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Farmers News & Information

Farmers sponsors university course on insurance company operations

During the Fall 2013 semester, Farmers sponsored a successful undergraduate elective course on insurance company operations through the Department of Finance of the College of Business and Economics at California State University Northridge ("CSUN"). Executive sponsors **Jeff Reinig**, CPCU - Head of Personal Lines Underwriting, and **Bill Riedley**, CPCU - Head of Commercial Lines Field Underwriting, and course facilitator **Jim Taylor**, CPCU - Senior Corporate Counsel, partnered with Professor David Russell, Director of the Center for Risk and Insurance at CSUN, and with the Los Angeles CPCU Society Chapter, on all aspects of the course from concept through implementation.

Sponsorship of the CSUN Center for Risk and Insurance benefits Farmers in numerous ways. In addition to being aligned with Farmers' brand campaign, actively supporting insurance education at the university level furthers the Company's community relations efforts. Additionally, direct interaction with today's undergraduate students - many of whom are tomorrow's business leaders - provides a perfect opportunity to profile insurance as a career of choice, and Farmers as an employer of choice.

Using the text and course guide for the CPCU 520 exam ("Insurance Operations") as a backbone, the Farmers course surveyed all aspects of property casualty insurance company operations. Class session topics spanned the gamut from property claims to loss control, and from regulatory affairs to strategic planning, and finance. What was really unique about the course, however, was that the various class sessions were taught by different Farmers employees - each a subject matter expert in the area being taught. "It was great to have a hand in developing and sharing my experience with these students," said Jeff Reinig. "Not only were we able to expose them to the value of CPCU curriculum, but we able to show them how it applied in the real world and how they could be successful in the insurance industry."

Professor Burke's Colleagues

Identifying potential speakers from the Farmers ranks was, perhaps, the simplest part of the whole effort. As Bill Riedley puts it: *"I was particularly impressed with how easy it was to find engaged and knowledgeable employees willing to give up their time to teach the next generation of business leaders, and to be part of Farmers' efforts to give back to the local community."*

Although most presenters worked alone, we had several successful "tag teams" leading class sessions. One of the most memorable teaching duos included **Shawn Carder**, CPCU and **Patrick Carder**, who presented a session on "Adjusting Property Insurance Claims". This father and son team, both Farmers Claims professionals, did a great job representing the Company, and in conveying their material. Patrick, a recent college graduate himself, was able to establish a real connection with the students by bringing in "props" from some of his claims, and by highlighting the cutting edge technology he uses in his work. On collaborating with his dad, Patrick says: *"...having a professional like my dad involved in the class is the greatest advantage that Farmers has in opportunities like this. Thank you again for this experience. Farmers really nailed this one."*

Another highlight of the course involved a "field trip" to the University of Farmers. On October 21, 2013, approximately 40 CSUN Insurance Studies students (from both our class and the lower division Insurance Survey course) were treated to a tour of the facility, and learned firsthand why the U of F receives such high praise, year after year. Dr. Russell summed up the experience as follows: *"All I can say is WOW! Thank you so much for hosting such a large group of our students. All of the students left the building with smiles. And several told me that a career in Insurance was no longer far-fetched. Just like the Farmers volunteers in Joplin, it says a lot about Farmers that you share your time and resources with our students in this way. I think Insurance as a career, and Farmers in particular, had a very good day, indeed."*

A hearty thanks to all of the Farmers personnel who participated in, or actively supported, the course:

Susan Bithell	Speaker
Patrick Carder	Speaker
Shawn Carder	Speaker
Pete Ducich	Speaker
Doris Dunn	Speaker
Ilene Haber	Sponsor
Bob Hanneman	Speaker
Rod Harden	Speaker
Jim Harwood	Speaker Sponsor Facilitator
John Lindemann	Speaker
Dave Manley	Speaker
Victoria L. McCarthy	Speaker
Dave Mullen	Speaker
Ron Myhan	Speaker
Dave Nystrom	Facilitator
Lee Ann Puente	Speaker
Jeff Reinig	Speaker Sponsor Facilitator
Bill Riedley	Speaker Sponsor Facilitator
Tom Robles	Speaker
Ruth Scott	Speaker
Rudy Suzich	Speaker
Jim Taylor	Facilitator
Annette Thompson	Sponsor
Matt Trone	Speaker
Lance Wilcox	Speaker

Special recognition also goes to **Jim Harwood**, Head of Field & Service Operations Learning and Development, and the rest of the University of Farmers team for their active support and assistance in facilitating the course.

University Feedback

Positive feedback has been received, not only from participating Farmers employees, but from the University, as well. Anonymous student surveys were solicited after the class, consistent with CSUN normal practice. Dr. Russell reports that the overall course rating of "Excellent" (4.6 on a scale of 1 to 5) exceeds the average course rating, and reflects the positive impact the Farmers people had on the class.

Professor Russell also has high praise for the course, stating: *"I have been the biggest beneficiary of the course. I am better prepared to give my students the industry viewpoint, having heard it from so many Farmers professionals. Armed with that knowledge, I can help literally hundreds of CSUN students, starting immediately. And steer them, when appropriate, to the CPCU designation as well as a career with Farmers."*

A New Farmers Team Member!

Dr. Russell's sentiments were right on target. **Yasmin Sarangi**, a student in the course, was so impressed by the experience that she pursued a position with Farmers upon graduation, and recently started work as a Commercial Underwriter Trainee in Woodland Hills!

Reflecting on her experience in the class, Yasmin commented that *"the Farmers class was a completely different experience from any other classes I took in college. Having experienced professionals in the insurance industry teaching class sessions impacted my learning significantly. Their knowledge and expertise gave me insight on various subject matters, and more importantly made it enjoyable to learn."*

I felt privileged to participate in this opportunity because not many students get the chance to be involved in a class like this."

According to Yasmin, her decision to seek a position with Farmers was an easy one: *"There were so many highlights with the class that really sparked my interest in working for the company. Everyone was very responsive and really took pride in being there to inform us about the insurance industry. I sensed that Farmers was just a great place to work. With all these positive impressions and reinforcement, there wasn't another company I wanted to be a part of more. I am thrilled to be part of the Farmers team and look forward to a rewarding career here."*

The team plans to be back at CSUN next fall to teach the program again with everyone confident it will be even more successful. Questions about the course and Farmers' support of the CSUN Center for Risk and Insurance may be addressed to Jim Taylor at jim.taylor@farmersinsurance.com.



California State University, Northridge, insurance studies students tour the University of Farmers in Agoura Hills, Calif.