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Growing up on my family's seventh generation burley tobacco farm in Central Kentucky has undoubtedly shaped my outlook on life for the past twenty one years. My earliest memories include many days spent at my father's and uncle's side learning how to produce the best crop possible. Through this, a deep sense of pride in our family's farming heritage was fostered deep within me. As I've grown older, my father continues giving me the choice as to whether or not I am involved with our family farm. No matter the task, I consistently choose to slip into my old work boots and muddy jeans, and hop into my father's truck out for another day's work. As a senior agricultural business major, I realize that my passion in life is to pursue a career in the agricultural industry.

My lifelong involvement in the agricultural field has molded my personal value system and provided me with an unparalleled drive to succeed. The level of responsibility that comes with maintaining a tobacco crop's health is unprecedented. This carried over into my life in the fact that I have learned to hold myself responsible for my actions and to acknowledge and learn from my mistakes. The joy and sense of accomplishment in seeing a crop beautifully hanging in the barn has driven me to complete all of my tasks to the best of my ability. Through my days of working on the farm, I have learned to never rest until the job is finished, as well as to take pride in the things I produce.

As a member of the upcoming generation of agriculturists in America, I feel a responsibility to be an advocate for agriculture. Throughout the past fifty years, the face of agriculture has shifted dramatically. Long gone are the days of a single farmer and his trusty mule pulling a plow. Instead, we see the face of agriculture as the genetic specialist in the laboratory working to increase corn yields, as the agricultural educator leading future generations to succeed or as the policy maker lobbying for producers on Capitol Hill. Students are no longer limited to a career solely in production, but can instead choose to use a wide variety of skill sets to achieve the common goal of feeding, clothing and sheltering the world.

As an emerging leader in the field of agriculture, I continually strive to promote the bright future agriculture has to offer my contemporaries and me. As I pursue a career after college graduation, I know my upbringing in agriculture will only benefit me in my future endeavors. Thomas Jefferson said it best in his letter to John Jay, "Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bands."