

COLLEGE OF ACES Office of International Programs



Newsletter

May 2017

Notes from the Director

Sometime between the Women's March on Washington and the March for Science, there was another convergence in Washington D.C. when high-level officials joined together for the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) Spring Meetings. Each year the Spring Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF bring together central bankers, ministers of finance and development, private sector executives, and even Heads of State to discuss issues of global concern, including the world economic outlook, poverty eradication, economic development, and aid effectiveness. Space and time are at a premium during the Spring Meetings, but this year the organizers made room for land grant universities. It was my honor to attend along with our Vice Provost for International Affairs and Global Strategy, Reitumetse Mabokela.

That the World Bank and IMF invited ACES and our peers during the meetings signals both a recognition of the importance of agricultural and food systems improvements in less developed countries and a recognition that necessary improvements require the kind of research, public engagement, and teaching that U.S. land grant universities have been working on for 150 years. The meetings in D.C. provided an opportunity to rekindle old partnerships with people like Professor Rose Mwonya, Vice Chancellor of Egerton University in Kenya, who first worked with the University of Illinois in 1988. At that time Vice Chancellor Mwonya was a junior faculty member working on a manpower study at Egerton with Dr. Carolyn Sands and Professor Burt Swanson from our college. The meetings also provided a chance to reinforce new partnerships with colleagues like Professor Eric Danquah from the West African Center for Crop Improvement (WACCI) in Ghana, who visited our campus for the first time earlier this year.

Egerton and WACCI have grown into strong institutions and can be great partners as we try to increase the impact of our work. The essential role of partnerships came out clearly in our International Food Security Spring Symposium when Tag Demment, Vice President of the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities remarked, "Problems are global, but solutions in agriculture must be local." Our expertise can only be applied for impact in Africa and around the world if it is grounded in local contexts and local knowledge. We look forward to deepening our partnerships with universities and research centers in Africa so that we can gain the local understanding to help develop impactful solutions. The articles in this newsletter show that we are moving in the right direction.

Alex Winter-Nelson, Director, ACES Office of International Programs



L to R: Max Pfeffer, Cornell University; Erick Fernandes, World Bank; Solange Uwituze, RUFORUM; Terry Tucker, Cornell; and Alex Winter-Nelson at the annual Spring Meetings of the World Bank. Present but not pictured, Reitu Mabokela, University of Illinois.

ACES Global Academy in Cuba: Exploring Academic Partnerships

The College of ACES Global Academy program for 2016/2017 provided some faculty members with their first glimpse of a country that contains immense potential to

study environmental, agricultural, and social topics. With a communist regime and pristine natural beauty, Cuba is an island of mystique for many Americans who are geographically so close (Cuba is only 90 miles from Florida) but unable to travel there due to the U.S. embargo, which bans purely touristic travel. The political tensions that made cultural exchange difficult also inhibited academic cooperation, but as relations between our countries begin to thaw, opportunities for research and education partnerships may be emerging. To explore linkages between Cuban research institutions and the College of ACES, a Global Academy cohort of 13 people, including two department heads, and one member from the College of Engineering, traveled to Cuba during spring break.

"The visit allowed us to get a lay of the land in terms of Cuba's academic landscape and structure of higher education as well as their strengths and the challenges they are facing. Given the complicated circumstances in Cuba, what we were able to accomplish on this trip was significant," said Suzana Palaska, associate director for the ACES Office of International Programs (OIP) who coordinates the Global Academy program.

ACES building partnerships in Cuba

A highlight of the Academy's itinerary was visiting the University of Pinar del Rio, with which the University of Illinois has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding. The itinerary also included visits to the Agrarian University of Havana, the Instituto Nacional de Ciencias Agricolas and the Instituto de Ciencias Animales, as well as the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences (FLACSO) and the Nunez Jimenez Foundation for Nature and Society."

Read more about the immersion trip to Cuba at: <http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/content/aces-global-academy-cuba-exploring-academic-partnerships>



ACES International Seminar Series brings FAS and UN to campus

Spring 2017 was a busy semester for the Office of International Programs, hosting three installments of the ACES International Seminar Series that included visitors from the Foreign Agricultural Service and the United Nations (UN).

