The 2017-2018 academic year was filled with opportunities for our students.

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Staff Acknowledgments

Contributing Writers
Josie Burgett, Ross Cady, Izak Christensen, Rebecca Frantz, Hannah Pagel, and Matt Stenzel

Graphic Designer
Courtney Davis

Reviewers
Lois Benning, Marcie Fahn, Barb McBreen, Clayton Mooney

Editor
Amanda Blair, Kevin Kimle
STARTUPS ROLE IN AGRICULTURE

Often when I meet new people and they inquire about what industry I work in, I beg off higher education and claim startup agriculture. Whether an agricultural technology business, a new farm, or an innovation project at an established agribusiness our days at the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative are firmly rooted in startups.

Is this startup activity important to agriculture? Important enough that I was asked to provide testimony to Congress last February by the U.S. House of Representatives Small Business Subcommittee on Agriculture, Energy, and Trade. The discussion centered on the impact of startups in agriculture and rural economies. I noted my view that the ‘sharktankification’ of America is a positive cultural event; the popularity of shows like Shark Tank and widespread understanding of entrepreneurial pitches providing a positive undercurrent for startup ideation.

The adoption of agricultural technologies developed by startups will result in a more productive and sustainable agriculture. The process of farm to fork will be more automated, connected, sensed, and traced. The ability to do and create new products, services and experiences will create opportunities that can work anywhere, including rural areas.

The most significant impact of startups, however, will come from Main Street businesses and farms. The entrepreneurs with high growth agtech businesses to have emerged from programs at the Iowa State University Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative are to be commended. But a much higher rate of new business formation and employment has come from the many alumni who have started a new livestock operation, crop farm, vegetable farm, seed business, trenching business, crop input supply business, etc. And many or most of these businesses are in rural areas. We estimate that twenty times more alumni have started these types of farms and businesses than have started higher risk/higher reward businesses.

Thanks to all who have contributed to the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative in the last year, and a thank you in advance to all we call on to help with programs in next year.

Shark tanks can work anywhere!
EXTERNAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

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Founder
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Shannon Latham
Vice President
Latham Seeds

Roxi Beck
Vice President
Look East PR

Ryan Pellett
President and CEO
J.D. Heiskell & Company

Hank Harris
Founder
Harris Vaccines

Dale Reicks
Founder
Reicks View Farms

Randy Hertz
CEO
Hertz Farm Management

Dave Rettig
Founder
Rembrandt Foods

Craig Hill
President
Iowa Farm Bureau Federation

Harry Stine
Founder and CEO
Stine Seed Company

Eric Holtkamp
Founder
ControlTech

Tray Thomas
Founding Partner
Context Network Solutions

Joe Kerns
Founder
Kerns & Associates

Roger Underwood
Founder
Becker Underwood
Riverwood Holdings
Each year the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative (AgEI) selects students to serve on the Student Leadership Team to help carry out the program’s mission. The team brings a unique perspective to planning and executing events, but also helps students develop professional skills. The 2017-18 team included students with diverse majors who all shared a passion for the AgEI program. During the 2017-2018 academic year the team focused on continuing traditions and creating new events. Collaboration was also a central focus as more events were created to strengthen the partnerships between AgEI programs, including the Student Leadership Team and the Student Incubator group.

Rebekah Sletten (‘19 agricultural business) joined the AgEI Student Leadership Team because of the opportunities to attend events and network with leaders and peers in other organizations.

"With the Student Leadership Team you have the chance to be creative and try new things each year,” Sletten says. “Even though students might not have their ‘big idea’ yet, it’s never too early to start working and thinking like an entrepreneur. The skills you learn through AgEI and the Student Leadership Team, are transferable to any career.”

-REBEKAH SLETTEN

Special Thanks to the AgEI Staff!

Amanda Blair
Program Coordinator II

Matt Clancy
Lecturer

Kevin Kimle
Director

Dave Krog
Senior Entrepreneur in Residence

Clayton Mooney
Junior Entrepreneur in Residence

Back L to R:
Izak Christensen
(‘18 agricultural business)
Geert Boelen
(‘19 agricultural business)
John Armstrong
(‘18 agricultural studies)
Will Stouffer
(‘18 agricultural business)
Connor Bollum
(‘19 agricultural business)

Front L to R:
Rebekah Sletten
(‘19 agricultural business)
Hannah Pagel
(‘18 agricultural and life sciences education)
Courtney Davis
(‘19 agricultural studies)
Josie Burgett
(‘18 agricultural business)
Agricultural Entrepreneurship Week began in 2017 as a way to celebrate and recognize entrepreneurs throughout Iowa. The proclamation was signed by Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds naming Sept. 26-28, 2017 “Agricultural Entrepreneurship Week” in Iowa.

Article by Josie Burgett ('18 agricultural business)
An event called “90 Seconds for $900 Business Pitch Competition” started the week on Sept. 26. The student competition was held on central campus with an audience of peers and three judges. The stakes were high for 16 brave participants that stood on stage and shared their business ideas. Participants had 90 seconds to pitch their business idea for the chance to win one of two $900 prizes.

Iowa State students from all majors and backgrounds joined in the fun and voted for their favorite idea. The judges presented Erik Dunteman with a first place award for his business idea “Wyaxis,” a growing technology designed for vertical farms.

