EFFECTIVE AGRONOMIC TEACHING—
A SEMINAR

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IT IS well known that many young agronomists, after
receiving Ph.D. degrees, are retained by institutions of
higher learning to instruct in agronomic courses. Many of
them have had little training beyond that of conducting or
assisting in laboratory sections or giving reports before
seminar groups.

To assist new instructors in making adjustments in these
new situations, some institutions have conducted orienta-
tion sessions for newly appointed staff members. In addi-
tion, others have held sessions for new and older instructors
where topics on improving standards of instruction were
presented by some of their outstanding teachers. Since this
comes a little late, after a man is already on the job, it
seems that such training might be pushed back into the
student's graduate program where he could get some basic
ideas and techniques on how to teach.

At the 1952 Meetings of the American Society of
Agronomy held at Pennsylvania State University, Prof.
H. L. Stier of the University of Maryland spoke of the use
of local talent on many campuses to focus interest on better
teaching. Following up this suggestion, a Graduate Agron-
omy Seminar (Crops) was started at the University of
Florida, using as a general theme, "Effective Agronomic
Teaching." Experienced teachers, young instructors, gradu-
ate students, and several members of the administrative
staff from numerous university departments agreed to par-
ticipate. The following subjects were included, together
with the 1-hour periods allotted to each:

(a) Objectives—2 periods; (b) Methods—7 periods;
(c) Evaluations—2 periods; (d) Counseling and Placement
—1 period; (e) The teacher.

The two periods given to a discussion of general objec-
tives pertaining to teaching included two topics, viz. foun-
dations in education, and departmental and course objectives
and course organization.

Foundations in education.—For a general presentation
of the broad bases of education methods, a representa-
tive of the College of Education was called upon. He presented
ideas for a general setting of the stage for the learning
process, ways of learning, and creating a favorable environ-
ment for learning.

Departmental and course objectives and course organiza-
tion.—For course objectives and organization, two speakers
were invited from departments in the College of Agricul-
ture—one from the Department of Entomology and one from the Department of Soils. Each gave broad depart-
mental and course objectives, and the departmental objective for learning.

Methods.—More than half the number of periods were spent in discussing methods commonly employed in teaching, and a number of subject matter was considered.

Finding, stimulating and holding students attention were discussed briefly under three headings by three speakers recognized as using them regularly and with success in their teaching programs.

Various types and kinds of oral and written reports were discussed by a member of the Agricultural Extension Service, who also devotes part time to teaching in Rural Leadership and Agricultural Extension in various areas and are usually intended for advanced students, and are commonly employed in teaching, and a number of subject matter was considered.

Student reports.—The value of such reports was dis-
cussed briefly under three headings by three speakers recognized as using them regularly and with success in their teaching programs.

Term papers are required by several departments of the College of Agriculture at Gainesville, Fla. A member of the Plant Pathology Department spoke on the nature and value of such papers, particularly to those utilizing them as an extended review of literature dealing with the topic.

Individual problems are offered in various areas and are usually intended for advanced students. Characteristics of a special problem paper that would indicate the student's having spent time on collecting data and presenting written material for merit college credit, were discussed by a representative of the Department of Agricultural Extension.

Laboratory work.—The laboratory method of teaching was discussed by a staff member from the Department of Botany and a graduate student from the Department of Soils. The staff member gave emphasis to the idea that could be reinforced by laboratory experiments, and emphasized the necessity for careful planning of laboratory work, and the appeal to as many courses as possible, were advanced as ways of holding student interest.

Laboratory work.—The laboratory method of teaching was discussed by a staff member from the Department of Botany and a graduate student from the Department of Soils. The staff member gave emphasis to the idea that could be reinforced by laboratory exercises, and emphasized the necessity for careful planning of laboratory work, and the appeal to as many courses as possible, were advanced as ways of holding student interest.