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Experiential Learning Takes Students to a New Frontier

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Photo provided by Justin Kastner, Frontier program.

Experiential learning takes students to a new Frontier

Ensuring a safe and healthy food supply for the world's growing population requires preparing highly skilled leaders ready to meet this challenge.

That need is the focus of Kansas State University's Frontier program, which provides multidisciplinary training and experiential learning to students interested in becoming scholarly, thoughtful global food systems leaders. Program alumni have gone on to work in government — including the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Kansas Department of Agriculture — and in agri-industry at companies such as Cargill.

Now, with a Global Foods System Innovation Grant from the university, the Frontier program will focus on a Kansas pipeline of global food systems leaders with the education and outreach project “Experiential, Multidisciplinary Career-Development Investment for Kansas.”

“This project will innovatively cultivate multidisciplinary breadth in current and future Kansas-based members of the global food systems workforce,” said Justin Kastner, program director and an

“From Los Angeles to Boston, the Frontier program increased my multidisciplinary breadth over facets encompassing the food industry and beyond by providing a unique educational atmosphere. This atmosphere developed my scholarly and occupational identities through experiential learning, networking with other students, and skill-development workshops. I discovered the vastness of the food industry through experiential learning.”

— Megan Kulas,
Frontier alumna who now works at
the U.S. Food and Drug Administration

associate professor of food safety and security at Kansas State University. “Global food system employers want skilled graduates and career-development pipelines and job preparation — and that’s what we’re doing at the Frontier program.”

Kastner and Jason Ackelson, a political scientist and an adjunct faculty member in diagnostic medicine and pathobiology at Kansas State University, created the Frontier program in 2004. Ackelson is the program’s co-director.

Frontier’s successful field trips and experiential learning components will be part of the new Kansas initiative. To date, more than 200 students

have gone on Frontier field trips to meet with governmental and nongovernmental policy-making and policy-analysis groups in Washington, D.C., and to explore key ports of food entry across the nation. Also to be offered will be weeklong courses on a wide and multidisciplinary range of topics relevant to global food systems.