My name is Isaac Sunderland, and I am from a small town in northeast Kansas called Sabetha. Although I was raised in a community where production agriculture was the cornerstone, I grew up with little intention to ever be involved within the industry. However, after finishing my first semester at Kansas State University and being involved in FarmHouse Fraternity, my perspective drastically changed on the ever-changing and highly innovative world of modern agriculture.

In December of 2021, I graduated from K-State with a degree in agricultural economics. This degree awarded me an education that continues to supply me with a fundamental understanding of the industry and inspires me to pursue solutions to difficult problems in the entire farm-to-fork process. As time has gone on, my passion for the industry and desire to pursue sustainability within production agriculture has cultivated a desire to pursue a master’s degree in Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University.

I can distinctly recall the lecture hall I was sitting in when I first read the internship application forwarded to me by one of my professors with a simple encouragement saying, “Hey Isaac! You might find this opportunity interesting!” The opportunity immediately became fixated on my mind, and I knew it was something that I diligently wanted to pursue. Two weeks after walking across the stage in Manhattan, KS, I packed my bags and flew to Washington D.C. for only the second time in my life.

Never would I have guessed the plethora of dynamic opportunities and rich connections the upcoming spring semester would provide me interning at Michael Torrey Associates. The MTA team is truly second to none. Every opportunity that I had to work alongside one of the team members provided insight and expertise into agricultural and governmental consulting in a way that uniquely expanded my knowledge. Additionally, I was continually impressed with the scope of connections the firm possesses and routinely maintains, which allotted me the invaluable opportunity to individually meet with eleven different professionals on Capitol Hill from diverse Congressional offices.

The true “team” atmosphere was the first thing to impress me when I first joined on in January. Mike’s ability to specifically cater to everyone in the firm will be an element that will stay with me for years to come. Moreover, the culture of the MTA team to work together and build upon each other’s expertise and acquired wisdom sets the firm apart from any other company I have witnessed. On multiple occasions I was invited to discuss policies and ask questions with a teammate over coffee or lunch to which they all displayed patience and a desire for me to learn.

The daily tasks proved to be thought-provoking, challenging, and extremely rewarding to perform. Whether it was taking notes on a congressional hearing, researching specific issues, or writing newsletters, I was not only benefiting the firm but also emerging as a young professional. Throughout the entirety of the internship, I could directly see the value in the work that I performed and always felt comfortable approaching the staff with any questions that I had.

I continue to reflect on how truly blessed I was to have the opportunity that Michael Torrey and the team provided me over the spring semester of 2022. In short, I entered the internship with hopes to network and learn how a lobbying firm in D.C. operates, but in reality, I left the internship with far more than I ever expected: an experience to cultivate growth and thrive as a young professional. I certainly would like to express my utmost gratitude to the MTA team for working tirelessly to manufacture solutions to the complex problems found in modern agriculture. I would also like to express a special thanks to James Glueck for allowing me to tap into his professional network and see to it that I met with individuals who shared similar interests as myself. While I am sad to see this chapter end, I am confident that this internship will prove to benefit my future professional career and I hope to continue to cultivate the relationships that it provided me. Thank you again, Michael Torrey Associates!