“Winning was unexpected, to be honest. I progressed at each match-up by audience vote, but I knew my idea lacked much of the "sexy" factor of some startup ideas, and feared I would lose traction with the spectators. I was, however, confident in the numbers and in the end it is the numbers that speak for the viability of an idea. In the final round, we had the opportunity to be asked specific questions from a panel of experienced judges. With their eye for numbers, and ability to challenge the finalists with targeted questions, I got the chance to flex my startup muscles with quantified and supported answers. It was invigorating, and quite the confidence boost.”

The audience’s first place winner was Andrew Pauley, who presented an idea called “U Conceal It,” a home concealment furniture business for keeping your family and valuables safe.

After the competition, students were invited to visit the Curtiss Hall Rotunda to learn about programs at the Ag Entrepreneurship Informational Fair. Booths were set up for AgEI students to share about their experiences with the Entrepreneurial Studies minor, travel courses, the Student Incubator program and the National Agri-Marketing Association.
On Sept. 27 students shared dinner and conversations with key entrepreneurs and influencers at the “Welcome to the PIT: Entrepreneur Roundtable” event held in Curtiss Hall. Connor Bollum (’19 agricultural business) said he took away some insights entrepreneurial ideas about business.

“My biggest takeaway is that you don't have to start your own business to be an entrepreneur, constantly improving and innovating whether you own a business or within a larger organization is just as important.”
-CONNOR BOLLUM

Roundtable Guests Included:
- Mikayla Sullivan, KinoSol
- Karen and Joe Kerns, Kerns & Associates
- Craig Hill, Iowa Farm Bureau
- Natalina Sents, Meredith Corp
- Jay Lehr, Heartland Institute

After the roundtable event students listened to keynote speaker and economist, Jay Lehr, who gave a speech entitled “Are we Ready? The Frontiers of Ag Opportunity.”

On Sept. 27 agricultural entrepreneurs, investors, and professionals met at the ISU Research Park for the first AgEI Unconference. The event emphasized the dynamic exchange of information and ideas between participants, rather than following a conventionally structured program of events.

During the event, conversations were focused on creating a more vibrant ecosystem for agricultural entrepreneurs. Those serving as panelists and moderators during the four sessions included: Rob Trice, Mixing Bowl; Joel Harris, Ag Startup Engine; Peter Nelson, Ag Innovation Development Group; Tom Field, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Kyle Welborn, Yield Lab; Xiuping Li, Tenor Capital; Adam Koppes, Rural Vitality Fund, Iowa Farm Bureau; Mark White, Prairie Crest Capital; Jude Conway, Ag Ventures Alliance; Matthew Bell, Cultivian Sandbox; Sarah Nolet, Agthentic; Colin Hurd, SmartAg; Martin Gross, Gross-Wen Technologies; Andrew Uden, Quantified Ag; Joe Sweeney, Eagles Catch; Darwin Melnyk, Mavrx; Cliff Smith, Global Vet Link; Karen Kerns, Kerns & Associates; Reed Herzig, Monsant Growth Ventures; and Lee Addams, High Quest Partners.

Steve Kenney with the Hancock Agricultural Investment Group said he enjoyed the Unconference.

“I enjoyed listening to all the high quality ideas within the Ag Tech space. We, at Hancock, do not focus on Ag Tech and areas where we could be investing to learn more. I appreciate that there is a deep sector within Ag Tech that Hancock needs to start to review and think about how to access the space as an institutional investment manager.”
-STEVE KENNEY
We would like to thank all who played a role in making Ag Entrepreneurship Week a success. It was a week full of learning, connecting, and celebration of agricultural entrepreneurs!

Supporters of Ag Entrepreneurship Week at Iowa State University included:

UNDERWOOD FAMILY FOUNDATION
BRUCE RASTETTER
IOWA FARM BUREAU
IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
PAPPAJOHN CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP
WOMEN IN AG LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Article by Rebecca Frantz (‘21 agricultural business)

The Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Women in Ag Leadership Conference was held November 27-28, 2017 at the Iowa State Center in Ames, Iowa.

Keynote speaker Roxi Beck, director of the Center for Food Integrity and vice president of Look East, began the conference with a presentation entitled, “Winning in Complex Conversations.” Beck is also a graduate of the Greater Des Moines Leadership Institute, past president of the National Agri-Marketing Association, and serves on the advisory board for the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative.

Jeanne Bernick, agricultural consultant and business specialist for the national accounting and finance firm K•Coe Isom, brought her expertise associated with 20 years as a Farm Journal Media editor to her presentation, “How Remarkable Women Lead with Confidence.”

Courtney Davis (‘19 agricultural studies) was one of seven students that represented the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative program at the conference. Davis enjoyed hearing women speak about their experiences in agriculture and shared some of her takeaways from the conference.

Davis said listening to the panel discussions on the hardship, determination, and creativity in running a dairy operation really resonated with her.

“Help others and let others help you,” Davis said. “Everyone has something worth sharing and people are looking to help young professionals learn from what they have done, so don’t be afraid to ask.”

-COURTNEY DAVIS
FALL PREVIEW NIGHT

When fall semester is in full swing, students take part in various AgEI activities. To showcase these activities and efforts of students involved in the AgEI program, an AgEI Preview Night was held on December 4, 2017. The featured program for the night was the AgEI Business Incubator, a program developed for students working on their own business ventures.

Throughout the semester, the AgEI Business Incubator provides young entrepreneurs with accountability, resources in books, panels, workspace, mentors, as well as industry connections for customers and advisors. Though students have often mentioned that the greatest value from being an incubator member is experiencing the ups and downs of entrepreneurship with peers who are going through similar experiences with their own business.

