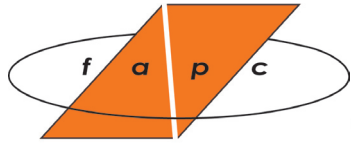


Food and Agricultural Products Center



FLASH!!

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY™

March 15, 2004

Center Specialist Participates in University Coalition Summit

LAS VEGAS, Nev. – Food and agriculture product centers from across the nation met in February in Las Vegas, Nev. to discuss possible opportunities for collaboration.

The purpose of the University Coalition, sponsored by the National Grocers Association, was to maximize the influence and impact of university supported food and agriculture product centers on food industry issues.

Jim Brooks, business and marketing specialist, represented Oklahoma State University and the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center at the conference.

"It was an honor to be selected by the National Grocers Association to participate in the University Coalition and to have the opportunity to promote the services and assistance available at the Center," Brooks said.

Other universities that attended the conference included Arizona State University, Cornell University, University of Minnesota, Portland State University, Purdue University, St. Joseph's University and Western Michigan University.

The conference began with university program overviews. Each university representative gave a 15-minute description of his or her program.

Following the program overviews, keynote speaker Matt Sanders, representative of SUPERVALU, gave a speech to stimulate collaborative thinking and discussion between the centers.

Sanders stressed the need to encourage more student interest in the retail food industry and increase communication between industry and university representatives.

In addition to those attending the meeting from universities, industry leaders representing Unilever, PepsiCo, Kraft, Price Chopper, Ramey's and URM Stores also attended and participated in the open discussion on industry issues.

The group discussed current industry needs and how the university community can assist in fulfilling them. The university representatives offered methods to share knowledge bases and resources.

One of the major topics of the conference was obstacles that prevent the university community from working together and possible ways to overcome some of the obstacles.

"One of the intriguing factors of the discussions was that the Center works directly with the food industry in the state, and the other universities in attendance focused on academic curriculums and post-graduate programs," Brooks said.

The university representatives also discussed industry scholarship programs and shared examples of successful programs and ways to improve opportunities offered. Industry certification programs were reviewed, and suggestions were made regarding a coalition model and the amount of industry support needed for the program.

The discussion included examples of industry recruitment and retention programs and methods of expansion in the future. Industry scholarships were offered as a possible solution.

The final topic discussed was academic institution connectivity. The university representatives proposed methods to delve more effectively into important industry issues. The possibility of offering a "universal" Web site was discussed.

"Each university representative submitted their Web site address to Dr. Cliff Shultz, dean and professor at the Morrison School of Agribusiness at Arizona State University," Brooks said. "Dr. Shultz was selected to review each Web site and make recommendations to the group at the next meeting for further discussions."

The University Coalition decided to devise five committees to research possible avenues for increased effectiveness. The committees will deal with the following issues: the development of a mentors program, professional certification, improving work place

diversity, unified Web site development and seeking reciprocal programs.

Brooks will participate in the mentors program and professional certification committees. An interim report from each committee will be provided to the National Grocers Association by June 15, 2004. The completed reports will be presented at the NGA Executive Leadership Conference scheduled for New Mexico in mid-September.

"I am looking forward to participating on the two committees for which I was selected and strongly believe that the University Coalition will provide some very positive programs for private industry and the National Grocers Association membership," Brooks said.

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Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Sam E. Curl, Director of Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Dean of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$103.60 for 740 copies. 0304 MHG.