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Great Teaching: Undergraduate Agricultural Economics Millennial Students

Kerry K. Litzenberg

The first title I thought about for this article was applying Collins' (2001) book to our profession, something like "Good to Great, How Agricultural Economics Departments Can Make the Leap." I think all of us have read that book and most of our students have. Jim Collins set the standard for what makes companies great and we have several authors attempting to set the standards for great agricultural economics departments in a transition time (Goodwin, 2007; Mittelhammer, 2009). Or Possibly, Collins's 2009 book How the Mighty Fall: and Why Some Companies Never Give In could be applied to agricultural economics departments attempting to achieve and sustain greatness. What many people do not know is that, driven by a relentless curiosity, Jim Collins was awarded the Distinguished Teaching award in 1992 from the Stanford Graduate School of Business. Subsequently I thought of Bob Dylan's song, "The Times They Are a Changin" and wondered if "Agricultural Economics Students—They Are a Changing" would serve well. However, then I knew someone would remind me that was 1964 (at least some of you who still remember that far back). In fact, the words in Dylan's first verse, "then you better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone, for the times they are a changin," might set the tone for some of what I have to say. I will focus on the idiosyncrasies of the millennial generation of students and the impact they have had on teaching in agricultural economics. Millennials are defined as those students who were born between 1981 and 2002 and have started to show up in our current agricultural economics classrooms.

Boland (2009) helped us understand the scope of the current situation of the number and interests of students in agricultural economics and agribusiness programs in his Western presidential address in 2009. Mike did an excellent job of setting the stage and his article on Developing Leadership in Agricultural Economics helped us understand the enormous importance of the department head in our total mission. The unit heads survey by Boland indicated their departments represented almost 12,000 undergraduate students. In addition, Boland indicated that nonmajor enrollments were also significant. Using Boland's assumptions about the age distribution of faculty in agricultural economics, approximately 21% are currently aged 60 or older and by 2018, 50% of the faculty will be aged 60 or older. Boland also showed that the number of Ph.D. graduates had decreased from approximately 200 in 1996–120 by 2005. This seems to imply that much of the undergraduate teaching will be done by older faculty. However, it was the provocative article by Goodwin (2007) that made me realize what was had not been discussed: great teaching. The new challenge is how to embrace the millennial student, especially with our aging teaching faculty.

While contemplating what to say as I received a lifetime achievement award, I could not

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help but think about the content in Peck's (1978) "The Road Less Traveled," which I read in 1978 as I started as an assistant professor at Texas A&M. In this work, Peck reconciled the psychoanalytic tradition with the conflicting cultural currents roiling the 1970s to the spirit of me-decade individualism. I had read just a little about how the students of the 1980s were different. However, in 1978, I thought I knew a lot about agricultural economics. I had Bruce McCarl's quantitative course and Ed Schuh's international trade course and Bob Taylor's "How to teach agricultural economics students seminar" (all of which remain my heroes to this day). At the time, some "old timers" reminded me that this tome of Peck's was just an update of the Robert Frost (1920) piece on "The Road Not Taken," which had also launched higher education into a new world. I am reminded of the importance of being at the right place at the right time. I know several of you have read Malcom Gladwell's book, "Outliers." If you have not, especially those of you young assistant professors who might aspire to being a great teacher, know that committing to being a great teacher in today's typical agricultural economics department identifies you as an outlier. I did not realize until recently as I read Gladwell's book that several things must come together for a successful career, whatever the goal. Several of the points in Gladwell's book are important for aspiring great teachers. This congruence of being at the right place at the right time in the right environment put forth by Gladwell certainly held true for my career. I had arrived at Texas A&M at a time when there was great concern for moving from a regionally oriented teaching institution to becoming a Tier I research institution. However, there was still a huge commitment to providing exemplary teaching to propel the rural kids coming into the university into a successful career—off the farm or ranch. I still appreciate the contact I have with many rural kids who came to Texas A&M in the early 1980s and, at least partly because of their education, went on to a highly successful business career. They hold the education we provided them in the highest level of esteem. I had a department head who believed in the importance of rewarding high-quality teaching. The Former Students Association at Texas A&M was proudly behind great teaching and sponsored teaching awards with significant financial rewards (a $4000 teaching award in 1983 when salaries were in the upper $20,000 level was significant). I include this reference to the importance of this confluence of opportunities because I was lucky enough to be a part of teaching when students wanted to learn; and departmental, college, and university administration supported and even demanded excellent teaching. The situation for new assistant professors in 2010 may not be the same. It may be much more difficult to dedicate oneself to great teaching as budgets for teaching are reduced, importance of research output both in terms of funding and publication rate are highly emphasized, and students may not be as excited about learning and launching their career.

