

Former Agricultural Economics Faculty

CORINNE ALEXANDER (1971-2016)

Dr. Corinne Alexander, an outstanding researcher, mentor and teacher, passed away unexpectedly at the peak of her career in January, 2016. Dr. Alexander was a driving force in her field, passionately committed to her work. Corinne was a Professor of Agricultural Economics and Extension Economist. Amongst her many areas of research, Dr. Alexander left her mark on price risk management and new marketing tools for new generation grain marketing contracts. She also contributed to research on marketing value-added products, with a focus on food-grade grains and organic products.

Before joining Purdue, Corinne graduated from Philips Exeter Academy, and went on to Oberlin College graduating with a triple major in Biology, Economics, and Environmental Studies. She received her Ph.D. from University of California Davis in Agricultural Economics.

Corinne was very passionate about her career and poured that passion into research, outreach, and teaching. She was a committed and loving mentor to both undergraduate and graduate students. She was passionate about working with farmers, and improving food security globally through her projects in Africa. She was particularly passionate about the PICS project in Africa which helps farmers store grains for longer durations and sell their goods to the market at the optimal time.

Although we lost her too soon, her impact on the lives of the many people she touched lives on. She will live on in our memory.

Memories of a Colleague and Friend

"Corinne Alexander always had a positive attitude and a smile for every situation. Your friends and colleagues from University of Austral, Argentina will always remember you with love and happiness."

- Bernardo Piazzardi

"Every time I ran into Corinne at a program or conference, her positivity and smile helped to cheer my generally pessimistic attitude. She was very optimistic and a source of encouragement in my efforts with co-chairing and chairing the Indiana Small Farm Conference. I looked



forward to working with her on fun and innovative Extension programs to support the growing sustainable agriculture and foods movement in Indiana. She will be missed dearly."

- Michael O'Donnell



"I enjoyed my time in Kenya with Corinne; she was great company, kind, and humorous. She was a very intelligent and hard-working woman, who I'm sure inspired many students in her field. I know that she loved her family very much, as we discussed various things during our trip. Corinne had a wonderful presence, and she will be greatly missed. I was very much looking forward to seeing her again; we would communicate periodically via email, and in December 2015, we had wished each other Happy Holidays. I am very saddened by her passing."

-Cheryl O'Brien

"The best part about working in the College of Agriculture is the diverse group of people that I get to work alongside. Corinne was one of the best. We would share rides going to meetings and talk non-stop. Our gabfests were epic. I can't imagine not having these with my dear friend. Her intelligence, experience, insight, and humor kept me on my toes. One of the last times we had one of our lengthy discussions was pure serendipity. Walking downtown Lafayette with my oldest child, Corinne just happened to be walking across the street. Both of our faces lit up to realize we were being given a rare opportunity to hang out. We ended up sharing a meal and talking non-stop (again). I did my best to convince her to write a proposal on organic grains because I thought it was so important for Indiana farmers to get into this market after she had hosted a grain buyer from Illinois at the 2015 Small Farm Conference. The session had incredible impact on many of us in the room and because of her we were able to see the great opportunities for farmers in the state. I can't even fathom how we might fill her shoes in the future. She was truly one in a million and will be sorely missed."

-Tamara Benjamin

"I am very sad to hear that a great professor and wonderful human being is gone so soon! Dr. Alexander was an amazing professor and I am very thankful to not only have taken her class but to have also had the opportunity to have her come and speak at a continued education event I organized last year! Dr. Alexander was not only a wonderful professor because of how smart she was, she also made sure that, as students, we knew she really cared about our success! I struggled in her class Sophomore year but she took the time to work with me and make sure I actually understood what she was teaching and gained something from my time in there! For that, I am eternally grateful!"

