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Brandon Hartley

HOMETOWN: Santa Fe, Texas

GRADUATION: Texas A & M University, Agricultural Engineering B.S., 2010

INTERESTS: Fishing and running with friends in the Texas hill country and bayous back home

I found out about ag/bio engineering from my high school calculus teacher. She was trying to put together a group to attend Aggieland Saturday, a day showcasing TAMU departments, and I was looking for any excuse not to spend a weekend on a school-sponsored field trip. She asked what my interests were, and after I said “agriculture,” she replied, “Good. TAMU has an ag eng department. No more excuses. I’ll sign you up!”

I knew I wanted to attend Texas A&M, and I decided on a major even before sending in my application. The traditions and overall atmosphere of the university influenced my decision, and

I urge others to consider the department, the participation of the faculty with the students, and the activities at the university’s chapter of ASABE in order to make an informed decision. In the end, when classes get difficult and things get tough, it’s the faculty and students in the department who make things easier to manage.

I want to pursue bio-energy after graduation, and I would like to help begin and expand development of alternative energy for the Texas gulf coast, maybe even start an alternative energy company. There are many options. I believe I would enjoy offering a way for producers to cut costs while producing affordable energy to the rest of the country.

And I recommend taking Golf II in college! Before the class, I couldn’t get a golf ball in the air. Now I can hit a consistent 150-yard shot with a six-iron. Some engineers move into management or human resources during the course of their careers, and golf is something that stays with you no matter what position you hold. It has opened up a whole new arena for networking and potential “business meetings!”

Gaining a World View

When Brandon Hartley traveled to Belgium last summer, he gained a first-hand appreciation for international soil and water issues. Hartley, a Texas A&M University bio and ag engineering major from Santa Fe, Texas, is one of 24 students who have traveled with the department’s Environmental Soil and Water Study Abroad Program to Belgium over the summers to obtain a different view of environmental soil and water issues.

“The program gave me a chance to experience something totally different from what I was used to,” Hartley said. “It gave me a global perspective on what I will be pursuing after graduation and some of the problems I may need to face in a global market.”

Clyde Munster, biological and agricultural engineering professor, organized the program. “Students need to get international experience,” he said. “The job market is not just state- or United States-wide anymore.”

The five-week program is hosted by the Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven, Belgium, and it satisfies the Texas A&M international and cultural diversity requirement. Field trips to different water and wastewater projects unique to Europe are included, allowing “compare-and-contrast” with European ways to solve environmental problems and cutting-edge technology.

Hartley was intrigued by Belgium’s sophisticated recycling program. “Every piece of land is put to good use. What is not used for towns or cities is used for agriculture,” he said. “Everything is recycled because they don’t have room for landfills.”

“Students gain a different perspective on the world and other people’s culture. They see things a little bit differently,” says the program director. “But they also see that we’re all basically the same.”

Kathy Wythe, Texas Water Resources Institute



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