FAS representative discusses opportunities for trade capacity building in agriculture

Jocelyn G. Brown, a Deputy Administrator for the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), spoke to students, faculty, and staff about "Trade Capacity Building in Agriculture and Opportunities for Engagement with the FAS." She was joined by Jim Suits, an International Program Specialist with FAS.

Brown mentioned the following three programs specifically (click titles for more information) as of interest to faculty members: [Quality Samples Program \(QSP\)](#), [Emerging Markets Program \(EMP\)](#), and the [Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops \(TASC\)](#). A comprehensive list of FAS programs can be found here: <https://www.fas.usda.gov/programs>

Brown and Suits concluded the presentation by encouraging researchers to reach out to the USDA about their ideas for furthering trade capacity building. "We greatly value continued and new connections between institutions and researchers, and even if we don't have funding or a relevant program, we will try to make connections," Brown said.

UN visitors discuss sustainable development goals and encourage students to join the major group for children and youth

Two representatives from the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth (UN MGCY) visited the University of Illinois campus to discuss the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and how students can get involved with the UN to help achieve these 17 goals. The SDGs are the new global framework passed by United Nations General Assembly to tackle a host of social, environmental, and economic challenges including ending poverty and hunger, providing access to clean water and sanitation, and addressing climate change.

Mr. Christopher Dekki and Mr. Ashish Khullar discussed how the SDGs are inter-connected and how they evolved from the UN's previous goals. Mr. Dekki asked the audience, consisting mostly of students, to identify a "favorite" of the 17 goals. After receiving various answers including "climate action" and "clean water and sanitation," he responded, "The best answer is all of them." The UN's official stance is that all of the goals are equally important and inter-connected. Dekki said that although all member countries have agreed to implement the goals as equally as possible, it is also understood that countries are in different places with regards to achieving the various goals and may require more work on some than others.

The speakers urged students who are interested in a particular topic – or ideally all 17 of the goals – to officially join the UN Major Group for Children and Youth. Students can join as individuals or as student organizations. Members should be under age 30 or part of an organization that represents the interests of children or youth. **You can officially join at this link:** <http://childrenyouth.org/involved/>. The visitors were hosted by Soo Ah Kwan, associate professor in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies and in Asian American Studies.

IFSI hosts Third International Food Security Symposium: Commercial Agriculture in the Tropics



Keynote speaker (R) Pedro Sanchez answers questions about the fertilizer value chain in Africa.

On April 3-4, International Food Security at Illinois (IFSI) in partnership with the Soybean Innovation Lab (SIL), Woods Hole Research Center, and the European Union Center, hosted the Third Annual International Food Security Symposium:

"Commercial Agriculture

in Tropical Environments." The symposium featured over 25 experts across multiple disciplines who discussed the latest research concerning the nexus of production agriculture and the rich and diverse biomes of the tropics. The speakers challenged themselves and their audience to wrestle with the global need to increase food production, the urgency to reduce poverty and malnutrition among the many poor nations of the tropics, and the responsibility to protect the natural environment.

The keynote speaker was Dr. Pedro Sanchez, a leading tropical soil scientist, who gave a lecture entitled "The Emerging Fertilizer Value Chain in Africa." Sanchez highlighted themes of the diversity of environmental conditions in the tropics and the divergent ways in which agricultural practices have affected local environments. The lecture also signaled the importance of social institutions like markets and agricultural policies in determining environmental outcomes.

The entire event was webcasted live to a global audience and recorded. You can access the recordings and the slides used by each speaker at: <http://soybeaninnovationlab.illinois.edu/third-annual-international-food-security-university-illinois-symposium>.

ACES students participate in elite Next Generation Delegation 2017



Pictured L to R: Fernandes, Poole, and Gaur

Two ACES students, Shashank Gaur (Food Science and Human Nutrition) and Thomas Poole (Crop Sciences) were selected by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs as part of an elite, global group of scholars to attend the Global Food Security Symposium as part of the Next Generation Delegation 2017. Also selected was Vitor Fer-

nandes, an exchange student at the University of Illinois from the University of São Paulo.

For more news items on international activities in the College of ACES, visit <http://intlprograms.aces.edu>. To receive an electronic version of this newsletter, visit <http://illinois.edu/gm/subscribe/7045>