

# The Syllabus

A newsletter for  
Master of Agribusiness  
students, alumni  
and friends

Volume 13 ■ Issue 1  
Spring 2012

## Space still available on MAB trip to Europe

Kansas State University's Master of Agribusiness (MAB) program is offering travel to France, Italy and Switzerland to learn about the food and agriculture industry in Europe. The trip will include stops in Lyon and Paris, France; Rome and Milan, Italy; and Lucerne, Switzerland. The tour is scheduled for August 1 – 13, 2012 and is open to anyone with an interest in international agribusiness. Nearly 20 individuals have committed to joining the group, but there is space for a few more.

The trip will include visits to crop and cattle farms, dairies, cheese-making operations, wineries, and olive groves, as well as professional visits to agricultural and food related industries. Guided sightseeing tours will be arranged along with free time to explore Rome and Paris.

Allen Featherstone, Agricultural Economics Professor and Director of the MAB program, feels the study tour offers a great opportunity for North American decision makers

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## Welcome to the MAB Class of 2014

**Kurt Anderson**  
Business Analyst  
John Deere Company  
Moline, Illinois

**David Bahre**  
President, CEO  
Bahre Investments, Inc.  
Wamego, Kansas

**Jacob Bailey**  
Grain Procurement Merchandiser  
New Horizons CHS Service Center  
Herman, Minnesota

**Jarah Casten**  
Project Manager and Developer  
John Deere  
Urbandale, Iowa

**Emilie Gein**  
Commodity Merchant  
Cargill, Inc.  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Blake Hansen**  
Shop and Equipment Manager  
Rodney Hansen Farms, Inc.  
Paul, Idaho

**Michael Hauger**  
Technical Support Specialist  
John Deere  
Des Moines, Iowa

**Chris Hines**  
Elevator Manager  
Offerle Coop Grain and Supply Co.  
Offerle, Kansas

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**Dr. Allen Featherstone**  
Program Director  
afeather@ksu.edu

**Mary Bowen**  
Program Associate  
mjbowen@ksu.edu

**Deborah Kohl**  
Program Coordinator  
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The New Year often brings new beginnings, and for Deborah (De-bore-ah) Kohl those new beginnings include joining the MAB team at K-State. Being a Wildcat is familiar territory for Deborah, as she completed her Master of Education while serving as a graduate assistant with Housing & Dining Services at K-State, but she is looking forward to new opportunities to put on the purple and represent the MAB program globally. Her previous 10 years at K-State centered around phase one of the \$104 million project at Jardine Apartments, including marketing, grant writing, communication and community development. After transitioning briefly to Baylor University, where she brought a newly-purchased apartment community online, Deborah and her family are thrilled to be back in Manhattan.

In her free time, Deborah enjoys following her children's adventures in men's gymnastics, wrestling, and ballet. She is also learning to ballroom dance with her husband, Ben, and looking forward to warm weather and gardening.



## MAB hires new program coordinator

### Welcome to Deborah Kohl

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**Jeremy Larson**

Product Marketing Manager  
John Deere Company  
Lenexa, Kansas

**Heather Luis**

Agricultural Commodity Grader  
USDA  
Hastings, Nebraska

**Joe Mosier**

Technical Information Business Analyst  
Deere & Company  
Moline, Illinois

**Tara Oliver**

Account Representative  
The Andersons Inc.  
Logansport, Indiana

**Juan Orozco**

Technician  
Murphy Brown, LLC  
Yuma, Colorado

**Kyle Patten**

Marketing Representative  
John Deere Company  
Des Moines, Iowa

**Nicole Peter**

Contract Manufacturing Manager  
Land O' Lakes Purina Feed, LLC  
Shoreview, Minnesota

**Lauren Robertson**

Credit Analyst  
John Deere Financial  
Madison, Wisconsin

**Magnus Rupp**

Frahm Farmland Inc.  
Colby, Kansas

**Dan Scheetz**

Wholesale Sales Representative  
Helena Chemical Company  
Ankeny, Iowa

**Janel Schemper**

Field Manager  
Schemper Harvesting  
Holdrege, Nebraska

**Jordan Shifflett**

Program Technician  
USDA-Farm Service Agency  
Saint Joseph, Missouri

**Michelle Swartz**

Account Manager  
Turf Design, Inc.  
Olathe, Kansas

**Christy Wipperfurth**

Agricultural Commodity Grader  
USDA  
Lodi, Wisconsin

**Emerson Wohlenberg**

Market Analyst  
SLC Agricola S/A  
Porto Alegre, Brazil

**Lance Zollinger**

Relationship Manager, Vice President  
Northwest Farm Credit Services  
Rexburg, Idaho

Welcome  
to the  
15th  
MAB  
Cohort!



