

A Vital Link in the Chain

Supply chain logistics is all about planning and executing against a plan. Mark Walker ('79 Industrial Administration)

knows how difficult that process can be in the current market.

“With today’s global supply chains, dozens of people touch your product. Someone needs to keep track of each one to make sure it gets to its destination on time,” he says. “It’s about effectively routing freight to optimize cost, inventory control and security around the product itself.”

Mark’s entire career has revolved around supply chain management and movement of freight within the transportation industry. To make sure these concepts are carried on at Iowa State, he and his wife Terri recently committed \$500,000 to establish the Walker Professorship in Logistics Operations and Supply Chain Management within the College of Business.

“Mark and Terri have made a substantial investment in the College of Business,” says Raisbeck Endowed Dean Labh Hira. “As a graduate of our program, we are very proud of all that Mark has achieved in such a short period of time. Both Mark and Terri are excellent role models for our younger generation of donors to the college.”

“For both Terri and me, it came down to giving back to the college,” Mark says, “and to the profession that gave us all the opportunities that we have today.”

Mark graduated from Ames High School in 1975. After his Iowa State degree, he also received his MBA in finance from Minnesota’s University of St. Thomas.

Today, he is senior vice president of transportation for C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., based

in Minneapolis. He attributes his years at Iowa State with providing the basis for his success.

“It was the foundation for my career,” he says. “When I entered college, I knew I wanted to join a business, but not what field it would be in. I did complete the CPA exam and used my accounting background. Your early success is about what you’ve gained overall in college—your ability to learn and problem-solve.”

At the time he graduated, the job market was tough. “I got lucky when Robinson afforded me the opportunity to move into the transportation field,” he says. “We had 250 employees when I started in 1980. Today we have 7,500.”

Occasionally, Mark returns to Iowa State to participate in business seminars and as a speaker. One of Mark and Terri’s daughters, Cary, is a 2006 marketing graduate from the ISU College of Business. Daughter Sarah attends college in Minneapolis.

“I’ve noticed that Iowa graduates tend to leave the state for other opportunities,” he says. “I was one of those people who didn’t have career choices there.”

Although Mark does not have all the answers to this exodus, he believes contributing to education is critical. “We need to help bring solutions to the table and create new business opportunities.

“Iowa State’s supply chain program is by far one of the best in the country and probably the world,” he says, “but the world doesn’t know it. We’d like to help give it a boost. We’d like to try to attract more faculty members who will help continue to make it grow,” Mark says. “Terri and I would like to create an example that others could follow.” ■

Reprinted from the ISU Foundation.



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