University of Minnesota Meat Science Students Shine at National Meetings

University of Minnesota Meat Science attended the Reciprocal Meat Conference (RMC) June 13-17 in Lincoln, Nebraska. RMC is the national scientific meeting for meat science and is attended by universities throughout the country as well as industry professionals and international scientists. Throughout the meeting, there are speakers that cover a broad range of topics from the latest scientific findings to how to communicate with consumers. Dr. Ryan Cox and a group of both graduate and undergraduate students attended the scientific meeting that also included a number of opportunities for students.

Prior to the technical program, students were invited to ConAgra headquarters in Omaha to participate in an Iron Chef competition and to learn about ConAgra. This year, the Iron Chef competition challenged students to create an appetizer, entrée, and a dish that incorporated ground beef. Upon the completion of the allotted 2 hours, the teams presented their dishes to a panel of 5 judges including chefs and executives from ConAgra and employees of the American Meat Science Association where they were judged on creativity, presentation, and taste.

The U of M had 6 students compete in the Iron Chef competition: Allie Hawkins, A.J. Hasslen, Jordan Juckel, Nicole O’Sell, Emma Penzenstadler, and Christina Fehrman. The U of M had a student on each team that won awards; Jordan Juckel was on the winning team that also won the sub category of best knowledge of meat and meat cookery, A.J. Hasslen was on the 2nd place team that also won the sub category of most cohesive meal, and Allie Hawkins was on the team that won the sub category of most creative meal.

The Undergraduate Quiz Bowl, testing student knowledge of meat science topics including food safety, muscle biology, microbiology, anatomy, and meat processing, consisted of 29 teams from universities throughout the country. Students from the U of M were Allie Hawkins, A.J. Hasslen, Jordan Juckel, Nicole O’Sell, and Emma Penzenstadler. This year was Minnesota’s first year entering teams into the quiz bowl competition, and we are very proud of their participation and disciplined team cooperation. The U of M had 2 teams compete, with one team advancing to the third round and one to the fifth.

University of Minnesota M.S. student Megan Nelson presented her research as part of the graduate student poster showcase where her work was on display and she visited with the attendees of the conference answering questions and comparing the results from her work with others who had done similar projects. Other events that the U of M students had the opportunity to participate in included a student-mentor breakfast, career fair, student mixer, and family picnic where students had the opportunity to visit with many other industry and academic professionals.

After the completion of RMC, Dr. Ryan Cox and his students traveled to Springfield, IL to attend the American Association of Meat Processors (AAMP) Annual Convention. In conjunction with the AAMP Convention is the American Cured Meat Championships (ACMC), the national product show with 27 product categories that meat processors from across the country showcase their skill and craftsmanship at producing premium meat products. New to the ACMC competition this year was the University Class. Students from universities in attendance were able to develop and submit their own products to compete against each other in a category set by the judges. This year, the category was small diameter specialty smoked sausage. Megan and Christina submitted two products: a Mango Blueberry Smoked Sausage and a Tuscan Smoked Sausage with sundried tomatoes, red bell peppers, and mozzarella cheese. The Tuscan Smoked Sausage was awarded Reserve Grand Champion in the inaugural year of the University class and the students are excited to compete again next year!