# Alumni Spotlight

## Carlos Piana

Class of 2001  
Head of Procurement  
Universal Sweet Industries  
Guayaquil, Ecuador



by Cristina Mansfield

*The Alumni Spotlight focuses on MAB alumni and is written by Cristina Mansfield, a 2004 graduate.*

### Agribusiness entrepreneur

Carlos Piana is a quintessential entrepreneur, always returning to his interest in agribusiness.

In the early 1980s, he and his father produced rice and soybeans. When he enrolled in the MAB in 1999, they were exporting mangoes from Ecuador. They contemplated constructing a processing plant for acerola, the vitamin C “super fruit,” for export to Brazil and Japan. At the time, the shrimp export industry was booming and a shrimp businessman expressed interest in financing Carlos’ acerola plant. However, a series of adverse events stopped their plans short: the shrimp monoculture was wiped out by the “mancha blanca” (white stain) viral disease, agriculture was devastated by the el Niño phenomenon of 1997-’98, and half of the banks of Ecuador failed the following year. Carlos eventually sold the factory and looked for opportunities outside the sector.

On a trip to the U.S., he bought the exclusive Ecuador franchise rights for Novus Windshield Repair and Replacement. The company franchises automated windshield repair and replacement equipment that allows franchisees to offer full windshield services (polishing, repair, and replacement). The business caught his eye because as a consumer he felt defrauded by the quality of service available in the Ecuador. After acquiring the franchise rights, he went to Chile for orientation, trained his staff, and set up shop.

The wake-up call came when Carlos realized that used car dealers – those

most likely to demand his services – where not interested in investing in the more expensive protective glass used by Novus. Although Carlos also imported Allied windshields, car dealers were more likely to buy supplies on the black market in “exploding” glass that had emerged, notwithstanding the dangers this presented to drivers and passengers. Nevertheless, the Novus business was successful, and Carlos sold franchises in two cities...until he realized that at least one of the franchisees was not using the standard resin when installing windshields that gives Novus its value. He cancelled one franchise, and when a business colleague expressed interest in Novus, Carlos sold his rights and got out.

By the time he put Novus behind him in 2006, Carlos was already working for Universal Sweet Industries (USI), where he is now Head of Procurement. Entrepreneur Isabel Noboa de Loor used her inheritance from plantation baron father Luis Noboa to build an empire of her own. Today, she is President of Nobis, a consortium of companies that includes real estate, commercial, and agribusiness enterprises including USI. When one of Ecuador’s leading confectionery companies, La Universal established in 1889, went bankrupt, Nestle bought up some of the brands. But the factory where Carlos works



*The Piana Family: Left to right: Roxana, Annamaria, Carlos, Grazia, Rafael, Roxana, Carlos, and Domenica.*

today stood empty until USI bought the remaining assets six years after the bankruptcy.

“I am not sure why, but Nestle did not buy some of the much-loved brands and USI eventually acquired them. Today, we compete with Nestle,” he said ([www.launiversal.com](http://www.launiversal.com)).

Carlos started at USI working in cocoa procurement. This is a complex area that

requires knowledge of bean production and processing as well as familiarity with the world cocoa market and factors affecting demand, supply and prices. However, Carlos was already familiar with the industry, which proved to be

useful. USI spends \$6 million annually on cacao. Although USI started with multiple producers, they now have a network of three to four producers that can provide the quality, volume, and price USI needs to remain competitive.

Carlos was also responsible for exports. Since La Universal is a historic brand, many of the three million Ecuadorians living on the East Coast of the U.S.



**Piana continued on pg 7**

## MAB Alumnus gives back and encourages others to do the same

With a recent large gift from MAB alumnus Rich Porter, building on previous gifts from other alumni and friends, the Department of Animal Science and Industry will begin construction of the expanded K-State Livestock Marketing and Learning Center.

Porter and his wife Sarah own Porter Cattle Company in Reading, Kan. He graduated from K-State in 1972 with a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering and completed the MAB program in 2004.

