Department of Economics alumnus John Primus has lived and worked in California most of his life. But he says it was the “common sense values and work ethic” from his upbringing on an Iowa farm and his time at Iowa State University that helped form his career the most.

Primus graduated in 1965 with a BS in agricultural business. As a graduating ISU student, he was recruited by California’s Bank of America, where he worked for over 20 years as an agricultural and real estate lender. He completed his MBA and PhD in business administration, and for the next 15 years taught finance, management, business strategy, and real estate at California State University, Hayward. He credits his education at ISU with positioning him for a “dual career” in banking and academics.

Retired since 2004, Primus has continued to work with students as a judge and mentor for the International Collegiate Business Strategy Competition. This competition brings US and international university student teams together to develop competing business strategies. “As judges, we delight in seeing these students in their ‘aha’ moments. The students return home with new perspectives,” he says.

Primus also credits ISU with a strong 50 year marriage to his wife Helen, also an alumnus, who earned a BS in home economics (1962). John and Helen met at ISU, and both grew up with similar farming backgrounds in Iowa. They still have interests in Iowa, and return every few years to visit. They have two adult sons, Michael, a practicing California attorney, and Daniel, owner of a software development firm. “Helen and I value our Midwest heritage, and the older we get, the more we appreciate where we came from - and the strengths we gained by growing up on an Iowa farm,” he says.