During the event, AgEI incubator members each took 90 seconds—the length of most elevator pitch competitions—to share details about their business and what they focused on during the semester. Members of the incubator all focused on conducting customer discovery interviews during the fall semester in hopes of learning more about their customers before moving onto other topics. The knowledge gained from these interviews are critical for the students as they can have a drastic impact on the success of a business. Fall semester customer discovery interviewees included gardeners, military veterans, ice cream enthusiasts, brides-to-be, zoo and aquarium directors, among others. The business incubator is led by Clayton Mooney, Junior Entrepreneur-in-Residence with AgEI.

“The number one reason startups fail is product/market fit—you either build something no one wants or you forget to figure out what people are willing to pay for your product or service,” says Mooney. “That’s why incubator members spend an entire semester assembling hypotheses around their venture’s value propositions, and then proving and disproving their hypotheses with real potential customers. In the long run, customer discovery interviews save time and money, as well as help to develop valuable soft skills along the way.”

-CLAYTON MOONEY

After highlighting the experiences of AgEI Business Incubator members, other students representing the AgEI Student Leadership Team and National Agri-Marketing Association Student Chapter provided updates on their respective activities and achievements.

The Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative is grateful for each student’s desire to be entrepreneurial and for allowing us to help play a part in their journey.
AgEI INVOLVEMENT SPARKS ALUMNI ENTREPRENEURIAL CAREER

Article by Ross Cady (‘21 agricultural business)

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ALEX HAGE

Alex Hage, a 2016 agricultural business graduate and active Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative (AgEI) member, never anticipated an entrepreneurial class would impact his life so profoundly.

Hage grew up in Inwood, Iowa and didn’t come close to an agricultural experience until moving onto an acreage in 2003. It was during that time that Hage’s interest in agriculture sparked. While he was a student at Iowa State University, Hage was constantly looking for entrepreneurial ways to utilize his degree in agricultural business. In the fall of 2014, Hage took the most impactful and important class of his life, Economics 334: Entrepreneurship in Agriculture. The course, Hage claims, initiated his involvement with AgEI.

“The class inspired me to get more involved in the program and actually pursue some of the entrepreneurial ideas that I had put together that semester,” Hage says.

One of those ideas focused on his family’s vegetable farming operation. Hage noticed the tumbling price of commodity markets, but knew his family could still benefit financially from producing food that wasn’t subject to such a volatile market.

“I saw the writing on the wall early on and this is why I focused on vegetable production. Vegetable production is higher profit per acre and we didn’t have much left after the sale. We are now around 5 acres of tillable soil for vegetable production,” Hage says.

While he was enrolled in Econ 334, Hage was also an intern at Early Morning Harvest in Panora, Iowa, where he worked as a greenhouse manager. Hage was looking for ways to integrate aquaponics for vegetable and fish production, while looking for new ways to create income for Early Morning Harvest.

“It wasn’t a fancy internship that came with a truck and an expense account, but it was a huge learning opportunity for me,” Hage says.
The ultimate solution for an alternative revenue came from using Early Morning Harvest’s best products to their fullest extent.

“They were incredible at growing basil, sage, rosemary, and many other herbs; so, after some thought, we devised a plan to start selling dried herbs. Drying the herbs was an opportunity to reduce waste and increase shelf life for a product that they had an abundance of and they are still packaging and selling these herbs today,” Hage says.

The biggest takeaway from the experience wasn’t about the company, but rather the experience that led him to where he is today.

“The internship was not a requirement. It was a direct result of the spark that the class gave me. The class nudged me in the right direction to pursue the things that I was passionate about that I could see myself turning into a business,” Hage says.

Hage is still harvesting vegetables, but also serves as the CEO of Digital Community Holdings, Inc., a company his father started in the late 1980’s. Hage has expanded the operation to include five magazines: Farm Country Trader, Car Truck Trader, Minnesota Cars, Trucker’s Choice, and AD-Venture, all have an accompanying website. Other business upgrades include custom development work and licensing that use the company’s software to connect buyers and sellers in their local markets.

Without the AgEI program, Hage says, he would not be where he is now in his career.

“AgEI was crucial in the development of my professional career. The activities got me out of my box and boosted my confidence in public speaking,” Hage says. “We were pushed to solve complex problems. I also enjoyed the networking opportunities. My only regret was not getting involved in the program sooner.” -ALEX HAGE
ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSE TURNS INTO THE DAILY GRIND FOR ALUMNA

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: ELIZABETH HOPPE

When people think about common agricultural startups, they rarely think of coffee, but for Elizabeth Hoppe, it has become her livelihood.

Hoppe graduated from Iowa State University in the spring of 2013 with degrees in marketing and finance, and a minor in agricultural business. She wanted to return home to Emmetsburg, Iowa, after graduation and accepted a marketing position for a company in the area.

When she returned to her hometown she found the one thing she missed was a local coffee shop. She began revisiting a few entrepreneurial ideas she created as an undergraduate in Kevin Kimlé's Economics 334: Entrepreneurship in Agriculture course. In the class she had developed a business plan for a bowling alley in Emmetsburg, but she didn't realize that her research and ideas would eventually be used to open her own business.

In the summer of 2016, Emmetsburg held a Dream-to-Reality contest with the goal of bringing more small business to the community. After hearing about the contest, Hoppe and her husband decided to enter.

