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The Graduate School, USDA

THE Graduate School of the U. S. Department of Agriculture is a cooperative effort by members of the federal service to increase the quality and effectiveness of government. Thousands of federal employees who desire further training support the school with their tuition. Hundreds of other employees teach in the Graduate School for small remuneration. The result has been easily available educational opportunities for federal employees in the fields in which the government is particularly interested. The programs of the Graduate School have contributed to the solving of the perennial problem of recruiting and holding the young personnel—in the sciences and in other fields—on which depends the future effectiveness of the government.

The demands of the federal service on its employees have changed rapidly and radically in the past generation as the government has attempted to meet succeeding domestic problems and international crises. As the depression, the war, and postwar years have brought new programs, new knowledge and skills have been needed quickly. The Graduate School has contributed a great deal toward the training and retraining of government employees.

The curriculum of the Graduate School is based on the government's needs. For example, when the REA undertook the electrification of farms, the agency needed personnel with special training, and the school organized courses in electric utility engineering. Again, the government's need for better techniques of surveying and mapping led to the organization of the first programs in cartography and photogrammetry in the country. To aid in the training of personnel for the U. S. Weather Bureau, the Graduate School offers the only meteorology program in the District of Columbia area. The courses given in agricultural economics, geology, statistics, and administration were organized for similar reasons.

The Graduate School was founded in 1921 to provide needed educational opportunities for the young

scientists whom the Department of Agriculture had begun to recruit in increasing numbers. Department officials thought it important to contribute to their further training. Thus, a program was organized, and a number of employees began to do part of their graduate work in the Graduate School for transfer to a degree-granting institution. The Graduate School does not grant degrees.

The curriculum of the Graduate School is based first on the needs of the Department of Agriculture, but, so far as its resources permit, it serves the federal service generally. It offers courses in most of the recognized academic fields but does not attempt to offer organized liberal arts or graduate curricula. Although founded as a graduate school, its undergraduate program is now larger than its graduate offerings. In 1951-52 the 373 courses scheduled had an enrollment of 6808. The faculty is drawn almost entirely from the federal service and includes many individuals who taught in colleges or universities prior to government employment.

The educational activity of the Graduate School is not limited to the offering of evening classes in Washington. A small correspondence program is offered to field employees of the Department of Agriculture. Annual lecture series on topics of interest to the department are presented in Washington. The Graduate School is also attempting to interest universities in the educational needs of federal employees who are in the field service, and it is hoped that some universities will provide opportunities for them to continue their education outside the Washington area. The Graduate School press publishes selected manuscripts which have been produced in the Department of Agriculture, but which the department cannot publish for lack of funds or for other reasons. The school is financed by tuition fees paid by the students. The Department of Agriculture, on authorization by Congress, merely provides office space and rooms for the after-hours classes.

P. V. CARDON

U. S. Department of Agriculture Graduate School

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