



# Cooperative Notes

## Northeast Cooperative Council

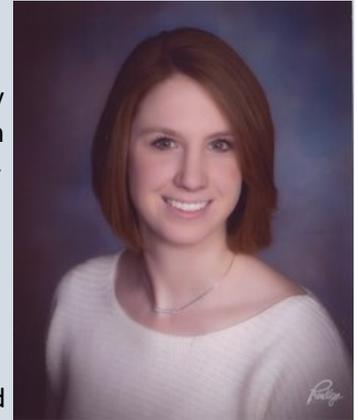
Information Education Collaboration

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### TALENT WANTED: ATTRACTING THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST

Prior to graduation, Brooke Hillman, Cornell University Senior majoring in Applied Economics and Management student of the Cornell Cooperative Management class, was asked to reflect upon how cooperatives might attract and retain students to become early-career employees. Prior to accepting a position at Farm Credit East, she interned at Farm Credit West and with AGR Partners, an agricultural investment fund. She grew up in Tulare, CA and her family is involved in the livestock feed manufacturing industry. Her conclusions from *Perspectives on the “Millennial Challenge” and How Agricultural Cooperatives Can Improve Their Attractiveness* suggest:



Brook Hillman, Cornell University Agribusiness Management Major

#### **Conclusion One: Left and Right Brain Converged.**

Millennials are both left and right-brained, meaning they have a variety of interests and skills, which is a result of how they were raised and the large role that technology has played in their lives. Implementing flexible roles within the cooperative for beginning employees allows millennials to use a broad set of skills. One approach is to create rotational programs that allow young employees to experience a variety of different roles within the organization, while at the same time gaining valuable experience that develops well-rounded talent to prepare them for higher management positions. This strategy relates to one that was proposed at the NECC 2015 Leaders Forum: horizontal movement. **It may be beneficial for cooperatives to utilize horizontal movement when vertical movement is not possible, or even when it is, in order to continue to challenge and engage the employee while mitigating the risk of a millennial becoming complacent in their positions.** Agriculture, by nature, is an ever-changing industry that requires employees to have the ability to easily transition from task to task and challenge to challenge. Thus, agricultural cooperatives are in a unique position to offer flexible roles and rotational positions that are always changing and require a broad set of skills, allowing for this generation to use their full brain on a daily basis.

#### **Conclusion Two: Your Personal Ambition, Pursued Jointly.**

Essentially this strategy encompasses employee support. **Showing the employee that he or she is valued for interests both inside and outside the workplace.** This could be as simple as sponsoring a sports team for an employee or her

children, or supporting the employee who needs time for coaching or mentoring activities. It could involve allowing an employee use of company offices for meetings related to his hobbies or even an article in the company newsletter when the employee completes a marathon. Many millennials also value extended time off to travel. Agricultural cooperatives have historically supported their employees’ family interests and this lesson might just mean expanding the concept of employee activities and being more flexible with work hours and vacation schedules.



Cornell Cooperative Management class members and Leaders Forum participants accepted positions with Farm Credit East and CoBank. An Alfred State College student attending the Leaders Forum accepted a position with Genex, CRI

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### **Lesson Three: There is No Lifelong Employment**

This lesson can be applied to agricultural cooperatives by clearly communicating to prospective and incoming talent that they are not expected to remain with the company forever, but that, they as employers, will make every effort to ensure that remaining with the company for the long-term is an attractive prospect. While this acknowledgement will take the pressure off, I also think that agricultural cooperatives are in a unique position to combat the adversity to lifetime employment, especially among talent that is passionate about the agricultural industry. **If cooperatives can instill an understanding of and appreciation for the cooperative business model, it can go a long way in retaining millennials.** In terms of the agriculturally driven millennial, the draw originates from an emphasis that the owners of the cooperative are also the users of the organization; that by being a part of the cooperative, employees concurrently serve the needs of its members as well as the agricultural industry.

