



**Opening doors to opportunity and
encouraging students to step through**

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Personal Background



- B.S. Agronomy, minor Agriculture Economics
- Took off several years and served as a crop consultant
- Graduate studies with primary focus on obtaining molecular knowledge of plant diseases, but made sure to maintain a field component
 - Partial work completed at International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines
- 3 years in private industry (diagnostics and pathogen detection for Quality Assurance)
- Current: Research Scientist for USDA-ARS

If I knew then, what I know now?



- To be marketable in today's environment, candidates must be able to show that they can do the particular task that they are being hired for.
- Of course the diversity of positions being offered is extremely extensive
- Therefore...breadth of experience/knowledge is crucial!!
- Graduate programs tend to train students to be highly knowledgeable on relatively narrow projects (i.e. thesis project)
- We have to provide students opportunities to gain broader experiences, and encourage them to take these opportunities

Breadth of experience




- International Collaborations
 - International students obtaining graduate degrees in the US have distinct advantage...need more opportunities for American students
- Field Trips and Extensive Projects
 - Basic/Molecular Students: Field trips and hands on workshops on production agriculture, disease diagnostics etc.
 - Applied/Field Students: Hands on workshops and specific small research projects
- More requirements for standard coursework to emphasize breadth of knowledge (i.e. statistics, agronomy, economics and/or business courses, etc.).
- Encourage students to volunteer time to clubs, professional committees, and other outside classroom activities.
- Departmental encouragement for faculty and mentors to provide these opportunities to their students



Show me the money?

- Need to provide opportunities for scholarships and special fellowships and encourage colleges to provide these for students obtaining higher education.
 - Personal experience
- Work with department faculty and local business to provide “internship” opportunities while students still in training
- Strongly encourage students to do different thesis work than what they did for B.S. or M.S.



Preparation of our professionals for the job market...opinions of an early career member in private sector

- BS and MS level pathologists are a rarity
 - Not all positions are suited for PhD's, need to support this training at our universities.

- Better training on interviewing skills
 - Prepare for the job applying for, NOT for what you want it to be.
 - For example: if position is not a research position, don't talk about all of the research you want to do in the job.
 - Leave the thesis behind!!!
 - For example: don't only talk about your thesis but other experiences and activities that emphasize your ability to do/learn other things.
 - Have examples that highlight abilities to take on new tasks or to do the job required