

Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project Highlights

December 2017

Scholar Program 12

PROFESSORS ARE ALSO HUMANS - PERSPECTIVE OF A 2017 PROJECT SCHOLAR

by Ufedo Monday Shaibu

Prior to coming to Michigan State University as a Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Food Security Policy, Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project (NAPP) scholar, it was pretty intimidating for me to approach professors. This was especially true for those I did not know very well; but hey, exchanges with professors are an essential ingredient of academic success. More often than not, students seem afraid of talking to their University Professors for different reasons, forgetting the fact that they are human as well. This idea is what informed this reflection piece.

During my time as a visiting scholar at the Department of Agricultural, Food and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, this narrative has changed significantly. I have gotten the opportunity to sharpen my critical thinking and research skills, especially as it relates to agricultural insurance, environmental economics, and even for further studies beyond the Master's program. This is largely due to the accessibility that students have to their professors. The student-lecturer relationship was quite different as one is encouraged to express his opinion and views on issues and there was actually no "wrong" answers. Your answers are always thoughtfully reviewed and some good can come out of every idea.

I can humbly say that my comfort reaching out to senior colleagues has come from interaction with various professors during classes and even outside the classroom setting. I was well groomed to take on any challenge that involved critical reasoning through this interaction and the University's teaching approach. For want of space, let me just highlight experiences in two key areas.

Interaction with Professors

No doubt, my thesis will come out a better work through interaction with various faculty members and graduate students here at MSU. The skills learnt will enhance the quality of my analysis and future research publications, moving away from conventional wisdoms to articulating policy recommendations that are evidence based. One uniquely good thing was that, the professors are always ready and willing to share their knowledge. Not only were they ready to share, they were equally ready to learn. All I needed to do was surf the faculty website and look through their profiles. This enabled me to see those working on topics related to my area of interest. That done, I would send an email to schedule a meeting and about 99% of the emails were answered within 24 hours, with all leading to a fruitful engagement

and even follow-up meetings in some cases. Through such interactions, I was able to gain a better understanding of concepts in my research area of agricultural insurance. The interaction further availed me the opportunity to strengthen my analytical skills as well as identify possible strengths and weaknesses of various analytical tools. I was then able to gain knowledge to address the identified shortcomings. It is undeniable that I am now a better scholar in terms of evidence based quality research.



Graduate Class Session on Environmental Economics with Prof. Soren Anderson at Michigan State University

Learning experience

Before taking classes on Environmental Economics at MSU, I had always wanted to do a graduate program in this field or write a thesis on environmental issues. At last, my journey in the field of Environmental Economics took off during my tenure as a visiting scholar at Michigan State University. Generally, I found the teaching methods in every class to be student friendly. Students were involved with high level of participation and what I would call colleague - colleague relationship and not a top- down, lecturer-student relationship. This kind of participation paved the way for an atmosphere conducive to more effective teaching and learning. In fact, I had the feeling that no matter how difficult a topic or problem set was, I could use the available resources and avenues in and outside of the classroom to build on what I knew. Without any doubt, I am now a better scholar and shall continue to keep the flag flying at academic fora in Nigeria, Africa, and the World.

This work is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the Feed the Future initiative through the Nigeria Agricultural Policy Project, Associate Cooperative Agreement Number AJD-620-LA-15-00001. The contents are the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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Published by the Department of Agricultural, Food, and Resource Economics, Michigan State University, Justin S. Morrill Hall of Agriculture, 446 West Circle Dr., Room 202, East Lansing, Michigan 48824.