

## FROM CLASSROOM TO CAREER: **ELIMINATING BOUNDARIES FOR FUTURE SUPPLY CHAIN LEADERS**

### **Will Heywood (00:09):**

Welcome to “All Business. No Boundaries.”, a collection of supply chain stories by DHL Supply Chain, the North American leader in contract logistics. I’m your host Will Heywood. This is a place for in-depth discussions on the supply chain challenges keeping you up at night. We’re breaking beyond the boundaries that are limiting your supply chain. Let’s dive in. Today’s episode is “From Classroom to Career: Eliminating Boundaries for Future Supply Chain Leaders.” My guests are Brian Gibson, Wilson Family Professor and Executive Director at the Center for Supply Chain Innovation at Auburn University, James Hill, Chairman of the Operations and Business Analytics Department at The Ohio State University and Dave Ames, Vice President of Talent Management and Acquisition and Certified Learning and Development at DHL Supply Chain. Welcome to you all. Thanks for being here. Okay, so it’s a big time of year for students as they graduate and start their careers with new employers. And I know that each of you has a lot to say on the subject. To start, I’d like you to introduce yourself, your university or company, and provide a little thumbnail sketch on the program you’re involved with. So, Brian, I’d like to start with you.

### **Brian Gibson (01:20):**

Sure. Great to be here. I’ve been in supply chain education for 27 years, the last 22 at Auburn University. Prior to that, I was a retail logistics manager for eight years, and I currently serve as Executive Director for the Center for Supply Chain Innovation at Auburn. I’m the 21 Chairman of the Board for the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, and I’m the 2021 Fulbright-Hanken Distinguished Scholar currently residing in Helsinki, Finland. So it’s great to be here. Our program has grown tremendously over the past 10 years. It’s been around for about 40 years. It started off as transportation then morphed into physical distribution and logistics, and is now a supply chain program. And what I would call it kind of a true supply chain program because we actually combined our logistics and operations management programs into supply chain management. We give students a full coverage of plan, buy, make, move, and deliver and return and everything involved in a supply chain overall. So it’s great opportunity for students to learn.

### **Will Heywood (02:31):**

Terrific. Thanks for that. And I do want to come back to kind of some more specifics on how the program has evolved over time. James Hill, could you please introduce yourself?

### **James Hill (02:41):**

Yes. My name is James Hill. I’m the Chairman of the Operations and Business Analytics department at The Ohio State University in the Fisher College of Business. Before I went into academia, I spent several years in supply chain, at that time was called product availability manager, at PepsiCo with range of responsibilities from production plan through the distribution center, really all the way out to the field warehouses. I was on the faculty at Vanderbilt University before coming to Ohio State. And here at Ohio State, our supply chain program is really unique. And let me explain that. We have a logistics major and we have an operations major. And our students, in order to get the full supply chain undergraduate experience, they major in both operations and logistics management. We also have a purchasing major to go with that. And so if you put those three together, they get the full experience of supply chain at the undergraduate level. Our students at the graduate level actually do the same thing. They pull all three together. Now we have a business operational excellence major also, which is really a deep dive into the operational excellence component. That’s the lean six Sigma part of the supply chain professional. In the future, we’re going to be bringing online, hopefully in 2022, a masters of science in supply chain here at Ohio State.

**Will Heywood (04:20):**

Super. So Dave, maybe a slightly different twist on this question. Obviously, you and I know we have a partnership with these two schools. If you could maybe talk about what that looks like, and if you could avoid getting into football rivalry. You know, there are three of us here in Columbus, Ohio, and Brian's elsewhere.

**Dave Ames (04:40):**

Yeah, that would be unfair. So I would not want to do that to someone who's such a supporter of the college recruiting program that we run here. You did mention my title before, Will. And basically what that means is that I've got the privilege of leading a team of about 90 folks that do all of our talent acquisition, the hourly workforce, the salaried workforce, inclusive of our college recruiting program, and also lead a team responsible for talent management and learning and development primarily for our salaried workforce. I'm going on 18 years here with the organization. And one of the things that has been just super meaningful to me was that I was one of the people who brought the college recruiting program to this organization. When we saw that there was a need, we did a pilot in 2005 and we've grown it to what it is today, which is a program that hires around 250 full-time people and about 250 interns directly from colleges and universities across North America. Over the course of the last five years, we have hired about a thousand college students and just shy of 900 into intern opportunities. And what's really cool about Auburn and Ohio State is that these two universities are 2 of 50 plus that we go to just based on where we need to be, where our distribution centers are, where people are willing to relocate to and things of that nature. But these two universities represent 13% of the full-time hires and 19% of the interns that we've hired in the last five years, which says a lot to come from two universities.

