

THE SPORTS TURF MANAGERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE: A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Stephanie Alea

This year I was one of four students from Rutgers University that travelled to Orlando, FL in January 2010 to participate in the Sports Turf Managers Association Student Challenge. I had an idea of what to expect because I also participated in 2009 in San Jose, CA. This year, I was more relaxed and it was even more rewarding compared to last year. Getting to see Mickey was nice too.

Since I am a senior this year, I had set certain goals for myself when I got to Orlando: make as many contacts as I possibly could (other students and industry); attend lectures; pass-out my resume; do well on the student challenge; and absorb as much as possible. STMA made it easy to accomplish all my goals.

The student challenge is fun. Although, at the same time, a little stressful. Returning from winter break and changing your focus from the holidays back to studying can be tough, especially when you are a senior. You are in the home stretch and you have to manage taking classes and making choices to get you where you want to go. Whether your plans are going to graduate school or getting a job, you need to know the right people, which is where making contacts comes into play.

It is impossible to meet everyone at the conference, no matter how much I would have liked to. It is reassuring to know they had a bulletin board where I was able to post my resume and look at internship and job listings.

The time I got to spend with my student peers, at the student luncheon and outside the lectures, was also time well spent. To some it was great being able to catch up with intern buddies they spent the summer with. We spoke

about our experiences at our different schools, the similarities and differences between programs, about previous internships, and future goals.

The lectures I was able to attend were interesting and I believe information I have taken from them will help me in the future. I went to lectures with one or more of my fellow Rutgers students. Afterwards we would briefly talk about it. It was a way to bond with my classmates and learn what their experiences in or out of the classroom had taught them.

The down time when everyone congregated in the halls was one of my favorite parts of the conference. As I walked along, I could overhear conversations of advice, frustrations,

questions and answers, and of course funny anecdotes too. I found it refreshing that no matter the topic I could hear the passion everyone has in their voice for their jobs. It made me feel really happy to have joined this fellowship and look forward to attending the annual conference after I graduate.

This experience would not have been possible if not for the generosity of SFMANJ's sponsorship of our trip and for that I am grateful. I look forward to a point in my career that I can contribute to the future of our field and be as generous as those I have met along the way.

Stephanie Alea is a Rutgers undergraduate student and STMA Student Challenge participant



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