



Alumni Spotlight

Dana Brooks

Class of 2013
Director, Government Affairs
Elanco Animal Health
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Brandon Garrett

Class of 2013
Regional Business Development
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Zoetis
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Two roads to careers in the animal health industry

This is a special double Spotlight on two recent MAB graduates and their paths to working in the animal health industry.

Brandon's story:

Brandon Garrett participated in FFA and 4-H growing up. While he attended Lakeland College in Illinois and then later at Texas A&M, he was involved with the Livestock Judging teams. Armed with his experience and a bachelor's degree in Animal Science, his path after graduation was pretty clear.

"The first place I looked for jobs after graduating from Texas A&M was with animal health companies," Garrett said.

Garrett started with Cargill Animal Nutrition as a territory manager in Central and Southern, Illinois, where he sold Nutrena feeds and Right Now Cattle Mineral. In 2008, he went to work for Zoetis (formerly Pfizer Animal Health). At Zoetis, Garrett has been an equine territory business manager and a companion animal strategic account manager. He was recently promoted to the role of regional business development manager on the Cattle/Equine team and will be relocating to the Minneapolis area. As a regional business development manager, his goal is to work with current leadership to develop local talent, support new colleagues and the western region team in business-related

activities.

After five years in the industry, Garrett decided it would be a good time to continue his education by completing a master's degree.

"When I decided I was going to continue my education, I looked at a couple of different programs. However, many of them did not offer the flexibility that I was looking for. Also, since my career and background has always involved agriculture, I wanted to find a program that would specifically focus on the areas that would most apply to me in real life. I found the MAB program achieved both of these goals, and it really focused on information that was relevant to my current and future roles," Garrett said. "I also found it extremely beneficial that I

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was able to network with other people in the industry, and get exposure to other

businesses, which has helped me to understand my business a little better."

He chose the topic of his thesis, *Impacts of the Recession and Horse Slaughter Ban on the U.S. Thoroughbred Industry*, because it was relevant to his current role with Zoetis and gave him insight into how the recession and ban has impacted the veterinary profession. Secondly, with this equine background, he has been impacted by these changes in the past.

"After reading some of the reports that were completed by many industry experts and government agencies on the effects of the horse slaughter ban, I felt that there were some opportunities for improvement in prior reports and I wanted to dig deeper into some key statistics within the industry," Garrett said. "It was an extremely challenging project to complete, but it taught me a lot about myself, and forced me to learn to do things that I might not have done otherwise. It has also changed my perspective on industry analysis within my current role, and has helped me have deeper conversations with my customers and colleagues."

Dana's story:

Dana Brooks is from a small town in the southeast Arkansas Delta region. She grew up working in cotton, rice and catfish farming agribusinesses.

After high school, she went to work for a local grain elevator and became interested in grain merchandizing, commodity trading, and farm policy. Brooks started attending a local university part-time while working full-time. She transferred to Arkansas State University at Monticello (ASU) to finish her degree in agriculture.

"I was blessed to have a major professor who could see my potential and encouraged me to strive to learn outside of the classroom by networking at agricultural business events. I joined the Agribusiness Club and started volunteering on a

congressional campaign in 1993. Those experiences at ASU were life changing," Brooks said.

Upon graduation, she took her first job at Riceland Foods Inc. in Stuttgart, Ark., as a grain merchandiser. Though merchandising was her dream job, a series of unfortunate events, including the untimely death of Brooks' father in July 2006 from a farming accident, necessitated a move closer to home where she managed an insurance agency. In 2000, Brooks was contacted by her former professor about going to Washington, D.C., to be the agriculture and trade legislative assistant for a congressman from Arkansas on the House of Representative Agriculture Committee. She's been representing agriculture in Washington, D.C. since then.

To stay current and competitive in her position, Brooks considered returning to school for more education.

"It was frightening to decide to go back to school at 40 years old, but I had a desire to be competitive in the current Washington, D.C., job market. I had been looking at different programs from law school to an MBA for more than decade. I knew a couple of people who had been or were currently enrolled in the K-State MAB program. The acceptance criteria, distance learning component, course outline, friendly and encouraging staff, and KSU's reputation made this choice the best for me," she said.

Brooks planned to return to an agribusiness company at some point in her career, but figured it would be with a company focused on crop production.

"I always knew I would go back to work for an agribusiness someday and that is why I chose K-State's MAB program. However, I admit I never thought I would work in the animal health industry. Until I worked for National Milk Producer Federation, my expertise had always been in program crops. NMPF opened

a new door to animal agriculture. The growth in the food and companion animal health industry is very impressive," Brooks said. "Elanco's CEO, Jeff Simmons, impressed me with his passion for feeding the world. How will we feed 9 million people by 2050 if not for technology in the animal and plant industries? Being able to help people around the world meet the basic need of food is both humbling and empowering. I want to know that I have done

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something to help farmers in the U.S., like my dad, while feeding families around the world with safe, abundant, and affordable food."

Current animal health industry issues:

Both Garrett and Brooks identified a number of issues the animal health industry is experiencing including regulations, animal welfare issues, and the high-cost of veterinarian degrees.

"There are general issues, like regulations, and then there are issues in both the large- and small-animal sectors," Garrett said. "Animal welfare, the decline in the number of large animal veterinarians, and the increase in small-animal vets graduating with fewer job opportunities available, are just a few of the trends facing the industry."

However, there were two areas they both agreed were current hot topics: the use of antibiotics in animals and public perception of animal pharmaceutical companies.

"Two big issues that I manage daily are the concerns that animal antibiotics contribute to antibiotic resistance and the acceptance of U.S. approved animal pharmaceuticals globally," Brooks said. "In both, areas proactive education is imperative. We can't assume that consumers, politicians, or agency officials both domestically and internationally understand how and where their meat, eggs, or milk are produced."

Final thoughts:

Two different paths lead these talented individuals to the animal health industry, but both found the MAB program enhanced their careers.

"Because my past, present and future is more than likely going to continue to be in the agricultural industry, I really feel that this program better prepared me for my current and future roles in the animal health industry.

Typical MBA programs can certainly teach you the skills that will be needed in leadership roles, but few present you with specific scenarios that we in the agricultural community encounter on a daily basis," Garrett said. "Additionally, this program gave me the opportunity to build a broader network in the ag industry that I most likely would not have been able to do in a normal MBA program. That is why I feel that the MAB is a more ideal program for future leaders in the agriculture industry."

Though Garrett's path was more direct into animal health, Brooks is pleased to find herself with new opportunities in the industry.

"It has been an amazing experience from being a legislative assistant on Capitol Hill to a lobbyist for the dairy industry and now Director of Government Affairs for one of the largest global animal health companies in the world," Brooks said. "I am so proud to have my KSU diploma hanging on the wall in my D.C. office. Graduating from the MAB program is one of the greatest achievements in my life."