**Will Heywood (06:18):**

Excellent. So James, you've been in academia around supply chain for some time at Ohio State. Can you dimension how big your program is, and maybe some of the key points of evolution in it over the last 10, 15 years or so?

**James Hill (06:35):**

Sure. At the undergraduate level, between our logistics and our operations and our supply chain program, we graduate about 7 to 800 students. In our graduate program, it's a little bit smaller. That number is probably 50 to 100. I'm going to go back about 10 years to look at where we are right now in comparison to where we were 10 years ago. We made probably two adjustments, major adjustments, to our supply chain program. The first one was when we incorporated the operational excellence dimension to supply chain and that's our lean six Sigma concentration in our college of business incorporating that into the supply chain program. So therefore, students get a yellow belt when they come out of Ohio State with this supply chain degree. The second dimension that we really expanded on, probably in the last three to five years, is the notion of the business analytics. And so we have a minor in analytics and our students that come out in the supply chain area also get the chance to get the minor in analytics. And we've really been pushing that, I'd say over the last three years, and it's really been coming from our customers, our corporate members have really been asking for the analytics. And so we've introduced that into our supply chain program also.

**Dave Ames (08:10):**

Amazing that you're doing that too, because your customers who are asking for that are probably some of the same people that we're seeing asking the same questions. And a program that was built here on hiring, I would suggest, 95% operations professionals into operations roles when we started it 15 years ago, is still predominantly operations, but not nearly as much. Right now, the target's about 75% operations roles. And the other 25% are looking for those analytical mindsets and those systems types of people that the colleges and universities are doing just such an amazing job of developing and educating.

**Will Heywood (08:49):**

Hey Brian, can you tell us a little bit about Auburn's evolution?

**Brian Gibson (08:53):**

Sure. When I arrived at Auburn, we had about 40 majors and three faculty members. And early on, we used to give students a t-shirt that said "the best major you've never heard of" to try and recruit. Fast forward to 2021, and we've got faculty asking, can we set up enrollment caps because the program is getting quite big. So we're up to 600 students, we've got 14 faculty members and 4 support staff that help with everything from your normal administrative assistant work to helping with internships, helping with full-time recruiting and professional development. So it's a big team now. They all do a great job.

We're regularly ranked in the top 10 of the Gartner North American top supply chain undergraduate programs. We are starting a master's of science in supply chain this fall. And all of this growth has culminated in us becoming our own department standalone with just that faculty group. We used to be housed in marketing, and then we moved to aviation management, and then we moved finally to systems and technology. And now we're big enough that we're on our own. So we work really closely with industry partners like DHL to help us make sure that what we're doing is keeping up with the times. And we've got a lot of interesting things going on and we've got a tools and tech and enterprise systems option for our students where they can get a SAP certificate and sit for the SAP Terp 10 Certification, we got an Excel certification in one of our courses now, and just the explosion of technology and analytics, similar to what James said, it's really in high demand from our employers. And we're always striving to deliver that.

**Will Heywood (10:42):**

Great. Well, if nobody heard of supply chain before the pandemic, they certainly have by now.

**James Hill (10:48):**

No, that's absolutely right. When you bring up the pandemic, we've been asked by media outlets all over the world just to come in and talk on virtual formats about supply chain. And one thing I can say is that the corporate involvement in the programs, as we were just talking about, Brian was mentioning, is continuing to grow because they see the impact that these undergraduate students can have on their organization. And here at Ohio State, we have a center for operational excellence and thanks to DHL for being one of our board members in the center. But we get tremendous engagement, not only from interacting with our students relative to internship possibilities, but also as a sounding board for the faculty to continuously improve our curriculum because the supply chain is changing at such a rapid pace. And so we need to keep up and no way better to keep up through our center corporate members.

**Will Heywood (11:57):**

Dave, turning it around. How does DHL work with places like OSU and Auburn to influence curriculum or even if you want to talk about the recruiting engine, how does your team do that?