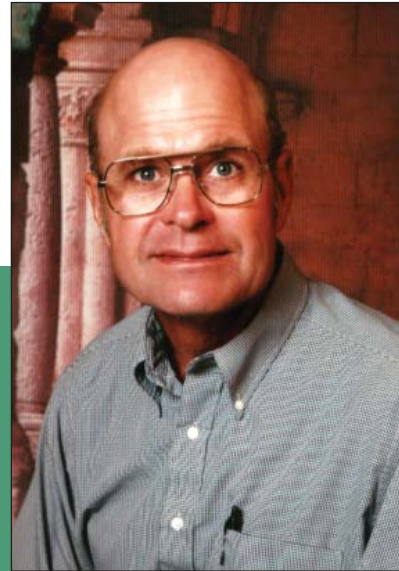
Porter believes the time he spent at K-State was a strong factor in his professional development and inspired him to make gifts to the university.

"While at K-State — in particular, pursuing my MAB — I became well-acquainted with a number of faculty members who helped me learn a lot about how to better run my business," Porter said. "I wanted to do something

that would make a real difference at K-State and help it better serve the faculty and students there who are doing so much good for society. I'm very passionate about helping K-State pursue its mission."

Opportunities exist for alumni to contribute directly to the MAB program through development of funding gifts

**"While at K-State — in particular, pursuing my MAB — I became well-acquainted with a number of faculty members who helped me learn a lot about how to better run my business."**



There are two different scholarships that are currently offered by the program: the Alumni Agribusiness Scholarship and the Alumni Producer Scholarship, which is awarded to a student in production agriculture.

"I was one of the oldest people in the first MAB class, so I am

hitting the stage of life when people are considering the best uses for the money their MAB experience allowed them to make. And KSU was at the top of my list, especially the College of Ag," Porter said.

Please contact the MAB office if you are interested in exploring opportunities to make a huge difference for others, please call us at 785-532-4495.

for professorships and endowments, which would allow faculty to focus solely on the MAB program, and through scholarships.

Scholarships allow us to attract students who otherwise may not be able to enter the program due to financial reasons, including individuals throughout the United States and the world. The

## Visit MAB at AMI in Dallas

The Master of Agribusiness will have a booth for the first time at AMI International (Meat, Poultry & Seafood Industry Expo) May 1-3 at the Dallas Convention Center.

If you're going to be at AMI, stop by and visit Allen, Deborah and Mary at booth #2030. We'd love to see you!



## Featherstone receives teaching award

by Shannon Krueger

Dr. Allen Featherstone was selected as a recipient of the United States Department of Agriculture



Left to right: K-State College of Agriculture Associate Dean Don Boggs, Allen Featherstone and Catherine Woteki, USDA Chief Scientist and Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics.

Food and Agriculture Sciences Excellence in Teaching award.

He accepted the award at the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) annual meeting in November 2011 in San Francisco.

Since joining K-State Agricultural Economics in 1986, Featherstone has taught a variety of undergraduate and graduate classes. His courses include an experiential course in conjunction with Frontier Farm Credit where the

class serves as a board of directors. In addition, he teaches Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems with eight international professors to educate students on the global dimensions of agriculture. In 1998, he guided the development of K-State's award-winning Master in Agribusiness (MAB) degree, a distance-education program for individuals whose career and family status do not allow access to a traditional on-campus degree program.

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in food and agriculture to look at major competitors in grains, beef and dairy.

“European consumers are much more focused on local production and the connection with where, and how, their food is produced. In addition, their views on the use of biotechnology differ quite substantially than those in the U.S. and other regions. Understanding the producers’ reactions to a very different food consumer may be helpful if U.S. consumers’ attitudes toward food continue to change,” Featherstone said.

We are currently accepting at \$500 per person deposit. The deposit is applied toward the total trip cost. Final payment will be due by May 18. Travelers will be able to pay the final payment by check or credit card.

Previous international trips hosted by the Master of Agribusiness program have been to South America, Russia, Southeast Asia, and Australia and New Zealand.

“These trips have been to countries with amazing and diverse scenery and exposed us to fascinating cultural and scenic aspects that an average tourist would not have the opportunity to experience. One of my favorite things was getting to know the group members. There is such a great dynamic on MAB trips.” Leah Tsoodle, Land Use Value Coordinator at Kansas State University said.

More information about the trip can be found at <http://mab.ksu.edu/Alumni/Europe12.html> or by contacting Mary Bowen at 785-532-4435, [mjbowen@ksu.edu](mailto:mjbowen@ksu.edu).



