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*Agriculture - Economic Aspects
(Pt)*

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PROCEEDINGS JUNE 1957

AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
STORRS CONNECTICUT

MY GRADUATE PROGRAM AT VERMONT

Melvin D. Wrisley
University of Vermont

The primary goal of the graduate program in Agricultural Economics at Vermont is to meet the needs of the individual student. This is done by personal help and guidance by well-trained personnel within the department.

There are three main areas of specialization--Farm Management, which is my field of specialization, Agricultural Marketing, and Agricultural Business. An average of not over two graduate students are admitted each year, and as a rule they have assistantships and work on department projects. Only a limited number of students are admitted as the staff is relatively small.

The graduate program is usually made up of half course work and half thesis research; however, it is flexible to meet the individual student's needs and desires. Those students majoring in Agricultural Economics at Vermont as undergraduates are encouraged to attend other schools for graduate work. However, if an agricultural student majored in another department and wishes an advanced degree in Agricultural Economics, there is a good possibility of consideration. In my own case, as an undergraduate, I majored in Extension at Vermont and was accepted as a graduate student.

My graduate program consisted of 15 hours of course work and 15 hours of thesis research and I officially completed the graduate requirements in 12 months. However, prior to enrolling in the graduate school as of July, 1956, I worked three months on my research project on a full-time basis. This was because I was separated from the armed services in the middle of a semester and was unable to enroll at that time.

Thesis research was by far the major portion of my program. The title of my thesis was "Roughage on Vermont Dairy Farms." Data for the thesis were obtained in the summer of 1953 by the survey method on 560 Vermont dairy farms. Each record contained livestock and crop inventories, receipts, expenses, crop production, milk production, fertilizer and lime used, and other general farm information. During that summer I worked as an enumerator collecting the data. Therefore, I actually spent an additional six months on the study before entering graduate school.

In doing my research I always had the feeling of independence and was free to do as I saw fit. On the other hand, when I asked for help or advice, my major professor was always readily available.

My formal course work consisted of five three-hour courses which were all of my own choosing. These courses were all approved by my major professor and the Dean of the Graduate College.

During the fall semester my courses were Rural Sociology and Research Methods. I took Rural Sociology as I did not have a course in sociology as an undergraduate and I felt it would be most helpful in doing Extension work. Research Methods, on the other hand, was of invaluable help in organizing the material for my thesis.

My courses during the past semester were Public Problems of Agriculture, Biological Statistics, and Production Economics. I participated in the presentation of the course in Public Problems in Agriculture. This training was educational in itself as well as becoming familiar with public agricultural problems.

My course in Biological Statistics was beneficial; however, I regret not having any statistics before this past semester. Statistics is one of the basic tools to research, therefore, I feel each undergraduate with expectations of going to graduate school should take an introductory course in statistics.

Aside from my thesis research, I believe Production Economics was by far my most valuable graduate course. This was true because it applied most directly to my field of specialization which is farm management. It also was a theory course which I feel is desirable for graduate students in Agricultural Economics.

The courses in my program were only a few of the graduate courses offered. There are many other courses in the College of Commerce and Economics as well as others in agriculture on the graduate level.