**Dave Ames (12:09):**

Yeah. I mean, there's a variety of different ways. The Auburns and the Ohio States of the world are the purple squirrels of colleges and universities that we look to partner with because these kinds of relationships and these kinds of students don't come around all the time, right? I think a lot of organizations who target supply chain and operations management people wind up going to a university and showing up at a career fair and potentially keeping their fingers crossed that the right students come across their booth when they're at that career fair, whether it's virtual or in person. With the ability to partner with the actual folks who are coming up with the curriculum and teaching the curriculum and helping bring to life what they're trying to teach the students is amazing because I think it's one thing to talk about things theoretically, and here's how a supply chain should work. But it's another thing to be able to partner with universities, to be able to come in and add real life examples and answer questions about, yes, this is what it says in the book, and this is how it should work. And here's how it is deployed. And sometimes it works as intended and sometimes it doesn't, and here's what you do in those situations. And by being able to partner with colleges and universities in that manner, not only does it help them, but it really creates the right kind of exposure for us as an organization. So people are putting faces with names behind companies, and they're starting to get a sense for what those companies actually do by hearing from them so that it really does help drive people towards a potential career path within our organization. And it's not a blind introduction at a career fair.

**Will Heywood (13:49):**

More about the students. This is one for James and Brian. Describe a typical student in your program. What motivates them to specialize in supply chain or operations? What's their sort of background generally, what do they look to get out of it? And you know, where do they go when they graduate from your schools? James, you can go first.

**James Hill (14:09):**

Yeah. So our typical student and we tend to call them problem solvers because one thing about our curriculum that we try to bring out is the ability to be able to solve problems. And so I look at our supply chain students, and if you asked me, hey, what is there, how would you portray them? They're problem solvers. And our curriculum is designed around problem solving. And so you think about the supply chain in general, all facets of the supply chain, our undergraduate students are put in what we call scenario basis. And so throughout our curriculum, they are faced with a of different scenarios that they're expected

to be able to handle when they go out into the field. And so their background is one where they are pretty analytical. I would say they have a pretty rigorous analytical background before they come into the major. And so there are a couple of statistics courses, two what we call optimization type courses, basic linear programming, things like that, quantitative modeling. They have all the core classes under their belt before they come in. Before they came into the college, they have the basic calculus course. So they're coming in with a pretty rigorous analytical background. And then when they come into the program, they're really faced with a lot more analytical rigor where they're doing simulation modeling and things of that sort. A lot of case-based decision-making, really strong problem solvers. That's why companies like, I believe DHL and Cardinal Health and Honda, Target, UPS, L Brands, those types of companies that are faced with enormous global challenges are very attracted to our students.

**Will Heywood (16:02):**

Brian, what about Auburn?

**Brian Gibson (16:04):**

I think James hit it really well with some of the key traits. I would add to that, students that are process-oriented that they can think from end-to-end. And they're very practical. You know, we don't get the creative marketing types or the very focused accountants, although we convert some of those students after they take a couple of our classes, but very pragmatic, practical students who want to solve problems, who want to get engaged. But it's hard to say that there's a typical student because our students come from all different areas. Some of them know that they wanted to go into supply chain, others took our introductory class and decided they want to convert to supply chain, but they're not really all looking for the same thing. You know, 15, 20 years ago, everything was an operations position and getting out there and teaching them basic supervision and things of that nature. Now, we've got students that want to go into procurement and they want to be transportation, logistics, and inventory analysts. They want to be involved in a wide variety of different things that are available to them through the supply chain program.

**Dave Ames (17:12):**

That is actually a really good point because you do see a lot of these students, even though they're all in the same major, doesn't necessarily mean they want the same thing, right? So, it's amazing to see people go through the same curriculum and come out with a different level of education and passion and interest in certain areas, which is really fun when you get into the recruiting process to understand what are they motivated by, what is it that they want to do and how can they fit into this puzzle of pieces we've got here as a third party logistics provider.

**Brian Gibson (17:47):**

Let me just add to that. That's really where internships and these practical engagements, simulations that we both talked about are so absolutely critical. Because I think these opportunities help students figure out not only what I want to do initially, but what I don't want to do, because there's some real opportunities for them to get out there and see what's going on and say, oh, that's not for me. And I'd rather have them do that as a junior, going out to an internship than somebody figuring that out after they graduated and they are in the first job out there.

**Dave Ames (18:22):**

Yeah, couldn't be more aligned with you there.