### Estimated Trip Rates:

Double Occupancy Rate: Single = \$4,400\* Couple = \$8,800\*

Single Occupancy Rate = \$5,275\*

*\*These are based on current estimates and exchange rates. Trip costs will be paid in local currencies and the final cost will depend on the number of travelers and exchange rates.*

### Cost Breakdown

- Registration; \$4,400 covers in-country logistics, hotel/motel rooms, internal flights and most meals for double occupancy.

### Additional Expenses

- International Airfare: \$600 to \$1,200 per person (airfare rates depend on economy). Each traveler is responsible for transportation from local origin to Rome, Italy and from Paris, France to local origin.
- Additional meals, souvenirs & personal items
- Optional trip insurance



# International elective, AGEC 710, begins April 16th

The MAB's award-winning international elective, Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems, is set to begin in mid-April and runs through mid-August.

AGEC 710 is team taught by faculty at K-State's partner institutions in Uruguay, France, Russia, New Zealand, Uganda, India and Thailand. The course gives students a first-hand account of the history and conditions of each of the significant economic zones studied – MERCOSUR, European Union, Russia and the Former Soviet Union, Oceania, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and East Asia.

Anyone with a bachelor's degree, two years of professional work experience and an interest in the food and agriculture sector is encouraged to enroll. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone thinking about joining the MAB program to test the distance technology and get a feel for the program.

The course is open to students in the Master of Agribusiness program, but may also be taken by individuals not currently participating in the MAB program. Anyone with a bachelor's degree, two years of professional work experience and an interest in the food and agriculture sector is encouraged to enroll. This is an excellent opportunity for anyone thinking about joining the MAB program to test the distance technology and get a feel for the program.

Enrollment is now open for the three-credit hour course, so if you are interested in the elective, please contact Deborah or Mary at 785-532-4495 to get registered.

## AGEC 710 faculty member will be missed

MAB faculty and staff were saddened to learn of the passing of AGEC 710 Instructor Daniel Conforte on February 18, 2012 in Palmerston North, New Zealand.

Conforte taught the MERCOSUR module of the course. He was one of the original partners who along with Allen Featherstone, Pavel Sorokin (Russia), Yann Duval (Thailand) and Nicolas Habert (France) developed the Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems course in 2001.

"At Daniel's encouragement, the course had expanded to cover additional regions in the world and added additional faculty. Through Daniel's efforts and enthusiasm, this course has reached more than 800 students from around the world. His lectures contained an excellent balance between charts and statistics and storytelling that provided students a feel for the immenseness and importance of the region and his love and passion for his home, Uruguay," Featherstone said.

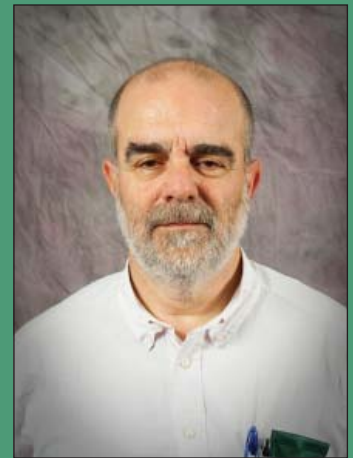
He served as head of the department of agribusiness management at Universidad ORT Uruguay, where he taught agribusiness marketing and strategy. His professional interest was in global agribusiness with a focus in South America, farmers' integration in value chains, and food security. Conforte recently spent several years teaching at Massey University in New Zealand.

In addition to his contributions to AGEC 710, he also hosted the first MAB alumni international agribusiness tour in 2004. Travelers enjoyed seeing Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina from his perspective.

Conforte would have been 57 years old on March 17, 2012. He is survived by his wife, Virginia, and their children, Daniela and Sebastian.

*Daniel's passion and enthusiasm for life and for his profession have inspired each of us to rethink how we teach others.*

*Daniel, you will be missed.*



Daniel Conforte, 1955-2012

## Students complete thesis projects

To read current or previous thesis projects, go to <http://krex.k-state.edu/dspace/> and search by author, title or keywords (no log-in required). To read a thesis written before 2008 or view thesis defense, log onto K-State On-Line, [www.online.ksu.edu](http://www.online.ksu.edu), with your eID and password. Go to the MAB Community Page, go to Files & Content and click on Theses.

