

Elizabeth A. Bechdol

M.S., Agricultural Economics, 1996, Purdue University

Always Ready for the Challenge

From education to high-profile career posts to family commitments, Elizabeth “Beth” Bechdol says, “I live for the challenge and I give 100 percent of everything I have to that challenge.”

After graduating cum laude from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service, she enrolled in Purdue’s agricultural economics master’s program in international trade and policy, earning her degree and Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award in 1996.

She joined Sparks Companies Inc., now Informa Economics, that June, staying five years as vice president. She then spent a year as deputy staff economist for the Senate Agriculture Committee and three as chief of staff to the under secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

After nearly a decade on Capitol Hill, Indiana and family called her home, where she was invited to take on the challenge of helping launch the state’s first Department of Agriculture. She spent three years as deputy director, an experience, she says, “I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

In December 2007, she was recruited by Indianapolis’s Ice Miller LLP to debut and direct the firm’s agribusiness strategies and lead business development and marketing efforts.

She lives in her native DeKalb County, where her father still farms. Spending time with family are her chosen pastimes today, with many activities, such as horseback riding and ballet lessons, centered on her daughter, Grace, 7. “I wish I could claim car racing or rock climbing as a hobby,” she says, “but right now I simply enjoy every chance I get to be with my family.”

Because of family members’ diagnoses, she’s also active with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and the Indiana Chapter of the Huntington’s Disease Society of America. She also serves on several Purdue and agricultural boards and associations.

Timeline

1994

B.S., International Politics, cum laude, Georgetown University

1996

M.S., Agricultural Economics, Purdue University



1996-2001

Vice President, Sparks Companies Inc., now Informa Economics, McLean, Virginia

2001-2002

Deputy Staff Economist, Senate Agriculture Committee, Washington, D.C.

2002-2005

Chief of Staff to the under secretary, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture

2005-2007

Deputy Director, Indiana State Department of Agriculture

2006-2007

Alumni, Richard G. Lugar Excellence in Public Service Series

2007-present

Director of Agribusiness Strategies, Ice Miller LLP, Indianapolis

2007

Distinguished Hoosier Award

2008

Purdue Women in Agriculture Leadership Award

Purdue Department of Agricultural Economics APEX Award

Indiana Commission for Women's Torchbearer Award for Agriculture

Quote:

“Purdue’s master’s program offered a great complementary set of skills by taking analytics, concepts, thoughts and words, and putting quantitative substance behind them. It’s also where I learned how the agricultural industry works and what the relationships are.”