-Kristine Kilfoil (former student)

"I was saddened to hear of the loss of Corinne Alexander. Before I joined the Ag Econ Department, I was a Biology Major and when I transferred I was lucky to have her as my advisor. She was the one that showed me I how much I enjoyed learning about Merchandising. When I would go in for a meeting about my academic plans she would also check to see if I had any questions about what she was going over in class to make sure that I'd be prepared for the test. I truly enjoyed having her as a Professor and Advisor throughout my years at Purdue."

-Katie Snowberger

"I am from Northwest Indiana, small town, small school, and I came to Purdue to pursue a degree in Agribusiness. Many adjustments had been made to my education and one class I always enjoyed going to was hers. I was in her commodity marketing course, and as a person who didn't come from a farm it was hard to understand a lot of the concepts. Dr. Alexander though taught it well, fair, and was always looking to help a student. I left for an internship for one semester and then came back in the spring. I saw Dr. Alexander in the hallway and surprisingly she still knew my name even after a year of not seeing her, and being in a class of 100 students. I always had a lot of respect for her because of that and her accomplishments in life. She just didn't make you feel like a number in the crowd, which can be common at a big school like Purdue. Currently now I live in central Illinois working as a Grain Merchandiser, trading commodities. Dr. Alexander was the first person to open my eyes with this area of agriculture and I feel privileged to have been one of her students."

-Austin Friedland

"This is terribly sad news... Dr. Alexander was one of my favorite professors that I ever had at Purdue. She was always willing to help me and never failed to say hello and ask how things were going whenever I would see her. She is one of the main people who sparked my interest in the career field I have just started in. She was not only intelligent, but kind, caring, friendly, and passionate for helping others. Dr. Alexander will be sorely missed by myself and many others whom she has positively influenced at, and outside, Purdue."

-Peter Reding

"I was fortunate enough to be in her AGE 321 class last semester and learned so much from her in a very short period of time. She was very passionate about Futures and Options and I could tell how much she loved what she was teaching. It was a very interactive class and helped to guide me towards my career path of being a Commodity Merchandiser. She had a very positive impact on myself as well as many other students in the class."

-Hayden Sholtis

"Corrine's insight, enthusiasm and willingness to dig-into-her-elbows to get things done will definitely be missed as part of the Indiana Small Farms Conference planning group. My eyes tend to glaze over when it comes to economics but she definitely had a talent of explaining things on a level which was engaging and informative to even those reluctant on the topic. You could see in her conversations and actions that she had a passion for working to improve the markets, incomes and lives of Indiana's farmers. In Corrine I was also happy to find a fellow foodie, at our last face-to-face meeting we had a nice discussion on the merits of various flavors and types of pie. She also spoke fondly of cooking for her family and holiday gatherings. I'm sorry we've lost this exceptional extension specialist and warm, friendly human being."

-Amy Thompson

"When I close my eyes and think of Corinne, I can hear her laugh, which seemed to be with her always and so distinct that I could find her in any crowd. I will miss that most."

-Charles Woloshuk

"Dr. Alexander was one of my favorite professors at Purdue. I studied Agriculture Economics while at Purdue and I loved the class that she taught. She was such an amazing teacher. I loved her style of teaching and the passion that she had for all of us as students."

~Barbara Wadsworth

"Words cannot describe the shock and sadness I feel learning this news about my friend and colleague Corinne. She has been so excited about being involved in the PICS3 project and the Food Processing Innovation Lab, enjoying making a difference in the lives of smallholder farmers around the world - and Africa in particular. When Corinne first joined Purdue, we recruited her into our Purdue Grain Quality Team, and together with Linda Mason and Charlie



Woloshuk, we enjoyed working together for many years. Corinne was a key member of our multi-disciplinary team and served on several of my graduate student committees. It had been personally and professionally rewarding to see Corinne blossom in her career all the way through her most recent promotion to full professor and the leadership roles she had assumed. She always contributed so much to every team and every project. Last fall she did an excellent job representing Purdue University at the 1st International Congress on the Prevention of Post-Harvest Loss in Rome. The year before she contributed to the 11th International Working Conference on Stored Product Protection in Thailand. Corinne was a fun person to be with! Corinne will undoubtedly be sorely missed by all of us."

