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PMA-Pack Scholar

I can not begin to describe how great the trip to Fresh Summit impacted my perspective of the produce industry. It started out on Thursday when we were introduced to our fellow Pack Scholarship recipients and this is where we were able to form relationships with others and meet our advisors that we would be shadowing for the next couple of days. It was such a great experience to meet students from all over the globe and to share a common interest with them in the produce industry.

One thing that I could not get over was the great hospitality the Pack family and other produce industry leaders provided us with. They were definitely a high light of the trip. The seminars we were asked to attend were very informative as well. The one I attended was on the “Why” generation and why we act and demand the things we do. It was events like this that gave me a perspective that I am sure most of my fellow students are not able to experience. This is what made the Fresh Summit so special, we were given the opportunities to meet and learn from top individuals in their precise fields.

Before the start of each day we were provided a wonderful meal, but what really topped the meal off was the great speakers that they entailed. I found Jack Welch to be really entertaining as well as direct and to the point. Although when a student from University of Florida asked what situation we are in as future graduates he pointblank told her that we are graduating at the wrong time. Although this may be true, most of the students that were at the PMA are now aspiring to be in the produce industry. Which we learned from the convention will be facing a major job deficit in the years to come.

To finally walk on the show floor and see for yourself, what students and faculty from years past have been talking about was really an experience. The floor was grander than I had expected. The huge displays from Dole and Del Monte to name a few blew me away. I could not believe companies would put so much into these setups knowing they would only be there for a couple days.

The question I had earlier about why companies would setup such expensive displays was answered when I was able to walk the floor with my advisor. Jarrod Snider explained to me that all these displays are here to generate business and that they are all here trying to generate more business to keep the industry on its upward growth.

One thing I want to reiterate is how great of a networking event this truly was. I meet so many great people and the entire thing was planned out so well. There was always a time and place to meet someone new and form a contact. It's been well over a week now since we were together in Florida and I have managed to stay in touch with a great number of the key industry leaders I met, as well as the fellow students we meet at the event.

In closing, I just want to say I really do appreciate the opportunity I was given to attend Fresh Summit 2008. It was a great experience, one that has had a profound effect on my careers choices.