They used the research and concepts she learned in her Economics 334 class to present her coffee shop idea to a panel of judges. The couple won a $10,000 startup fund and the support of the local community to pursue the coffee shop endeavor. Within three months of winning the Dream-to-Reality contest, Hoppe resigned from her marketing position, put an offer down on a building space and opened DejaBrew on December 12, 2016.

Today, DejaBrew is successfully meeting the coffee needs of Emmetsburg and surrounding towns. Along with brewed coffee, DejaBrew also serves lattes, smoothies and light breakfast and lunch.

DejaBrew customers can order their favorite brew from Hoppe every morning. Hoppe says an average day begins early.
“Either myself or my husband are at the shop at 5:30 a.m. and then I am there working the counter until closing at 2 p.m.,” Hoppe says. “After business hours, I do the managing, marketing and other important aspects of owning a business. At some point I would like to take a more managerial role, but right now I enjoy working the counter alongside five part-time workers.” -ELIZABETH HOPPE

Hoppe plans to add additional space to the building and add an outdoor seating area for customers. Looking back at her adventure of starting a new business, Hoppe says she wouldn’t have been able to pursue this idea without the support of her family, community and the many resources that helped her get started.
Resolving labor issues in the forage industry was the challenge for students competing in the 2018 Vermeer Innovation Challenge.

Students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences formed teams of four and were given one week to brainstorm, collaborate, and prepare. During March 2018, the teams were judged on creativity, innovation, feasibility, and product value.

Ideas varied from safe guards on hay wagons, front and back attachments on skid loaders, mechanized claws to place bales, and using a nitrogen freeze spray to slow forage decay. Each team brought a unique angle to the table to solve labor issues in the forage industry.

Every team participating in the challenge received a prize. Prizes ranged from lunch with Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds at Terrace Hill, dinner with Harry Stine, the founder of Stine Seed, and dinner at the Knoll with Iowa State University President Wendy Wintersteen.

The winners of the challenge, Hannah Pagel (’18 agriculture and life sciences education), Rebecca Frantz (’21 agricultural business), Ryan Calvert (’20 agriculture and life sciences education), and Hans Riensche (’21 agricultural business), presented an application called “Bale Me Out.” The app is based on the Uber concept and focused on two goals. The first was to help farmers connect with employees and the second was to expand the resource pool for machinery and allow farmers to share equipment.

“The challenge was a very cool experience and taught me about issues that I never thought about before,” Calvert said. “This challenge helped me create ways to solve these issues and think about other problems we need to solve. Overall, I had a lot of fun with my team coming up with ideas and seeing how creative we could get.” - RYAN CALVERT

ABOVE: From L to R: Dr. David Acker (Associate Dean), Hannah Pagel, Ryan Calvert, Rebecca Frantz, Shelley Taylor (Associate Director Study Abroad), Josh Vrieze (Vermeer Forage Product Manager), Shawn Wang (Vermeer Forage Product Manager). Not pictured: Hans Riensche
FARMER ENTREPRENEUR ROUNDTABLE

Article by Matt Stenzel (’21 agricultural business)

The annual Farmer Entrepreneur Roundtable event allowed students to interact with invited alumni that are currently active in their own operation or a have returned to the family farm.

After dinner, students and the invited farmers discussed topics including farm management, financing operations, and getting started in farming. This event was one of many that AgEI puts on to encourage students to advance both educationally and professionally. Kayleigh Koch (’19 agricultural business) shares why she enjoyed attending the roundtable event:

“I learned that not every farmer comes to college knowing that they will farm after graduation. The path to farming is unique for everyone. One farmer at the event was joining the family farm, while another was a woman starting a dairy beef herd,” Koch says. “As a female in agriculture who hasn't been planning to go home and farm, this roundtable changed my perspective and gave me the confidence to consider it as a career path in the future.”  - KAYLEIGH KOCH

Entrepreneurs attending the event included:

• Garrett Ley, Geisler Farms
  (’13 agricultural Business)
• Shannon Hoyle
  (’13 public service & administration in agriculture)
• Brittany Weaver
  (’12 agricultural business)
• Ethan Lambert
  (’14 animal science)
• Jared Achen
  (’11 agricultural business)

Ley was a former member of AgEI and attended many similar events as a student:

“As a student, my participation in these types of events was vital to the direction I went with my entrepreneurial endeavors. By engaging in these roundtable discussions, I feel if I am able to contribute to the future success of those students involved I’ve done my job.”  - GARRETT LEY
TRAVEL COURSE GOES BEYOND BOUNDARIES TO UNDERSTAND CRISPR

LEFT:
(Back row L to R):
Sean Mears
(’18 agricultural stuides)
Will Stouffer
(’18 agricultural business)
Leonardo Casaroli
(’18 graduate student, food economics)
Alberto Basilissi
(’18 graduate student, food economics)
Sam Gorden
(’19 animal science),
Josh Thompson
(’18 agronomy and environmental studies).
(Front row, L to R):
Kayleigh Koch
(’18 agricultural business)
Hannah Pagel
(’18 agriculture and life sciences education)
Rebecca Frantz
(’21 agricultural business)
Whitley Frieden
(’18 agricultural studies)

Students visited the Redwood Forest

Students with Dr. Alison Van Eenennaam at UC-Davis

Fun in the sand at Bodega Bay Beach
CRISPR is a revolutionary technology with the potential to drastically change and advance the agricultural industry, including improvements in disease and drought resistance in both crops and animals, animal husbandry and welfare advancements, nutrition, extend perishable foods’ shelf life, and much more.

