

A Recipe for Success



Charlotte Steuby '20 (middle) with The International Companies' Research and Development Team.

As she sat in Karen Schuering's statistics class listening to a guest speaker, Charlotte Steuby '20, did not realize what was cooking. The speaker was Ting Ting Wang, an animal food scientist from the International Ingredient Corporation, a business unit of The International Companies.

"Charlotte was even more inquisitive than usual," Karen said. "I knew there was something there and I wanted to make sure we jumped on it."

So Karen went to Cor Jesu Academy's Career, College and Wellness Center (CCW) – a comprehensive counseling program that works to not only assist students' success in academics, personal growth and college admissions, but also to provide resources for students that are relevant to their future pursuits and career aspirations. Karen knew that Cynthia Wilhelm, director of the CCW, was already in conversations with CJA parent, Tony

Armitage, Vice President of Purchasing and Risk Management at The International Companies. They were collaborating to create a food science internship offered exclusively to a Cor Jesu student. To complete the recipe, however, they needed two ingredients:

1. *The perfect student*
2. *Company buy-in*

The Perfect Student

They were looking for someone who was not only passionate about food science, but also a self-starter whose placement in the role could help trial the internship concept and cement it for the future. Charlotte was already considering a food science major in college. She was also enrolled in Cor Jesu's unique honors class, Independent Science Research (ISR), which pairs a student with a professional mentor in the community to develop and execute a research project and report their findings. Charlotte was working with Emily O'Chiu, a food technologist at The International Companies. Her project: to create a lactose-free cheese sauce for macaroni and cheese.

Company Buy-In

The already-established company culture at The International Companies made acquiring the second ingredient simple.

"We [The International Companies] like to say that our word is gold," CEO, Clayton Brown, said. "If we say we are going to do something, we do it, and we treat everyone with respect along the way."

With the ingredients secured and ready to mix, Tony got to work crafting a detailed description of a college-level summer internship that included the opportunity to rotate among strategically selected teams at The International Companies, as well as a field component to allow learning and engagement with a variety of its corporate clients.

"It was easy for me to be enthusiastic about this internship project because of the environment Clayton Brown has established," Tony said. "I knew it would take a lot of people to make this happen, and everyone at our company stepped up and said 'yes.' That's what happens when you work at a great place."

Mixing It All Together

Charlotte started the one-month paid internship at The International Companies in July 2020. Tony's vision for learning modules allowed her to meet and work with various specialized company teams to learn about their roles and where they fit in the food science industry. As part of each team rotation, she completed an activity related to that specific area. For one activity, she conducted her own sensory panel where she tested which brand of Stevia, an artificial sweetener, tasted best.

"I made solutions with different levels of concentration of Stevia, and then the control set was regular sugar," Charlotte said. "I had 10 people taste and rate the different attributes of the samples, which included sweetness and clean tasting, to see which was best."

Charlotte's field study provided a well-rounded perspective on all the different career paths available in the food industry. She visited food manufacturing plants as well as some of The International Companies' clients, like 1st Phorm – a premier supplement nutrition company that purchases products from International Food Products.

And finally, she experienced what it is like to work in a professional office setting handling a variety of office duties.

"My favorite learning module was flavor trends," Charlotte said. "I enjoyed making connections with recent flavor trends and how they align with popular culture."

The Finished Product

At the end of the internship, Charlotte delivered a capstone presentation sharing the highlights and learnings of her summer experience to an audience that included leadership and team facilitators from The International Companies, as well as faculty and staff members from Cor Jesu.

"Beyond its exceptional depth and scope, what impressed me most about Charlotte's experience was that it allowed her to grasp how the specialized elements within the industry all work together to form the whole picture," Cynthia Wilhem said. "Many college-level internships don't come close to delivering this caliber of impactful learning."

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—CYNTHIA WILHELM, DIRECTOR, CJA CAREER COLLEGE AND WELLNESS CENTER



Now, Charlotte is in her second semester studying food science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Thanks to her internship with The International Companies, she feels ahead in her food science courses, and has even earned three credits toward her major for completing the internship and capstone project. Plus, she continued to work at The International Companies during the fall because her college coursework was virtual due to Covid-19.

"It's really unique that we have the Career, College and Wellness Center at Cor Jesu to help students seek out opportunities like this," Charlotte said. "I think it really helps your college search if you have an idea of what you want to do in high school, and the CCW supports CJA girls in that process."

Next Steps

The pilot internship with Charlotte was so successful that The International Companies will offer two college-level internships for Cor Jesu students this summer: a food science internship and a business internship with an entrepreneurial flavor. The food science internship will be similar to what Charlotte experienced and the business internship will introduce the intern to the many different facets of business that go into running a company, such as sales, accounting, marketing, logistics, distribution and more.

"We want to open the eyes of these young interns to all that is out there," Clayton Brown said. "Most high school students know about the basic careers available, but they may not know about something out of the ordinary like food science."

Thanks to the CCW, attentive CJA teachers, and exceptional corporate partners like Tony Armitage and Clayton Brown at The International Companies, Cor Jesu students are able to see and experience different careers. These types of partnerships empower students to discover how their interests and unique skills can work together to lead them down a career path, which in-turn helps them make an informed college decision.

"I'm grateful for everyone that took an interest in me and my future," Charlotte said. "Right now, the plan is to be a food scientist, but I might also become a flavor chemist. Either way, I can't wait until I can go to the grocery store and point to a product and say: 'I made that!'"



ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES

The International Companies is a family-owned manufacturer and distributor that supplies quality ingredients and provides expert advice to its clients in the food, pet food and feed industries. It is one of St. Louis' largest privately owned companies and is comprised of three business units: International Food Products Corporation (IFPC), International Ingredient Corporation (IIC) and Green Field Solutions (GFS).

- IFPC manufactures custom formulations and distributes ingredients into the dairy, beverage, and other food manufacturing and food service industries.
- IIC is a manufacturer of research-proven ingredients for use in animal feed and pet food. It has sales in 26 countries.
- GFS is a leading sustainable nutrition company helping large CPG food manufacturers manage and upcycle their by-products.

The International Companies employs over 300 people in eight states and is an expert in food and feed ingredient manufacturing, food science, animal nutrition, food and feed safety, distribution, and commodity risk management.