Plant Pathology at the crossroads: attracting the Millennial Generation

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Millennial Generation: their attributes

- Closely tied to their parents
  - Speak with parents about 1.5 times per day
- Confident in their abilities and driven to succeed
- Driven by compassion
  - Believe it’s “cool” to give back to society
- Team oriented and appreciative of diversity

The ‘Net’ Generation

- Have a Facebook account
- Own or read blogs
- Get news from TV and www
- Do something else while IM-ing
- Use Instant Messaging (IM)
- Own an iPod, Zune, Sansa, etc.
- Own or read blogs
- Have a Facebook account
- Do something else while IM-ing

Percentage of 7,500 sample size

Data source: Connecting to the Net. Generation: What Higher Education Professionals Need to Know About Today’s Students, by Reynol Junco and Jeanna Mastrodicasa, 2007
Millennials’ view of Science

• Vague, Abstract, Difficult, Boring

Many of them do not know:

• What Plant Pathology is and what Plant Pathologists do
Why the disconnect?

• The American society largely ‘detached’ from agriculture
• Over 300,000,000 people live in the United States
  - 1% claim farming as an occupation
  - About 2% actually live on farms
• Agriculture is less ‘attractive’
Paradigm shift

• Making agriculture/plant science a key component of education process
  - Beginning with K-12 curriculum
• Making teachers part of the process
  - A better appreciation for agriculture should be the first step
Paradigm shift

Partnering with Parents

- Millennials rely on, and are in close contact with, their parents
- Involving parents in science/agricultural fairs and academic activities
Need for Greater Involvement: Scientists/Faculty

Courtesy: Robert Hubner
Need for Greater Involvement: Scientists/Faculty

Mike Derie and Lindsey du Toit at their plant pathology display during Mount Vernon High School Sci-Tech Event
Providing Hands-on Experiences

Future plant pathologist, Harley Hulbert, examines nematodes feeding on *Fusarium* in a petri dish.
Providing Hands-on Experiences
Remember that they are the ‘e-Generation’

• Making best use of their ‘love’ for high tech

Image source: nunsuch.wordpress.com/.../more-on-millennials/
Emphasizing the positives

- Significance of Plant Pathology/Plant Science:
  - We depend on plants
  - Healthy plants for ‘healthy’ food
  - Food security in developing countries
  - Sustaining the ecosystem
  - Agricultural bio-security
  - Global experiences
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