



**Development of a Professional Sciences Master's Program in  
Agriculture & Biological Sciences at South Dakota State University  
Don Marshall**

**Issue:** Traditional graduate degree programs at Land-Grant universities generally require an intensive research project and on-campus coursework, and thus are not well suited for working professionals who wish to remain in their normal employment while working on an advanced degree. We aim to develop a Professional Science Master's (PSM) degree program to provide graduate training for working professionals in Agriculture and Biological Sciences.

**What has been done:** A preliminary proposal was submitted to the South Dakota Board of Regents and recently approved, thus providing permission to proceed with a full proposal. A full proposal is currently being developed and will be submitted in Fall 2009. Several planning sessions have been held by a multi-disciplinary working group to determine curricula, delivery methods, and funding.

**Impacts:** This program will provide graduate-level training to industry professionals in fields such as agriculture / food systems, agricultural business, biotechnology, and bio-energy. Cooperative Extension field staff represents another target audience. Industry will benefit from the professional development and advanced technical skills gained by employees without having to provide a large block of release time from normal work duties. Students will be able to apply these skills directly and immediately in their professional workplace.

**Funding Sources, Cooperators, Partners, Mentors etc.:** The primary sustainable funding source will be tuition generated by the courses. Grant funding may be sought for start up needs such as initial course development and to underwrite potential tuition shortfalls until enrollment stabilizes. An advisory board including industry representation may be formed. Several departments and the SDSU Graduate School are the primary partners.

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