It’s All About Quality

- Our main concern is the quality of our work
- Standing for election as President of AAEA in spring 2012:
  - I focused on changing work environments
- All too prescient?
Our Conversation About Quality

- Connect forces and changes we are experiencing as agricultural and applied economists
  - To the concepts of quality attributes and quality metrics
- Identify major issues our profession and AAEA face in certifying the quality of our work
- Ask: How are we doing as a profession and as the AAEA in certifying the quality of our work?

Conversation Threads

- Definition and recognition of quality across all our functional areas
  - Focus on academic settings
- Which quality attributes and metrics are central now and for the future?
- Places where quality and quality certification come together
- The role of AAEA in today’s quality certification landscape
Positioning of Agricultural and Applied Economics Depts & Faculty

- Conversation milestones
  - 1992, Dan Bromley, *Vested Interests Organizational Inertia, and Market Shares: A Commentary on Academic Obsolescence*
  - 2013, Rich Sexton, *The Renaissance of Agricultural Economics*

- Going forward

Our Conversation About Quality—1st Conversation Thread

- Definition and recognition of quality across functional areas
Quality Certification

- Hierarchy
  - Standard setting
  - Certification to standards
  - Quality signaling and labeling

Quality Attributes and Metrics for Individuals

- Define profile or performance expectations
- Research quality and quantity
  - Articles
  - Grants
- Teaching
  - Peer review, portfolios
  - Student evaluations
- Extension/outreach
  - Program development and impact
Quality Attributes and Metrics for Organizations

- Aggregate individual metrics
- Reputations:
  - National
  - International
  - Local (e.g., state)
  - Within college
  - Within university

Our Conversation About Quality—2nd Conversation Thread

- Central attributes and metrics
- It’s all about
  - Quality attributes
  - Quality metrics
Central Attributes and Metrics for Agricultural and Applied Economics

- Research/Ph.D. program quality
- Teaching quality
- Extension/outreach quality

Attribute 1:
Research/Ph.D. Program Quality

- The university reputation game
- Two metrics
**Metric 1:**
National Research Council (2011)

- *A Data-Based Assessment of Research-Doctorate Programs in the United States*
- Includes variables on faculty research productivity

**Questions Raised**

- Maintenance of a sufficiently large # of Ph.D. programs identifying as ag & resource economics
  - And assuring recognition of diverse programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Department</th>
<th># in NRC Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>Agricultural &amp; Resource Economics</td>
<td>28 (+3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
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Questions Raised

- How do departments without a Ph.D. program get on the research radar?

Metric 2: Citation-Based Metrics

- Impact factors
- Multiple other metrics
Questions Raised

- Suitability for discipline and for cross-discipline comparisons
- Gaming
- Nascent movement to return evaluation to the content of the science

Attribute 2: Teaching Quality

- Clear trend to activity-based budgeting systems
- Ag and applied economics in excellent position to grow in quality and quantity
Major Challenge

- “You don’t teach much”
- Response: teach more

Attribute 3: 
Extension/Outreach Quality

- Example:
  - ECOP Strategic Opportunities and Measuring Excellence Program
- Research and teaching metrics also apply
Our Conversation About Quality—
3rd Conversation Thread

- Key places where the quality story comes together

Place 1:
Hiring & Early Career Development

- Changing job market
  - ASSA job market becoming primary (or strong secondary?) for many departments and students
- Results for early career cohorts
Groups of Early Career AAE Professionals

- Ag and Applied Economists Trained in AAE Departments
- General Economists and Those with Other Training

- Working in AAE Depts
- Working in Academia in AAE Areas, not in AAE Depts
- Working in Govt, Business, NGOs in AAE Areas

What About Diversity in Hiring, Retention, and Advancement in Rank?

- Data collection and assessment through 2007
- No tracking since then
- Working hypothesis: If experience is similar to economics, expect relatively weak progress
- We need to collect data and analyze information to know
Place 2: Positioning of Departments & Faculties

- I'm a veteran!
- It's about quality attributes and quality metrics
  - When reorganization is underway
  - Always in access to hiring and resources

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College Placement of Ag and Applied Economics Depts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College Placement</th>
<th># of Departments</th>
<th>% of Departments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture or Agricultural Sciences is First Name in College Title</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>83%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Agriculture or Agricultural Sciences is Second Name in College Title</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
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Our Conversation About Quality—4th Conversation Thread

- AAEA’s role
- Quality attributes and metrics must address:
  - Important societal issues and performance criteria
  - Support disciplinary quality
  - Allow us to compete in our academic environments
- Generally facing these needs department-by-department and institution-by-institution
- Put our heads together to think more & better

AAEA in Today’s Quality Certification Landscape

- Adapting and innovating over time
- AAEA Board is currently doing strategic planning
  - Input from member survey this spring
- Some thoughts at this early stage
Focus 1: Providing Context & Best Practices

- Quality attributes and quality metrics in agricultural and applied economics field
  - Assessing quality for individuals
  - Assessing quality for organizations
    - Across agricultural and applied economics
    - Across disciplines (e.g., cross-college and cross-university comparisons)
- Venue for discussion and communication

Focus 2: Offering Mutual Mentoring throughout the Career Process

- AAEA has strong history in mentoring
- Mentoring is a major area where AAEA can make investments with high dividends
  - Quality of our work
  - Vibrancy and relevancy of AAEA
Focus 3: Providing Large and Intimate Scale Meeting Places for Interaction that Supports Quality

- Our D.C. meeting is setting a 20-year attendance record!
  - Annual meetings support & build overall community
  - Work to build even more ways to support quality feedback and networking into meeting format
- Stand-alone AAEA Symposia
  - Smaller, specialized meetings

Quality Certification Checklist for Agricultural and Applied Economics

- Attributes and metrics for
  - Individuals
  - Organizations
- Critical control points
  - Hiring and Early Career Development
  - Positioning of departments and faculties in universities and colleges
- AAEA
  - Clearinghouse for standards discussion
  - Support for quality development
Our Conversation About Quality

- Launching place for our conversation—how we’re doing as a profession and as AAEA
- “It’s all about quality” isn’t precise enough
  - It’s all about quality attributes and quality metrics
- It’s really about impact
- Invite you to join, continue, and extend this conversation