

# Adventures in Interdisciplinarity

Ben Gramig  
USDA Economic Research Service  
Research Agricultural Economist

GLASSNET  
November 7, 2022

**DISCLAIMER:** The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the presenter and should not be construed to represent any official USDA or U.S. Government determination or policy.



# Ben's timeline

Agri-environmental risk mgt consulting, 2001.5-2004.5

Associate Professor (2017-2021), University of Illinois at U-C

Worked in Kentucky Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy, 2000-2001.5

MS in Agricultural Economics, University of Kentucky, 2002-04

PhD in Agricultural Economics, Michigan State, 2004-08

Asst. (2008-13) and Associate (2013-17) Professor, Purdue University

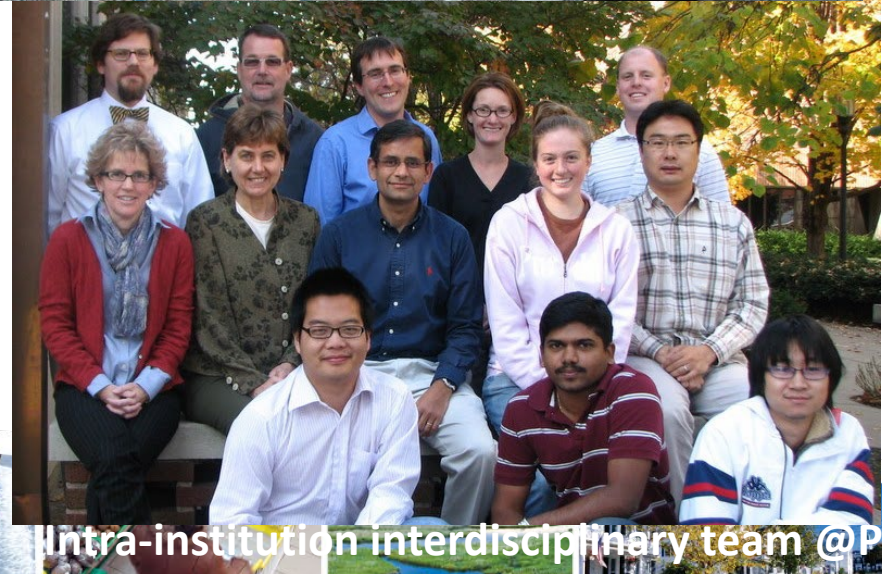
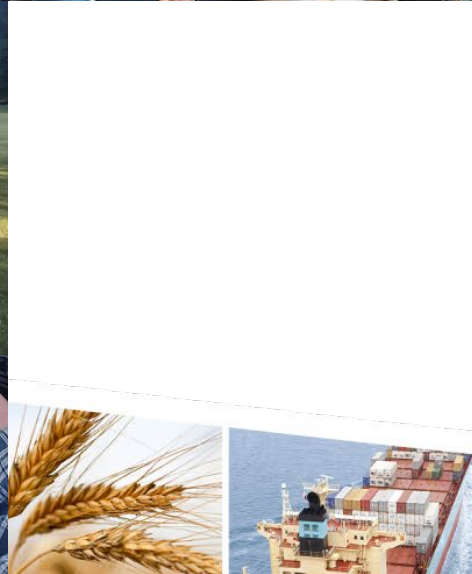
Research Economist, USDA Economic Research Service, 2021-present

## Common elements in my training and experiences that got me on the interdisciplinary path:

- Institutions matter
- Worked with ag meteorology and engineers early on and was tremendously valuable to me
- Outcomes humans care about and determine welfare are a result of basic/physical sciences (biology, chemistry and climate), social science and policy/politics



# Teams I have/do work on



# Research Ideas: Talk it over, refine...repeat

- Have always found there is no substitute for in-person meetings to hammer out ideas
  - Whiteboard
  - Bi-lateral and small sub-team meetings
- We have all found ways to achieve similar engagement online in the wake of Covid-19

## Key topics to address:

- How are our data needs similar or different?
  - How do they overlap?
- Where are the “feedbacks” between disciplines, models and outreach/public engagement?
  - Parallel, orthogonal or sequential
- What elements are disciplinary science and which ones are interdisciplinary?



# Ben's Notes on Interdisciplinary Research (1/2)

## PROS

- Impact and reach of your work
- Step outside our disciplinary and/or academic silos
- Fun and interesting!
- GROW your professional network



# Ben's Notes on Interdisciplinary Research (2/2)

## **CONS** (if you can call them that)

- Hard to do *well*
  - One-off papers are especially difficult, but can be a springboard
- Not always rewarded but this has changed a lot
  - Junior academics, especially, need a portfolio of core disciplinary+ work



# Acknowledge Important Ways Disciplines Differ

- Disciplinary norms
  - Lead author name position: first or last or co-equal authorship
  - Graduate student co-authorship versus sole authorship
- Different professional and technical jargon
  - Sometimes use different terms for the same thing
  - Need to learn each others' disciplinary languages



# Leading Effectively in Effective Teams

- Deep engagement at the proposal writing stage
- Co-authorship guidelines/agreement
- Use of intra-team surveys and evaluation of team's *internal* functioning
- Filesharing, file formats, messaging and communications





# Ben Gramig

benjamin.gramig@usda.gov



[www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)



[linkedin.com/company/  
usda-economic-research-service](https://linkedin.com/company/usda-economic-research-service)



@USDA\_ERS

**Subscribe to Weekly E-mail Notifications:** [www.ers.usda.gov/subscribe](http://www.ers.usda.gov/subscribe)

**Learn About Careers at ERS:** [www.ers.usda.gov/about-ers/careers-at-ers](http://www.ers.usda.gov/about-ers/careers-at-ers)



**Economic Research Service**  
[www.ers.usda.gov](http://www.ers.usda.gov)

