An Instrument to Gauge World-Mindedness of College Students

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Introduction
Many university students in agriculture are uninformed and uninterested in global issues. They recognize that Brazil is a threat to soybean sales. They know that many Europeans oppose imports of GMO corn from the US, and that Japanese bans on US beef have hurt the livestock industry. However, they are often naive about the background to these issues. They do not see the need to be better informed, instead blaming the problems on “stupid” policies in other countries. They do not see career opportunities that can be made available for them if they increase their skills and knowledge in dealing with international issues.

College courses should help students to better understand the key issues affecting them. They should prepare students for current and future careers which are increasingly impacted by globalization in all of its manifestations. To help our students, we need a tool that provides a profile of international effectiveness for those in agricultural majors. That tool needs to describe the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that make a college graduate in agriculture more competent and more connected with our world. We need an instrument that can measure changes in attitudes so that we know if our courses and educational activities are helping students become more world-minded.

Purpose
The purpose of this carousel roundtable discussion is to contribute to the development of a world-mindedness instrument. This discussion will contribute to a model-building study to create and evaluate a reliable instrument.

Research Method
The research method to complete this study over the long term will be grounded theory (Creswell, 2005). Data collection techniques include review of literature, group discussion, and interviews. Then an instrument will be constructed, field tested, revised and evaluated. The discussion today will contribute to the data collection phase of the study.

The procedure for the study includes four stages: 1) data collection; 2) design of a draft instrument; 3) field testing and revision; and 4) evaluation of the revised instrument. Through a review of literature I have identified several checklists for world-mindedness and particular skills,
knowledge or attitudes that college graduates need to be prepared for careers in international agriculture at home and abroad. These checklists will be distributed to carousel participants for their examination and stimulation.

Questions for Discussion
1. Is this overall approach to world-mindedness sound? 2. Do you agree that this study is needed? 3. What are the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that graduates of colleges of agriculture need to be effective in an international setting? 4. Do any of these checklists help describe a profile of the globally-ready graduate? 5. Would they help our students prepare for international careers in agriculture? 6. Can we use any of them as an instrument to measure needed changes in skills, knowledge, and attitudes? 7. Could we combine items from these checklists with other sources to make a world-mindedness instrument?

Educational Importance
Successful development of a world-mindedness scale would help university faculty design courses and activities to prepare their students for careers in international agriculture. It would also be useful for evaluation – to answer the critics who ask, “how do you know that your course (or international minor or major) makes a difference?”

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