



Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

July 2011

Nominations Being Accepted for 2011 International Achievement Awards

The nomination deadline for all of the International Achievement Awards is September 30, 2011. 2011 winners are honored during the 2012 spring banquet. Detailed criteria and nomination forms for the 2011 International Achievement Awards are available at: <http://ilint.illinois.edu/grants/awards.html> or are available by emailing: int-eng-prot@illinois.edu.

Categories include:

- **Madhuri and Jagdish N. Sheth International Alumni Award for Exceptional Achievement** recognizes the university's distinguished international alumni.
- **Sheth Distinguished Faculty Award for International Achievement** recognizes faculty that are distinguished by their international activities in teaching, research, and public engagement.
- **Charles C. Stewart International Young Humanitarian Award** recognizes the accomplishments of the University's young humanitarians.
- **Illinois International Graduate Achievement Award** recognizes a graduate student whose Illinois-affiliated international research or service has had great impact.
- **Illinois International Undergraduate Achievement Award** recognizes a significant service or activity made by a current U of I undergraduate student resulting from an international course or program.

Working to Improve Agriculture in Afghanistan

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has been working on the ground in Afghanistan since 2003 when U of I and Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) were partnered with the NWFP Agricultural University in Peshawar, Pakistan in an effort called "Human Capacity Development for the Agriculture Sector in Afghanistan." Then, starting in 2005, U of I and SIUC were selected to implement the "Balkh University Agriculture Faculty Development" project. In addition, MOUs have been signed with Nangarhar University in Jalalabad, Balkh University in Mazar-e-Sharif, Herat University in Herat, Kabul University, and what is now named the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock (MAIL) .

When the Afghanistan Water, Agriculture, and Technology Transfer (AWATT) consortium was being formed in the fall of 2007, the Illinois universities were invited to join on the basis of their successful experience in Afghanistan and their 25-year presence in the Northwest Frontier (now, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) Province in Pakistan.



In collaboration with New Mexico State University (NMSU), Colorado State University (CSU), and SIUC, U of I has been working to increase food security, agricultural productivity, and employment in rural Afghanistan through the AWATT Program, a USAID-funded project.



"As the project unfolded, NMSU and CSU made their contributions to the water and irrigation component, SIUC foresters did a great job in watershed rehabilitation, and U of I covered the technology transfer component," said John Santas, Emeritus Assistant Dean for special projects in the ACES Office of International Programs, who has been leading Afghanistan activities on behalf of U of I.

AWATT is a three-year program that started on the ground in Afghanistan in 2008, and was completed on June 30, 2011. Its objective has been to improve community and farm level management of irrigation water resources for increased agricultural productivity and food security in Afghanistan. AWATT operated active projects from Kabul and three regional offices—Jalalabad (east), Herat (west), and Mazar (north). The program worked with MAIL staff and agricultural extension workers, who provide outreach support to isolated farmers.

Students from Zhejiang University Studying at Illinois

Sixteen students from Zhejiang University in China are participating in a six-week research internship at the University of Illinois. They will be on campus until August 10, 2011. Students are currently working on research projects with their respective faculty mentors. In July they are participating in industry-focused tours to such places as the Board of Trade in Chicago and Monsanto in St. Louis.



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Welcome Suzana Palaska-Nicholson to ACES Office of International Programs

The Office of International Programs (OIP) welcomes Suzana Palaska-Nicholson to the College of ACES! Suzana is joining OIP as Program Coordinator. She began her appointment on July 18, 2011.

Palaska-Nicholson has an impressive educational background and experience that makes her very well-suited for this position. She earned her B.A. in Government, (International Relations) from California State University,



Photo courtesy of Natalie Cartwright

Sacramento and an M.A. in African Studies with a graduate minor in Gender Relations in International Development from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. Her past experience includes working with the Office of International Student Affairs, the Center for African Studies, and the Study Abroad Office at University of Illinois. She also worked with the United Nations Development Program in Sarajevo, Bosnia. Palaska-Nicholson brings great skills in languages and extensive travel experience to her new role in OIP.

She is located in 109 Mumford Hall, and can be reached by phone (244-2295) and email (spalaska@illinois.edu).

Funding Opportunities

Make the most of funding opportunities to explore research and cultural interests. One such opportunity: American Cultural Centers and Cultural Programming in the People's Republic of China. Deadline: August 12, 2011. Visit <http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/funding> for more information.

Teaching Dairy Management Practices in Iraq

Jim Baltz, Department of Animal Sciences, joined Jawad Al-Ali and Firas Mahmood, two USDA Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) Iraqi Fellows, in presenting a five-day dairy management workshop from May 15-19, 2011 in Erbil, Iraq. Al-Ali and Mahmood spent eight weeks in the College of ACES with Dr. Mike Hutjens, Jim Baltz, and Travis Michels to learn more about modern dairy production practices. The May workshop focused on teaching Iraqi producers how to develop dairy tools that they can utilize.

Faculty Feature: Dr. Marcela Raffaelli Professor of Human and Community Development

Q: What is your research focus?

A: My main research focus is to understand the factors that allow children and adolescents to thrive despite growing up in potentially challenging circumstances. Some of the research I am conducting with colleagues in the U.S. looks at how immigrant Latino families and youth adapt to life in a new environment that often differs dramatically from what they left behind. In Brazil, I study child and adolescent development under conditions of extreme poverty, including homelessness.

Q: What international ties do you have?

A: My major international ties are in Brazil. My father is Brazilian, and I lived in Brazil for a number of years growing up, and I have family there, so it is important to me to stay connected and involved. I am also involved in professional activities in Brazil and have participated in workshops and conferences, been a visiting scholar, and worked with Brazilian students.

My professional activity in Brazil has benefited from a long-standing collaboration with Silvia Koller, who is a Professor at the Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul and founder of the Center for the Psychological Study of Street Youth in Porto Alegre. Dr. Koller and I have been working together for over 15 years, and we recently received a grant from the Jacobs Foundation to conduct a longitudinal study of homeless youth. This will be an important study because following the same kids over time will give us unique insight into why some youth do well despite the very difficult conditions they encounter.

Another aspect of my Brazilian involvement is a study tour I developed on "Family Strengths and Challenges in Urban Brazil." Each year, I accept a small group of students who take an eight-week prep class in the spring then spend two and a half weeks in Recife and Rio de Janeiro, where we visit community-based agencies and universities and engage in a variety of cultural and social events.

In addition to working in Brazil, I am part of a collaborative team consisting of researchers from the University of Illinois and the Universidad Autónoma de San Luis Potosí in Mexico. We are working on a large-scale program of research to study the influence of biological, lifestyle, social, and environmental factors in the development of obesity and related diseases.

Q: What is the end goal of your projects?

A: The goal is to generate knowledge that can be used to address important social issues. For example, the studies of homeless youth that Dr. Koller and I have conducted have been used to develop youth interventions and to inform policy and practice. The research being conducted in Mexico will ultimately yield information that can be used to develop health promotion interventions. I find that working in partnership with people from different countries and disciplines keeps my thinking fresh and pushes me in new directions.



Marcela Raffaelli (center), with 2010 Brazil Study Tour participants and adolescent participants in Redes de Desenvolvimento da Maré, a non-governmental organization in Rio de Janeiro.

