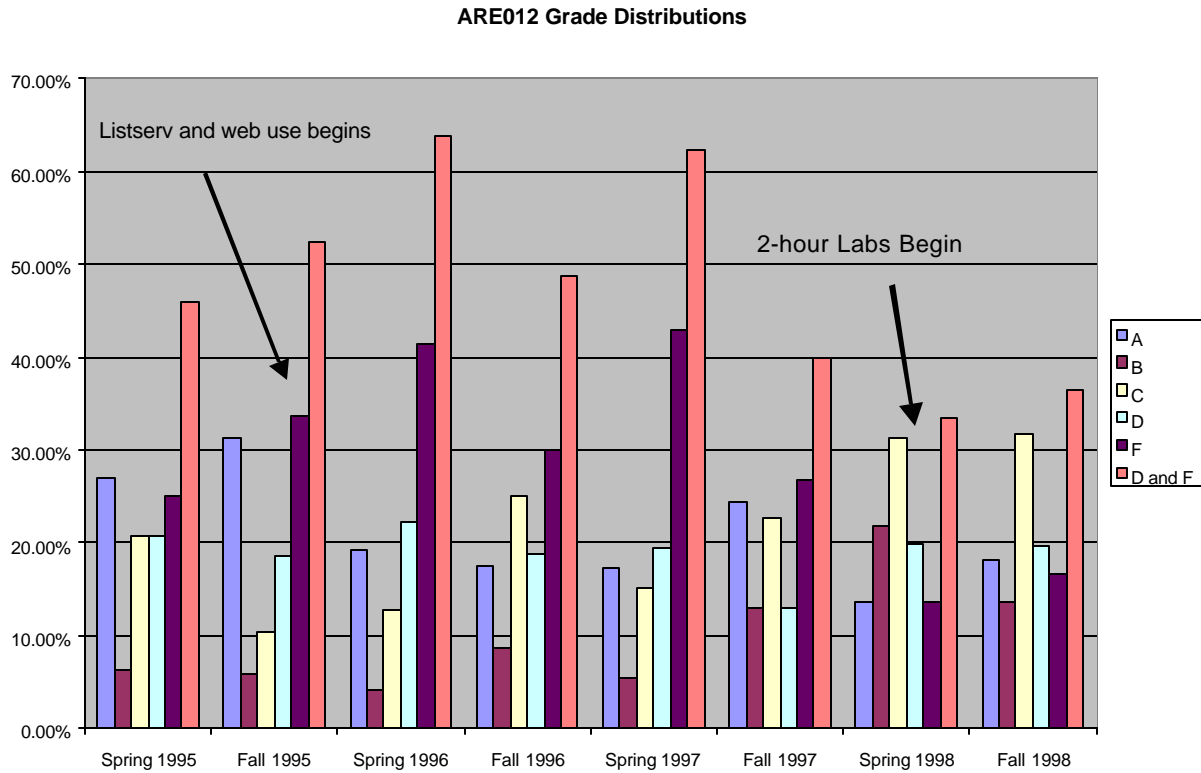


Impact Statement

Issue: Introduction to Agricultural Economics has been a general requirement in the Agricultural Institute since its conception. I have taught this course since 1984. The course has historically been a three-hour lecture course, and has served the institute well for years. Beginning in the fall of 1994, student grades began to decrease noticeably.

