

LOOKING TO CARVE YOUR CAREER PATHWAY? WE'VE GOT SOME GOOD ADVICE

Lara Durben, *Midwest Poultry Federation*

If there is one thing our organization consistently hears from a variety of poultry companies, agribusinesses, and farm owners and managers, it's that well-trained and knowledgeable employees with a passion for all things avian-related are in high demand.

That's why Midwest Poultry Federation has made it a commitment to host a student careers program during its annual in-person convention and trade show in Minneapolis each spring. While the pandemic has put these in-person events on hold for now (we're going virtual in May!), we still remain committed to being a place where students and poultry businesses can make connections.

We post job and internship openings on our website, www.MidwestPoultry.com, and share these updates via our social media platforms. We also took to Facebook this month to ask the age-old question ... "What's your best advice for college students looking to gain experience in professional work settings and carve out their career pathways?"

It was a lively discussion with a few constant themes that we are happy to share with you:

- **Internships, internships, internships.** Quite simply, take all the internships you can find and use these to figure out what you like to do – and equally important, what you don't like to do. Internships will also teach you how to interact with people of different backgrounds and work styles. This is the best – and really only way – to fully understand the working world.
- **Network the heck out of your professional experiences.** That old adage, *it's not what you know, it's who you know*, is 100% true. Seriously. Always carry business cards. Make connections. Build friendships. They will be your biggest assets later in life. (And understand we're not just talking about going to happy hours. Find ways to build genuine relationships with mentors and peers.)
- **Do what you really want to do.** Yes, money is important, but don't get so wrapped up in it that you lose focus on your passions and what you love to do.
- **Don't be afraid to relocate.** Take chances that make you feel uncomfortable. Take the job that no one wants. Be willing to make mistakes because that's how you learn and grow. You can always move back after you gain new experience.
- **Clean up your social media.** Yes, potential employers really do creep on your social media accounts to find out more about you.
- **Be kind.** The poultry industry is a small world at times and you may likely work around the same people for years to come – even if you move between companies. Be supportive of others and lift people up.
- **Try new things.** Take chances! Broaden your knowledge base to learn what your skills, weaknesses (yes, weaknesses!), and interests are.

In the end, know that life is not a straight shot. You may feel early in your career that it's quite a bit of "hustle and grind" when you are trying to establish yourself. This is when you focus on learning, gaining experience, and building meaningful career relationships. Later, you may have other things on your priority list as well – like your family, your health, your personal relationships. All along the way, you will find that life's lessons will lead you on a path to building the career trajectory and the life that you love.

To learn more about the opportunities for career advancement in the poultry industry, check out www.midwestpoultry.com and plan to attend the 2021 MPF Virtual Convention on May 18-21. You'll learn and connect with poultry companies in our Exhibit Hall, have access to a variety of education sessions for turkeys, egg layers, broilers, and poultry processing, and network with attendees at our happy hour events. Registration is free for qualifying college students.

