

GLS Internship Symposium Featured Good Advice for Students

While the Grazing Livestock Systems Internship Symposium was held on a date that won't happen again for 100 years (11-11-11), the symposium is held annually so that students who have completed their GLS internship in the past year can fulfill one of the requirements of this major: a presentation on their internship experience. This year those students and their internships were: Corby Chytka, Darr Feedlot, Cozad; Colman Outhet, Dept. of Animal Science, UNL; Lucas Stewart, Frank Family Farm & Ranch, Bassett.

Setting the stage prior to the student presentations were Brent Plugge, Extension Educator in Kearney and Chip Ramsay, Manager of Rex Ranch headquartered in Ashby.



Brent Plugge

employers and careers.

Ramsay began his comments by pointing out that when you first go to school, the teacher gives you the questions, lets you think about them for a bit, then gives you the answers.

Plugge said internships help identify strengths and weaknesses, and where there are weaknesses, students can take classes in their remaining time in school to help shore up those needed skills. Internships also allow students to "test drive"

"Teachers love it when you come back [from an internship] because you start developing the questions on your own and you start challenging things, asking why things are done a certain way," Ramsay said. "If I am a teacher, I am jazzed by that!"

Internships help teach what can't be learned in the classroom. Ramsay told the students that while learning core competencies in the classroom is very important, it won't teach you things like how to prioritize when you have multiple responsibilities. Only experience can teach something like that.

"You learn things like... how do I prioritize my time when I have 900 heifers that will calve over the next 28 days and I have a herd of yearlings I need to move and a herd of heifers to move out and I need to make this all work with my grazing plan... and I have a downer cow over here... how do I accomplish all of that and marry the science from the classroom to the day-to-day functions of the operation? That's the value of an internship," Ramsay said. "It teaches you how the whole system fits together."

Both Plugge and Ramsay encouraged the students to



Chip Ramsay



pursue internships in different settings than those with which they are familiar.

“Challenge yourself, because getting out of your comfort zone is what helps you grow personally and professionally,” Plugge told the students.

Other internship tips on which Plugge and Ramsay agreed were:

- Set clear objectives with the employer.
- Clarify what your employer expects by restating what your employer wants you to do.
- Ask lots of questions.
- Write down key things you do during internships; you might want to include some of these on a resume.
- Use your internships to begin professional networking.

- Remember to also work on developing “soft skills” such as communicating with individuals and in team settings while on internship.
- Prepare for internships by building leadership skills through involvement in clubs and other activities on campus.
- Use your internship(s) to help identify your passion.

Commenting on that last point, Ramsay said although he grew up on a farm, he thought he wanted a non-ag career, so he got a degree in business and began working in the insurance industry. “While I was doing well in the job, it took me about six months to realize my passion was back in agriculture,” he said. “If you find a job for which you have a passion, you’ll be on vacation the rest of your life!”

Student Profiles

For the Fall 2010 issue of this newsletter, we asked a few of our first-year students why they chose the Grazing Livestock Systems major. Here is what two of them said back then.

Patrick Heerten, Springview, NE: “I was impressed that it’s more than just animal science and adds a strong sense of business into the curriculum. With today’s modern agriculture changing every day, it really should help give me a leg up as a rancher in the industry.”

Chelsea Fullerton, Cody, NE: “I enjoy working with animals and the range part, but I also knew I needed a good knowledge base on the economics, so this major caught my interest.... I worked for NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service] this past summer, and thought this might be an option for my career after graduation, but I also might want to help manage our family ranch or another ranch in the area. When I learned that I could satisfy the requirements to work for NRCS with my degree in Grazing Livestock Systems, giving me career flexibility, I knew everything was fitting together perfectly.”

We decided to check in with the now-sophomores this fall for our student profiles.



When asked about what activities he was involved with in high school, this year’s GLS student ambassador **Patrick Heerten** pointed out that when you come from the size school he did (Keya Paha Co. High School, nine in his graduating class), “you kind of do it all.” For him that included Skills USA (for which he was a state officer for two years), student council, speech, drama and sports.

The family operation consists of a cow-calf herd and farm ground. He makes no bones about the fact that he prefers to work on the side of the river that has the grazing animals. “That’s my passion,” he said. He prefers to let other members of the family handle the farming aspect.

He plans to return to the family operation after graduation.

Another passion of Patrick’s is learning. After he applied to UNL, he received information in the mail about the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program (see casnr.unl.edu/engler). After researching it, he decided to apply and has participated in the program since the



Patrick Heerten

Spring 2011 semester. That same semester he also started in the Nebraska Beef Industry Scholars Program (see animalscience.unl.edu/anscnbis).

