Coffee with a Professional Series
By: Hannah Jo Greer and Christina Hilliard

Spring 2018 has been a busy semester for the Master of Agribusiness program. A new series, Coffee with a Professional, has been launched to connect students with professionals via virtual live sessions to discuss career paths, career advice, and current industry trends.

Thank you to Jacob Luna, Senior Business Analyst with The Context Network in St. Louis, Missouri for kicking off the series in January! Mark Goering, Asia Sales Director for JBS met with MAB students in early March and Lauren Urbanczyk of Silveus Financial talked with students in late March.

Are you a professional interested in participating in the Coffee with a Professional Series? Email mab@agecon.tamu.edu for more information.

Blue Bell Creamery Tour
By: Christina Hilliard

On February 16th, MABs took a trip to Blue Bell Creamery in Brenham, Texas for a tour and yummy samples of their savory ice cream. The behind the scenes tour was guided by senior Blue Bell leadership with the unique opportunity for students to engage in discussion with the leaders.

We want to thank Samuel Sommer (CFO) and Joe Robertson (Director of Advertising and Public Relations) for taking the time out of their busy schedules to meet with us!

Presentation Skills Workshop & Competition
By: Christina Hilliard and Dr. Victoria Salin

Presentation skills are ever evolving and to enhance the skills of students, the MAB program hosted the first of its kind workshop on April 9th. The workshop was hosted by Dr. John Park, Dr. Dmitry Vedenov, and Dr. Victoria Salin and was entitled, “Presentation Secrets Revealed”.

A Presentation Skills Competition was held on April 13th. The speakers addressed the hot topics for grocery retailing—home delivery markets, robotics in distribution, and mergers—using a recent case of the Canadian company Sobey’s and the British company Ocado.

Pictured left to right: Dr. John Park, Enrique Pinon of CoBank, Dr. Pablo Sherwell of Rabobank, Devon Smolak, Heinrich Wittleder, Morgan Van Dame, and Dr. Victoria Salin

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Congratulations to the winners: Devon Smolak, first place, Heinrich Wittleder, second place, and Morgan Van Dame, third place.

The Grand Innovation Challenge (TGIC)
By: Tracy Obi

The Grand Innovation Challenge (TGIC) is a competition hosted by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, where participants are encouraged to form multidisciplinary teams and work on developing innovative solutions which tackle one of five selected grand challenges – feeding our world, protecting our environment, improving our health, enriching our youth, and growing our economy. One team wins the grand price, which is an all expense paid trip to attend the “Thought For Food Challenge.”

At the start, I joined a team which includes Carly Donsbach, Suresh Krishna Kagga, and fellow MAB student – Edeoba Edobor. We decided to work on tackling the “feeding our world” and “growing our economy” grand challenges by finding a solution to curb the level of post-harvest loss experienced by smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa.

After hours of brainstorming, researching and hard work, we drafted and built a physical prototype of the dehydrator we had chosen as a solution to curbing post harvest loss. We reckoned that an affordable, solar powered dehydrator (due to the epileptic power supply), would hasten the drying process and produce evenly dried and sanitary produce which could be sold on the market at a premium price. We also ensured that the materials used in building the dehydrator could be sourced locally.

Looking back, I’m glad I made the decision to participate in the TGIC competition. The process of brainstorming with a multidisciplinary team gave me the opportunity to learn how people from fields outside Agriculture would tackle issues within the Industry. In addition, I learned how to navigate the issues of practicality and viability of a solution to a highlighted problem.

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The TGIC competition provides a great platform and opportunities for individuals or teams looking to make a difference in our world.

For instance, Alfredo Costilla-Reyes, winner of the 2017 Grand Challenges Challenge before it got renamed to The Grand Innovation Challenge was named the 2017-18 Kirchner Food Fellow and he received the Mexico National Youth Award in the Entrepreneurial Ingenuity category. I encourage everyone to apply and take part in next year’s competition.

For more information on the TGIC competition send an email to: Lindsay.sansom@ag.tamu.edu.

A Peer Group’s Perspective

By: Peer Group 3—Mandi Guo, Tracy Obi, Corey Parish, and Emily Thomason

As finals commence, we in Peer Group 3 collectively and excitedly anticipate the opportunity of stepping away from the world of academia and enjoying summer internships and company visits in the fall.

Look back, we specifically enjoyed visiting Blue Bell Creameries in Brenham, Texas on February 16. Ice cream samples aside, visiting Blue Bell, and other agricultural businesses, during the semester provides several benefits to us as MAB first- and second-years.