### **Lesson Four: Skills and Experience, Not Titles and Roles.**

Agricultural cooperatives can effectively use this lesson concurrently with lesson one (left and right brain converged). While positions within cooperatives are not stripped completely of titles and roles, skills and experience are the focus as there are various positions and opportunities that are filled with people that have interests and passions for that particular role. This lesson can be implemented by agricultural cooperatives as in advertising. Using psychometric testing to determine employee strengths and interests will help align an employer's needs with an employee's strengths and interests. **A cooperative will succeed by listening to an employee's interests, matching roles to those interests and being open to expanding and changing employee roles. Millennials want to feel like they are encouraged to be their best and that the employer is constantly seeking the best talent to join the team.**

Copies of Brooke's paper are available by contact NECC Executive Secretary, Bobbie Severson at email: [rmh27@cornell.edu](mailto:rmh27@cornell.edu) or phone 607/255-1987.

## **FOCUS ON MEMBERSHIP**

The Cooperative Development Institute is a cooperative business development center serving the Northeastern United States. Founded in 1994, the mission



of the non-profit organization is to build a cooperative economy through creating and development of successful cooperative enterprises and networks. CDI staff specialize in helping people work together to plan and launch cooperatively owned businesses. The organization provides education, training and technical assistance in food agriculture, forestry, fisheries, housing, energy, arts, retail service, and health sectors.

Most recently, CDI Executive Director, Noemi Giszpenc made a presentation at the United Nations in New York City as part of a panel on "Sustainable Development Goals."



Noemi Giszpenc with Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury, of Bangladesh, leading UN Culture of Peace emissary.

In addition, CDI was one of ten organizations invited to present on innovative economic and community development ideas at the Friends of Midcoast Maine annual meeting. Friends of Midcoast Maine help communities identify and save what is valued, while promoting change in a way that serves the present and is sustainable for generations to come. Within the 5-minute allotted time, Rob Brown, Director of CDI Business Ownership Solutions, persuaded the audience on how business owners could retire, help workers build wealth through ownership, and strengthen economic and community development by converting investor-owned businesses into worker-owned cooperatives. Following all of the presentations, the audience voted Brown's presentation the "People's Choice Award."

# Cooperative Internship Recognition Award



NECC members recognize the need for new members and employees willing to lead cooperative businesses in the future as they engage in the global economy, embrace social change, and adapt to changing policies and emerging issues and opportunities. The NECC **Cooperative Internship Recognition Award (CIRA)** recognizes outstanding students who successfully complete an internship with a NECC member cooperative.

Prizes of \$1,000 each will be awarded to no more than five individuals who successfully complete an internship with a NECC cooperative member in good standing.

## Eligibility

- ◆ Must successfully complete an internship with a NECC member cooperative between January 1 and November 15, **application due December 1**
- ◆ Must be a college junior, senior or graduate student with a minimum GPA of 3.0/4.0 studying in an accredited college in New England, New Jersey, New York, or Pennsylvania
- ◆ Demonstrate successful completion of coursework in one of the following: production agriculture, business, finance, marketing, food science, agriculture and food policy
- ◆ Submit completed application along with personal letter of interest, recommendation from faculty advisor, recommendation from internship mentor/advisor, and official college transcript.

**For more information and application form contact:**

**Bobbie Severson, NECC Executive Secretary**  
Email: [rmh27@cornell.edu](mailto:rmh27@cornell.edu)  
Phone: 6047/255-1987

## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



The future of NECC has been on our radar for the past year. Through board discussions and input during the NECC Leaders Forum Directors Round table, several important topics were identified.

1. The Annual Meeting and Leaders Forum is important because of the speaker presentations, round table discussions, and networking opportunities. With the increasing number of mergers, the organization needs to bring renewed value to its members and attract new members as well.
2. Leadership development is important. Invitations accepted by early career employees to attend the Leaders Forum has expanded their understanding of the cooperative business model and professional growth. The Future Cooperative Leaders Conference builds upon the knowledge of young members as they assume roles as their organization's committee members, delegates and directorships.
3. Forging relationships with colleges and universities is important. A narrative needs to be constructed as a means to explain the cooperative business model. Opportunities need to be developed to attract talented students as new hires to NECC member organizations. Todd Schmit, Associate Professor and NECC liaison to Cornell University is investigating a means to offer an online class on cooperative management. In addition an October event is being planned to introduce students to careers in cooperatives and celebrate 'Co-op Month.'

