Corporate Engagement: These Boots were Made for Engagement

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Hog heaven

When it comes to swine research, Kansas State University is a national leader. It’s a reputation cemented by decades of work, as evidenced in this photo taken in 1934 at the university’s ag experiment station. Described as “three pigs looking over fence,” the photo came about through a request by Cliff Aubel, associate professor of animal husbandry and swine investigations officer at the ag experiment station.

Aubel taught Elements in Animal Husbandry, Swine Production and Animal Breeding. Read more about K-State’s many contributions to swine research on Page 24.

Photo courtesy of the Kansas State University archives

These boots were made for . . .

Richard Potter, Kansas State University’s director of corporate engagement, is kicking the university’s collaborative potential into high gear with faculty boot camps. Potter helped to develop a series of “Working with Industry Boot Camps” in 2015 as part of a collaborative project with the Kansas State University Foundation, the university’s Institute for Commercialization and the Office of the Vice President for Research. The workshops, available via video archives on the Office of Corporate Engagement website, provide faculty and staff with tools to establish mutually beneficial industrial collaborations and develop strong strategic partnerships.

“We can play with industry but we need to do it in the right way,” Potter said. “In other words, there are ample opportunities to work together with industry that are in sync with our mission as a land-grant institution.”

The workshops cover many topics, including why corporate engagement is important, where to find valuable resources, how to initiate and formalize relationships, how faculty can promote themselves and their research, how to manage expectations, how to disclose and protect intellectual property, and tips and tools for meeting contractual obligations.

The university has many areas of expertise that corporations would find very useful, Potter said. The workshops were designed to encourage faculty to consider the potential of future corporate partnerships and build on existing partnerships.

“We bring to the table something that is of great value to industry,” Potter said, “including specific strengths related to well-being, human and animal health and nutrition, sensory analysis and grain science — all in tandem with global food systems.”

K-State is the only university with a grain science and industry department and, according to Potter, that means significant corporate interest and opportunities are available.

The university established the Bulk Solids Innovation Center at the Kansas State Polytechnic Campus in 2015, which is the first center in the nation to study the science of handling bulk solids, such as grains, sugar or minerals. For industries using bulk solids, the center can provide a wealth of knowledge, he said.

The university also is the western anchor of the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor, a concentration of more than 300 animal health companies. According to Potter, the corridor provides numerous opportunities for finding corporate engagement partnerships, such as the PetFood Innovation Workshop. K-State faculty work with industry professionals in conjunction with the annual PetFood Forum in April at the K-State Olathe campus to experiment with different techniques in making pet foods.

By Stephanie Jacques