During the spring semester, 11 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences students had the opportunity to take an in-depth look at CRISPR (Clustered, Regularly, Interspaced, Short, Palindromic Repeats), a new innovative genetic engineering technology.

The technology is new to the market and consumer knowledge is limited, which led the students to want to find a way to share information and facts about CRISPR. After meeting with researchers and CRISPR experts, the class decided to produce an educational video explaining the technology to help consumers make informed decisions.

The students began by learning about CRISPR experts around the nation. For two months, the students held weekly video calls with experts and professionals asking questions to learn about CRISPR.

Students also met with experts at companies utilizing the technology during an eight day visit to California. The students visited with experts including: Alison Van Eenennaam, cooperative extension specialist with the Department of Animal Genomics and Biotechnology at the University of California - Davis; Steve Kanner, Caribou Biosciences chief scientific officer; Ann Blechl, USDA Crop Improvement and Genetics Unit research leader; and researchers Myeong-Je Cho, Alex Schultink, and Kevin Doxsen from the University of California-Berkeley Innovative Genomic Institute.

The students interviewed more than 30 experts about the topic and then consolidated the information into a video.

“This class taught me about the science behind this technology from how it is being used to solve agricultural issues to how to communicate with the public about these issues.” - HANNAH PAGEL

The trip to California provided opportunities to meet with experts, gain a better understanding about the technology, and get ideas on how to share that understanding with the public.

If you’re interested in viewing the video made by these students, visit us at www.agei.cals.iastate.edu.
The Iowa State University National Agri-Marketing Association Student Marketing Team participated in the NAMA Student Marketing Team Competition in April held in Kansas City, Missouri. The competition is held in conjunction with the Agri-Marketing Conference and provides students the opportunity to network with peers and professionals, explore career opportunities, and participate in the student marketing competition.

The marketing competition gives students the opportunity to gain highly applicable experience creating a marketing plan complete with financials, along with a professional pitch presentation paired with digital and print marketing materials. This year’s marketing team was inspired by AccuGrain, a product created by Iowa State and AgEI alumna, Ryan Augustine (’12 agricultural studies). The auger-mounted x-ray unit was renamed "GrainXact" by the team for the competition. This product precisely measures grain flow and delivers data to a touchscreen display, increasing marketing advantage and operator safety for farmers throughout the midwestern United States. The team competed against 28 other student marketing team and advanced as one of the top 12 teams into the semi-finals.

The team was coached by chapter advisors, Amanda Blair (Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative program coordinator) and Marcie Fahn (student recruitment and retention specialist in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences).

The NAMA Student Chapter received many awards for the breadth of chapter activities. These awards included: third place John Deere Signature Award, second place Outstanding Student Chapter Award, and performance awards in the areas of Chapter Communications and Fundraising/Financial Management. In addition, two members were selected as recipients of scholarships from the National NAMA Foundation.

The annual banquet was held prior to nationals and proved to be the highlight of the year. Members and their families gathered at the Iowa State University Alumni Building for a delicious breakfast. During the banquet the chapter officer team presented the year in review paired with a sideshow of chapter activities followed by the presentation from the marketing team. The banquet concluded with the presentation of the prestigious member-voted chapter awards. Awards were presented to three members for their outstanding involvement and leadership within the organization. The award recipients included: Outstanding Senior Member, Hannah Pagel; Outstanding Current Member, Courtney Davis; and Outstanding New Member, Rebecca Frantz.

Team members included:

Ryan Calvert (’21 agricultural communications);
Emily Campbell (’20 agricultural studies); Courtney Davis (’19 agricultural studies); Rebecca Frantz (’21 agricultural business); Jordan Geis-Agar (’19 agricultural business); Kristi Goedken (’20 agricultural communications); Emma Harper (’21 agricultural communications); Ashley Moore (’19 agronomy and agricultural communications); Kayla Morgan (’19 agricultural business); Hannah Pagel (’18 agricultural and life sciences education); Rebekah Sletten (’19 agricultural business and international agriculture); Elizabeth Smith (’21 agricultural business); Matt Stenzel (’21 agricultural business); Megan Striegel (’19 agricultural communications); Daiton Tietz (’18 agricultural communications); Megan Warin (’21 agricultural business).

Team member, Erica Baier, a junior in agricultural education, was elected to serve as a National FFA officer. She finished out the fall 2017 semester on the team before leaving to pursue her remarkable journey as the 2018 National FFA Secretary.

The team was coached by chapter advisors, Amanda Blair (Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative program coordinator) and Marcie Fahn (student recruitment and retention specialist in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences).

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**LEFT:** 2018 ISU NAMA Student marketing team after advancing into the semi-final rounds.

**Back row L to R:**
Ryan Calvert, Hannah Pagel, Kristi Goedken, Ashley Moore, Emma Harper, Courtney Davis, Jordan Geis-Agar, Rebecca Frantz, Matt Stenzel.

