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**LeeAnn E. Moss**  
**Participant**  
**Ph.D. Curriculum – Panel of Ph.D. Graduates**  
**Given at the 2002 WCC-72 Meetings in Las Vegas, NV**

**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