**Josh Engelmann**, class of 2011, *Dairy Price Risk Management Analysis*

**Juan Garza**, class of 2010, *Quality Perception in a Meat Department of a Retail Store*

**Cori Wittman**, class of 2011, *From Rice Fields to Red Light Districts: An Economic Examination of Factors Motivating Employment in Thailand's Sex Industry*

## Piana continued from pg 3

remember it with fondness. USI is now exporting the revived brands to the U.S., in particular to New York, Brooklyn, and Miami, as well as to Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, and Spain.

Three years ago new management at USI decided to focus on local sales. Carlos was asked to take charge of all procurement, including glucose, maize, monostearate glycerol, and packaging materials. This represented a big step for him as he had never negotiated procurement agreements

for a full year. For 2011-2012 Carlos was able to negotiate a price of \$2.50/kilo for peanuts. Before he was in a position to negotiate annual contracts, it was not possible to get a price below \$3.00/kilo. The plant buys a lot of liquid glucose and hopes to negotiate with Cargill or

ADM in the future. "Having the annual contract is important. Before we could never get regular supplies."

Along the road, Carlos was also given responsibility for SAP – the information system that links procurement, production and sale of products within a company. As a result, Carlos became familiar with all functions within the company. He also implemented an enterprise resource planning system and just finished implementing ISO 9001:2008. He has also been working



ISO 9001 is a quality management system. Independent third parties provide certification that a

company or production facility has appropriate systems. For example, that they have records training back products and raw materials to their source; that there is a system for feedback from customers; and that new products are appropriately tested.

on OSHA's occupational health and safety guidelines for USI.

Asked what lessons he has learned since the MAB program, Carlos

says that the main one has been how different your position is depending on where you are in the supply chain. Having negotiating power allows to you to look for synergies and reach interesting agreements.

"I could not have learned it on my own. This kind of negotiating power allows us to set up mutually beneficial arrangements, not just to get the best terms for ourselves."

At some point, Carlos will want to start his own business again. For now, he feels fortunate to have an interesting and relevant position in Ecuador because the political situation continues to hamper development. "The company is doing well and we expect to become even more profitable next year."

He and his wife Roxana, who teaches grade school, have six children – four girls and two boys ranging from 18 to 4 years of age. They live in Guayaquil, Ecuador. "Everyone is in school, and doing well."

## Calendar of Events

### March 18-23

Campus Session

### April 3

Deadline to have name appear in commencement program

### April 16

AGEC 710, Comparative Food and Agriculture Systems begins

### April 27

Final electronic copy of thesis due to graduate school to be spring grad

### May 1-3

American Meat Institute Show in Dallas

### May 11

K-State spring commencement

### June 26-28

Institute of Food Technologists Expo in Las Vegas

### August 1-13

MAB Trip to France, Italy and Switzerland

### August 10

Final electronic copy of thesis due to graduate school to be a summer graduate

## in the NEWS...

**Brandon Laws**, class of 2012, and his wife welcomed baby Carter Michael Laws on November 8th. Carter weighed 6 lbs 6 oz.

**Nate Smith**, class of 2011, and his family welcomed Aiden Kendrick Smith to the family on December 27th. Nate also accepted a new position as Territory Finance Manager for John Deere in KS and MO.

**Sosthenes Mwansa**, class of 2013, has accepted the Senior Credit Officer position with Vision Fund Zambia.

**Audra Weber**, class of 2012, is moving to Thibodaux, LA where she accepted a position as the Factory Order Fulfillment Manager within John Deere Company.

**Ben Smith**, class of 2011, welcomed a new baby boy to the world. Liam Gene Smith was born December 13, 2011.

**Clair Doan**, class of 2009, and family welcomed a new baby on Monday, February 6th. Sophia Elizabeth Sadie Doan weighed 6lbs 9oz and was 20.5 inches long.

**Charles Loubersac d'Hotel**, class of 2012, and his wife, Marie, had a baby boy, Paul, on November 1st of last year.

**Martin Mwansa**, class of 2013, and his wife have a new baby girl named Joyce. He now also works as a Provincial Marketing Coordinator for the Luapula region under the Food Reserve Agency.

**Michelle Evosovich Adams**, class of 2006, is now employed as Production Planner for Pacific Nutritional, Inc. in Vancouver, WA.

**Meng Tee**, class of 2009, and his wife had a new baby, Jonah on September 29th He also started a new position within the agriculture industry as a Horticulture Consultant.

**Alison Rosenblum**, class of 2004, moved within Coffee Bean International and is now the Director of Strategic Account Development.

**Leah Suellentrop**, class of 2002, had a baby, Betty May Suellentrop, on July 2, 2011.