-Dirk Maier

"My heart is filled with sadness at the passing of Corinne and yet then I think of her I smile. Her smile and enthusiasm were infectious. Corinne was a great colleague, generous faculty member and wonderful human being. I loved serving with her on student committees because of her insightful nature. She was curious as a scientist and used that curiosity to push the boundaries of knowledge in all the projects she touched. She taught me so much about the field of agricultural economics and how to use this new knowledge to assist in my own research decisions. She was a great contributor to our annual post-harvest workshop. Farmers, grain managers, pest control operators, food processors or researchers, it didn't matter, we all gained great insights into the state of the grain markets each year from her presentations. During these presentations, it was not only the knowledge she extended that made her a great speaker, but her gentle nature. What a joy it was to listen to her and what a loss for Purdue Extension. Corinne was also a great colleague in our pursuit of improving the lives of women faculty in the college. Her insights into these issues will be sorely missed. May you rest in peace. Your legacy will live on in all those that you have touched."

-Linda Mason

"Corinne was my good friend. She was also a very close colleague who was the first person to reach out to me about working together when I joined the faculty at Purdue in 2011. We were partners on PICS3, and the FPL Innovation Lab projects. Without a doubt Corinne's leadership, dedication, vision, intellect, and true collaborative spirit were driving forces behind Purdue's ability to both get these grants and help the projects successfully have a positive impacts on the lives of farmers in Africa. Corinne was also a great mentor to junior faculty like me. She was very supportive, and offered constructive, useful advice that really helped me through the stressful process of trying to obtain tenure. I can remember the almost daily occasion where I would be sitting in my office and hear the sound of Corinne's footsteps coming down the hall. I knew that when she got to my office we would be chatting for the next hour 😊. I can still hear her footsteps and will treasure our conversations. Corinne was a special person, and will be greatly missed."

-Jacob Ricker-Gilbert

"It is with great sadness that we learned of the tragic passing of Corinne Alexander over the weekend. She has been a great collaborator with CRS on PICS for several years, had visited several of our programs in the field, and worked closely with a number of CRS colleagues. She had attended the meeting I had with faculty when I was on campus last month for commencement. Know that our hearts are with yours at this moment of great loss. We will keep Corinne, her family and the Purdue community in our prayers in the days and weeks to come. Corinne will be greatly missed. We remain fully committed to carrying on our work together on PICS to which Corinne had dedicated so much effort. May her soul rest in Peace."

-Carolyn Y. Woo

"I am deeply saddened to hear of Corinne's passing. She was my colleague for 4+ years at Purdue, but she was so much more than that. Corinne had a zest for life that was irrepressible. She was interested in everything! Students. Colleagues. Agriculture. Food. You name it. Two memories stand out. First, before Susan and I arrived at Purdue in the winter of 2006, Corinne sent me a long and thoughtful email about life in West Lafayette in general. She talked about Otto Doering's farm and the emerging restaurant scene in downtown Lafayette. She also waxed eloquently about the Lafayette Farmer's Market. It was clear that she lived her life in such a way that she fully embraced the best parts of wherever she happened to find herself. The second was her expressed desire to learn a bit more about shotgun sports. One fine Saturday afternoon in the early spring of 2009 she rode with me up to our family farms near Palestine so that she could stand in some corn stubble and try her hand at shooting clay targets. I don't think she ever pursued this rather arcane hobby any further--her shoulder likely hurt way too much afterward--but it goes along with my first story: she was always willing to try something new, and to keep an open mind. It amused me to no end that she sincerely wanted to try shooting, at least once. I have not seen Corinne in several years. I don't know what all she was doing in recent times. But I have no doubt that she was basically doing what she was always good at doing: embracing life with arms wide open. I shall miss her. I grieve for her. I will continue to grieve for her. I am also sad for her friends, colleagues, and students at Purdue and in the greater Lafayette community. There is little comfort to be had in a time like this. I can only say that while her time on this earth was cut short, way too short, many of the rest of us would be fortunate indeed to live twice as long and accomplish half as much."

