



Solidifying the Future

As graduation nears, students find this to be a time of personal growth.

by Megan Silveira, editorial intern

Looming in the minds of all college students are uncertainties about graduation. Growing up has always sounded daunting, but for many students, it's quickly approaching. What do you need to do to succeed after you have a diploma in hand?

Set up for success

While college classes can feel tiring, Daniel McFarland, recent graduate of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, encourages students to stay motivated during undergrad.

"College has become an avenue for people to show they're determined and focused enough to achieve a degree," McFarland says. "College is also a time for an individual to find themselves and the person they want to be in society."

Sally Yon Harrison, staff member at Yon Family Farms, believes college is more than just academics. Her advice to current students is to

"never let school get in the way of your education."

Harrison says students need to remember opportunities can be found everywhere, not just inside the boundaries of campus. Lessons learned from these opportunities are worth as much as classes.

McFarland agrees with Harrison's advice, saying college helps students gain life skills, in and out of the classroom. McFarland says in the real world, students who went out of their way to expose themselves to different experiences are more advanced and prepared.

Harrison spent every summer of her time as an undergrad in a new internship position. She describes these positions as huge blessings and believes all college students should work as an intern before graduating.

McFarland encourages students to never be afraid to reach out and search for opportunities to gain hands-on experience. From

internships to job shadowing, McFarland believes undergraduates should learn about the work force.

Diverging paths

Harrison says she struggled to create specific plans for her future while she was still a student. The agricultural industry was where Harrison has always wanted to land, but she had a difficult time choosing a career she would enjoy.

Harrison graduated from Clemson University (CU) before going to Oklahoma State University (OSU) to achieve her master's degree. Amidst classes and internships, Harrison says she was able to learn what she did and did not enjoy in a career. In graduate school, Harrison found her true calling in life.

"I felt like the classes and skills I was learning would be something beneficial for my family's cattle operation," she explains. "I realized that I did not want to work

indoors full-time and really missed production agriculture and the hands-on side of the cattle industry.”

Harrison graduated in 2015 with a master’s in agricultural communications. She happily works full-time with her parents, brothers and husband at Yon Family Farms.

McFarland grew up in Louisiana on a small Angus operation and went into college intending to enroll in vet school.

During his junior year, McFarland realized his passion wasn’t for treating animals.

“Everyone has a goal and dream,” McFarland says. “But it got to the point in school where I realized some things had changed for me.”

While this change might have been intimidating, he knew he could not pursue a career he was not fully invested in. McFarland believes students have to take time to evaluate their likes and dislikes.

McFarland made a few changes to his plans and received his Master of Health Administration at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. He will soon be taking up the administrative fellow position at John Hopkins Medical University.

Selecting a career can be a difficult task, and Harrison suggests soon-to-be-graduates take time to narrow down options. She encourages students to follow their heart and to not let the opinions of others alter their future.

“Do what makes you happy,” Harrison says. “People will question your decisions and your interests, but you need to remember they are your interests not theirs.”

Transitioning into adulthood

McFarland says one of the hardest parts about graduating is transitioning from being a student to

the work force.

“You have to find joy in working every day,” McFarland says. “School isn’t an excuse anymore.”

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—Daniel McFarland

In between dealing with an eight-to-five job, McFarland says you have to learn to be self-sustaining. This includes thinking about purchasing a home and creating a budget.

Harrison acknowledges the responsibilities students have increase once they graduate. You have to say goodbye to the social setting of college and leave things behind.

McFarland believes internships and part-time jobs helped him get ready for this transition. Despite the nerves this transition period naturally exudes, McFarland says he has stayed optimistic about the future.

“I see it as an exciting time,” McFarland admits. “It’s a big move, but I get comfort in knowing I have the support of my Angus family.”

Built by the breed

When asked if Angus involvement helped prepare him for the real world, McFarland laughed. He says, “Angus is a part of the real world.”

Being part of the breed provided McFarland with helpful connections and opportunities, even in a career outside the agricultural industry.

“The Angus industry is everywhere,” he explains. “That became more evident once I ventured into the work force. It seems to pop up in every scenario.”

Harrison also “grew up Angus.” The breed gave her the chance to

travel and build relationships she says will last a lifetime.

McFarland encourages all current junior members to enjoy their time as members of the National Junior Angus Association (NJAA) and take advantage of every opportunity coming their way. From shows to contests, McFarland firmly believes the Association is setting junior members up for future success.

“The Angus industry provides us with new avenues to grow,” he says.

Finding a way back home


Harrison considers the Angus industry to be her home and is grateful for the constant support she receives from her Angus family.

Harrison is “engulfed by the Angus industry on a daily basis” because of her career. She encourages those with a love for the breed to stay connected with the Association.

Despite moving away from a career with Angus cattle, McFarland is doing as Harrison suggests. With his new career path, he is able to serve a unique role in the cattle industry.

“I am serving as an advocate for Angus cattle as I venture out in a different direction,” McFarland says. “I can serve as a face for the breed to the people I am meeting who don’t have a background in the industry.”

McFarland still owns cattle and plans to stay as involved with the Association as possible. From continuing to breed cattle to serving on a local and state level, McFarland says he will always include the Angus industry in his future.

“I’m moving in a career away from the cattle,” McFarland says. “But I’ll never let go of the industry that helped me grow.” 

Editor’s note: This is the final installment in the “Paving Your Path” series. Find previous “Paving Your Path” articles in the September and October issues of the Angus Journal.