TD Ameritrade Institutional sets multi-year sponsorship with Texas A&M Financial Planning Program

January 5, 2015

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COLLEGE STATION – TD Ameritrade Institutional, one of the country’s largest custody firms for independent registered investment advisers, has agreed to a multi-year sponsorship with Texas A&M University to help its Financial Planning Program develop top-tier undergraduate degree and continuing education programs that will help prepare more students and graduates for careers as personal financial planners.

The sponsorship will support program development and fund a newly created TD Ameritrade Institutional Director of Financial Planning position to be filled by Dr. Nathan Harness.

“There is great need for financial planners, and there are many career opportunities for Texas A&M students,” Harness said. “We are incredibly enthusiastic about this program as well as the opportunities created by this new sponsorship to enhance the diversity of the profession.”

Harness comes to the Texas A&M campus in College Station after serving as an associate professor of finance at Texas A&M-Commerce. In addition to having a doctorate in personal financial planning from Texas Tech University, Harness holds the Certified Financial Planner, or CFP, designation. He previously worked as a financial advisor at Morgan Stanley and American Express Advisors and since 2007 has been on the faculty at the University of Georgia and Texas A&M-Commerce.

Kate Healy, managing director and head of marketing at TD Ameritrade Institutional, provided the keynote address at the Fifth Annual Texas A&M University Financial Planning Workshop recently, which attracted financial planners from throughout Texas. She also visited with students in the program, discussing the financial planning and advising profession and answering questions.

“TD Ameritrade wants to encourage more young people to pursue careers as personal financial planners, and the Texas A&M brand will help showcase financial planning on a much bigger stage," Healy said. “TD Ameritrade Institutional is committed to helping the RIAindustry attract a new generation of advisors. Demand for the financial planning profession continues to grow, and its services are needed by an increasingly diverse population. There’s a huge opportunity for women and minorities to serve families who need professional help planning their financial futures.”

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics forecasts that personal financial advisor employment will grow by 27 percent through 2022, which is nearly three times the average 11 percent job growth rate for all occupations.

TD Ameritrade Institutional is a leading provider of comprehensive brokerage and custody services to more than 4,500 fee-based, independent registered investment advisors and their clients. TD Ameritrade Institutional is a division of TD Ameritrade, Inc., the brokerage subsidiary of TD Ameritrade Holding Corporation (NYSE: AMTD).
Lane Keller, owner of KMH Wealth Management LLC, a fee-only wealth management firm in Victoria, Texas, that utilizes TD Ameritrade as their primary custodian, is excited to see the development of this program at his alma mater.

“This TD Ameritrade Institutional sponsorship and the expansion of financial planning in higher education programs can help fuel a steady flow of qualified and properly educated young professionals to fill the need for objective financial services to the public,” Keller said.

Dr. Gene Nelson, professor emeritus and the person spearheading the creation of Texas A&M’s financial planning program, said its offerings include both an undergraduate academic program for enrolled undergraduates seeking life-long careers and an extended learning program for graduates looking to advance or change their careers.

“The extended learning program was approved as a registered program of the CFP Board of Standards in September 2013. Over the past few years, the program has grown from an idea outlined on a lunch napkin to the six-course curriculum, which includes the equivalent of 18 semester credits in financial planning core topics at the upper-division level.”

The program features courses in the following areas: financial planning fundamentals, insurance and estate planning, tax planning, investment and retirement planning, and the financial planning capstone. An academic minor program available to all Texas A&M students has been proposed for implementation in fall semester 2015.

Completion of this curriculum qualifies students, both undergraduates and extended learners, to sit for the CFP Exam, which is one of the most recognized and respected designations for financial planners and advisors.

“Although the fundamentals course was developed in 2010, the remaining five courses were developed after our executive associate dean approved the program’s business plan in September 2012,” Nelson said. “This fall semester, more than 50 students are enrolled in our fundamentals and our investment planning courses, with students across the country taking the courses online.”

For an overview of the program and application information, visit http://financialplanning.tamu.edu.

To learn more about TD Ameritrade Institutional, visit http://www.tdainstitutional.com/