When I arrived at Texas A&M University in 1978, I knew I wanted to try to become a great teacher. That is the topic I discuss today, great teaching with the important caveat that once again, students are changing. I might add one other thing by way of introduction. For the remainder of this article, I will consider agricultural economics to include agribusiness students. I also consider all those departments who have reinvented themselves with new names such as applied economics or natural resource economics or food economics to fall under the general category of agricultural economics. I know some faculty have lots of worry about the differences in the curriculum and departmental names. For the purposes of encouraging great teaching in these departments, I will put aside all of these arguments and use the general term agricultural economics to identify our profession.

At the turn of the century, teaching faculty started thinking students were changing. The first millennial students (born 1982) had started entering our classrooms. This also happened to coincide with the appearance of the first children of former students whom I had taught at Texas A&M in the 1979–1980 timeframe. No longer were students just proud to be at college. We started to see the students of the entitled generation challenge our prerequisites and core curriculum and heaven forbid, "an A grade

doesn't stand for attendance?" (Greenberger, 2008). I knew things had changed when I read the 2009 UCLA freshman survey and noted that 72% of the freshmen last year thought they would get a Ph.D. (notice I didn't say *earn* a Ph.D., but rather *get* a Ph.D.). Surely 72% of them could not pass qualifiers or stay focused long enough to write a dissertation. (In case some of you who only do graduate education think you can sit back for awhile longer, beware they are coming to you soon.)

Although we have long considered teaching innovations in the agricultural economics classroom (Dahlgran, 1990), the invasion of the millennial students has made a new set of considerations necessary for great teaching. I am going to identify characteristics of millennial students that I think are important for great teaching. You will notice that, as I discuss these characteristics of millennial students, I note several things I have tried in my classroom to engage them. Let me first identify some characteristics of the millennial students now filling our classrooms.

Some Shockers about the Millennial Agricultural Economics Student

My Mom (Dad) is My Best Friend

This has been one of the hardest concepts for me to understand and recognize the impact on great teaching. I always ask student to tell me something special about their parents on my information sheets they complete the first day of class. This is what they often enter on the information form: "My mom (or dad) is my best friend." I would again remind you of Gladwell's premise that whatever we are has a lot to do with our parents and their parents and the culture they created for us. These students are the "wanted generation." Their parents started the "Baby on Board" bumper and window stickers. These "helicopter parents" have hovered over them and kept them tightly scheduled. Oftentimes these millennials have been scheduled for two or more activities such as football, soccer, and dance on a single evening after school. So, although these students are used to being busy, they have not had experience setting their own agenda. I was astonished last fall when I stopped by one of the local Texas A&M bookstores to purchase a book at the number of 40+ parents in the line to check out. I asked one of these people if they were coming back to school and they answered, "No, I am just buying books for my son."