I am happy to report that the Council is inaugurating the Cooperative Internship Recognition Award (CIRA). Information has been shared with Cooperative Council members about the award. In the future information about the award will be shared with college placement offices as well. Outstanding student interns will be recognized at the 2016 Leaders Forum. The purpose of the award is two-fold. Students from Northeast colleges and universities will be attracted to intern with NECC member cooperatives. Through the internship experiences, NECC member cooperatives will gain additional insights into what makes a successful internship experience. Those receiving the award will make a presentation about their internship experience and be recognized at the 2016 NECC Leaders Forum.

As we move into fall, my hope is good weather allows for a timely harvest. I look forward to the next time we meet. Feel free to call any time 585-590-7503.

Sincerely,  
*Cyndy Van Lieshout*



## USE VIDEO AS A RECRUITING TOOL

comScore, Inc. is a global media measurement and analytics company. A study by comScore found that 85 percent of online audiences in the U.S. watch videos. Video is a technology that can introduce job-seekers and new hires to the culture of a business.

A video should:

1. Engage the audience through story-telling. It should tap into core emotions.
2. Be personal. It should be entertaining, engaging, with a 'personality' that embodies the culture of the business.
3. Convey one idea or a single, central idea. It is important to minimize the amount of facts and figures.
4. Video production details count. It is important to have the correct lighting, sound, and on-screen talent to make a positive impression and the company come to life.
5. Focus on persuasion and the audience call for action. Persuasion is accomplished in one of three ways—1) Logic of the information that draws someone in to apply to a company, 2) Credibility of the speaker of the video to draw the person to the company, or, 3) Use emotion of the story in the video to move a job seeker to apply.

—from "Tap Into the Value of Video as a Communication Tool"—Barnaby Cook, NACE 2015 Conference



## DID YOU KNOW...

- ◆ Average hourly wage for interns working towards a bachelor's degree was \$17.20 and the average hourly wage for a masters-level student was \$23.83.\*
- ◆ Seventy percent of interns were offered full-time positions, 52 percent accepted the offer.\*
- ◆ Employers begin planning intern recruitment 7 months before position is scheduled to start\*
- ◆ Video interviewing increasing at a rapid rate\*\*
- ◆ Time between job listing posting and interview was 39 days\*\*
- ◆ Average offer to acceptance time is 13 days\*\*
- ◆ Average cost per hire is \$3,582.\*\*

\*Source: Koc, Edwin, W. 2015 *Internship & Co-op Survey Report*, National Association of Colleges and Employers

\*\*Source: Koc, Edwin, W. 2014. *Recruiting Benchmarks Survey Report: Key Measures for University Recruiting*, National Association of Colleges and Employers

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**November 5-6, 2015** 18th Annual Farmer Cooperatives

Conference, Minneapolis, MN

**February 10-12, 2016**—National Council of Farmer Cooperatives Annual Meeting, Phoenix, AZ

**February 29, 2016**—NECC Leaders Forum and Annual Meeting, Doubletree, E. Syracuse, NY

**March 1, 2016**—CoBank Northeast Customer Meeting, Doubletree, E. Syracuse, NY

**"WE SEEM TO BE LATE..."** on finding students to fill internships and as new hires. One NECC member noted that they seem to lag in the process of attracting students as new hires. The most highly motivated students are investigating internships in September and locking them down in October and early November for the following summer. Campus recruitment is strong during the fall semester for full time positions post-graduation. Technology such as video-interviewing through mechanisms such as Skype is becoming more mainstream. The 'traditional' letter of reference is being replaced with an online survey.

## CONGRATULATIONS FARM CREDIT

The Farm Credit system has announced the launch of their centennial year. NECC Board members were privy to some of the organization's historical items housed at Farm Credit East, Enfield, CT at the July 2014 board meeting. Farm Credit has unveiled Farm Credit Fresh Perspectives in honor of the 100th anniversary. One hundred individuals or organizations throughout the United States will be recognized for changing the face and future of agriculture and strengthening rural communities. Of the 100 honorees recognized, 10 exceptional leaders will each receive a \$10,000 award to help further their contributions to thriving rural communities and agriculture. For more information about the award visit [FarmCredit100.com](http://FarmCredit100.com)

