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- Provided by SCCC/ATS

Seward County Community College was an opportunity for Patricia (Rodriguez) Beer to gain a solid and affordable education. “Secretly ... I did not want to leave my parents quite yet,” Beer said. “I was unsure about what I wanted to do with ‘the rest of my life,’ and staying at Seward allowed me to gain more maturity before I went off to a big school.”

After graduating from Liberal High School in 2004, Beer graduated from SCCC in 2005. If the math says there is no way she could have graduated so quickly, she not only took concurrent classes while in high school but took extra hours during the school year and during the summer so she could graduate early. “My parents were supportive of whatever school I decided to attend,” Beer said. Her dad told her to pick the school, and they would worry about paying for it. She said they instilled the importance of an education in all of their children. It was never a question on whether or not Beer would go to college, but rather where she would go to college. At the time, her sister, Mirta, worked at the college and she had “nothing but great things to say about the culture. SCCC was always on the ‘maybe’ radar, but I was not sure if it would be the ‘uncool’ thing to do not to go to a big university right away or if it would be just like high school. I made the decision that was best for me and not anyone else and I have absolutely no regrets!” Her sister Nora also graduated from SCCC.

As a student at SCCC, Beer was a presidential scholar and a lifeguard and was a member of Phi Theta Kappa, the Hispanic American Leadership Organization, Student Government Association and Big Brothers Big Sisters. One of her favorite memories was her involvement with the Foundation Scholarship Auction. “I got to be ‘Vanna White’ for the evening and share my pride with SCCC alums.”

Although she graduated from SCCC with an associate in science degree in marketing, she still was not sure what she wanted to do. However, great scholarship opportunity encouraged her to pursue a degree in Ag Business. She graduated from Kansas State University in 2007 with a bachelor of science degree in Agricultural Business and 2009 with a Master of Business Administration.

“I always assumed ag was for those who wanted to be farmers or work with cows,” Beer said. “I

was wrong. After being educated on vast career opportunities, I was sold. I was very blessed with a full academic scholarship, which allowed me to graduate from college with no debt.” She now works for a Fortune 500 company— ConAgra Foods, where she is the human resources generalist supporting its second largest frozen manufacturing facility in Omaha, Neb. She started her career as a college recruiter along with managing a Fortune 500 intern program enterprise-wide. She traveled about 70 percent of the time to different colleges and universities finding the right talent for her organization. After a second promotion, she then moved into her current role supporting a manufacturing facility of approximately 1,000 employees in a generalist capacity.

Most of her favorite college memories took place while at SCCC. She has always said that if SCCC were a four-year university, she never would have left. “I made friendships with the faculty and the staff that I will cherish forever,” she said.

And although she no longer lives in Liberal, it is still “home sweet home. I will never forget how great this small town was to me. My parents still live there, and I must say there is something special about coming home once or twice a year even after being gone for eight years. I have wonderful childhood memories along with great friendships I left behind. . . so Liberal will always be home no matter where I end up. Her husband Shannon, also from Liberal, graduated from Kansas State University and is employed with Union Pacific Railroad.

Beer encourages students today to “do what is best for you, not what your friends are doing. Going to SCCC is a great opportunity to save money before you go off to a big school where you are just a number. If you are worried about not getting the “full” university experience, I disagree with that statement. You can do this at SCCC by living in the residence halls, getting involved in organizations and working on campus. You can continue the college experience once you transfer to a university by joining organizations or a sorority or fraternity.”

A saying she lives by is “no one can ever take your education away.”

She also learned through her present job that education and grade point average are both important to recruiters.

“For those of you reading this and know me, you know I am a big dreamer and have high aspirations. I know life has quite a bit in store for me and there are some things ‘in the works,’ but you will just have to wait and see what happens,” she concluded.

College expands ag opportunities

- SCCC/ATS Seward County Community College/Area Technical School has been expanding agricultural programs each year to give students a wider variety of opportunities. Students can major in sustainable agriculture resources, animal science, agronomy, agri-business or soils and plants and in fall 2013, students can pursue a career in food science and safety. Students can join a livestock judging team, crop judging team or a soils judging team. Students can earn a two-year associate in applied science degree and move immediately into the work force or a two-year associate’s degree and transfer to a four-year college or

university.

Since the field of agriculture has become so diversified, students can investigate many new areas of employment in addition to traditional production agriculture. Students interested in agriculture could be employed as:

Buyers

Meat Inspectors

• Cattle

- Feedlot Managers
- Swine Farm Managers
- Fertilizer Field Sales Representatives
- Natural Resource Conservationists
- Agricultural Journalists
- Field Representatives for Breed Associations
- Veterinarians
- Greenhouse Managers
- Bank Agricultural Representatives
- Entomologists
- Agricultural Instructors
- Agricultural Engineers

Career opportunities are promising for students who prepare themselves for the future.

Agriculture and related industries need qualified personnel with skills and knowledge in livestock and crop production, science, management, marketing, and business.

For more information, go online to www.sccc.edu or call 620-417-1100.

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