As I asked colleagues to read draft copies of this paper, several of them commented that I needed to add another section to the article about millennial parents. Millennial students have not become the way they are without the impact and guidance of their parents. The generation y parents (and their Baby Boomer parents, now grandparents) who focused on establishing wealth and working hard at developing their career have influenced the millennial students to boast that they are not interested in money or even a highly successful career. They just want to "make a difference." The parents have highly scheduled these millennial students but now expect them to select a career path. This has resulted in millennial students experiencing a difficult career selection process. Remember, they can "be anything they want to be." Graduates often struggle with deciding on a career path and ultimately some faculty get involved in this process. Although faculty do not want to perseverate on career development or focus too strongly on the vocational aspects of the learning outcomes in their courses, the parents expect students to be employable after graduation from college. However, it is becoming quite acceptable for college graduates to move back home with Mom and Dad for several months after graduation as they decide what they want to do. So, parents of millennial students, although highly influential, are inconsistent in their attitudes.

Although some employers have gotten used to this impact of parents, most of them are still blindsided when the parents phone them because they have not offered their son or daughter enough starting salary or have not provided them with the right training or promoted them fast enough. Educational research has found that the success of students (and even retention of learning from one grade to the next during the summer) has to do with the culture of the parents and the importance of education in the family

(Gladwell, 2008). This has enormous implications for students who attend college as the first ones from their family. Because Moms and Dads are considered "best friends," they rarely provide anything but glowing compliments about their child's behavior and performance. They always seem to side with the student and the faculty become the "bad guys" who make their sons or daughters work too hard or expect too much. I expect most of you realize that many of the students call their parents several times a day. Often, students really do not know how to interact with teaching faculty. We do not seem to be on their side, because sometimes we give them negative feedback.

Grades are an Entitlement

"I always get an A or I never get anything less than a B." Some of you have undoubtedly heard this one. The millennial students have gotten trophies and awards for everything. These children are central to their parents' sense of purpose. They have come up through grade school receiving smiley faces and have never failed. They have expectations that their school performance is at the highest level of accomplishment. They are high-achieving but have never been allowed to fail. Therefore, it is difficult to engage the students in what many faculty would call "paying the price" of learning. Homework, outside reading, working problems, and practicing for presentations is not normal for many of the millennial students.

Students are 24-Hour People

Their schedules are driven by the Internet and technology. Information and communication are available 24 hours a day. Students expect faculty to be 24-hour people driven by technology. Have you ever had a student send you an e-mail (or better yet, a text message) at 3:45 am on a day when you have an 8 o'clock class followed by a 10 o'clock class? So you eventually answer the e-mail at 11:15 am and you have a couple more e-mails from that student wondering if for some reason you did not get their message because you have not yet responded. Students are 24-hour people, and school is not necessarily their number one priority.

School May Not Be Their Top Priority

As tuition and fee costs have risen dramatically in the past few years and because most of the students expect (remember they are entitled) to live well and drive nice cars and vacation in a high-quality manner, many of them work part-time and borrow extensively to finance their education and standard of living. They consider their constant texting and social networking as an important and central part of their life. Many current students travel extensively. It is not unusual for students to schedule a concert or participate in a sporting activity several hundred miles from campus. They play electronic games with their friends and others from around the world, all virtually. Although there has always been competing activities for college students' time, the millennial students seem to have several important activities that compete for priority with school.

Students Do Not Want to Go to Class Now

Because these students are 24-hour people, they want to learn when they want to. Their schedules are full, so going to class at a specific time is not their desired approach. I have developed video podcasts for most of the major learning units in my marketing class. These podcasts were designed to be 8–9 minutes long, because that is how long it takes to go from the main campus to the west campus (where most agriculture classes are held). I foolishly thought that these "brilliant" videos would be a great way for students to use wasted time. After three semesters of offering podcast downloads, I still only had 3% of the students downloading the videos. They were watching the videos, but from their computer *when* they decided it was time to study. When I asked them about the lack of adoption of putting the videos on their iPods, they told me that iPods were for fun, for music, not for classes or studying. Now I have all the videos available on a multimedia web site where they can get them from their iPhone whenever they are ready. I continue to be shocked when

students tell me that they watched six or seven of the modules "last night" between 3 and 4:30 am.

