

“Cooperative Business Strategy: What is Working and the Road Ahead”

By: Chelsea Miller

Friday, April 10th the Masters of Agribusiness program and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension held a symposium on Cooperatives at the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center. The symposium was made possible through the Roy B. Davis Professorship in Agriculture Cooperation and the CoBank Cooperative Excellence Fund.

The symposium consisted of three panels, each uniting the industry with students, academics, and other key stakeholders. The panels of industry speakers interacted with students in the role of moderators. Themes included human capital, leadership development, strategic insights on the food industries, and communications with stakeholders from many locations and diverse generations.

Dr. Parr Rosson along side Dr. Mark L. Waller welcomed guests by discussing Co-ops & AgriLife Extension. Moderator Dr. Vicky Salin introduced panel one “Connecting the Classroom to the Cooperative” panelists Michael A. Boland, Gregory McKee, Sanjib Bhuyan, and John L. Park. Kicking off the conversation MAB student Allie Hamel asked “Can co-op membership provide sufficient returns to keep a producer economically viable without diversifying?”

Dr. Vicky Salin opened panel two discussions: “Financial Services, for Cooperatives and by Cooperatives.” Panelists Rod Kelsay, Cody White, Billy L. Curb, and Gregory Taylor discussed the member key-stakeholder positions and member ownership for co-ops. MAB student Kade Beck presented the question of “Who should own the Co-op”, where students and panelists discussed the topic. Students suggested that employees and consumers could be part owners of cooperatives to gain more equity.

Panel three: “A Rising Tide Lifts All Cooperatives” held discussions by panelists Tony Grasso, Tamra Reynolds, and Richard Carrera. The three discussed business strategies and how character is key to any relationship in business. Reynolds discussed the five C’s of credit and expanded on the importance of character.

Judith Canales, State Executive Director for the USDA’s Farm Service Agency in Texas, spoke briefly on co-ops current events. Canales also spoke on the importance of the FSA and its background in College Station, Texas.

Story Continued



Michal A. Boland and Gregory McKee answer questions during panel one.



Billy L. Curb and Rod Kelsay discuss who should own co-ops.



Panel Three guests Richard Carerra, Tamra Reynolds, Tony Grasso, and moderator John B. Penson, Jr.

CoBank representatives Cody White and Tamra Reynolds brought the symposium to a close by presenting the CoBank Outstanding Student Scholarship award to Daniel Swirsky. CoBank established the scholarship to provide financial assistance to students properly enrolled in the Master of Agribusiness Program—Industry Partners Program at Texas A&M. Following the awards was a luncheon where students were able to network with the panelists.

The symposium held a live tweet on the MAB Twitter (@aggieMAB) using the hashtag #MABCOOP. To view the story please follow: [tx.ag/MABCOOPStory](https://twitter.com/aggieMAB). For more information on the symposium, panelists, and funding please visit: [tx.ag/MABCoopSymposium](https://twitter.com/aggieMAB).



Judith Canales, State Executive Director for the USDA's Farm Service Agency in Texas.



Cody White, Tamra Reynolds, Daniel Swirsky, and Dr. Vicky Salin.

The MAB program would like to thank all of those who helped plan and participate in the symposium. Below is information regarding our panelists and moderators.

- Panel 1: Connecting the Classroom to the Cooperative
 - Michael A. Boland, Professor and Director at University of Minnesota from St. Paul, Minnesota.
 - Gregory McKee, Director of Quentin Burdick Center for Cooperatives & Associate Professor, Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics at North Dakota State University from Fargo, North Dakota.
 - Sanjib Bhuyan, Associate Professor and Graduate Program Director Department of Agricultural, Food & Resource Economics Rutgers University —The State University of New Jersey from New Brunswick, New Jersey.
 - John L. Park, Roy B. Davis Professor of Agricultural Cooperation with the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University from College Station, Texas.
- Panel 2: Financial Services, for Cooperatives and by Cooperatives
 - Rod Kelsay, Executive Director, Mid America Cooperative Council from Indianapolis, Illinois.
 - Cody White, Relationship Manager at Regional Agribusiness Banking Group CoBank from Lubbock, Texas.
 - Billy L. Curb, Texas Commercial, Cooperative, and Renewable Energy Specialist Rural Development from U.S. Department of Agriculture from Temple, Texas
 - Gregory Taylor, Shareholder at D. Williams & Co., P.C. from Lubbock, Texas.
- Panel 3: A Rising Tide Lifts All Cooperatives. How have the farm business cycle and general business cycle affected cooperatives?
 - Tony Grasso, Co-Founder Value — Added Production & Director Board Member of Moontower Community Agricultural Co-op from Austin, Texas.
 - Tamra Reynolds, Vice President, Power, Energy and Utilities Division at CoBank, from Greenwood Village, Colorado.

Story Continued



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- Richard Carrera, Project Director, Texas Rural Cooperative Center at The University of Texas — Pan America from Edinburg, Texas.

Moderators

- Panel 1& 2- Vicky Salin, Professor & Chair, Intercollegiate Faculty of Agribusiness, Director of the Master of Agribusiness Program, from College Station, Texas.
- Panel 3 – John B. Penson, Jr. Regents Professor, Stiles Professor of Agriculture with the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University from College Station, Texas.

Visit from Dr. Hongdong Guo

By: Chelsea Miller

In February, the MAB program hosted special guest Dr. Hongdong Guo, Professor and Chair of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Management in the School of Management at Zhejiang University of China. Dr. Guo's research background includes agricultural economics and development economics of (rural) institutions, including Agro-enterprise development, contract farming and farmer cooperative.