**Front Row L to R:**
Megan Striegel, Megan Warin, Elizabeth Smith, Rebekah Frantz, Kayla Morgan, Daiton Tietz.

**Chapter award winners L to R:**
Rebecca Frantz, Hannah Pagel, Courtney Davis

**Chapter members with the five awards won at NAMA Nationals**

**Hannah Pagel and Courtney Davis, NAMA Scholarship Recipients**

**RIGHT: 2018 officer team**
From L to R: **Jordan Geis-Agar** (Treasurer), **Daiton Tietz** (State Correspondent), **Kristi Goedken** (Secretary), **Rebekah Sletten** (3rd Vice President), **Courtney Davis** (President), **Elizabeth Smith** (CALS Council representative), **Ashley Moore** (1st Vice President), **Rebecca Frantz** (2nd Vice President).
In March 2018, the ISU Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative and the ISU Pappajohn Center for Entrepreneurship once again collaborated for a weekend competition, the ISU INNOVATION PRIZE. More than 45 students and community members participated by creating solutions to challenges in education, agriculture, and global impact.

The incentive competition was inspired by the XPRIZE Foundation model, a global platform to solve the world’s most pressing issues. The competition at Iowa State was held March 30 – 31 at the ISU Economic Development Core Facility in the ISU Research Park. The competition theme for the event was "Innovation at Iowa State" with three challenge categories: AgTech, EdTech, or Global Impact.

The AgTech category challenged students to increase global productivity and decrease the impact on land, energy, water, and the environment, while the EdTech category challenged students to design and reinvent learning quality and value in an age of accelerating technology.

The newly added Global Impact category challenged students to think more broadly on how we improve the quality of life and continue to help solve urgent issues all around the globe.

"We wanted to encourage BIG ideas for solving some of the world's biggest problems. With the Iowa State Pappajohn Center for Entrepreneurship as our partner, the ISU Innovation Prize brings together those willing to put in the teamwork over an action-packed weekend. It's an incredible event."

- CLAYTON MOONEY (Jr. Entrepreneur-in-Residence)

During the event, participants formed small teams, based on their interests and abilities. Research shows that smaller teams are able to brainstorm and consistently outperform larger groups when it comes to innovation.

The brainstorming sessions were hosted by David Tominsky, entrepreneur and community builder based in Cedar Rapids. David serves as the Managing Director of the Iowa Startup Acceleator and had a 15-year career in the technical staffing industry before joining the ISA in 2014.
AgEI SHOWCASE NIGHT  
Article by Rebecca Frantz (‘21 agricultural business)

Faculty, staff, and students gathered at the Memorial Union on April 23, 2018 to share memories while reflecting on the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative (AgEI) program and student accomplishments this year.

The evening began with the AgEI Student Leadership Team recapping activities held throughout the school year.

Following the Student Leadership Team’s review, Courtney Davis, (‘18 agricultural studies) President of the Iowa State National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) Student Chapter provided a presentation about the team’s achievements during NAMA Nationals and the awards brought home by the team. To read more about the NAMA Student Chapter, turn to page 19 - 20.

Clayton Mooney, Junior Entrepreneur-in-Residence, provided an overview of the Student Incubator Program, student business ideas and achievements. Incubator students then presented their ideas, accomplishments, and future career and business goals. The student incubator members include: Whitley Frieden (‘18 agricultural studies), with The Barn at Willow Creek; Cassie Krebill (‘18 dairy science), with Half Grass Creamery; Chris James (‘20 business), with True 360; Andrew Albrecht (‘19 agricultural business), with Cobb River Distillery; Rachel Wilkens (‘18 agricultural business); with Green Zone Farms, and Rebecca Lyons (‘18 agricultural studies), with Lunchsox.

“The best thing about the Incubator Program is the community of student entrepreneurs I am surrounded by. We are a unique bunch, but because we are going through similar things with our businesses, we are beneficial to one another. I am thankful for the friendships I’ve formed through the incubator.”  
- REBECCA LYONS (‘18 agricultural studies)

Dave Krog, Senior Entrpreneur-in-Residence, recognized students who worked on the AgEI domestic travel course, which focused on providing consumer education about CRISPR, a new gene editing technology. The class produced a video about CRISPR and shared their video at the event. For more information on this program, turn to pages 17 - 18.

The AgEI Spring Showcase was a success. To wrap up the evening, AgEI leaders congratulated the students involved and wished them the best of luck in their future endeavors.
JOHN ARMSTRONG
(‘18 agricultural studies)
Started his own business, Strong Source Ag Services LLC, where he works as a sales representative for Corteva selling Pioneer seed. He hopes to add crop insurance and protection into his business.

“I was able to open up my mind to think and dream like an entrepreneur. I had the ability to connect with many people who had been in my footsteps and could help me answer the tough questions from their first hand experiences.”

IZAK CHRISTENSEN
(‘18 agricultural business, agronomy & M.B.A.)
Is currently working for Summit Agricultural Group located in Alden, Iowa, as an investment analyst. His older siblings’ involvement in the program made Izak want to see what opportunities were available to him.

“Being a self-starter and entrepreneurial thinker is something that is especially valuable whether you start your own business right out of school or work in industry.”

WILL STOUFFER
(‘18 agricultural business)
Accepted a full time position with Cargill in an egg processing plant in Lake Odessa, Michigan as their operations management associate. His AgEI journey began when he took a Small Business Management class and an Entrepreneurship in Agriculture class with Kevin Kimle.

“The biggest benefit I saw was the domestic travel courses because they gave me an avenue to apply what I was learning in all of my classes and improve my understanding of different concepts as well as thinking processes.”
When thinking about Iowa State University, students are familiar with the phrase “Choose your adventure.” These three individuals took this phrase literally and made the most of their time at Iowa State. Armstrong, Christensen, and Stouffer credit their success to the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative (AgEI) program for introducing them to the endless opportunities available.

