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I had the pleasure of being assigned to American Proteins Inc. during this year's Educator Exchange. The top notch southern hospitality I received was more than I could have ask for. All of the employees at API were extremely receptive to my questions as well as my observation of their daily routines.

I was extremely excited to see how much the employees cared about their jobs. The importance of what API does for the poultry industry was well known throughout the facility. The working conditions were fast paced and seemed to fit the work ethic of the employees. I also noticed how hands on the supervisors were and how they assisted regardless of the job.

On the first day, I was in the lab and exposed to the stringent measures that API takes to ensure their products are safe for both the buyer and our environment. The equipment in the lab was highly advanced and really enabled me to understand importance of students having the latest in technology. While in the lab Jacob let me know the importance of just taking the time to fill out scholarship applications and how it helped him to get where he is today. Also the continual growths of the testing and environmental procedures were always expanding. We also discussed how constant the growth in environmental testing and procedures is.

My two days working in the mill gave me a new appreciation of the type of work that is done at API. Dennis, David, Ed, Bobby and Frankie were working to make the new equipment run more efficiently. Everyone's willingness to work together helped to make the transition to the new equipment easier. Although some may consider the conditions in the mill less than desirable, everyone had a smile on their face and was willing to work together to get the job done.

My last two days in waste water treatment were informative. The importance the team places on the water quality and odor control are unbelievable. The fact API being that could return some of the treated water back into the river was a measure of the high level of care that went into waste water treatment at the facility. The use of the lagoons and the capture of rain water were amazing to see. The 135 in- house analyses per day really goes to show the lengths taken to ensure a safe and clean environment around the facility.

While at American Proteins, I observed various hands-on skills needed to work at API. The use of measuring and accurate data collection was obvious. The employees in the mill needed good short-hand math skills, the ability to think on their feet, and they needed to be in good physical condition. The most important trait I took from my experience at API is to value your job and the work you do. This is why API has such a successful operation and wonderful work atmosphere among the employees.