During previous MAB meetings and events, the topic of networking and its importance has been presented, emphasized, and highly encouraged. As we attend and engage in these company visits, we will be able to make lasting impressions with industry professionals and build upon those connections as we search for internships and employment opportunities. Of course LinkedIn is a great networking tool, but the face-to-face interaction that comes with these company visits could help an aspiring salesperson, economist, or animal scientist get that crucial foot in the door. Furthermore, it has been said that the Aggie Network is invaluable. Why not tap into that network and expand your own while having a fun time doing it?

For those students who are still deciding between career paths, and even those who have committed to a career path, these company visits will hopefully serve as eye-opening experiences. In addition to learning something new about an agricultural sector we may have not been familiar with and understanding the practicality of our coursework in a real-world setting, gaining exposure to these companies may serve as a swing-vote between career choices, or add it to the list entirely! After experiencing the day-to-day operations, visiting with employees, and understanding the company culture, a door could be opened that we hadn’t even known existed.

Lastly, a company visit wouldn’t be complete without a social aspect thrown into the mix. As we represent the MAB program in a professional manner, visiting these companies will serve as an opportunity to interact within and between cohorts outside of an academic setting. Once again tying into the concept of networking, company visits will facilitate the building and strengthening of relationships between cohort members and across Peer Groups.

Interacting with seasoned industry professionals, learning more about the different sectors that comprise the agricultural industry, making headway in that internship or job search, and growing collectively as a program are all reasons why we look forward to company visits. With this in mind, we can’t wait to see what the future holds!

Graduation

By: Christina Hilliard

As the end of the semester quickly approaches, several MAB students are preparing to graduate on May 11, 2018 and take the next step in their futures.

The graduation celebration will continue with a luncheon and pictures in the AGLS immediately following graduation.

Congratulations Devon Smolak, Lauren Friend, Edeoba Edobor, Mandi Guo, and Muhammad Abdullah on a job well done!
MAB Program Celebrates 20 Years!
By: Christina Hilliard

2018 marks the 20th Year of the MAB program, which calls for celebrations. Plans are underway to mark this event in our history. As we are planning events, we would like to invite professionals, former students, current students and more to help us plan!

Be sure to follow us on social media and check your emails for updates on upcoming celebration events.

BeeWeaver
By: Devon Smolak

Off of Texas. 6 N and down what some might say is a questionable dirt road, lies a hidden Texas gem, deep in the Brazos Valley called BeeWeaver. On arrival, we were greeted at the store by a polite blind dog, and were met by our tour guide, Mr. Roosevelt (not the President, but I’d certainly vote for him). One could say Mr. Roosevelt was a bee master; he had worked for BeeWeaver for over 60 years and does not wear a bee suit. He proceeded to demonstrate all parts of the hive; from smoking to introducing a new queen. He sat us down in a semi-screened gazebo and bare-handed frames of the most forgiving bees I had ever witnessed. In fact, this was not an exaggeration; BeeWeavers is not a honey producer, but a bee producer—world renowned for the hardiness and docility of the bees they have bred for about 3 generations.

After learning about the hive itself, he encouraged us to hold a frame full of bees and drone bees which are males and do not sting. He concluded the tour by letting us scoop honey out of the comb. We were led back to the gift shop where we were to have a honey tasting. It was fascinating to first-hand taste the difference in honey produced using varying pollen varieties. We tried things like mesquite honey (which tasted like the smokey mesquite), macadamia, and wild flowers from two different parts of Texas. Our honey barista, a TAMU entomology graduate, answered all of our apiary-related questions with ease and gave advice such as to not kill the creepy green-eyed spiders in my hive because they are scavengers, meaning they clean the hive of dead bees. BeeWeaver is also pesticide-free, if you’re into that. The BeeWeaver tour, allowed us to see an agribusiness that many aren’t familiar with but is crucial to agriculture and food production—it is certainly a place you should visit!

Study Abroad: Swaziland
By: Christina Hilliard

Several MABs are preparing to make the journey to South Africa and Swaziland for the 2018 Study Abroad., “Agri-Tourism, Market Research, & Exploration” from May 22—June 8th. MABs will be joined by students from the University of Tampa for this exciting and educational adventure. Students will see first-hand the challenges and opportunities that agribusinesses face in Africa.

Be sure to follow the MAB program on social media—Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram—as pictures will be shared.

Summer Internships
By: Christina Hilliard

This summer look for the 17 MAB students who have accepted internships around the globe. Some of the positions students will be working in include supply chain, global procurement, investment, sales, meat procurement, marketing, and food, beverage and branded products.

Upcoming Events

MAB End-of-Semester Party
May 4, 2018

Commencement and Commissioning
May 11, 2018

Faculty & Staff Holiday
May 28, 2018

New Student Orientation & Meet & Greet
August 24, 2018

1st Day of Fall 2018 Classes
August 27, 2018

Tail Gate
September 8, 2018

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