-Matt Holt

"I am deeply saddened by the shocking news that Corinne passed away. I formally met her, less than three days before her passing, when I walked into the two-day APHLIS+ working group meeting at the Stewart Center on the Purdue University Campus. She greeted me with a warm smile and an inspiring enthusiasm for a successful meeting. During the two day discussion, I was

thoroughly impressed by her wealth of knowledge about postharvest loss and the way she effectively shared the knowledge. It was a short acquaintance, but the memory is eternal."

-KC Ting

"In trying to think of all the things Corrine was, I am struggling to find the words that capture her spirit, kindness and personality. I never had Corrine as a professor or adviser, yet she was one of my favorite teachers. Corrine always made herself available to me to provide guidance, tutelage and friendship that was invaluable to me while at Purdue. She was there to answer all of my questions about my research (PICS) or walk me through a complicated methodology (which was every methodology for me) until I was able to grasp the concept. However, it is the free flowing conversations that occurred after these sessions where we talked and laughed about family, happiness, hobbies and all things agriculture that are filling my mind with so many wonderful memories. Purdue lost a great ambassador and so did the world at large."

-Jim Flock

"Dr. Alexander was truly one of my favorite professors. I'll never forget when she asked me to stop chatting in class one day. Later, I had emailed to apologize. She replied telling me that she thought I was smart, and could go a long way and simply didn't want me to miss out on anything. At the end of the semester, she encouraged me to join this year's CME Group Trading Challenge. Afterwards, I told her I was not sure what I was doing. Once again, she encouraged me that figuring it out was half the fun and she knew I could handle it. That was one of the many great things about Dr. Alexander, she continuously encouraged us. A separate time Dr. Alexander had let me reschedule an exam, after basically coming unglued about how busy I was with being the President of a club and having a job interview. Instead of simply telling me the exam was to be taken when scheduled, she let me take it the next day and invited me into her office to just vent about the struggle of balancing class with clubs, having a social life, and still finding time to eat and sleep. You see, Dr. Alexander could have chosen to dislike me, she could have kicked me out of class for talking, and had made me take the exam the day it was scheduled, but instead, she had acceptance and understanding to not only me, but all of her students. It was an honor to have her as a professor with so much passion and such an understanding of her students. Dr. Alexander will not be forgotten. I know, not just this year's, but following years will be encouraged by Dr. Alexander's passion for agriculture and commodity markets."

-Alexandra Henderson

"I have only known Dr. Corinne Alexander briefly, having interacted with her at three meetings related to postharvest loss reduction and food security. She brought such important insights to group discussions at each of these meeting, and had the ability to challenge dogma in a non-

threatening manner. I learned a lot from her during this brief period I knew her. She hosted a meeting at Purdue that I attended just before her untimely death. She was a wonderful host, organized, caring and friendly; and also contributed greatly to the meeting with her knowledge and insights. I was very impressed by her intellect and her passion for agricultural economics and for making a difference in the world. The agriculture community has lost a bright star. I am sorry not to have the opportunity to work with her in the future."

-Beth Mitcham

"When I heard the news about the tragic passing of Dr. Alexander, I immediately had flashbacks run through my head to my time in Ag Econ 321. The thought that immediately came to my mind was her willingness to put the student first. She would always make me feel so prepared and better when we left that classroom each day. I will never forget sitting in Krannert G016 listening to her genuine excitement when explaining puts and calls while trading commodities. The interactive way she taught her students and kept them engaged was unlike any other teacher I had known. Dr. Alexander's class was a power hour, 75 minutes, and while most people would dread that, they never did with her class. The students wanted to be there as much as she did. Dr. Alexander had a tremendous impact on my Purdue experience and for that, I am eternally grateful. She will be missed."

