

In My View

Misconceptions arise concerning new research chair

by David Fincannon

The endowed chair at Texas A&M University is now reality. This is the most important achievement ever for the pest control operators here in Texas.

Historically, it will rank up there with the late J.J. Davis' early work in pest control. There are, however, some misconceptions concerning what this chair is capable of doing and what it is supposed to do.

I feel that some of the presentations I've seen for the endowed chair had arguments which were misleading. For example, the chair is supposed to be the sole answer to the industry's problems.

It seems to me a grand wizard was promised—not a professor for urban pest control. The concept of a single person helping our profession is great, but we have to be more realistic. Professors are not miracle workers. Professors are teachers, researchers, writers and enlighteners.

Emphasis was placed on how this position would be a source where the media would ask the major questions of the day. In my view, it will take time for A&M to develop the credibility needed for such respect in this area. No one should expect overnight results.

We sometimes think of what something is going to do for us, instead of what it is supposed to do. There are research projects to be coordinated, bright students to be sought and pest control classes to be developed—not media wars to be fought.

There was mention of the fact that this professor would not be at Texas A&M very much because he would be flying around the country giving his point of view. The wizard strikes again! This position is going to involve a large technical staff. He or she will be like the president of a new company. At first, more papers will be pushed than television appearances made. We must be patient and let this innovator do the



job he was hired for.

Another concern of mine is where future students will come from. There is only a handful of people enrolled in the pest control program at Purdue. Many of my friends who graduated from the Purdue program went into the pest control industry optimistically.

Most of these friends are now disenchanted. They are either back in research or have turned to another field. When I've promoted entomology in high schools, few of the next generation found it appealing. What is planned to stimulate their interest?

I would like to sum up my thoughts on this subject and make some recommendations: The donors should not expect miracles from this department. It will take some time to develop a reputable image. Do not expect someone to save your neck. The individual that occupies this position will be a wise person. He or she just might provide a rope in some cases, instead of a hand.

New ideas should be the main theme. A&M must have fresh, new programs which will not copy other universities and possibly ruin them.

Furthermore, business management related to pest control should be an intricate part of this department's curriculum. These new, innovative programs should include a major recruiting effort. This might consist of scholarships and lectures at high schools on urban entomology.

I am looking forward to this endowed chair. I might even be motivated to go back to school. If the right mixture is formulated, we will have a winner. If not, we might end up with another Aggie joke.

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