The Role of Ph.D. Agribusiness Curriculum in Addressing Faculty Needs: My Experience from the University of Illinois

By
William E. Nganje, Ph.D
Assistant Professor of Agribusiness Finance
North Dakota State University

Presented at the 2002 WCC-72 Meetings in Las Vegas
Outline

- Background
  - Brief Biography
  - Ph.D Curriculum

- Teaching Needs
  - Flexibility of Ph.D Curriculum

- Research Needs
  - Dissertation versus Paper Option

- Obtaining Grants

- Conclusion
Brief Biography

- Completed Ph.D in the Spring of 1998 from the University of Illinois.
- Started Work at North Dakota State University (NDSU) in October of 1998 with a 50/50 research and teaching appointment.
- Teaching at NDSU: Teach an undergraduate Agribusiness Finance Course, co-teach a graduate Agribusiness Finance Course, and co-teach two Capstone Economics of Food Safety Courses.
- Research Areas at NDSU: Food Safety Cost-Benefit and Efficiency Analysis, food and crop quality insurance, and other risk management issues.
Ph.D Curriculum Completed

- Completed 18 Units (1 unit is equivalent to 4 credit hours. Only 16 units were required) of coursework and 8 units of research.
- Core Courses (10 units): Advanced Microeconomics, Macroeconomics, Mathematical Programming, Statistics, Econometrics, Risk and Information, Two Agribusiness Management Courses, and two Agricultural Finance Courses.
- Electives (8 Units): Financial Institution Management and Investment Management (College of Business), Strategic Marketing and Decision Making in Agribusiness (Agribusiness Courses), Two Applied Econometric Courses, Production Economics, and other Independent Studies and Seminars.
- An Agribusiness Person is defined as someone who completes a major in Agribusiness Management and one other field (Agricultural Finance, Marketing, etc.)
Teaching Needs

- Comprehensive and Flexible Program at the University of Illinois.
  - Electives can be designed to suite specific dissertation research area of interest.

- Mandatory two weeks teaching workshop for TAs.
  - To equip graduates with Problem Based Learning (PBL) skills and the use of examples.

- Very organized mentors (faculty) who provided me excellent teaching styles to mimic.
Dissertation versus Paper Option

- It is my bias that the dissertation option does very little to prepare Ph.D graduates to meet the rigorous publishing skills.
- I will particularly recommend the three paper option and suggest that at least two of the papers be accepted for publication before students are allowed to defend their research work.
Obtaining Grants

- Major void area in my training.
- Students should be encouraged to attend regional meeting where valuable research need areas are discussed.
- Students and advisor should submit Ph.D research proposal for funding (this maybe particularly appealing to students who wish to have Post Doctoral experience).
Conclusion

- Agribusiness is an evolving discipline that embraces new issues in value added to agriculture like food safety and crop quality insurance that are not addressed in the Business Curriculum.
- It maybe be misleading to confined the Agribusiness discipline into a box that will quickly be outdated in the immediate future because of the evolving nature of this discipline.
- My Agribusiness training has been instrumental to my career as a faculty.