Having an agricultural background can help pave the way to success. Pursuing degrees in agriculture made sense for Armstrong, Christensen, and Stouffer. They continued to expand their knowledge by challenging themselves. These students were involved in many events and activities which helped them understand new ideas and opportunities.

These students were actively involved in all aspects of the AgEI program. These opportunities allowed them to become self-starters, think like entrepreneurs, enhance communications skills, and network with successful professionals. While Stouffer, Christensen and Armstrong are busy in their full-time roles, they continue to use what they learned in the AgEI program.

An Interview With Our May 2018 Graduates

**QUESTION:** What advice would you give to students who are unsure whether or not they should become involved with the AgEI program?

**Armstrong:** "Even if you don’t think entrepreneurship is something you want to do, the people in the office can help you become a better problem solver and help you think in different ways. It allows you to find like-minded individuals in the industry."

**Christensen:** "Just say “yes” to the opportunities that the program has to offer. Don’t over-think it. If you give it a try, you will find out that the people involved in the program are great to work with and there is a plethora of ways to get involved whether you have a business concept in mind or not."

**Stouffer:** Get your toes wet and have an open mind. AgEI isn’t just a place for people wanting to start a company; it’s for anyone who wants to learn and grow professionally. AgEI has something for everyone in any major.

**QUESTION:** How do you plan to implement what you have learned into your new lifestyle and career?

**Armstrong:** "Since I started my own business, I rely on my networking abilities to strengthen it more than ever before. While ‘what’ you know is important, ‘who’ you know will help you continually interact with new individuals. I will continue to work hard to showcase my passion for agriculture knowing there is a reward at the end."

**Christensen:** I will continue to stay in touch with the professionals I met through my involvement with AgEI. These experiences were a highlight of my time within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and I’ll remain involved to ensure future students have the same opportunities that were presented to me.

**Stouffer:** As an operations management associate, my job is to learn how the plant works and find ways to improve processes. I will directly apply what I learned in my economics classes as well as different ways of thinking. We were taught about different agricultural topics and incorporating entrepreneurial thinking into any job we have.
MINA TAHERI  FarmlandFinder

Mina Taheri is pursuing a dual master of business administration and management information systems degree from Iowa State University. She spent her summer interning for FarmlandFinder where she shared the exciting work and valuable experience she had at the startup company.

FarmlandFinder is a technology company that develops products and services to make farmland information accessible. The startup has set out to discover new ways to make finding land information easy and accessible for farmland professionals. The website, Farmlandfinder.com, has created an online search engine and marketplace for agricultural real estate.

Taheri shared that working for FarmlandFinder was a positive learning opportunity. Her work consisted of maintaining a clean database and making sure the information FarmlandFinder shares is accurate and up-to-date.

For more information visit:
farmlandfinder.com

DAVID LIVINGSTON  Eagle’s Catch

David Livingston, a senior in animal ecology at Iowa State University, was looking for an internship that would give him a hands-on experience working in aquaculture. He found that experience at Eagle’s Catch, a startup in Ellsworth, Iowa, that produces tilapia fish. Eagle’s Catch is located on 10 acres with four acres used for greenhouse production. Meeting their goal of stocking fish in the facility during summer 2018, the facility has begun full fish production.

Livingston is grateful for his internship and shared how Kevin Kimle, Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative director, helped him find an internship that would allow him to work with fish.

“Day to day operations can vary depending on the situations. I spent some time helping feed the fish and doing water tests,” Livingston says. “Everyday is different and provided a new opportunity to learn something new.”

For more information contact:
Joe Sweeney, joe@eagles-catch.com
**HANNAH PAGEL** Ag News Daily

Senior in agriculture and life sciences education, Hannah Pagel enjoyed her summer interning for Ag News Daily, a podcast channel posting daily talk shows about agricultural topics.

Pagel wanted to spend her summer doing an internship that was ‘out of the box’ and would allow her to feel like she is part of the day-to-day operations. Pagel spent her days hosting the Ag News Daily podcast alongside founders Mike Pearson and Delaney Howell. Not only could you hear Pagel daily on the podcast, but she also spent her time researching news articles related to Washington D.C., trade, policy, and markets. One of Pagel’s favorite parts of the job was working with the content and seeing it come together first hand.

“This internship taught me a wide variety of things. From the podcast, to logo designs, to interviewing, having a conversation with someone and really listening to the details; all of these things have greatly improved my skills as I prepare for my future career in the agricultural field,” Pagel says.

For more information visit: [agnewsdaily.com](http://agnewsdaily.com)

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**RACHEL ZUMBAH** SwineTech

Rachel Zumbach, a sophomore in agriculture communications, sought an internship that would allow her to learn more about swine markets and the swine industry as a whole. Through the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative, Zumbach landed an internship with SwineTech, an agricultural technology company located in Cedar Rapids, Iowa.

SwineTech uses artificial intelligence and sensory-based technology to reduce one of the main causes of piglet mortality, the mother accidentally laying on her piglets. Using advanced technology, SwineTech has developed a product called SmartGuard, which is a proactive solution to helping address the challenge of piglet mortality.

Zumbach experienced several areas of the business, from sales to marketing and more. Zumbach says day-to-day operations included assisting in the management of SwineTech’s social media channels, updating the website, and working with experts in the swine field.

“The work environment SwineTech provided is fun, innovative, and engaging. Matthew Rooda and Abraham Espinoza provide an attitude of ambition that is replicated by all employees in the company.”