We (faculty teaching courses) are in Their Way

This is one of the more difficult things to understand about millennial students. They have been entitled, and because their parents have continued to tell them they can do anything they want, it is hard for them to see why they should work for a grade in class. Additionally, the world they live in often provides them instant response. So a semester-long project for example is viewed as a "bother." It is difficult for many millennial students to see faculty as a part of the learning process, especially when the learning takes place over an entire semester.

Calling on Them in Class Is Understood as Calling Them out in Their World

The first few times this happened to me I was totally flabbergasted. Most of us believe that in the work world, standing up for what we know and voicing our opinions on what will work in a business environment is what earns success or at least the attention of the boss. However, students have become accustomed to passive learning and the protected environment of sitting quietly in the class, never voicing their opinion and of course never being wrong. This is why I have been using personal response systems (clickers) in my classroom the past couple of years. This forces the student to move toward a more active learning situation while allowing them to remain anonymous in front of their peers.

Many Students Do Not Love the Food Industry

In fact, some do not like agricultural economics very much and some do not even want to consider a career in agriculture. On the one hand, this is an advantage of agricultural economics, that we can draw a diverse student population to the applied study of our field. The typical agricultural economics faculty has a highly varied research focus. Alternatively, this means that we have to be very careful of the examples we use and the careers we mention in the classroom. In fact, many of the students see the food industry as unappealing. Many of them have worked in low-level jobs in the food industry as servers or even cooks in fast food and food service and do not appreciate the high potential of food industry jobs. They see these jobs as mundane and beneath their sense of entitlement.

Implications for Great Teaching

Although some of these characteristics of the millennial students may seem negative from a great teaching viewpoint, I am convinced that the opportunity for teaching faculty to make an enormous contribution to students' development is at an all time high level. I believe that the opportunity to help students understand the agribusiness systems both nationally and globally and the role of economic theory to the profitable management of these systems is at an all-time high. Let me identify a few of these roles that I think great teaching can fill for millennial students.

The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Great Teaching

Goleman's (1995) book, "Emotional Intelligence," followed up by the practical guidelines incorporated into the 1998 book, "Working with Emotional Intelligence," helped us understand the enormous importance of the emotional intelligence (EQ), especially when compared with the IQ we often sort for in freshman entrance requirements. Goleman states that EQ is "managing feelings so that they are expressed appropriately and effectively, enabling people to work together smoothly toward their common goals." As Goleman says, EQ is not about "being nice" but sometimes "bluntly confronting someone with an uncomfortable, but consequential truth they have been avoiding." Furthermore, the millennial students now filling our classrooms seem to have even less EQ than Goleman identified as a problematic limiting factor over a decade ago. Add to this the dichotomy of millennial students' parents who

never say "no" and instill in the children the idea that they are always right. I believe great teaching must take on the challenge of developing EQ in our students. I had a student last semester who after approximately the tenth time of asking me "can I go to the bathroom" during class and I responded, "I don't know if you *can* but you *may*." Being quite proud of myself (surely I was developing the EQ of taking responsibility for one's actions), the student responded, "That was bad, something my parents would have said." I do not think my point was well made. We have to help them grow professionally, but do it very carefully.

The Role of Motivation in Great Teaching

I have spent much of my professional career trying to understand the principles of motivation of college students and the skills required by industry for our graduates. Siebert et al. (2006) and I identified several factors that motivate student learning. However, today's millennial student requires a new approach to motivation. Some of the time-tested classroom approaches to motivation no longer work with millennials. For example, have you ever tried to improve student performance by "calling them out" [their words] for not having read an assigned article? Peer pressure just does not work with millennials. Motivation of millennials must be focused on getting them to want to learn the material while convincing them that now is the time they need to do the learning. I have moved from learning objectives to learning outcomes for my course design and syllabus. Learning outcomes seem to be more clear to millennials. What will I know at the end of this course or learning unit rather than what was the objective of the learning seems to resonate with millennials. Millennials are pragmatic in the sense that they want to truly learn only what they need to know. Remember, they can look most all facts up instantaneously on the Internet (or at least so they think). I check back with the course learning outcomes periodically throughout the semester. In fact, I have a checklist that I encourage them to check off skills and abilities as they develop them throughout the course.

