

Anything but minor

Students benefit from extra coursework at OSU

If you want to add extra credit to a bachelor's degree, look no further than an academic minor.

"A minor indicates specialized education and training in a discipline that complements your major," said Ed Miller, associate dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. "The requirements for all minors have been formally designed and approved by the faculty to provide a solid introduction to the minor discipline.

"Minors formally show how graduates have broadened their skills through the completion of a set of courses in specialized areas," said Miller. "It is a great opportunity; an organized way to enhance your career opportunities."

Miller earned his bachelor's degree in forestry with a minor in soil science at Iowa State University.

"Minors displayed on diplomas show graduates have planned for their future by expanding the knowledge necessary to meet or exceed the demands of a job," said Miller. "Extended knowledge and skills can be a big advantage in a competitive job market."

— Ed Miller
Associate Dean

An incoming freshman can declare a minor when deciding on a major. The degree plan is discussed with an adviser, said Bill Weeks, professor of agricultural education.

If the student is interested in an agricultural minor, the adviser will send the student to 136 Agricultural Hall to pick up a minor information sheet, said Weeks. Students may then choose to have a degree plan developed by the adviser or be referred to another adviser in the field of their minor.

If currently enrolled, students may decide at any point to add minors to their degrees. This decision must be discussed with an adviser, and sometimes courses used to meet major requirements also can be used toward a minor.

If a course is required for the student's major, it also can be counted toward a minor, thereby reducing the number of extra courses a student must take for a minor.

Heather Sumner, an animal science senior, added a minor in agricultural economics.

The minor only added three credit hours to Sumner's degree program. She plans to pursue a master's degree in business administration upon completion of her bachelor's degree. Her economics minor has given her additional sales experience she said will be useful for her future career.

"Agricultural marketing and sales was my favorite class," said Sumner. "It gave me real-life experience, and this was the class I learned the most in."

Sumner said she almost had enough hours to complete a minor, so she did it.

"To an employer, a minor may look good on a résumé," said Miller. "In some cases, the salary may be higher, if the minor skills are highly valued by the employer."

The résumé establishes your profile for a company and will be a factor when hiring decisions are made.

"A minor may help a graduate find a job; it depends on the student," said Amy Gazaway, CASNR career development coordinator. "You should look at your options, and see what it can do for you."

A minor that complements or relates to the major may make a student a unique resource to companies helping to market themselves, said Miller.

"When I was getting my degree in biochemistry, it only made sense to pursue the minor in microbiology," said Ben McLarty, 1999 alumnus from OSU. "Many of the course requirements for the two majors were identical, and I felt like I'd be wasting money if I didn't secure that extra piece of recognition on my diploma."

Various universities like Texas A&M University and The Ohio State University require students to have a minor in some fields of choice. OSU does not require a minor in a degree program, but it offers a variety of minors to prepare students to compete for jobs against graduates from other schools.

CASNR offers 11 different minors, including agricultural economics, horticulture, soil science, rangeland ecology and management, leadership education, forestry, food science, entomology, biochemistry and molecular biology, animal science and agronomy.

Added in Fall 2002, the leadership education minor is the newest to the college. The university's decision to add this minor was

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based on developing skills for personal growth in a leadership role, said Miller.

The university's decision to approve this minor was based on the need for graduates to better understand the basics of leadership development and to be able to apply this knowledge professionally, said Miller.

The leadership education minor gives specialization to someone who wants to add a leadership focus to an academic program.

"The leadership education minor serves as an opportunity for students to gain an understanding of leadership theory with the goal of teaching others about leadership," said Penny Pennington, agricultural education assistant professor.

A minor requires fewer hours than a double major. According to the OSU catalog, a second bachelor's degree requires students to take 30 additional hours. Most minors require 22 hours, whether additional or as part of a major. CASNR students can also earn minors from curriculum areas outside the college.

"A completed minor in the field quite different than the major field of study can be a big advantage, if graduates wish to continue their education through graduate degrees in the minor field," said Miller. "The minor course will provide a necessary foundation for advanced graduate courses."

To add a minor, talk to your adviser and add extra credit to your degree. ♦ *By Jenny Hardin, Ponca City, Okla.*