-Howard J. Leach

"I was privileged to have Dr. Alexander as not only my research advisor, but also as an amazing mentor. As my research advisor, we meet once a week to check in on my progress, and discuss the research. These meetings also ended up being where I got some of the best life advice- Dr. Alexander encouraged me to apply for a Fulbright scholarship, consider grad school, and her genuine sincerity made me feel like I actually was good enough and smart enough to do it. Knowing that she really believed in me is the motivation that I needed to overcome self-doubt, and to pursue things that excite me. She reminded me that it's okay not to have everything figured out right now, and to choose things that make me happy, not just do what I feel others expect me to. I am so thankful that I got to know her, and in just one semester of working together, she has made a huge impact on my life. I strive to have my passions lead my career in the way the Dr. Alexander's had. I am forever thankful that I had the chance to work with her, and learn from such a brilliant woman."

-Jacquelyn Frances Brown

"I first met Corinne when she was a graduate student and getting interested in the grains industry. At the time I was at Virginia Tech and working extensively at the national level with the industry and involved with multi-disciplinary/multi-state research committees and we communicated about building a network. She was so thrilled when she was offered the position at Purdue. It was

her dream job, as evidenced by her success. The British aren't particularly demonstrative, in contrast to the French cultural influence in Corrine's upbringing, but she always greeted me with a huge hug when our paths crossed at meetings. Her enthusiasm was infectious and embraced all around her. I know that you will continue to feel the loss of such a bright 'light' in your 'community' for a long time."

-Eluned Jones

"I was privileged to have Dr. Alexander as my thesis research co-advisor in 2007. Then as a new professor, Dr. Alexander lived a busy life. However, she made sure to help me on a timely manner so I can complete my thesis on time. The last time I saw her was in March 2009 when I visited the department after I took my first teaching job in New York. I ran into her in front of Krannert and mentioned to her that I had a hard time locating teaching materials for my commodity risk management class. She invited me to her office and shared with me her commodity risk management video CD with the entire set of course notes and problem sets. She then made suggestions on how to use the materials and said "Email me if you have any questions." I still use some of these materials now in the teaching of agribusiness courses in California. I am eternally grateful that I had her as my advisor. She had a very positive impact on myself and my many students."

-Pei Xu

"Dr. Alexander is one of my favorite professors at Purdue and I even was thinking about meeting her again in a future time when I can get a chance back to Purdue; but now and later, I will see her only in my memory. I was deeply touched by her encouragement and how she was willing to support us. In 2014, having her as our great advisor, all two teams from Purdue proceeded into the Championship Round in the CME Group Trading Challenge. As an advisor, she offered the best help and resources she can offer to us. In the evening right before the CME Education Day, she was driving a van herself for more than 2 hours taking us to Chicago. The trip was full of happiness and it is her driving for us that makes me so touched. Currently, as a graduate student at The Johns Hopkins, I am always feeling gratitude for Dr. Alexander who once provided strong support to my academic pursuit. Even though she is unseen, she will forever live on in my memory."

-Danning Li

"Dr. Alexander was not only a teacher, but also a boss, mentor, role model and friend. After taking her Commodity Marketing Principles class she encouraged me to compete in the 2015 CME Group Trading Challenge. With her encouragement, I joined a team. Throughout the experience, I was able to get to know Dr. Alexander very well, and with her endless support and reassurance my team was able to progress to the final round of the competition. I was also

fortunate enough to have the opportunity to act as her teaching assistant, where I continued to learn from Dr. Alexander daily. I always knew when I went into her office that there would be a smile on her face; she would be eager about something that was going on in the commodity markets. I could count on the fact that our conversation would never be dull. Our conversations might have started with a small question, but somehow we would end up talking about something completely different, like our common like of craft beer. I cannot begin to explain the immense impact that Dr. Alexander had on my life. She greatly influenced my decision to focus my degree in commodity marketing and to later decide to choose a career dealing with commodities. I was looking forward to continuing to learn from her this year, as she was coaching my team in this year's 2016 CME Group Trading Challenge. She was very enthusiastic and was looking forward to the team doing as well as we did last year. I hope we will be able to honor Dr. Alexander in this year's competition. As I continue with my career, I will always remember Dr. Alexander and her passion for agriculture, specifically the commodity markets. I will strive to put my heart into my work, just as she did in everything she was a part of."

