

SUCCESS IN THE AG INDUSTRY

by Brittney Zumbach, Iowa State University Student and AgCareers.com Marketing Intern

Editor's Note: Learn how one young professional found his success with a career in agriculture and what he did to get there.

Name: Evan Harris

Education: B.S. in agriculture business management with minors in economics and biological sciences, North Carolina State University

Position: Territory Sales Manager, Alltech

Though Evan Harris did not grow up with a traditional agricultural background, he was always interested in science, even through elementary and middle school.

After graduating from high school in 2005, Harris furthered his education at **North Carolina State University** where he received his Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture business management. Harris is currently employed with Alltech, where he is a Territory Sales Manager in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

AgCareers.com: Describe your background, and how it led you to your current position.

Harris: Growing up, I was always more into science than any other field.

I remember in sixth through eighth grade, our school had an elective called biotechnology and that quickly became my favorite part of the day. It was always hands-on learning. The teacher made it exceptionally fun, and you really came away with a sense of how diverse the agricultural job market can be. In high school, I became more interested in business and that carried on through college.

When Alltech offered an intern position, the more I found out about the company, the more I loved it because it allowed me to combine my two favorite fields. After graduation, there was an opportunity to work in my home



territory and it has been an exceptional career experience since.

AgCareers.com: Describe your current position with Alltech.

Harris: I am a Territory Sales Manager for Alltech in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina. Alltech provides natural solutions to problems faced within the animal health industry through feed additives and ingredients.

I have dealt with all species in our region from broilers to fish. I've even had people call me regarding rabbits (not joking).

We believe that a healthier animal is better for both the consumer and the environment, and we do so through innovative technologies and research.

AgCareers.com: What motivated you to pursue a career in agriculture?

Harris: It all actually started during my first semester in college when I met with a department head by the name of **Arnie Oltmans**. He listened to my background and explained to me that a career in agriculture was a great fit for someone like me because you can use all of your diverse talents every day.

Agriculture encompasses so many different fields of education, and that was what really did it for me. I left feeling like I had gained knowledge on so many different subjects while still specializing in one particular field.

It is also hard to find a career path with better job security because the population is constantly growing and our food supply has to become more and more innovative to meet that growing need.

AgCareers.com: What work, internship, or volunteer experience do you have? How did these experiences prepare you for your current career?

Harris: The biggest push towards my career was an internship with Alltech while I was in school. It really gave me insight on how life after college was going to be, and what was going to be expected of me.

The internship also allowed me to better understand both the industry and company I hoped to work for and how they operate.

Another great program from college was the mandatory spend-a-day with an individual already in the working world. This gave you the opportunity to really ask questions on what worked and didn't work for them when they were in my shoes, and any advice they would have for the future.

AgCareers.com: What activities were you involved in on campus?

Harris: I attended **North Carolina State University** and am a proud Wolfpack fan. I would have to say my own campus activity list was a little unorthodox and consisted mostly of intramural teams, but that was because a lot of the time I spent not in class was spent working either a job or an internship. The activities that really helped me along the way would be attending career fairs, resume workshops, guest speakers, etc.

These were really the driving points behind polishing my jump from college to a career because you get that insight on what companies are actually looking for from you as a fresh graduate, and it also gives you the opportunity to network with people who are successful in the field. Who better to take advice from?

AgCareers.com: *What advice do you have for someone just starting college?*

Harris: I would say make new relationships with people, work hard, and play hard. This is your opportunity to really mold yourself into who you want to be as a person.

You have the ability to be who you want to be, learn about what you choose to learn about, and still have more fun than you've ever had in your life.

If I had any word of caution, it is that I think guidance counselors and entry level university officials really try to place you into a career type group very early.

That's OK because it helps them make recommendations for where you should attend school, but just remember if you think something else may be a better fit in the future, consider it.

Go to career fairs and seminars and find out about different opportunities you may not know exist. Your passion is out there somewhere, you just have to find it.

AgCareers.com: *Is there anything you wish you would have done to better prepare for the workplace?*

Harris: I definitely wish that I had been more involved with some of the student organizations on campus. Looking at them now, they are an incredible way of networking with both your peers and employers.

It amazes me how tight-knit an industry like agriculture can be. It seems like everybody knows everybody and it's one of the best qualities of our field.

By starting these friendships early, I think you really have an advantage of learning from what people have done and are doing to prepare themselves for the workplace.

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— Evan Harris, Alltech Territory Sales Manager

AgCareers.com: *What was the biggest setback you had while job searching?*

Harris: It's easy right now to go ahead and blame the biggest setback on the economy and how competitive the job market is, and a lot of that is true. But, I think the biggest setback is really just getting over the hump of disappointment.

It is very easy to get down once you've had a not-so-good interview, or an interview you thought that went well and the other party didn't agree so much.



You have to take the positive from everything, and these situations are no different. Learn from the past and move forward and it will save you a lot of setbacks during an already grueling process.

AgCareers.com: *What is "A day in the life of Evan Harris, the Alltech Sales Manager" like?*

Harris: Non-stop would be a good way to describe it.

Our industry is constantly faced with problems, and we have to be the problem-solvers. Whether it is meeting face-to-face, a phone call, e-mail, or web conference, I spend my day listening. Listening to what my customers needs are, listening to how our industry is evolving, and listening to what the end consumer's demands are shifting towards. It could be veterinarians, feed mill managers, nutritionists, producers, CEOs, restaurant owners, families, university officials, students; we all have to work together to figure out what works best for our industry.

AgCareers.com: *What advice do you have for graduating seniors looking for a job?*

Harris: The most important advice in my mind is to seize every opportunity.

I think a lot of outstanding graduates really limit themselves because they sit back and wait for the job they wanted while they were in school to come to them.

What they may not take into consideration is that companies or organizations they are unaware of may be looking for what that graduate has to offer.

The market is definitely tough right now, but every opportunity is experience that will be vital for that graduate in the future, whether it be an interview, community service, or an offered internship.

You can't accomplish anything if you don't act on anything, so instead of waiting for what you want to come to you, go out and get it.

Alltech, Inc. provides natural solutions for the feed and food industries. The company supplies ingredients to the food and beverage industries. It develops and produces yeast strains, yeast derivatives, yeast extracts, mannan oligosaccharides, beta glucans, enzymes, natural antioxidants, selenium yeast, organic minerals, biologically active proteins, flavors, and direct-fed microbials. The company also provides natural solutions to the agronomic problems in crop production; and aqua feed to the aqua culture sector. It has operations in North America, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Asia-Pacific. Alltech, Inc. was founded in 1980 and is headquartered in Nicholasville, Kentucky.