National Agri-Marketing Association Membership Provides Professional Growth Opportunities for Nebraska Students

The National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) is comprised of 25 professional chapters in six regions nationwide and has more than 3,500 professional and student members. Nebraska’s Cornhusker (professional) Chapter of about 70 professionals works closely with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) student chapter to foster professional growth for student members.

NAMA students are often interested in careers in marketing, sales, promotion and advertising. The experiences they have through NAMA helps them to be career ready when they graduate. These experiences include developing a product marketing plan for competition at the national level, organizing and sponsoring career development events on campus, helping agribusinesses with set-up at trade shows, doing community service projects and organizing social events with other organizations.

The National Agri-Marketing Association’s annual conference is a venue for both professional and student chapter members. Those who attend have opportunities to hear outstanding speakers on relevant topics in the agri-marketing arena, draw ideas and motivation from nationally recognized agribusiness leaders and speakers and connect with others in the industry. NAMA Conference also features the Connection Point Trade Show where, as the event name suggests, professionals and students alike have an opportunity to connect. The 2013 annual conference was one of the best. This year’s attendance was the highest in the past 12 years, and the program was outstanding. Anders Sorman-Nilsson, author of *Thinque Funky: Upgrade Your Thinking* urged conference attendees to take advantage of new media tools to embrace the transparency being demanded by customers and use them to tell the real story of American agriculture. Josh Linkner, author of *Disciplined Dreaming: A Proven System to Drive Breakthrough Creativity* explained the virtues of creativity,
calling it the “currency of success.” He noted that creativity is 85 percent learned, and shared simple ways to nurture creativity in the workplace. Each year, awards for NAMA professionals (Best of NAMA) are celebrated. In the student track, the marketing plan and outstanding chapter competitions are held and scholarship winners are recognized.

Eight Nebraska NAMA students traveled to Kansas City for the 2013 national conference on April 16-19. They attended seminars, took in a luncheon with professionals, met professionals at the trade show and interacted with students from the other 29 chapters from across the nation and Canada. Team members (pictured below), who traveled to the national conference were: Back (l to r) Boone McAfee, (Leigh, NE); Ethan Smith, (Eustis, NE); Kristin Witte, (Scribner, NE); and Ellie Hoffschneider, (Arlington, NE). Front, l to r, Matt Fleischman, (Tekamah, NE); Michael Killinger, (St. Paul, NE); Melissa Winkelmann, (Waco, NE); and Gavin Kenney, (Kearney, NE).

This year eighteen NAMA students were involved in developing a product marketing plan for a pivot fence. The product was an electric fence suspended via truss rods from towers of a pivot system. The primary purpose of the pivot fence is to background calves via extended grazing on fallow crops or residue in order to add value through lower feed costs, and the opportunity to sell calves at more opportune times in the market. The team worked with Jason Gross, UNL Extension Specialist and entrepreneur, who came up with the idea for the pivot fence to develop the marketing plan. Members learned that research is an essential element of creating an effective marketing plan. From choosing a product in the fall semester to deciding on the right balance between electronic and print advertising based on prospective customer habits, students learned how effective decisions are made with respect to marketing a product.

The team worked with the NAMA Cornhusker Chapter professionals to get feedback on the plan before national conference. While they did not make the final round in the marketing plan competition, the team learned a great deal in the process. The importance of explaining every element of a product became clear to the team when, despite best efforts to illustrate phases of calve feeding and finishing and opportunities to add value, what hindered the team was the judges’ lack of understanding of how a pivot system operates. The students learned first-hand that one thing that is sure in marketing products is that consumers have diverse perceptions of products, based on their varying experiences. For the marketing professional, this means that while creating a marketing plan is not a simple process, the need to demonstrate and “tell the story” about what a product does as simply as possible is critical to conveying the intended message.

Nebraska NAMA brought home several awards from national conference. They placed in the top ten chapters, and received a NAMA Chapter Performance Award and cash award of $100 for chapter management.

The UNL Student NAMA Chapter is proud of its accomplishments this year and is looking forward to a successful year in 2013-2014.

Ellen Hoffschneider
NAMA President, 2012-2013
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Rosalee Swartz, (402) 472-5234
NAMA Advisor
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
rswartz1@unl.edu