USPOULTRY Foundation College Student Career Program Hosts Interactive Panel Discussion with Industry Leaders

TUCKER, Ga. – March 2, 2020 – College students from more than 60 different universities nationwide convened in Atlanta recently for the USPOULTRY Foundation College Student Career Program, held in conjunction with the 2020 International Production & Processing Expo (IPPE). Nearly 700 students and 161 human resource managers and recruiters from 27 companies participated in the program. The College Student Career Program is the most efficient and effective way for the poultry industry to find managers of the future and has been a vital part of many companies hiring process for nearly 50 years. It is one of the largest career events of its kind for students seeking professions in the industry.

The program’s opening session offered students the opportunity to bring their questions before a diverse panel of speakers with varying levels of experience in the poultry industry. This year’s panel featured Jarod Morrison, chief financial officer for Farbest Foods and USPOULTRY board member, Hector Gonzalez, vice president of human resources poultry for Tyson Foods, and Zach Hurd with Rose Acre Farms and an IPPE “30 Under 30” Young Leader recipient.

Throughout the session, the students’ questions consistently came back to career building, trying to determine which skills and characteristics employers are looking for in the next generation of employees. The answers from the panel were varied, but they all agreed on one thing - soft skills are what makes the difference.

“The skills you’re learning in the classroom are important, but the skills that come from the experiences you have outside the classroom will help you navigate the complexities of the workplace,” remarked Gonzalez. “We, as employers, are interested in finding leaders that never lose a thirst for learning and growth. All you need is an opportunity to prove that you have that drive. Find an opportunity where you can go to work and demonstrate what it is that drives you.”

Morrison took the discussion in another direction, focusing on the importance of interpersonal skills. “It sounds very simple, but building relationships is key,” he said. “You need to be able to take all those great ideas that you have and skills that you’ve learned and convince someone else to make a change for the better.”

Hurd encouraged students to set themselves apart by simply putting in the effort. “It’s almost uncommon to find now - things will begin to get hard, and managers will see people start to drop off,” Hurd explained. “If you continue to put in the effort, make connections and work well with the people around you, your managers will see that. Effort does not go unnoticed.”
Barbara Jenkins, executive director of the USPOULTRY Foundation, commented on the central role students play in the industry. “The leaders of tomorrow are sitting in this room,” Jenkins said. “The future of the industry depends on their talent and innovation.”

In addition to the interviews and education programs, students had the opportunity to visit the IPPE exhibit floor, which featured a large and diverse collection of industry exhibitors and technology.

The International Student Program also brought in 24 students from 12 universities in Latin America for a specialized program that enabled the students to discuss job opportunities with companies that have Latin American operations.

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The USPOULTRY Foundation’s mission is to support the recruitment and training of the brightest students, seek and fund scientific research, foster student scientists and promote careers in the poultry and egg industry.

**Photo Caption:**
The 2020 College Student Career Program panel featured (from left) Hector Gonzalez, vice president of human resources poultry for Tyson Foods, Jarod Morrison, chief financial officer for Farbest Foods and USPOULTRY board member, and Zach Hurd with Rose Acre Farms and an IPPE “30 Under 30” Young Leader recipient.