

Sent on behalf of Western Region

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Contact: Megan Pierce

Ph: (209) 338-7797

Fax: (866) 357-1488

Email: mpierce@vancepublishing.com

Cal Poly and CSU Fresno students face off to prepare for Dairy Challenge

Students from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and California State University Fresno faced off in a friendly competition to test their dairy knowledge.

A Dairy Challenge scrimmage was held to prepare students for the upcoming Western Dairy Challenge that will be held March 4-6 in Twin Falls, Idaho. The Dairy Challenge is an innovative management analysis competition developed in 2002 by industry and university professionals from across the U.S.

“The Dairy Challenge gives students hands-on experience evaluating farms,” says Stan Henderson, dairy science professor at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. An experience which he says can be applied in future careers.

Students take what they’ve learned in the classroom and apply it, says Jon Robison, professor of dairy science at California State University in Fresno. “The Dairy Challenge bridges the gap between books, lectures and the real world.”

Paired in teams of four or five, students evaluate the dairy operation from head-to-toe and then make a presentation to the owner and a panel of judges. From cow comfort and herd health to reproduction and finances they evaluate it all, looking for opportunities to improve efficiency and profitability, says Henderson. Students are then judged based on their recommendations.

This competition is so popular that Robison and Henderson have more students that want to participate than slots available. This popularity led them to hold the scrimmage between the two schools. While 24 students participated in last week’s scrimmage, each school will only be able to take a team of four students to the Western Dairy Challenge next week.

A high regard for the Dairy Challenge is still held by Cal Poly alum Adrian Diepersloot, owner of Diepersloot Dairy and host dairy of the Cal Poly/CSU Fresno scrimmage. “The Dairy Challenge was by far the most realistic experience I gained during college,” he says. “I was able to see what worked and didn’t work on different operations, instead of just reading about it in a

book.” Diepersloot says he was then able to take that information back to his own operation and apply it after graduation.

Students also gain appreciation for working with people they’ve never met before. In addition, Robison says, the contest helps create better thinkers and better communicators.

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and CSU Fresno will partner again to host the national dairy challenge competition on April 8-10, 2010 in Visalia, Calif.

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About Dairy Challenge

The Dairy Challenge is an innovative management analysis competition developed in 2002 by industry and university professionals from across the U.S. It strives to incorporate a higher-learning atmosphere with practical application, in turn generating highly qualified graduates to lead and further improve the dairy industry.

To date, more than 1,500 students have enhanced their dairy management, communication and business skills through the Dairy Challenge program.

Financial support for the North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge (NAIDC) comes from generous contributions from dairy industry companies, association and foundations, and dairy business owners. NAIDC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. Contributions to Dairy Challenge are tax deductible to the full extent of the law. For more information on sponsorship support, visit www.dairychallenge.org or contact Executive Director Molly Kelley at (217) 684-3007 or email: naidcmjk@aol.com.

Photos are available from the Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and CSU Fresno Dairy Challenge scrimmage.

Dairy Challenge Scrimmage participants included:

Team 1

Kate Rector, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Lauren Reid, CSU Fresno
Alex DeJager, CSU Fresno
Robbie Thommen, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Jared Carmo, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Team 2

Brian Medeiros, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Megan Bettencourt, CSU Fresno
Sam Cody, CSU Fresno
Andy Gomez, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Team 3

Brian Waymire, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Andres Deunda, CSU Fresno
Eddie DeJager, CSU Fresno
Michelle VanRyn, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Tyson Nunes, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Team 4

Micah Kuiper, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Michael Wesselink, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Ray Sanchez, CSU Fresno
Darik Ameye, CSU Fresno
Jessie Ruvalcaba, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Team 5

AJ Martin, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Kelsey Blagg, CSU Fresno
Justin Nickerson, CSU Fresno
Stephanie Dehner, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
Michael Stewart, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo