

Cornhusker Economics

Nebraska National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) is Back on Track

UNL's National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) student organization is one of more than thirty student chapters across the U.S. and Canada. NAMA's objective is to make students aware of the many career opportunities in agricultural marketing. Building strong connections between students and professionals in marketing, advertising, communications, promotion, sales, and public relations is the key to this objective. NAMA members also have opportunities to develop leadership and team-building skills through club activities and involvement.

Two years of COVID created a leadership and experience gap for UNL NAMA. Officers from 2018-2019 had graduated. Monthly meetings were suspended for some time, followed by online/Zoom meetings. Getting a group of students who wanted to lead or compete at the national level without an example was a bit of a challenge. It is great to report that NAMA is back on track, doing what they do best!

Nebraska NAMA hosts speakers at monthly meetings, conducts fundraisers, has socials, and works with the department's other clubs to coordinate an annual industry tour. Monthly meetings included speakers from the Nebraska Corn Board, AgriVision Equipment, Divine Foods, and the Nebraska Soybean Board. In January, the Agribusiness Industry Tour took students to Denver, Colorado, where they visited companies and organizations including Ardent Mills, National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Co-Bank, U.S. Meat Export Federation, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and Roggen (CO) Farmer's Elevator. They also took in a National Western Stock Show rodeo and a Denver Nuggets basketball game.

Each year a select group of students are members of the UNL NAMA Marketing Plan team. This group develops a marketing plan for an innovative agricultural or food product, commodity, or service that is an input for, or output of, an agricultural application, for which return to the producer



Nebraska NAMA Marketing Team (left to right). Cade Wiese (sophomore, Columbus, NE), Mads Kreifels (sophomore, Syracuse, NE), Marissa Davis (freshman, Lake Elsinore, CA), Danika Schultes (senior, Creston, IA), Airlee Freeman (freshman, Mountain Home, NC), Ashtyn Humphreys (junior, Wymore, NE), Seth Wright (sophomore, Petersburg, NE), and Emily Kurpgeweit (senior, Ewing, NE)



2023 Denver Agribusiness Industry Tour. NCBA Digital Command Center

can be demonstrated. The culmination of the team's work is a presentation of their plan in the national competition at the professional NAMA National Agri-Marketing Conference.

The National Agri-Marketing Conference was held April 25-28 in St. Louis, Missouri. It was a remarkable experience for UNL NAMA members. Adam Whitacre (junior, Kearney, NE) competed in the Sales competition which took place on Tuesday, April 25. After one round of presentations, the group was narrowed from 40 to 9 finalists. Adam didn't make finals this year but learned a great deal. He enjoyed the experience and came away motivated to prepare for next year's competition.

This year Nebraska NAMA's marketing team chose to market *Wonder Waffles*, a frozen waffle product with a superior nutrient profile—higher protein, lower carbohydrates, and lower fat—than Eggo waffles which captures a substantial share of the frozen waffle market. *Wonder Waffles* were marketed to active families who place a priority on nutritious eating but also need the convenience of a frozen product that can be prepared quickly. Research shows that active families are most often found in cities in the western U.S. The key states for the target market were California, Arizona, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington.

None of the eight Marketing Plan team members had been in the national conference competition prior to this year. Their written plan was submitted on March 31, but they continued to research and finetune areas of the plan between then and the time they presented in the first round on April 26. Judges moved them to the second round, and they presented to a new group of judges that afternoon. The NAMA Connection Point Trade Show opening that evening was where the final six teams were announced. A very excited Nebraska team found out they would compete in finals the next day. The team had survived two rounds of judges' questions and received feedback on the first-round presentation. They spent the next morning reviewing changes that could be made based on these experiences. They presented in the afternoon and placed fifth.

One takeaway from the NAMA competitions is understanding that judges' feedback is the real world. What appeals to one person may not appeal to another. Having a sound rationale for the decisions that are made in the marketing plan is key to surviving judges' questions. Teams are asked a myriad of questions about topics such as identifying the target market; determining media strategies based on the target market; choices related to product differentiation, pricing, packaging, positioning, and distribution; and/or partnering with other firms to source ingredients and manage risk. A judge in the first round might praise one aspect of the presentation, only to have a final round judge criticize it. Participating in a national competition gives students valuable experience in marketing plan development. More importantly, it teaches them to seek out and value differing viewpoints and to be open to new ideas.

Keep up with Nebraska NAMA on Instagram @Nebraska_NAMA.



Ashton Humphreys
NAMA Marketing Plan Co-Vice President
Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Rosalee Swartz
NAMA Advisor
Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Nebraska-Lincoln
rswartz1@unl.edu
402-472-5234