



Center for Paper Business and Industry Studies

Newsletter of the Center for Paper Business and Industry Studies
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Student Profile: Rafael De La Torre *by Aselia Urmanbetova*

Among the students currently affiliated with CPBIS, Rafael De La Torre stands out as someone who has both extensive industry experience and advanced training in diverse disciplines. Together, these assets have equipped him to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the inner workings of the forest products industries. He has, in his own words, “18 years of progressive, international experience in forestry.” He expects to receive his Ph.D. degree in Forest Resources, Business and Finance at The University of Georgia in December. His dissertation was undertaken as part of the CPBIS project, “Commercialization of Forest Biotechnology: Economic Targets for Enhanced Global Competitiveness of the U.S. Pulp and Paper Industry” in the fall of 2001.

Concurrently with his undergraduate studies in Forest Engineering at the National University of Colombia, Rafael founded and managed his own company, Silviculture and Landscaping Tree Care. Upon his graduation in 1984, he sold the company and started working for Smurfit Carton of Colombia. At Smurfit, he effectively utilized his experience as a forestry engineer and was in charge of procuring 120,000 tones of pulpwood and managing 20,000 hectares per year. Within a few years, he reached one of the top positions at Smurfit and was responsible for the company’s forest planning department, developing strategic and tactical forest plans. In recognition of his achievements, Rafael received the Smurfit Performance Award for the support of his studies in the US.

Rafael’s CPBIS work entails an in-depth economic assessment of tree biotechnology, matching new fiber sources and traits with advanced production technologies to provide superior economic performance. With his colleagues, he found that linerboard mills could improve their year 2020 profitability by up to 25% by using biotechnology to improve the growth rate and specific gravity of trees. Such findings triggered wide industry and academic interest, and further research to better quantify the impact of wood lignin content on pulp production is under way.

Rafael feels that one of the most interesting parts of his CPBIS project work has been discussing research results with the leaders of such companies as IP, Weyerhaeuser, and MeadWestvaco: “Being among other project partners made me feel that I was in the place to be, because of the advances in Forest Biotechnology. Forest Biotechnology means a true revolution in production which will change the current forest business perspective.”

Currently, Rafael works as a Manager of Planning and Analysis at CellFor Corporation here in Atlanta. Among his many responsibilities are conducting complex financial and biometrical simulations of the application of a new biotechnology (cloned seedlings) for the forest products industry. During his off-work hours, Rafael is busy with his wife and two kids exploring Georgia’s outdoors, hiking, fishing and camping. And while still missing the beauty of his home country, Rafael likes the freedom and possibilities that are open to him and his family here in Atlanta. If you are interested in learning more about his work contact him at red1675@owl.forestry.uga.edu

Sloan Centers Seek Sustainability

Although Sloan Industry Centers span many industries, all must establish strong linkages to companies and executives within their respective industries to achieve their objectives. Each center is called upon to enlist financial support from companies to fund its research and industry outreach activities. This is a universally difficult task and one which threatens to limit the growth and financial sustainability of the Centers.

To help the Centers address the relevant issues, the Sloan Foundation will sponsor a workshop dedicated to helping all Sloan Industry Centers improve their long-term sustainability through increased effectiveness in corporate recruiting and development. The workshop will be facilitated by Jim Ferris (formerly president of the Institute of Paper Science and Technology, and instrumental in the founding of CPBIS), with planning input from workshop co-organizer Ron Durbin (Director of Industry Relations for the Information Storage Industry Center). It will be held at CPBIS in Atlanta, beginning Tuesday, January 11 at 1 PM, and ending mid-afternoon the following day.

The participants, selected to represent a cross-section of industries and Center research and outreach models, will share programs and practices used in their corporate recruiting and Center development activities. Members of this multi-Center "Sustainability Special Interest Group" will then collaborate on a broader effort to define best practices in this area and to publish these best practices for dissemination among all Sloan Industry Centers.

New Continuing Education Alliance

CPBIS, the Paper Industry Management Association (PIMA), the National Paper Trade Association (NPTA), and the Pulp and Paper Education and Research Alliance (PPERA) have partnered to form the Forest Products Leadership Alliance (FPLA). Its purpose is to provide management and leadership oriented education and training for everyone throughout the forest products supply chain.

The Alliance will build on existing systems shared among the partners and a number of other key industry organizations. It will make available programs that provide members of the forest products industries with leadership and management skills that are of critical and increasing importance as these industries seek to adapt and prosper in a rapidly changing global business environment.

Students to Convene in Florida

TAPPI and PIMA have announced the 2005 TAPPI-PIMA Student Summit, to be held in Jacksonville, Florida, January 14-17, 2005. The Summit will allow students to learn about opportunities after graduation, the current state of the paper industry and some of its key issues and opportunities. The purpose of the Student Summit is to provide students interested in pulp, paper, and allied industries direct interaction with industry leaders and to provide valuable information on employment opportunities within the industry.

The host for this year's Student Summit is Smurfit-Stone in Fernandina Beach, Florida. One of the highlights of the event will be a mill tour on Monday, January 17, 2005.

Mill Database Updated

The CPBIS database of U.S. pulp and paper mills was updated recently (November 23). The database, described in the June issue of this newsletter can be found at <http://www.cpbis.gatech.edu/millsonline>. Just click on the map and the locations of mills in that state will appear, with quick links to information about the mill and the community in which the mill operates.

Among the updates:

Boise Cascade Corp. Mills have a new owner, Boise Cascade LLC (Madison Dearborn Partners).

SCA Tissue North America, L.L.C., Gary, IN closed indefinitely.

Burrows Paper Corp., Little Falls, NY idled.

SCA Tissue North America L.L.C.'s Cherokee, AL mill added. This is a new mill that was recently built and is in operation.

Upcoming Events

TAPPI-PIMA Student Summit. Jan. 14-17, Radisson River Walk Hotel, Jacksonville, FL. See <http://www.tappi.org> or <http://www.pimaweb.org>

Center Sustainability Workshop. Jan. 11-12, IPST at Georgia Tech, Atlanta. See article above.

CPBIS Industry Advisory Board (IAB) Meeting, Thursday Jan. 20, IPST at Georgia Tech. Themes: State of the Center and Industry Connectivity. For more information, contact Colleen Walker, 404-894-5756.

Management Development Course. May 9-13, IPST. See <http://www.cpbis.gatech.edu/mgtdev> ■