Dover, DE – Rachelle Purnell, Lincoln, DE, joined more than 550 of the top collegiate agriculture students Nov. 7-10 in Kansas City, MO, for career preparation training at the Agriculture Future of America Leaders Conference (AFA).

Purnell, a junior agribusiness major in the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources at Delaware State University, participated in soft skill training provided by agriculture, education and facilitation professionals. She was among like-minded, future agriculture leaders who are passionate about agriculture and who received financial support and mentoring from agriculture professionals.

“As the only student from Delaware State University to attend the Agriculture Future of America Leaders Conference this year, I can say that the experience forced me out of my comfort zone,” says Purnell. “It pushed me to network and make long lasting connections with industry professionals from companies like Monsanto, as well as with other students. The conference workshops equipped me with interview skills, tips on adapting to changes and on investing.”
As a student delegate, Purnell was competitively selected by AFA and its partners for conference participation and an opportunity to connect with Monsanto. Prior to that process, Alex Meredith, recruiter for the College of Agriculture and Related Sciences, invited Purnell and other DSU Ag students to apply for the conference based on their grades.

“For the past four years, I have recommended students to attend Agriculture Future of America’s Leadership Conference,” says Meredith. “I appreciate the growth that our students show upon their return to campus in areas of career preparation, professional development, and networking with future colleagues/employers in the agriculture and related industries.”

Monsanto Company is one of the organizations that partners with AFA to make this training possible and the company that sponsored Purnell’s participation. During a special breakfast hosted by Monsanto, Purnell was able to connect with company representatives and discuss career opportunities and Purnell’s interests. Purnell was paired with Monsanto Company based on mutual interest.

“The AFA Leaders Conference gives Monsanto a great opportunity to support agriculture’s next generation,” said Monsanto’s Leticia Goncalves, vice-president and U.S. Commercial Operations lead as well as AFA board member. “These young men and women will be the ones we look toward to continue to meet the challenge of feeding and clothing our growing world.”

“The most beneficial part of this conference was connecting with major companies and industry leaders at the opportunity fair and learning more about potential jobs and
internships,” Purnell says. “I sincerely appreciate Monsanto and DSU’s Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources for their support and allowing me to have the opportunity to broaden my horizons.”

AFA Leaders Conference is just one collegiate and young professional leader development program offered by AFA, which exists as a catalyst in the preparation of the next generation of agriculture leaders.

For more information about our academic programs that are preparing future leaders in agriculture and related sciences, call 302.847.6400, or visit our web page: www.desu.edu/cars

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