

Diversity Champion Spotlight: Lou Ann Baugh, Agricultural Economics

Lou Ann Baugh is the Graduate Coordinator/Graduate Advisor in the Department of Agricultural Economics, where she has served for 33 years. Her responsibilities include recruitment of a diverse group of graduate students, advising graduate students (including new student orientation, advising on plans of study and registration, and monitoring and assisting students in their academic progress through course work research and graduation, and thesis format advisor) as well as serving as building deputy for the department. Lou Ann, however, plays many roles well beyond her job title.



Recruitment, Retention and Graduation of a Diverse Group of Graduate Students. Lou Ann covers all details when it comes to success for prospective, current and graduated students from Purdue Ag Econ. From developing brochures to setting up booths at Graduate Student fairs across the country, to emailing and calling students, to setting up campus visits, to giving advice on apartments to rent, to assigning office mates who work well together, to helping students navigate the registration process and have the correct credits for graduation, to advising on thesis formatting so the final thesis deposit goes smoothly, to continual communication with alumni, Lou Ann is there at every step. She was one of the first graduate coordinators in the College of Agriculture to target graduate student fairs with underrepresented minorities, making it a priority to attend and recruit at those fairs. She included materials from other College of Agriculture departments and assisted with their recruiting. In the last ten years (2006-2016) the percentage of women graduate students in Agricultural Economics increased from 37% to 52% and domestic minority graduate students increased from 4% to 7%. In the graduate program, women and underrepresented minority students graduate at the same rate as the overall student group. Lou Ann Baugh is most definitely a key to this success.

Tahirou Abdoulaye, an international student whose first language was not English, is an MS and PHD alumnus and recent Distinguished Ag Alumnus Award winner. He notes the influence of Lou Ann on his success: “She was always understanding, patient, welcoming and provided clear guidance that was key to the success of all graduate students. When you enter her office you are sure to be helped with a smile.”

Assisting Faculty and Staff, especially Women and Underrepresented Minorities: As stated by Professor Joan Fulton, “I can personally attest to Lou Ann’s role in assisting faculty and staff – especially women and underrepresented minorities”. Arriving at Purdue I was one of just three women faculty in the department and the only one working with graduate students. Lou Ann

made sure I had the most effective office set-up, worked to schedule my classes at the best times and encouraged graduate students to work with me. All of these helped to jump start my program, overcome the barriers associated with being the “only” woman and were very significant in my success.

Helping Others Less Fortunate: Lou Ann has been a leader in the departmental drives for Food Finders and migrant farm workers, always working for the welfare of those less fortunate, often underrepresented minorities.