

A Student Perspective

- on “Meet Your Future Employer” Evening
and the NZIF Conference

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The Canterbury section of the NZIF recently held a “Meet your Future Employer” evening at the University of Canterbury School of Forestry. This is the third time such an evening has been held, and from a student’s perspective, was a huge success. This was not only attributable to the fact that we were provided with vast quantities of free pizza part way through the evening, but also to the fact that there were talks given by seven different industry representatives from a range of different fields. These fields ranged from forest research and large organisation representatives to forestry logistics and smaller consulting companies, with one individual travelling from as far away as Northland. For those who did not attend, both students and Industry professionals, I would highly recommend coming along next year to check it out if you can.

The evening highlighted the wide range of opportunities available to students upon completion of the degree. Each of the speakers had different agendas, some recruiting, some informing of opportunities, but probably the most valuable aspect of the evening was hearing each speaker’s perspective as to where they saw the forestry industry at present (a fairly positive outlook) and what they saw as the most valuable skills and attributes of a forestry graduate. These were things that we students could practically take on board and apply through the next few years to make us more valuable as future employees.

As an undergraduate, especially one only just starting out, the next five or ten years of our careers often seem quite daunting, with so many unknowns. The more information that is made available as to what opportunities there are, how to take advantage of them, and where the gaps are in the industry, the more easily we as students can shape our education to fill those gaps and roles.



The field trip - Central Processing Yard in Kaingaroa.

For me personally, the evening complemented the recent NZIF conference. Unfortunately the conference was held the week before exams at Canterbury, so student attendance was low. This probably meant more food for the rest of the attendees during the breaks (I know how notorious we students are for eating all the food!) but watch this space next year, as the timing and location will make the conference a much more accessible event for students.

The conference was invaluable as a preparation tool, as it highlighted the cutting edge issues in the forestry industry today. It was encouraging to see the information and skills that we are learning being utilised in real life situations. It’s nice to know we are actually learning all these things for a reason!

The field trip was fantastic! Having grown up in Rotorua, I always knew that Kaingaroa forest was special (my dad worked there so how could it not be!) and massive (although I was quite small at the time), but I guess it was one of those things that you just take

for granted. Actually visiting the forest and seeing the logistics involved, it really drove home just how big the whole operation is and what must be involved in the day to day running. It was very humbling and slightly daunting to realise the extent of the operations, but exciting to realise that this is what we are training to be involved in!

The highlight of the conference though had to be the people. There are not many opportunities for students at Canterbury to meet so many industry professionals from such a wide range of backgrounds and job types. The relatively confined space of the conference and field trip made it easier to corner specific individuals of interest and ask them the thousand and one questions about what they did and what their work involved, as well as obtaining contacts for future assignments, study, and possibly work. It was also just a generally enjoyable and encouraging experience to meet so many different people and talk to them about both forestry related topics, and general unrelated trivia. What a great opportunity! I can’t wait for the 2011 joint conference in Auckland next year!