

PERSISTENCE IN POULTRY

*CALS alumnus helps
lead country's largest
table egg producer*

SHERMAN MILLER'S work ethic dates back to his days growing up in Ethel, Mississippi, where he helped raise cattle on his family's farm. The tenacity served him well during his collegiate years, first at Holmes Community College, then at Mississippi State where he graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in poultry science in 1997.

A Cal-Maine Foods internship his junior year was all it took for Miller to find his place.

"I recognized that Cal-Maine was an innovative company with high expansion potential," said Miller, who began his career as processing plant supervisor for the company's facility in Edwards.

Miller said that the company began the intern program in 1995.

"I was the second intern in 1996. We have since expanded this internship program for fifteen to twenty students each summer," Miller explained. "It is a great way for students to see our industry through hands-on experience. Many of these students graduate and take on leadership roles in our company with many of our general managers and vice presidents having started with our company through a summer internship."

Now chief operations officer for Cal-Maine Foods Inc.—the country's largest producer of table eggs—Miller's journey in the poultry industry has spanned more than two decades.

Within two years of moving up to processing plant manager, he was dispatched to a new facility in Delta, Utah. When that was operational two years later, he became the general manager for the company's Kansas facility. Miller spent the next 10 years in the Sunflower State, and during that time, he was promoted to vice president of

operations for Kansas, Ohio, and Utah.

In 2011, Miller was asked to return to Mississippi to serve as chief operations officer at the company's Jackson-based headquarters. He is now part of an executive team that oversees operations that include 38 million laying hens across 14 states. The company has 40 million layers, two hatcheries, 44 processing facilities, and 22 feed mills.

Beyond Cal-Maine, Miller has helped lead the industry as a whole. He is past chairman and current member of the board for the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association. He is also a member of both the Board of United Egg Producers and the American Feed Industry Association.

Miller says it's important for students to be involved as well, encouraging them to consider summer internships to find the fit for an ideal career.

"Twelve weeks during the summer is a great way to determine which segment of the industry best meets particular passions and goals for a life-long career,"

said Miller, who pointed out the poultry industry employs several professions including accountants, lawyers, nutritionists, and veterinarians in addition to poultry scientists, just to name a few.

"While any career in agriculture is rewarding since agriculture provides the basic needs for a population, I personally love the poultry industry," Miller said. "I can truly say that one of the best decisions that I have made was walking in the doors of the Hill Poultry Science Department building and meeting Dr. Tim Chamblee, the poultry science advisor. He assured me that the industry had jobs waiting on graduates. I believe that this is even truer today."

Miller said he is proud to help produce a product that helps feed the world.

"I believe that eggs are an extremely valuable food item that will nourish people for generations to come," Miller said. "Many people in the world rarely have access to high-quality protein. I think egg production will continue to expand as an efficient means of filling this void."

