

idea corner

Nontraditional Study Programs

Nontraditional study programs seem to have a place in university curricula if recent experience at the University of Missouri-Columbia is an indicator.

In late 1974, the first applicants were selected for a nontraditional study program offered by the Missouri College of Agriculture. The unique program is supported in part by a five-year grant from the Kellogg Foundation, and is directed on the UMC campus by John Mowrer.

One of the first applicants for a BS degree was Robert Best, a 21-year veteran of Soil Conservation Service (SCS) work, who had left the university in 1948, 15 hours short of an undergraduate degree in agriculture.

During his SCS career, Best had collected 17 hours of college credit from

3 other colleges and universities. By taking six hours of problems courses the winter semester at UMC, Best completed a study program fully acceptable to the UMC College of Agriculture. On May 10, 1975, he received a BS in agriculture, an effort he had begun in the fall of 1941.

Although Best doesn't necessarily expect a promotion as the result of obtaining his degree, it does make new opportunities possible. He felt he'd advanced as far as he could in the SCS organization without an undergraduate degree.

Mowrer says that right now 33 students have been admitted to the study program and 140 others have applied. Many others have inquired about the program.

"Nontraditional study is not an easy way to complete work on a college degree," Mowrer pointed out. "Most nontraditional students put in greater effort than their counterparts on campus, and the cost is also greater.

"At the same time it does permit Missourians out in the state to continue their education," he said. "There are many people like Bob Best who have a long-standing goal to obtain a college degree.

"Nontraditional students may earn college credit in a variety of ways, including credit for learning that has occurred outside the classroom or other formal educational settings, provided that the learning is documented, relevant, and of college level," Mowrer said. "But, all efforts must be approved by the College of Agriculture faculty."

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