For more information visit: [swinetechnologies.com](http://swinetechnologies.com)
Kimle said additional sources of venture capital, especially from sources based in Iowa, as well as other funding resources would bolster the state’s climate for ag startups. He also said increasing exposure of Iowa students to entrepreneurship in college and high school could pay dividends in the future as well. He highlighted a course he teaches at Iowa State that requires students to develop three concepts for ag startup businesses over the course of a semester and then deliver a presentation on the concept with the most potential.

Kimle said Iowa’s rural communities would benefit from such investments due to the resultant advances in agriculture technology as well as from the possibility of new startups locating in rural communities.

“Rural communities should be able to participate in various ways, and that’s going to make for a better, more prosperous rural America,” he said following the hearing.

Two members of Iowa’s congressional delegation took part in the hearing. Rep. Rod Blum of Iowa’s 1st district serves as the subcommittee’s chairman, and Rep. Steve King of Iowa’s 4th district sits on the panel as well.

Kimle’s full testimony as well as video footage of the hearing are available on the House Small Business Committee’s website at: https://smallbusiness.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=400583
BUSINESS BEYOND BORDERS

Article by Rebecca Frantz ('21 agricultural business)

Continuing the “Business Beyond Borders” theme, the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative (AgEI) had the opportunity to expand the program and bring more attendees to the United States this year.

In July 2018, Brazilian agriculturalists traveled to Ames, Iowa, to participate in the “Business Beyond Borders” series. During the week long conference students met with agribusiness professionals and got the chance to tour different companies throughout the week.

Once the week was over, AgEI staff traveled to San Francisco to meet the first group about their second year in the Business Beyond Borders series. The second year students were able to focus on agricultural technological advances that could be implemented in Brazil.

Throughout the week, attendees toured California agricultural areas, met with industry professionals, and visited companies. Tours included, many startup businesses in the Silicon Valley area, Tanimura & Antle Farms, D’Arrigo Bros of California, Climate Corporation, Blue River Technology, and TerrAvion.

Many thanks to the participants, speakers, and businesses that made these events possible!

Speakers in Iowa included:
- Kevin Kimle, Iowa State University
- Karen Kerns, Kerns & Associates
- Matheus Almeida, Dom Cabral Foundation
- Bob Riley, Feed Energy
- Gil Depaula, Iowa State University
- Bruce Rastetter, Summit Agricultural Group
- Joe Kerns, Kerns & Associates
- Chris Boessen, Iowa State University
- Chad Hart, Iowa State University
- Dustin Weiner, Landus Cooperative
- Ryan Risdal, Landus Cooperative
- Ari Freisinger, Highfields Capital
- Kyle Hansen, Hertz Farm Management
- Jon Scharingson, Renewable Energy Group
- Jeff Bentley, Ag Leader Technology
- Sam Worley, Ag Leader Technology
- Wendong Zhang, Iowa State University
- Dave Miller, Iowa Farm Bureau Federation
- Gary Weihs, Kincanon & Reed

Speakers in California included:
- Kevin Kimle, Iowa State University
- Matheus Almeida, Dom Cabral Foundation
- Karen Kerns, Kerns & Associates
- Grant Lundberg, Lundberg Family Farms
- Leonardo Carvalho, Solinftec
- Dave Gonzalez, Descarte Labs
- Francisco De Frutos, BiomeMakers
- Climate Corporation
- Rob Trice; The Mixing Bowl
- Marcelo Murachovsky, Bov Control
- Robert Morris, TerrAvion
- Kerry Varney, Tanimura & Antle
- D’Arrigo Bros of California
- Dave Adams. Dave Adams Consulting
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Want to work together to inspire students and impact the future of agriculture through the programs offered by the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative?

LEARN MORE AT www.agei.cals.iastate.edu

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VISIT OUR OFFICE 0030 Curtiss Hall

Gifts to support the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative could fund the following strategic priorities:

**STUDENT ACTIVITIES**

Funding will support popular events including the Entrepreneur Roundtable, Farmer Entrepreneur Roundtable, Pitch Competitions, conferences and professional development opportunities, among other new activities, including student preparation workshops and Agricultural Entrepreneurship Week.

**STUDENT INCUBATOR**

The Student Incubator provides resources and mentoring vital to success in moving an idea to a viable business. Support will provide incentive funds for students to develop business ideas as well as shape and formalize business concepts. Funding will also support special events in areas such as creative business concept development, sales skills development, and prototype development.

**ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERNSHIPS**

Internship offerings include the summer internship program, in which students are placed with early-stage companies for 12 weeks during the summer. The Semester Inc. internship is similar, students are placed with early-stage companies during the school year.

**INTERNATIONAL STUDY**

Funding will support participation in internships and other international student learning opportunities.
We would like to thank all who play a role in helping the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative be a success. Our thank you list can now only be read with a magnifying glass, so please accept this as our recognition of your special efforts! Without the tremendous support we receive from our donors, volunteers, mentors, and friends, our activities would not be possible. We are proud of all the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative has achieved during the past year, and look forward to sharing future achievements with you!
BECOME A PARTNER OF agri

For more information on how we can work together to inspire students and impact the future of agriculture through the programs offered by the Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative, visit us on campus in 0030 Curtiss Hall, on the web at www.agei.cals.iastate.edu, emailing us at agei@iastate.edu, or calling us at 515-294-4945.