-Ross Phillips

"Corinne was passionate about her work but also sharing that knowledge with others. Corinne's visit to Malawi was not just about ticking the boxes but making a difference, an improvement in CRS's implementation of the PICs project. This is a great loss to the Purdue Family. Corinne was more than a colleague to me and many Malawian Friends. I used to call her the Lioness of PICS. Beautiful in the heart and worked with such passion never seen before. May her soul rest in peace."

-Sydney Khando

"It is truly hard to know what to say when such a valued colleague is lost so suddenly. She was one of the few people I have ever known who, after visiting or meeting with them, you always felt better. Her enthusiasm was absolutely infectious. I try to smile thinking of my last meeting with her, at the AAEA meetings in San Francisco last summer. I wanted to meet with her to talk about graduate students at Purdue who might be interested in an outlook position. Of course, the scheduled 15-minute meeting took over an hour as she caught me up on everything going on at Purdue and we had a wide ranging talk about the grain markets and her work in Africa. Such a loss. She will be missed by many."

-Scott Irwin

"My relationship with Dr. Alexander was recent, but very rewarding. AgInsider is always looking for researchers and scholars in agriculture to publish to our farmer members. While her publications were scholarly, they were also written so the general Ag community could comprehend - a rare treasure."

-Robert Paarlberg

"Corinne Alexander had the rare ability to simultaneously play the roles of a profoundly influential mentor and a dear friend. We first met in 2010 when we began the PICS project with similar excitement and energy. We gelled immediately and she quickly became my thesis co-advisor. I probably spent more time in her office than I did in some classes that first semester, and with her enthusiasm and guidance we knocked out the majority of two working papers by New Years. She wasn't the mentor who overloaded you; she simply made you want to put in the work. She wasn't the mentor who berated you for missing, at times, basic intuition; she carefully talked you through until it clicked. You look forward to meetings with Corinne instead of dreading a progress check. She was just an amazing person to sit and talk with and you always walked away learning something new. While yes, many times this led to her needing to kick me out to be able to get something done, we quickly built a strong rapport from those long talks. I certainly wasn't the only student who felt that way and we were excited to have Corinne frequently join our graduate "after hours study groups" at Jake's or Chumley's. There was never a professor/graduate student barrier with Corinne, but it never took away from the deep professional respect we held for her. I was lucky enough to have Corinne join me in the field on two occasions, once in Malawi and once in Rwanda. These are by far my favorite memories of her. In both cases the success on the ground was directly tied to her invaluable insight into grain marketing. I'm also pretty sure her Malawi Gin drinking skills helped too. Women also instantly connected to her in the villages, loving seeing this tiny muzungu in a traditional long skirt, laugh echoing for miles, totally at ease in any new environment. I know much of the success of the PICS project extensions is similarly indebted to her expertise. Corinne also played a key role in my relationship with my wife, Denise. Through years of long-distance in my Purdue tenure, Corinne was incredibly understanding and always willing to let me run down to Florida for a couple days or a week. That understanding helped keep my relationship alive during some tough times and we were thrilled she was able to make the trek to our wedding two years ago. Corinne Alexander was the most important mentor I've ever had. She is one of the most influential people who have ever entered my life, and I have no doubt she'll remain so for years. She's molded me as a professional and made me a better person. She's demonstrated exactly how I want to be as a graduate mentor and how I can and should use my skills to better humanity. We are all better for knowing Corinne. I hope we can honor her by carrying her example forward in our own lives."

-Mike Jones