Dr. Guo is the associate director of the Center for Chinese Agricultural and Rural Development of Zhejiang University. During his visit he presented on "Agricultural Cooperatives and Supply Chain in China: Status and Trends."



Dr. Hongdong Guo presents on Ag. Cooperatives and supply chains.

The overall goal of the Zhejiang University MBA-GAM program is to develop excellence in global agribusiness management capabilities in agri-food industry. This will be the first agricultural industry-oriented MBA program in China. While visiting Dr. Guo observed the TAMU MAB program to get ideas for the Zhejiang University program.

Discussing the history of the University and China's school background Dr. Guo explained how the household responsibility system worked in the Chinese economy. Dr. Guo also presented about the challenges farmers have confronted since 1985.

Dr. Guo expressed the importance of farmer education and how it is currently low. Guo presented on the gaps of income between urban households and rural households and the challenges for agriculture development on different scales.

As part of Dr. Guo's visit, the MAB program hosted a tour of Royalty Pecan Farms in Caldwell, Texas. Royalty Pecan Farms is a family owned and operated working pecan farm that implements sustainable farming practices to grow, nurture and harvest quality pecans.

Andy Sherrod, Royalty Pecan Farms Orchard Manager, gave the MAB and visitors a tour of Royalty Pecan Farm. Sherrod explained his role at the farm and how he too attended Texas A&M University and studied his undergrad in horticulture and later received his Master's degree in Agriculture.

The MAB program would like to thank Dr. Guo for visiting campus.

Congratulations, Arjun Shanker!

By: Chelsea Miller

Congratulations, Arjun Shanker, for being selected as a Buck Weirus Spirit Award recipient. Each year, the Buck Weirus Spirit Award honors students demonstrate high involvement, create positive experiences throughout the Aggie community, impact student life at Texas A&M, and enhance the Aggie spirit.

The Buck Weirus Spirit Award recognizes those students who make contributions to the university through participation in student organizations, Aggie traditions, and university events.

Story Continued



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The Buck Weirus Spirit Award, named for Richard "Buck" Weirus '42, recognizes students for their outstanding contributions to student life programs at Texas A&M University.

Each year up to 55 students receive the Buck Weirus Spirit Award, five of which are considered graduate students in a degree-seeking program at Texas A&M University.

Arjun has expressed leadership skills through his Presidency role for the Indian Graduate Student Association, Secretary for Agricultural Economics Graduate Students Association, and College of Agriculture and Life Science Representative for Diversity Council.



Learn.Network.Ski

By: Chelsea Miller & MAB student Yara Altashan

January 29 – 31 MAB students Yara Altashan, Ramses Gonzalez, Paul Guimaraes, Thiago Parente, and Toby Pan participated in the 2015 University Private Equity Summit in Salt Lake City, Utah. The 12th Annual UPES is the premier gathering of the brightest minds in private equity, including thought leaders, investors, entrepreneurs and students.

MAB student Yara Alatshan discussed how during the summit there were chances to meet key investors and entrepreneurs who were able to share stories with the students.

“The best part of the summit was keynote speaker Mr. Scott Dahnke, Managing Partner at Catterton, Partners who shared with the participants the recipe for his success,” said Alatshan.

While at the summit the students learned about topics such as: The Art of the Deal: Identifying, Adding Value and Exiting. The panel of entrepreneurs discussed creative business.

The last day of the summit the MAB students chose to ski at Park City Mountain resort where Alatshan learned to ski.

“It was a really fun experience learning to ski with my fellow colleagues; it gave us a nice break from the professionalism at the summit and a great chance for the five of us to get to know each other.”



Big Event

By: MAB student Julie Anna Clark

MAB students participated with the AgEcon Graduate Student Association in the Big Event on March 28th. The Big Event is a university wide event where over 22,000 students volunteer in the Bryan/College Station Community. Big Event is the largest student led community service project in the country.

The GSA members and other guests were tasked with cleaning up the Little League ballparks in Bryan. With 19 participants, the group cleaned out dugouts and put new dirt onto the fields, tidied the parks from litter, completely cleaned the concession stand kitchen, organized tool sheds, and painted the bathrooms.

Story Continued



Normally, parents do the maintenance work for these fields, and they were very grateful to have assistance from the Big Event.

Five hours of hard work from 19 willing students saved them two weeks of tasks that would have hindered the kids' baseball season. I would like to thank the AgEcon graduate students, and those guests who join us in giving up their Saturday to give back to their community!

MAB students: Kade Beck, Claire Camstra, Joseph Ciesynski, Julie Anna Clark, Marcelo Coelho, Will Czarnecki, Lindsey Dodgen, Lydia Mante, Toby Pan, David Salinas, and Chelsea Takahashi. Ph.D students: Kendra Williamson, Pan Liu, Nishita Sinha. MS Students: Elizabeth Sutton Young, Wen Zheng and Zhe Fan, Mechanical Engineering Ph.D., Natalie Eason Sr. Undergrad Microbiology, and Kelsey McLaughlin, Masters of Kinesiology.



GSA and Friends Volunteer through the Big Event at the Little League Ballpark in Bryan, Texas.

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Enjoy your summer!
Share internship
experiences on
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Coming Up

May 15 - 30: Swaziland Study Abroad

May 18 - 20: 17th Annual National Value Added
Agriculture Conference

Location: Austin, Texas

June 14 - 19: IFAMA

Location: Minneapolis - Saint Paul



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