



# News Release



For Immediate Release — Tuesday, June 23, 2015

## **Business of agriculture to be the focus of inaugural Cor Van Raay Agribusiness Case Competition**

The University of Lethbridge and Lethbridge College are collaborating on a new venture that will present a challenge to students and begin to lay the foundation for the future of agribusiness in southern Alberta. The Cor Van Raay Agribusiness Case Competition, scheduled for Nov. 6-8, 2015, is the first of its kind in western Canada.

A student-directed initiative, the competition is designed for students to expand their knowledge in the areas of agriculture and business on a global scale, all the while introducing students to key players in the agribusiness sector.

“Southern Alberta is an ideal location for this competition,” says Dr. Danny LeRoy, agricultural economist and coordinator of the agricultural studies program at the University of Lethbridge. “Agribusiness is of local and global importance, encompassing a wide range of activities that are ultimately aimed at meeting the needs for food, feed, fibre and fuel. From farm gate to consumer, entrepreneurs are continuously responding to an ever-changing, consumer-driven marketplace.”

Bringing students from both of the area’s post-secondary institutions together for the competition is a natural fit and speaks to the manner in which the schools’ programs complement each other.

“Lethbridge College is delighted to partner with the University of Lethbridge in this first annual competition, made possible through the generous support of Cor Van Raay,” says Chair, School of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Lethbridge College, Dr. Edith Olson. “This competition will allow students to apply theory to find practical solutions to real-world business problems, and will provide students with the skills employers are looking for. The competition is an example of the strong interrelationship between programs at Lethbridge College and the University of Lethbridge.”

Business case competitions have been commonplace for years but only recently has an agricultural component been incorporated.

“It’s an amazing opportunity for students to gain practical experience in finding ways to improve agriculture practices by implementing modern business theories in an agricultural setting,” says University of Lethbridge management student Monica Gorham, one of the event organizers. “It’s also a huge networking event, a chance for students to get to know future employers and for event sponsors to meet potential employees.”

Gorham, who is in her fourth year of studies and set to graduate in December, is a veteran of case competitions. She was part of a four-person team that included fellow organizer Phyllis MacCallum that claimed first place at the 3rd Annual International Agribusiness Case Competition at the University of Guelph in 2014. That led to a trip to South Africa for a world competition and thoughts of bringing an agribusiness case competition out west.

“When we were in South Africa, the Cor Van Raay gift to the University and Lethbridge College was announced and we thought that maybe we now had a way to try and start something here,” says Gorham.

The inaugural event is scheduled for Nov. 6-8, 2015 and will primarily include undergraduate students from the U of L and Lethbridge College. Teams of four to five persons will be presented with a written business problem and given four hours to analyze and solve. Teams then present their findings to a panel of judges, often made up of academics, industry sponsors and the community at large.

“It really gives students the opportunity to apply theoretical material they learn in class to practical uses in areas of agriculture, natural resources and general business,” says Gorham.

The competition is open to all students and they can register as a group or individually. At least one agriculture student per team is required and Gorham advises a business student be included as well. Registration details will be announced in the fall.

“It’s amazing that through my experience in the competitions, how many doors have opened for me,” she adds. “Not being from an agriculture background, I’d always thought of agriculture as the family farm and it’s definitely opened my eyes.”

The cases for the competition will be mined from an online bank of business cases and tailored to include an agriculture element. Examples could include a scenario where a middle-sized corporation is looking to expand its operation, or the father of a family farm is retiring and has to design a succession plan for his business.

Industry sponsors for the event include Cor Van Raay, MNP, Scotiabank, MacLachlan McNab Hembroff, Viterra, Cargill and UFA.

Any sponsors looking to get involved in the competition are urged to contact Gorham at 403-382-8101 or [monica.gorham@uleth.ca](mailto:monica.gorham@uleth.ca).

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