LeeAnn E. Moss  
Participant  
Ph.D. Curriculum – Panel of Ph.D. Graduates  
Presentation Outline

- Ex poste viewpoint of my experience in the Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

- Tempered by my perspective:
  - Fall 2000 graduate
  - Two specialty area prelims taken - agribusiness management and agricultural finance
  - Returned in mid-30s after 10+ years in industry
  - Employed as an Academic Professional (staff) with The Center for Farm and Rural Business Finance while completing the degree
  - A positive experience:
    - Excellent faculty who taught
    - Informal experiences (examples):
      - Ph.D. seminar
      - Strategy seminar (Mintzberg text)
      - Student-driven prelim preparation seminars
      - Job market talks – faculty and department head

- An ideal Ph.D. program would:
  - Develop analytical skills through application
    - Not just a topical or theoretical presentation
    - Give context, applications to current research questions and data
    - Industry hires? Some skills or abilities cannot be taught
      - Ability to communicate, lead and mentor in a team environment
      - Understand the whole
      - Are “divergers” made or born? (i.e., Ph.D. is just a “finishing school”)
  - Recognize that management scholarship exists
    - “Program perspective”
      - Allow students to integrate business courses for credit (i.e., prior to prelims at Illinois)
    - “Paradigm perspective”
      - This is huge
      - Traditionally-minded ag economists may equate this to “dumbing down” the program
• This attitude permeates program committees, graduate advising, dissertation supervision, departmental leadership, and faculty perspective toward students
• Leads to schizophrenia – graduate students, new hires, P&T

- **Acknowledge that teaching training is important**
  - My experience was unique
  - Advisors – promote/support gaining experience
  - Department – provide/promote opportunities (like econ and B-schools)

- **“Practice what we preach” regarding the agriculture and food system**
  - Farm to table?
  - Support/mentor students whose interests lie toward the consumer end of this continuum.
  - Midwestern schools – acceptable research projects:
    - E.g., close to farm gate, corn or soybean processing, meat packing
    - But what about other end of the channel (consumer economics?)

- **Be more flexible and less rigid**
  - Dependent on formal program (e.g., classes) – inadequate preparation for academia or industry
  - Focus on our primary consumer - the student!
  - Allow students to design programs that meet individual needs and (research) interests
  - Venue? The student-advisor interface