

# Senior Spotlight 2021-22



## AUSTIN BERENDA

Graduating Senior  
Reflects on his  
experience as a  
Boilermaker

**Hometown:** Earl Park, IN

**Major & Concentration:** Agricultural Economics Major - Quantitative Analysis Concentration

**Minors or Certificates:** Political Science Minor

**Why did you come to Purdue:** I always wanted to study Agricultural Economics, but I planned on completing my undergraduate studies out of state. I came to Purdue because the people in the Department of Agricultural Economics are phenomenal and they truly valued me - my visit included time with LeeAnn Williams, Andy Oppy, and Ambassador Ethan McNeely. I realized there that Ag Econ was the best place for me and that the department alone was enough to bring me to West Lafayette. The William and Helen Uhrig family and the Sonny Beck family also put tremendous faith in me by very generously sponsoring my undergraduate education. I am a firm believer in service to others and helping others reach their potential, the people of Agricultural Economics live that mentality, so I knew I would fit in.

**Favorite Purdue tradition:** I don't really have a favorite tradition, I frequently found myself studying... Does that count? I'll pretend that cramming for an exam as a group a few hours before the exam is a tradition. It seems to happen frequently.

**Top three influences at Purdue(people, ideas, experiences):**

1. Dr. Nathan DeLay
2. Dr. Ken Foster
3. Mr. Mason Gordon

**Top five memories of your time at Purdue:**

1. Dr. Foster's Cricket Ball (and other eccentric lecturing features) in AGEC 305.
2. Running Review Sessions for AGEC 203.
3. Dr. Eales singing in AGEC 220...and AGEC 451.
4. Walking Around Campus at 2:00 am with Mason Gordon, Dane Chapman, and Bailee Cook.
5. Dr. Deboer cutting his tie and playing "Economics" music before class.

**Places you have been as a Purdue student:** Austin, Texas - 2021 AAEA conference with the Agricultural Economics Quiz Bowl Team.

**Favorite club/organization:** Agricultural Economics Quiz Bowl

**Favorite Student-led event/initiative:** College of Ag Ice Cream Social

**Favorite Purdue event:** The Battle for the Old Oaken Bucket.

**Favorite Social Activity:** Hanging out in the Union (when it was open) and gathering with other students from the College of Ag.

**Favorite place to study:** Humanities, Social Sciences, and Education Library

**Favorite spot on campus:** Seventh Floor of Krannert – Beck’s Floor for Agricultural Economics

**Favorite thing about CoA:** The College of Ag has people who care about students as individuals. It is possible to disappear and not be involved if that is what you desire, but the people of the College of Ag will do whatever they can to prevent that. From Dr. Fernandez’s personal meetings with incoming freshman to Dr. Wilson’s willingness to converse on the lawn of Ag Administration, someone wants you to feel cared for and wants you to succeed. The College of Ag has great departments, within one you can take pride in your field and claim you are the best, but it is the combination of the departments that makes the College of Ag so well rounded. I love the diversity of departments and their common love for the college as a whole.

**Favorite thing about your major:** As Dr. DeLay said on the first day of AGECE 203, “Economics studies people’s choices, accounting studies money. We will look at how choices affect what people do with their money, but in economics we do not directly study money.” Agricultural Economics is incredible because we look at the numbers behind things that happen every day. From price elasticities in microeconomics to Federal Reserve rates in macroeconomics, we see how changes in the economic system lead to changes in the everyday choices of individuals. Agricultural Economics is particularly interesting because commodity markets are really the closest thing we get to perfectly competitive markets in the natural world, and it is interesting to examine markets where demand is, broadly speaking, perfectly elastic. Agricultural Economics doesn’t just explain how phenomena happen, it explains why they happen.



**Favorite class:** AGEC 305

**Favorite professor:** Dr. Nathan DeLay

**Cooler project:** Undergraduate Research I conduct regarding demand elasticities and consumer utility through Dr. Kuethe's AGEC 499 class.

**Three biggest accomplishments:**

1. Election to College of Agriculture Student Senator
2. Never Failing to Make Dean's List and Semester Honors
3. Graduating in three years in an effort to catch up to my classmates after taking a gap year.

**Things on your resume not listed above:** I have worked at least one job at all times while averaging 19 credit hours per semester at Purdue. I am a Lilly Endowment Scholar.

**Where do you want to end up:** Teaching Agricultural Economics at a Division 1 institution (hopefully a land grant institution) where I can conduct research and help students find a passion for and appreciation of economics.

**Advice for underclassman:** ATTEND LECTURE. The difficulty of courses increases exponentially with each missed lecture. Professors come to lecture to teach what they want you to know, and that is the material that will be on the exams. Not going to lecture is like saying you don't want to learn. Professors and TA's remember who shows up, and they have a lot more patience and willingness to assist those who engage in the course. Not to mention those who are engaging in the course usually do better anyway. Being a student is our primary job, it is harder to do your job if you never show up to work.

**Biggest takeaway from Purdue:** Learning far surpasses experiences in the classroom. Life itself is constant learning and development. Look for room to grow in every experience, every day. Always keep your mind open to new information and new opportunities.

