



Dylan Ward

## CONNECTING FOR SUCCESS:

Student Dylan Ward shares his experiences with Iowa State's new on-line distance education Graduate Program in Seed Technology and Business

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After working for 10 years in various agricultural roles, Dylan Ward decided he was ready for a change. That's when he learned about Iowa State University's Graduate Program in Seed Technology and Business (STB)—a distance education program designed for individuals who are currently working in the seed sector, but want to increase their knowledge of seed science and technology while acquiring skills in business and management.

"I heard about the Graduate Program in Seed Technology and Business through a press release announcing the new program," said Ward. "I applied for the program because it matched perfectly with what I was looking for in a graduate program."

Ward added that taking courses in more than one discipline immediately appealed to him. "I was looking at both traditional MBA and agronomy programs, but I really wanted a program that was a combination of both science and business. When the Seed Technology and Business program was announced, it was an easy decision to apply."

Students from eight countries currently are enrolled in the on-line distance education program that was developed by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Business at Iowa State University. Lectures are captured on video, edited, copied to CD-ROM, and then distributed to students.

Students in this "global classroom" communicate with instructors and

fellow students via the course Internet site and email. This affords them the opportunity to compare their knowledge and experience in the seed industry and to participate in group projects with students located around the world. Effective delivery of course content, keeping students engaged, and ensuring prompt instructor response time are all high priorities for STB educators involved in designing the program.

Although Ward says that the wide range of seed topics covered in the program has challenged him, the unique distance education format offers him opportunities that other students in traditional classrooms may never experience. "The diverse group of professors and students allows for many different views of the seed industry," he said.

Ward admits that balancing the daily demands of work and a home life while also working towards a master's degree isn't always easy. That's when developing a set schedule and sticking to it helps to keep him on track. "With a full-time job, and three kids under the age of six years old, that can be a challenge," said Ward. "I do most of my studying in the evenings after the kids go to bed and on weekends. The strategy that helps me the most is to schedule time for school work, just like you would with a traditional class."

Having already earned a graduate certificate in the STB program, Ward is confident that the program has had a positive impact on his career. "I think the [STB] courses have made me a better-

rounded employee in the seed industry," he said. "I feel confident that I can move into a wider variety of roles and be successful."

Planning ahead and having a support system are two things that Ward says have helped to make his experience in the graduate program possible. "My advice is to make sure that you can commit the time to be successful in the program and to stay current on the lessons," said Ward. "It also helps to have an understanding spouse!"



STB graduate student Dylan Ward resides in Nebraska with his wife Susan and their three sons (from left) Landon, Spencer, and Brady. Ward is employed by Syngenta Seeds, Inc.

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For more information about STB program application deadlines see page 13.