are."

"It is a real honor for K-State and the master's in agribusiness program to be selected for this recognition," said Beth Unger, dean of continuing education and vice provost of academic services and technology. "We are very pleased to have the recognition of a great deal of creative work on the part of many. It is also reassuring to know that there are others in the nation who feel that K-State has taken a positive direction with our mixed media distance learning initiative."

"This award truly recognizes the collaboration that has occurred between the Division of Continuing Education and the department of agricultural economics," said Daniel J. Bernardo, agricultural economics department head. "The accolades should go to the faculty, computer programmers and program coordinators who have worked tirelessly to develop the program. We have dedicated many of our most outstanding faculty to this project, and they have given unselfishly of their time and talents to deliver a world-class program."

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

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

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

More information on K-State's master in agribusiness program is available on the Web at http://www.dce.ksu.edu/course_marketing/agecon or by e-mailing mab@agecon.ksu.edu

Those who contributed to the development and continuing success of the master in agribusiness program include: Allen M. Featherstone, Sandra J. Chapman, Arlo W. Biere, Bryan W. Schurle, Michael R. Langemeier, Ted C. Schroeder, Joe O. Arata, Andrew P. Barkley, Jeffery R. Williams, Michael A. Boland, Daniel J. Bernardo, Elizabeth A. Unger.