As part of the Beef Industry Scholars program, students take courses that stress beef industry knowledge with a focus on networking. One of the courses Patrick took required the students to do three job shadowings. While most students, especially from a small town like Springview, would probably fulfill this requirement in or near Lincoln or their hometown, not Patrick! He didn't even stick to Nebraska; he hit the road to visit operations in Iowa, South Dakota and Montana.

"I know what operations around home are like," he said, "so I wanted to see something different." It is why he especially likes tours that are incorporated into courses. His desire to "see something different" will also guide him as he plans his GLS internship, which will likely take place in the summer of 2013. "I want to go where they are doing unique things and/or doing things really well. For example, I know what it's like to calve in March, so I'd like to maybe intern where they calve in May or incorporate mob grazing."

More evidence of Patrick's passion for learning? He is participating in the Nebraska Ranch Practicum, which has eight day-long sessions over six months, and he attended the 2011 Nebraska Grazing Conference this past summer (see back page of this newsletter). He received some financial assistance in the form of "GLS event scholarships" for both of these educational activities.

Patrick likes interacting with established producers, especially innovators. He gets the opportunity for that interaction in the tours, conferences, seminars, Engler and Beef Industry Scholars programs, and internship that all make up his educational experience as a Grazing Livestock Systems student at UNL.



"I absolutely love it!"

Those were the first words out of **Chelsea Fullerton's** mouth when she started talking about her experience to date as a Grazing Livestock Systems major at UNL.

Chelsea's family ranch has a 200 head cow-calf herd and 100 yearlings plus 2,400 acres of crop land. Like Patrick Heerten, Chelsea enjoys the cattle side of the operation more. Also like Patrick, she was involved in many activities in Cody-Kilgore High School including FFA, sports and drama. Unlike Patrick, whose school was too small to have an FFA chapter, Chelsea's FFA involve-

ment (she served as president, treasurer and reporter) started her on the road to Indianapolis where she received the American FFA Degree at the National FFA Convention this October. The degree is awarded to FFA members who "have demonstrated the highest level of commitment to FFA and made significant accomplishments in their Supervised Agricultural Experiences." Less than half of one percent of all FFA members receive this degree, one of the organization's highest honors.



Chelsea Fullerton

At UNL, that tradition of involvement continues for Chelsea. For starters, she is in the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program. Her interest in entrepreneurship was piqued when she was still in high school; her school received a grant to establish a student-run grocery store, and she served on the student steering committee for the venture. This year she is also president of the Range Club and treasurer of the Agronomy Club. Through the Range Club she learned about an employment opportunity in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture; since last November she has been working with graduate student Lars Anderson on a research project for which she calculates brood and nest coverage for nesting prairie chickens.

Broomball, anyone? Yes, you can add that to the list of activities Chelsea fits into her long days on campus. She also attends the occasional GLS evening activities such as socials and seminars.

Summers between college are not exactly time for rest. Chelsea is hoping to participate in the Student Career Experience Program – a planned, progressive education program that provides for the integration of a college student's academic studies with target positions in the Federal workforce. It requires students to work 640 hours over two summers, which Chelsea is doing with the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

As if the above were not enough, toward the end of the interview for this article she added: "Oh, and did you know I'm getting married in December?"

Ideally, Chelsea would like to end up in a position with NRCS while also working with her husband in managing the family operation. Based on what she's been able to juggle so far in her life, she should have no trouble accomplishing that goal as well!

Heerten Hears a Who

The “Heerten” in this Dr. Seuss-like phrase is Patrick Heerten, and the “Who” is the cadre of speakers at this year’s Nebraska Grazing Conference, to which Patrick received a GLS event scholarship. Here is what he had to say about his learning experience.

“On August 9, 2011, I had the pleasure of journeying to Kearney to the Nebraska Grazing Conference. I spent the day learning from and listening to many pro-

fessionals from across the industry. They covered a wide range of topics including mob grazing, maximizing gains on grass, financials, and supplementing yearlings on grass. These topics sparked a lot of interest in the producers that were there and everyone left with many new ideas in their heads. Overall, it was a great day, and I recommend the conference to anyone interested in the beef industry.”

Congrats to Dr. Walter Schacht, who helped establish and continues to guide the GLS major. He is the recipient of the 2011 Crowe Outstanding Undergraduate Advising Award. He “joined” the recognition luncheon in October via phone, since he does not return from his year in Namibia until mid-December. His students and colleagues will be very glad to see him back in our halls again!

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