Grant gives farmers help

By Pat O'Bryan
Lantern staff writer

Ohio commercial farmers now have an OSU computer program to help them manage their finances.

The Accelerated Farm Financial Management Program is geared toward approximately 20,000 Ohio commercial farmers whose farms annually gross over $40,000.

The program is not designed to aid in financial crises but to help farmers improve their financial management skills said David Miskell, associate agricultural industries leader for the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service at Ohio State.

"It's not intended for farmers in severe financial distress," said Darrel Acker, Ohio State Extension economist. "It's intended for the commercial operators who are probably going to survive anyhow but still need some help in analyzing their alternatives."

The program which began operating officially on July 1 was made possible by a $500,000 grant to the Ohio Cooperative Extension Service by the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Acker said, but the trained technicians were not available until late August.

Requests by farmers to use the free program have been low because many farmers have been busy bringing in their crops. "Farmers have said 'wait until I get done with my corn and soybeans and then I'll talk to you,'" Acker said.

The grant has gone toward providing 40 technicians throughout the state, renting computers and developing support materials such as textbooks and other learning aids for farmers, Acker said.