The Role of Procrastination as an Impediment to Great Teaching

Although the concept of procrastination has changed significantly over the past 25 years, it still plays a role in poor teaching. Burka and Yuen (1983) provided definitions of procrastination and even developed tests for their clinical patients to see if one has it (or conversely how bad it might be affecting them). The second half of their book provided ways to overcome procrastination. Some of us still remember the late 1970s when the advent of Federal Express next day delivery "solved" all of our procrastination problems, or not. Then came the ability to fax those documents that were a result of procrastination. Next, attachments to e-mail were the savior from procrastination. There is enormous momentum in the university system. Teaching is something that lends itself to procrastination. Many of us have said on at least one occasion "I'll read my Power Point slides just this one time, but I'll be prepared for next class." Now, In fact, it has been said that Power Point may singularly be the downfall of university education. Thousands of faculty members blindly go to class, read off the day's Power Point slides, and head back to their office. Although there must be some justification for this behavior because it continues, it is almost always recognized by the students. Students are not immune to this procrastination behavior either. How many times have you heard, "Will you post the Power Point slides?" or more likely the millennial will say, "When will you post the slides?" You see, they too have become somewhat accustomed to procrastination. If a course is mostly about memorizing facts, or even approaches to problem-solving (think will you just change the numbers in the problems from class?). If we are content to demand only low levels of cognitive thinking, maybe it makes sense for the students to put off memorizing the information on the slides until just before the examination. Again, I think some of us have gotten into a vicious cycle of demanding low-level cognitive thinking and the students who recognize this learn, or maybe even just memorize, on a "just in time" system. It is no longer procrastination if

the optimal examination performance can be attained by putting off this memorization until the last minute. Great teaching uses Power Point effectively but not passively. There is no greater teaching tool that an animated slide that shows demand and supply shifting around and equilibrium being reached with additional shifts in those functions and the effect it has on the equilibrium point.

The Role of Telling Stories in Great Teaching

I believe it is important to ground education in agricultural economics in relevant stories about real people who have used the technique or a real situation that shows the application of analysis. This is particularly difficult but ultimately important to great teaching for millennial students. I work hard at planning the "stories" I tell in class to demonstrate the use of concepts. Timing is important. However, a well thought out example that a former student actually used does seem to validate the classroom presentation. On one hand, millennial student are not impressed with experience and age. I used to work diligently at getting CEOs and Vice-Presidents of firms to come to my classroom for guest presentations. However, the millennial students who feel highly entitled do not necessarily see these high-level executives as superior. I use the "Professor for a Day" format in which industry representatives become the professor for the class day. (No, I do not require them to take the relative low pay for that day.) However, in the past few years, as the millennials enter my classroom, I have found that the most effective people for professor for a day presentations are students who are 3–5 years out from graduation. The students see these only recently former students as bringing important and useful examples into the classroom.