**James Hill (18:25):**

You know, Brian brought up a very good point, and I want to echo that sentiment. This field of supply chain operations or logistics in our world here, a lot of the undergraduate students, when they come in the door at Ohio State in business, they're thinking accounting, you know, their parents have told them about marketing and, of course, finance, and they don't know much about what we do in supply chain management. Now, some of that is changing over the last, you know, 12 months. The pandemic has kind of brought this field to light that hopefully we're going to see a lag there and in another year or two, we're going to see students coming into the doors saying, yes, supply chain management. What is often the case now, and over the past 5 to 10 years, is that we'll get students after they take that core class, that core logistics class, that core operations supply chain course. And then all of a sudden, they say, oh, wow, I see now. This is the one field that is kind of transformational, that can have impact. The type of a job that I can get when I graduate out of here, that I can have impact. One of the things I tell my students when I get them in the elective class is that this field of supply chain operations, logistics, this is where most of the people in the world work. So if you want to have an impact on people and on processes and solve some major problems, this is the field for you. And I think that's resonating now with our students.

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**Dave Ames (20:01):**

And building on that even further, what we see every once in a while is non supply chain or non ops management majors who wind up taking a class too late into their student careers to make a change that they probably would have made if they had taken that class earlier, who are still interested in these kinds of jobs, right? That's another component of what you guys are teaching and what you guys are showing the students that it connects with them, right? And they still wind up pursuing careers in this space, even without the major, because they were introduced to it.

**Will Heywood (20:39):**

When you guys look ahead and you think about what the market will require for students to be successful in their careers, what kinds of things are you looking to either do differently or enhance in your programs to prepare this next generation?

**Brian Gibson (20:57):**

I'd say one of the things we're constantly hitting them to develop their data skills and not just the number crunching skills, but trying to understand that report that you just created, that Excel spreadsheet that you just built, what does it mean? And what are you going to do with that information? How are you going to use that information to run better operations, make better decisions, avoid problems and satisfy your customer. So we're really ramping up the expectations for them on being able to understand and interpret the data so that they can be better decision-makers overall. So that's really something that we see as critical. Yes, they have to have the analytical skills. It helps if they have some supervisory and people skills, absolutely. They have to be able to communicate, all the fundamental things. But on top of that, we're expecting more and more for these graduates to come out and really have a strong background in quantitative, not only analysis, but decision-making interpretation and decision making as well.

**Will Heywood (22:05):**

Yeah. That's interesting. So Dave, when you take in a class of college recruits, obviously you're placing them into the various parts of the business, but from a developmental standpoint, how do you kind of pick up from all the good work that Brian and James lead in their universities and translate that into the workplace?

**Dave Ames (22:25):**

There's a lot of different ways that we go about doing that and we've really come a long way in terms of creating the right kind of program and the right kind of environment to enable the students to be successful. We talk a lot when we're on campus about the fact that we are not a designed rotational program, right? We want to talk to people about what it is that they want to do coming in the door, put them in positions where they can be successful, but then continue to talk to them about what it is that they want to do next, where they want to go geographically, what is the business need and how do their skills and abilities match up, whether that's in an operations role or a support role, to be able to do that. And we've aided in that by dedicating a head count to making sure that we've got someone within our college recruiting program who is having one-on-one conversations with everyone who joins the organization through the program for the first two years of their career. And it's really focused, not just on onboarding and their current role, but some of the things that I talked about, you know, what do you want to do next? What does your skillset look like now? What development needs do you need to accomplish to be able to get where you want to go and how can we help with that? There's a variety of different trainings we do specific to the college recruiting workforce. That again, come back to business partner, networking and frontline, operational leadership curriculum, along with peer networking and a lot of other things from webinars and newsletters to consistent reviews of development plans and providing opportunities for making sure this population of students understands, now that you're here, this role is just a starting point and we want this to be the launch pad to a long career and here's how you find all those opportunities.

**Will Heywood (24:09):**

Good. Well, I know we're appreciative of the partnerships we have with our university partners like Brian and James at OSU and Auburn. Thanks to all of you for joining us today. This was a really interesting conversation. Look forward to having more of them in the years ahead. If you enjoyed the conversation today, please share it with a friend and rate us on Apple Podcasts. You can find us online at [dhl.com/allbusinessnoboundaries](https://dhl.com/allbusinessnoboundaries) and follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter @DHLSupplyChain. We'll see you next time.