Gearing graduates for red meat careers

MLA is seeking penultimate year university students across Australia to participate in a vacation work program with Australia's red meat industry.

The 13-week Red Meat Industry Undergraduate Program brings together a company, a student, and a specifically designed project.

The program runs over the university summer break from late November until late February and gives students the opportunity to run their own independent project with objectives and deliverables.

The Red Meat Industry Professional Development Program has been developed by MLA and Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC) to increase the professionalism and innovative capacity of both individuals and companies within the processing sector.

MORE INFORMATION

Red Meat Industry Professional Development Program information and application forms:
www.mla.com.au/rmipdp
Email: rmipdp@mla.com.au

The *Red Meat Industry Professional Graduate Program* places university graduates with various companies in the red meat industry supply chain including processors, feedlots, technology providers, and value-added businesses around Australia.

The Meat & Livestock Australia initiated program aims to increase the uptake of young professionals in the red meat industry by encouraging industry to employ young graduates and young people to consider a red meat industry career.

MLA's Innovation Development Coordinator Danielle Bragg said the aim of the program was to encourage graduates to then stay in the industry.

"MLA contributes towards salary, mentoring and professional development," Ms Bragg said.

"An industry mentor is employed to help the graduate with research and development project work as well as career development. Networking is an important part of the program."

The program's 2009 Graduate of the Year (as voted by peers in the program), Jonathan Cook, and runner-up graduate, Leesa Utz, agreed the program had provided valuable opportunities and helped advance their careers.

Automated solutions for processing

Mr Cook, an automation support engineer with Machinery Automation & Robotics (MAR), graduated from Queensland University of Technology in July 2009 with a degree in engineering and a master of engineering management.

Mr Cook said working in the red meat industry with skilled people and the latest technologies had allowed him to challenge himself.

"I did my final year engineering project with MAR, who assigned me to a red meat industry project and from there I entered MLA's Graduate Program," he said.

Providing robotic and automation solutions, MAR offered Mr Cook the kind of work he was interested in, mainly working in the area of R&D on a robotic hock cutter (a system that robotically removes a cow's front hocks on an abattoir's slaughter line).

He said networking and the opportunity to receive mentorship from someone outside the company were extremely useful.

Mr Cook, who grew up in Brisbane, said the program attracts people who otherwise might not have considered the red meat industry as a career path.

"Working on 'outside the box' projects has allowed me to put myself out there. I'm not sure I'd get this kind of opportunity with a lot of other industries," he said.

Engineering graduate, Jonathan Cook, is working on robotic and automation solutions for processors through the Red Meat Industry Professional Graduate Program.

"There is a need to find solutions because, as in any industry, it's always looking for that competitive edge."

Working on feedlot efficiencies

Ms Utz began working at Swift Australia's Beef City feedlot, near Toowoomba, following her graduation in 2005 from The University of Queensland Gatton campus with a bachelor of applied science in animal production. She is now assistant manager at the company's Mungindi Feedlot.

Ms Utz has completed several projects with the company and is currently working on a feeding efficiency trial, conducting a time in motion study about feeding practices to consider time saving areas, for example a liquid addition system or batch boxes.

Ms Utz said meeting people from other feedlots and other program graduates, along with having the support of a mentor, had been helpful during the learning process.

Raised on a dairy farm in Queensland, she has enjoyed feedlot work and at this stage intends to stay with Swift Australia and further develop her skills and career.

Ms Utz added that the program focused on real life skills that can apply directly to graduates' work, to encourage professional careers in the industry. "These opportunities definitely encourage us to remain in the industry and achieve our goals," she said.

MORE INFORMATION

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