The Role of Teamwork in Great Teaching

I wonder how many of you have team taught. I mean *really* team taught, not where one professor teaches 4 weeks and the next professor teaches 5 weeks and the final professor teaches the final 5 weeks of the semester; but one in which two or more faculty teach together, maybe even simultaneously. I will never forget 1986 when I had the opportunity to team teach with Randy Westgren. Now I believe that Randy is one of the greatest teachers I have ever known. We were team-teaching a strategic management course and I spent the first several weeks of the course trying to emulate him. Finally, one Friday afternoon, we were discussing our success in team teaching. I admitted to him that although I was trying to emulate his teaching style, I was not yet successful. Simultaneously he was telling me that he was having trouble trying to adopt my teaching style. We both learned an important lesson that semester. Team teaching, in its most pure sense, takes advantages of the complementary skills of both teachers. This semester I am team-teaching with a young assistant professor, Lindsey Higgins, who has 1 year of teaching experience. I have not doubt that she will one day be awarded every teaching accolade in existence because she is a great teacher who is highly committed to student learning and willing to teach an old professor a few new tricks, especially about using technology with millennial students (see Higgins, Litzenberg, and Brock, 2010 for more discussion about innovations in team teaching). I have learned several things from my team teaching experience: how millennial students think and their attitudes toward teaching; an updated view of how technology affects the millennial students and their thinking; and their approach to learning. We have developed a working paper based on the team teaching experience titled "Evaluation of an Innovative Team-Taught Agribusiness Marketing Course" that reports the student attitudes.

The Role of Covert Teaching Objectives/Outcome Assessment in Great Teaching

During the 1986–1987 academic year when I was team teaching with Randy Westgren, we wrote an article (Westgren and Litzenberg, 1989) about using overt and covert teaching approaches for capstone courses. The concept was that instructors should obviously have teaching objectives for the learning that is to happen in a course; we called these overt teaching objectives. In recent years, I have

moved toward using learning outcomes rather than just teaching objectives to emphasize what I want the students to know after being in this class. Millennial students seem to appreciate much more the outcome of the learning process. I start the first day of class with a single word in the middle of a power point slide: learning. I make the point that this class is about learning. I also show the outcomes they should expect after completing the course. However, the role of the covert teaching objectives (those known only to the instructor, to meet their teaching objectives) is major in the selection of teaching methods and examples or stories (see previous discussion). Several of the professional skills identified by agribusiness professionals (Litzenberg and Schneider, 1987) can be taught as part of the covert teaching agenda. Knowing the idiosyncrasies of millennial students is of enormous importance in developing these covert teaching strategies. How we teach to millennials and how we use technology are part of the planning for each class session.

The Role of Technology in Great Teaching

Without a doubt the last 10 years have given us great advances in technology that can significantly affect great teaching. Note that I said *can;* sometimes that is hard to believe when you have 15 students texting while you are trying to have class. In the 2009 article, "Demand for Multimedia in the Classroom," Boyer, Briggeman, and Norwood elicit preferences for multimedia in the classroom for students and faculty members in agricultural economics. Their results show that students prefer multimedia instructional tools over a traditional chalkboard/whiteboard lecture format, *whereas faculty members do not* (my emphasis added). The Boyer article showed that students were not impressed with clickers or podcasts, especially when they were asked to bear the costs of these. Carnevale (2005) presented clickers as a way to keep students involved in an active learning sense by using them in a game show environment. Electronic texts showed a negative and statistically significant willingness to pay (WTP) in their study. Because I have invested significant amounts of time developing both podcasts and effective clicker use in the classroom, I wanted to check my students' reactions to this technology. I had generated a working paper regarding the role of technology in the classroom that included some encouraging data about the students' acceptance of the personal response systems (Litzenberg, 2009). During the Fall 2009 semester, Gene Nelson and I (2009) collected data from three courses using clicker technology in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M. These data show that nearly 79% of the students believed that clickers facilitated learning. The WTP for clickers was somewhat less supportive but still positive with 42% saying that clickers were worth the cost, whereas only 7% strongly disagreeing that the clicker was worth its cost. I believe that good teaching can be improved through technology, but technology does not make good teaching. Bruff (2009), in his book "Teaching with Classroom Response Systems: Creating Active Learning Environments," states that faculty must "become intensely intentional about their teaching- moment to moment." Millennial students seem to appreciate the use of technology, because it has always been a part their lives.

I have been using podcasts for the past 2 years to supplement classroom teaching in my food and agriculture sales course. The millennial student wants to look up information when they need it. Therefore, a 9 am class may not be the time they think they need to know how to do something. In my classroom experience, approximately 45% of the students rate the video learning as the same value in learning as classroom presentations. More importantly, it provides the material to students when they need it. Additionally, using the podcasts allows student to reinforce classroom instruction while allowing for variations in learning speed and need for repetition, especially considering the learning style of the student. Well-developed podcasts also provide additional examples to augment student learning.

The Role of Mentoring in Great Teaching

Hopefully the identification of these roles and their consideration has made an impact on your

potential for great teaching. A final thought about roles that augment and encourage great teaching is the importance of mentoring, especially in discussions dealing directly with students. Senior faculty can, and *should,* mentor junior faculty regarding student interactions related to but outside of the classroom. There is no greater gut-wrenching experience than sitting across the desk from an upset millennial student (or the millennial parent) with issues of grading, excused absences, and even final grades assigned. A power differential actually does exist because the faculty member ultimately decides on the course grade. However, entitled millennial students often ignore this power differential and challenge faculty. Faculty who read an earlier draft of this article suggested that these mentoring suggestions that I assembled over a 30-year career by trial and error should be included in this article.

Remember It Is a Long Semester

It is sometimes tempting to get caught up trying to win a battle over the grading of a single question in an examination or homework or evaluating an "excused" absence. Faculty should stay focused on the importance of establishing working relationships with students that span the whole semester. Your reputation does not reside on a single event. On the other hand, because millennial students have a lifelong sense of success, we do need to learn how to tell them "no." Handled correctly, these small failures can be motivating and provide a learning situation for students. Second, before you begin to respond (verbally or by e-mail), be sure to think how to proceed in a beneficial and nonconfrontational way. They probably do not feel they have transgressed the student–faculty line of authority and certainly are not challenging your entire educational achievements or trying to destroy your reputation.

A Quick Word about Student Organizations

It has historically been thought by department heads that those who are highly involved in the teaching functions should naturally be interested and involved in student organizations (and hence assigned as advisors for these organizations). There are several of you who are National AgriMarketing Association (NAMA) advisors or agricultural economics student organizations advisors. In my opinion, millennials require a significantly different approach by the advisors of these organizations. In the 2004 sourcebook edited by Coomes and DeBard (2004), they say, "Two powerful forces—history and popular culture play an important role in shaping the values, beliefs, attitudes and worldviews of individual and groups." Oftentimes senior faculty are perceived to have the time (at least relative to assistant and associate professors who are consumed with promotion, tenure, and grant writing) to advise student organizations. Some department heads believe that senior faculty are the most likely to understand and appreciate the legal, social, and cultural requirements of managing the activities of a student organization. I believe it is extremely difficult for senior faculty to advise student organizations of millennial students unless they are highly sensitive to their attitudes and beliefs. I think the best way for this organizational advisor assignment to work is to create teams of young faculty who understand and identify with millennials and senior faculty who may be able to commit more time and experience. In fact, I am currently doing this with NAMA in which we have joint advisorship between a 30-year old faculty and me. This activity requires significant leadership from department heads (Boland, 2009).

So, Where to from Here?

I hope I have identified some of the characteristics of the millennial students that might confound us and serve as an implicit impediment to great teaching. I also hope I have provided direction for those who aspire to great teaching with millennial agricultural economics students. I still believe that there are some enormous questions that we must answer as a prerequisite for great teaching. Let me end with the identification of what I think are enormously important questions for us to answer.

What is the Optimal Goal of Undergraduate Education in Agricultural Economics?

