

Summary Points from *Meet the CEO Series* Meeting held on February 27, 2014

The College of Business Administration faculty welcomed Jim Doyle to start the 2014 *Meet the CEO Series* in February. Doyle is the Executive Vice President of Brenntag North America Inc., one of the largest chemical distribution companies in the world.

Mr. Doyle commented on a variety of current business and industry topics. Specifically:

- Brenntag NA is a large public company with 13,000 employees operating in four regions around the world – specifically North America, Europe, Asia and Latin America. The company focus is chemical distribution, and also provides products and services in the areas of logistics, supply chain management, inventory management, e-commerce, and quantified results reporting.
- Doyle started as a salesman at Coastal Chemical in Abbeville, LA in 1973 after graduating from UL with a degree in Business Administration (accounting major). He quickly moved up to be a sales manager and 18 years later was named Chairman and CEO. Coastal Chemical was sold in 1997 and Doyle has continued to be affiliated with the company, most recently returning as President in 2013. The company currently operates with 680 employees and generates \$890 million in sales revenue.
- The chemical distribution business has grown through mergers and acquisitions and Doyle discussed his role in 13 acquisitions to date during his career. He stressed that it is easy to buy a company – but hard to integrate the cultures. Most small distributors are “mom-and-pop” businesses who typically do not focus on succession planning as a part of the strategic planning for the company. Doyle emphasized the need to find ways to extract value in mergers with the goal of keeping as many jobs in place as possible. He noted most of the redundancy is in the administrative positions and not in the field jobs. The challenge is to successfully integrate the companies involved and keep the soul of the company intact. Jim commented that it is best to adopt the “best practices” of the company being acquired so as to respect the history of that company.
- When asked about his personal style of leadership, Mr. Doyle spoke about stewardship and the responsibility that comes with the planning and management of resources in an organization. He noted that he has evolved as a leader over time after watching other leaders in action. He mentioned some personal character traits that have helped him to be successful, including self-discipline, acting with integrity, giving compliments, and reinventing oneself when needed.
- Doyle noted that students should be taught two important business values: (1) the importance of strong communication skills (both written and oral) and that their skills in these areas are being assessed starting with the job interview; and (2) work to be satisfied in all areas of life.

Submitted by: Dr. Lise Anne D. Slatten, Department of Management