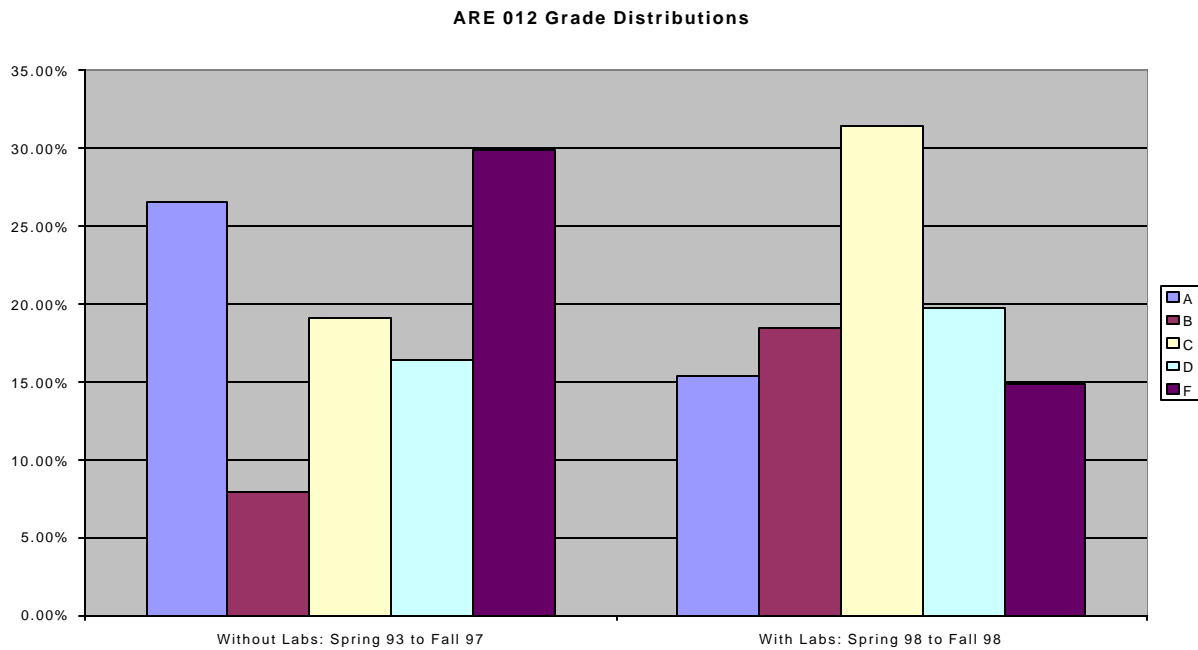


The last bar for each semester represents the percentage of D's and F's awarded in ARE 012. The course has always been considered rigorous, but the drastic increase in D's and F's through the spring semester of 1997 concerned me greatly. The class material, instructor, exams, and general rigor remained constant. Integration of the computer into the class began in fall, 1994 and became a very important component of the course by fall, 1995. Introducing the computer to the class both as an instructional aid and as a requirement for students to utilize in the course coincides with the sharp increase in poor grades. Is this coincidence, or is the use of the computer a primary determinant? I do not have a carefully researched answer for that. Other hypotheses may be that the academic skills of students have eroded over time, and possibly some combination of both eroded academic skills and the challenge of using a computer are contributing factors. Another question one does not like to pose but in all honesty must is: Am I doing an adequate job now relative to years past?

For the last ten years, I have offered review sessions weekly for students to ask questions about lecture, old exams, or receive assistance in working homework. These review sessions also allowed the instructor and TA's to cover material again that students may be having trouble with. Unfortunately, attendance was sporadic and for the most part attended by the students that were doing well in the course. The weekly review sessions basically served as "unofficial" labs that were voluntary.

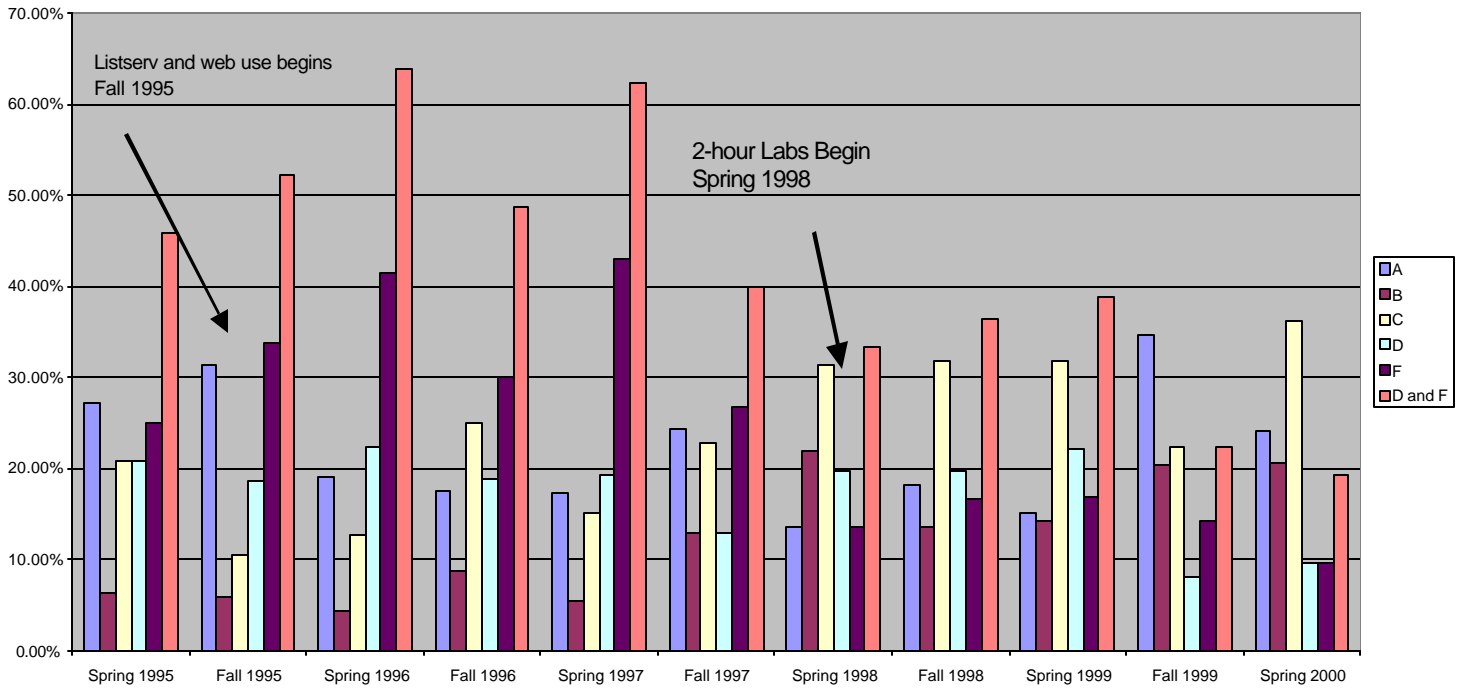
Based on informal and formal feedback from students (student evaluations), I decided to "officially" introduce a lab to the course. Beginning spring 1998, ARE 012 has been taught with two hours of lecture and a two hour lab. A formal course action was approved making this change permanent in fall, 1998.

Informal feedback from current students, and current student grades indicate a positive response from the change in the course structure.



The chart above illustrates the dramatic change in grade distributions for ARE 012 as a result of the new structure of the course. Grade distributions for the course between spring, 1993 and fall, 1997 are provided by the histogram on the left and coincides with the time period before formal labs were introduced. The histogram on the right is the grade distributions for spring, 1998 and fall 1998 and coincides with the time period in which the course structure was modified to accommodate labs.

ARE012 Grade Distributions



ARE 012 Grade Distributions