Some of us in the Land Grant system probably overemphasize the vocational aspects of an undergraduate education. I believe an undergraduate should be ready to enter the work world on graduation. Usually the recent graduate enters the work force at the entry level. This is in direct conflict with the entitlement concept of the millennial student. It is even in conflict with many parents' views of their son or daughter who they believe should be "anything they want to be" and "start at the top." The constriction of the economy in 2008 and 2009 has provided an opportunity for students to say they cannot get a job and have to move back home with their parents. I have been most surprised by the typical parent who has even embraced the idea that the graduate will move back home with them. It is even in conflict with some faculty who believe the major purpose of undergraduate education is to prepare students for graduate school. I think we must decide on what the goal (or possibly several multiple goals) of our undergraduate program for agricultural economics should be. In recent years, our department, as I am sure many of yours has done, was required to identify the learning outcomes for our undergraduate program. We often seem like the goal of academic programs is to make students become just like ourselves. I think we must spend the time and effort to identify what the goal of our undergraduate program should be. Although it is possible to overvalue the career development aspects of education in agricultural economics, I do not think we can ignore these needs. I have served as our internship coordinator for the past several years and have supervised over 240 internship programs of students. What I do know is that after an internship experience, students almost unilaterally change their attitude about the value and purpose of their education. Should we require an internship of all students? Probably not. However, I know it does change their view of education and the need to learn certain skills required in the work environment.

In a recent paper I wrote with Jim Mjelde and Yanhong Jin (Jin, Mjelde, and Litzenberg, 2010), we estimated the reservation price that students exhibit for accepting employment in a region of the country that is not their preferred area. Texans have a reputation for not wanting to leave Texas. Although the reservation prices we found were rather large, students were able to evaluate several variables of the job decision. Although the students will vote with their feet, I think we must identify the goals of our undergraduate program. These goals must be broader than to just create undergraduates who can go to graduate school and become just like us.

How do we focus the outcome assessments of our undergraduate education in agricultural economics to take advantage of our highly varied approaches and the broad considerations of our research programs in agricultural economics? This may be a larger question for the profession to debate. In fact, the work of Ron Mittelhammer and others on the board of the Agriculture and Applied Economics Association has contributed much to the discussion of our role as applied economists. In a time of decreasing budgets across most universities in the country, we will not have the ability to teach courses in all the areas we are interested in. With the advent of core curriculums that may dictate 50–60 hours of a 120-hour program, and with the precious need to accommodate some of the variability of our students through including at least a few free electives, we must clearly identify our goals and carefully assign the required courses in agricultural economics. This is not easy because there continues to be efforts presented about the need for addition courses in several areas. For example, Penson (2007), in his Lifetime Achievement Award article, makes a solid case for increased macroeconomics in agricultural economics curricula.

How Do We Encourage Great Teaching in Agricultural Economics?

Great teaching takes time. Great teaching takes commitment from faculty and administrators. Great teaching requires rewards. Great teaching requires important consideration in promotion and tenure decisions. I have led our program in peer review of teaching in the department for

several years. Every time we organize a new peer review team, I emphasize that great teaching and subsequently the peer review of great teaching must focus on both summative and formative aspects of classroom teaching. Identifying what makes great teaching and, more importantly, how to develop great teaching must be a concern of department heads across the country. I help the athletic department recruit athletes from time to time. (My job is to sell Texas A&M to these students.) I have been amazed at the change in focus in recruiting. Although the NCAA keeps athletic recruiters in check to some extent, the identification of football and basketball talent as early as the eighth grade or even earlier is prevalent. I think we must provide much more focus on the undergraduate program as a recruiting effort for our graduate students and ultimately faculty.

Where Are We Heading?

Change. Kilmer (2007) said it well in his 2007 Lifetime Achievement Award address: "What has remained constant, however, is that we are an applied profession that uses economic and business concepts on a problem-set, within which, the emphasis among the parts of the problem-set has changed over time." Our undergraduate program is also changing and will continue to change. I urge us to continue to consider great teaching as part of that legacy.

Maybe the ending of this article should go back to the Bob Dylan song, made famous by Peter, Paul, and Mary, "Blowin' in the Wind." I know we do not have all the answers to great teaching, but as long agricultural economics faculty everywhere continue to have that relentless curiosity identified by Jim Collins, we have a chance to keep making a difference. I am excited to be a part of great teaching with the millennial agricultural economics students.

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