

THIRTY YEARS AND COUNTING

by Jennifer Stewart-Burton

We're celebrating a birthday here at the **Purdue University Center for Food and Agricultural Business**. As of 2016, we have officially been providing excellence in professional development and executive education for the last 30 years — and we have no intention of stopping here.

Center Founder and Executive Director **David Downey** recently penned a blog (<http://agribusiness.purdue.edu/blog/30-years-and-going-strong>) about his motivation for creating the center and what its evolution has meant to him over the years. In it, he mentions that one reason the center exists is because the university needed a more effective and efficient way to engage on a national scope with the rapidly growing agribusiness community.

As the center has evolved from its first custom program, designed for a specific seed company, to the 11 open-enrollment programs, multiple custom programs, and MS-MBA dual-degree program with Indiana University that we now offer each year, our commitment to excellence has never changed.

"People have high expectations and they have choices," Downey said. "Since the beginning, meeting and exceeding participant expectations has been the mantra of center faculty and staff. Facilities, food, logistics, materials and interactions with staff and faculty must be high quality and consistently delivered for the center to grow, or even survive."

RESEARCH

Research is at the heart of all that the center does. One of our most high-profile, ongoing initiatives is the "Large Commercial Producer Project," which is a national study of farmer buying behavior across commodity sectors. In recent years, we've also moved into the realm of talent and performance management

in an effort to help our clients in food and agricultural businesses lead their most important assets: people.

LOOKING AHEAD

But as both Downey and Director **Allan Gray** will tell you, the center's focus isn't on the past. It's on continuously improving and pushing the limits to see where we can go in the future. It's on providing the most value possible for food and agricultural business professionals, to support them as they move the industry forward. It's on the future.

"Our world will most certainly continue to change rapidly," Downey said. "We already live in a global marketplace. Farms and agribusinesses will continue to consolidate. Advances in technologies are almost unfathomable. New regulations will be challenging. U.S. agriculture can and must play a critical role in feeding a growing world population.

"We have learned a lot in the last 30 years, which gives us a platform to succeed in a demanding future."

Gray echoes that sentiment in his recent blog, "The next 30 years" (<http://agribusiness.purdue.edu/blog/the-next-30-years>). In that article, he talks about the future of the industry and the center's role in it.

The main focus of the center for the first 30 years was to help people in the food and agricultural business industries anticipate and adjust to changing environments and to help them make better, science-driven decisions. That focus hasn't changed.

Instead, center faculty and staff are doubling down on these efforts and aligning them with today's industry challenges: feeding a growing population, access to and understanding of science and making strategic decisions in an ever-changing marketplace.

"Regardless of what future unfolds to define or redefine how we will provide food, clothing and energy for the people of this planet,



it will always be about people making decisions to provide safe, healthy, diverse, sustainable and plentiful resources for their fellow human beings," Gray said. "We want to be the partner of choice for these decision makers as they seek to improve their understanding of this unfolding future and how to best achieve their goals and the goals of the industry."

We look forward to working with the food and agribusiness industries to tackle the opportunities and challenges of the next 30 years.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

- National Conference for Food and Agribusiness
Nov. 16 - 17, 2016
- ARA Management Academy
Jan. 31 - Feb. 2, 2017
- ASTA Management Academy
Mar. 6 - 10, 2017

Learn more about us at <http://agribusiness.purdue.edu>. **AM**

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