The Graduate Council conducted a site review of the undergraduate and graduate programs in the Department of Food Science and Technology on March 3 and 4, 2008. This review was undertaken in conjunction with an external review team as well as a Curriculum Council team, with the latter team focusing on the undergraduate program. The present report represents a three-year follow-up of the graduate program review.

Darlene Russ-Eft (College of Education), who was an original member of the graduate review committee, conducted the follow-up review, first on February 17, 2011 and again on February 7, 2012. The review consisted of meetings of about one hour each with the department head, Robert McGorrin. The reason for the delay involved the need for FST to implement most of the recommendations.

Summary of the Specific Recommendations

These fell broadly into three categories: (a) Research capabilities and faculty resources, (b) Graduation education and issues of graduate students, and (c) Facilities and administration. Each of the recommendations, along with specific actions, appears in the attached report from Robert McGorrin.

A. Research Capabilities and Faculty Resources

1. The Department should have a long-term plan of action for increasing linkages with relevant federal and state agencies, as well as continued linkages with private industry. Such linkages may help with future research funding.

2. The faculty is encouraged to continue to build linkages with other departments within the College of Agricultural Sciences (CAS) and outside of CAS, including Business and Forestry.

3. Attention should be paid to mentoring and supporting new faculty in their efforts to obtain research funding.

4. The Department should consider establishment of a more organized mechanism for gaining stakeholder inputs to planning. Involving relevant stakeholders may help to highlight the need for additional research funding for the department.
B. Graduate Education and Issues for Graduate Students

5. The Department should consider developing a comprehensive plan for recruitment of minority students. In particular, the current admission process has the potential to let qualified minority candidates slip through the cracks.

6. The last Graduate Program Review identified the high number of international graduate students. Some progress has been made, but further attention needs to be placed on recruiting domestic graduate students.

7. The self-study document prepared by the Department identified that there has been a drop in Ph.D. candidates over the past four years from 19 students in 2003-4 to 7 students in 2006-7. More energy and attention needs to be paid to recruiting Ph.D. students and to the graduate student experience. The review team felt a lack of enthusiasm among the graduate students and faculty on the Corvallis campus.

8. Continue the leadership and mentorship of graduate students in the Astoria facility, including the monthly graduate student meetings to discuss research. The graduate students in the Astoria facility were very satisfied with the leadership and mentorship that they experienced. They appeared to be working well as a team, and the facilities were considered adequate.

9. Efforts should be made to continue to develop processes to ensure communication and linkages among on-campus and off-campus graduate students and faculty. This may help to solve the issue of enthusiasm, given perceived satisfaction with leadership and mentorship in the Astoria facility. Some possibilities include but are not limited to: (a) scheduling on-campus seminars and other similar activities such that they do not conflict with off-campus activities, (b) scheduling off-campus seminars that do not conflict with on-campus activities and courses, and (c) providing a van for students to travel to campus or to one of the off-campus facilities as a group.

10. Attention should be focused on increasing the number of graduate advisors and mentoring new faculty into that role. The self-study document noted that five graduate advisors accounted for over 55% of the graduate degrees awarded. Furthermore, three of the five advisors have either retired or have been reassigned to new positions.

11. The Department must further evaluate 400/500 “slash” courses, and especially examine the consistency with which such courses are taught across the curriculum. Graduate students complained that they have to seek courses through forestry and toxicology to fill out their credit requirements. The Department self-study mentioned that all faculty members are expected to develop a graduate course in their areas of expertise that will be taught every other year. Such development would provide a great addition to the program.

12. Efforts should be made to increase teaching opportunities to graduate students, particularly through increasing the number of Teaching Assistantships. The department should continue to develop graduate teaching assistants for courses with large enrollments. It would seem that MS students could be utilized for some of the graduate teaching assignments. A second year MS student should be capable of picking up some of the TA load, at least for some of the
lower level courses. For Ph.D. students who want teaching experience, the Department could consider offering course credit in return for teaching.

13. The previous Graduate Program Review identified a concern about the lack of consistency in communicating information about the program requirements, particularly the preliminary written exams. Concerns still exist regarding the qualification exam. The purpose and the rationale of this exam were not clear to the review team. The multiple levels of screening and testing of graduate students seem unnecessary. It is suggested some streamlining could take place and not utilize the “optional” exam. The present approach also seems to leave the program open for criticism as arbitrary.

14. The previous Graduate Program Review identified that the FST seminar program was of concern. Over the past years no major restructuring has been done. There appear to be no scheduled seminars, and when they do occur, they are not well attended by faculty or students. Both students and faculty expressed interest in improving the current seminar status, and this should be given priority attention.

15. Graduate students must find a funded lab to undertake research, and there are no rotations within labs and disciplines. This may lead to issues as to exposure of students to the various science and technology techniques and approaches as well as possible personnel conflicts. The Department should consider instituting some form of lab rotation process for graduate students.

16. The Department should continue to conduct annual reviews with graduate students. It can help to keep graduate students on track and can serve to “catch” struggling or failing students.

17. The Department should continue to conduct surveys of recent graduates, as this provides valuable feedback.

C. Facilities and Administration

18. The Department is encouraged to develop a space and equipment utilization plan. Certainly Wiegand Hall is an older building, but attention should be placed on replacing old equipment and obtaining new equipment, such as autoclaves, cold storage units, freezers, and centrifuges.

19. An area of concern for graduate students involves the lack of a graduate student lounge. As part of the space utilization plan, the Department should consider creating a graduate student lounge separate from the undergraduate student lounge.