



Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

June 2011

Zhejiang University Students Arrive July 2

Sixteen students from Zhejiang University in China will be arriving in Champaign-Urbana on July 2. They will be participating in a six-week research internship at the University of Illinois. Students will spend their time completing a research project with their respective faculty mentors, learning about graduate schools in the U.S., and immersing themselves in American culture through industry-focused tours in Chicago and St. Louis.

Our thanks to the following ACES faculty members for their willingness to serve as mentors to these students: Mohammad Babadoost, Keith Cadwallader, Tony Griff, Mike Ellis, Hao Feng, Bill Helferich, Bob Hudson, Ming Kuo, Andrea Martens, John Masiunas, Hayri Onal, Patrick Tranel, Michelle Wander, and Yuanhui Zhang.

Information about last year's U of I and Zhejiang Research Apprenticeship Program can be found at: <http://global.aces.illinois.edu/ZHU>.



Rwanda's Minister of Gender and Family Promotion Speaks on the Role of Women in Nation Building

On Wednesday, June 8, 2011, the Honorable Minister Inyumba Aloisea from Rwanda spoke on the role of women in nation building as part of the College of ACES distinguished international lecture series at the University of Illinois.

Minister Aloisea is a graduate of Makerere University in Uganda where she was a refugee. She was among the very first females to join the Rwandese Patriotic Front movement for national liberation in the late 1980s. She has served as a Senator, the Governor of Kigali Rural Province, and the very first Executive Secretary of the National unity and Reconciliation Commission.

She discussed Rwanda's history, including the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, in which 1 million people were lost in 100 days. She said, "the genocide destroyed the country's social fabric."

She explained that everyone in the country—including women and youth must be active agents of change to help stabilize the country. Rwanda's efforts in nation building are "sustained by political will and transformational leadership that is committed to mainstreaming gender," she said. "Traditional roles of women had to change. Women are the foundation of a family, and families are the foundation of a nation."

Currently, women serve active roles in the government of Rwanda. In fact, women make up 56 percent of Parliament and 61 percent of their Supreme Court.



Photo courtesy of Kyla Kruse

French Delegation Learns about Nutrition Science at Illinois

On Thursday, June 9, ACES Office of International Programs hosted a delegation of health and nutrition scientists from companies in France. The main objective of the visit was to make connections with American researchers to share information about common areas of research interest and to explore potential partnerships. They met with faculty members in the ACES Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, including Karen Chapman-Novakofski, Elvira de Mejia, Sharon Donovan, Elizabeth Jeffery, and Michael Miller. They also met with Emily Wee to discuss technology transfer.

Apply to U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program by Aug. 1

The core Fulbright Scholar Program sends 800 U.S. faculty and professionals abroad each year. The deadline for application is August 1, 2011. More information is available at http://www.cies.org/us_scholars/us_awards.

Alfred Schmidley Presents Lecture on Postharvest Losses in the Rice Value Chain

On Thursday, June 16, 2011, Alfred Schmidley, of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines, visited University of Illinois and spoke on “New Paradigms for Addressing Postharvest Losses in the Rice Value Chain.” His interests lie in innovation, entrepreneurship, and the use of “open business models” in international development and delivery of technologies through multi-stakeholder platforms.

According to Schmidley, IRRI’s mission is “to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability through collaborative research, partnerships, and the strengthening of national agricultural research and extension systems.” In 1960, there was

rice yield of 1/5 ton/ hectare. Now there is a yield of 4 ton/ hectare, and IRRI has formed alliances with Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Korea, Bangladesh, Laos, Philippines, Nepal, and China.



Photo courtesy of Carly Rakes

Schmidley discussed how mechanized harvest, special modifications to combines, and hermetically (sealed) storage systems have been implemented to reduce postharvest losses.

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Faculty Feature: Dr. Elvira de Mejia Associate Professor of Food Chemistry and Food Toxicology Food Science and Human Nutrition



Dr. Elvira de Mejia offering a conference to food science students in Kigali, Rwanda. Photo courtesy of Dr. Faye Dong

Q: What is your research focus?

A: My research includes food chemistry, food biochemistry, and food toxicology; the study of food components with health benefits; the analysis, characterization, and mechanism of action in food components; the study of bioactive proteins in different legume genotypes; the role of genetic diversity and environmental conditions on the presence, concentration, and physico-chemical characteristics of bioactive seed proteins with biological potential against transformed human cells; the health benefits of tea, in particular the molecular mechanisms underlying the biological effects of ethnic teas used in folk medicine to combat several chronic disorders.

Q: What international ties do you have?

A: I am a member of the Global Institute for Bio-Exploration (GIBEX) devoted to perform research on bio-product chemistry and medically active compounds in foods and teas in several countries around the world, especially in Ecuador. I was part of the first initiative on biodiversity and participated in the 2011 Biodiversity Summit in Ecuador aimed at attaining a sustainable use of their biodiversity for the development of Ecuador. The National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology, and Innovation of Ecuador (SENESCYT) organized a symposium to discuss research on biodiversity, its uses, and means to preserve it. This event brought national and international researchers to share current knowledge in this important field. I presented the topic “Bioactive compounds and biodiversity: opportunities for the food industry.” In addition, I work with researchers from the University San Francisco of Quito on plants with pharmacological potential.

In collaboration with researchers at the Institute for Scientific and Technological Research in San Luis Potosi, Mexico, I work to increase the understanding of the potential health benefits of peptides and proteins in amaranth (a native plant of Mexico) on the management of diabetes. We obtained funding from the health sector in Mexico to characterize the activity of peptides in amaranth on adipocyte differentiation and inhibitory activity of the enzyme dipeptidyl-peptidase IV.

I am also collaborating on the development of a research, teaching, and outreach program on Bioactive Compounds of Brazilian Foods in Human Health at the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) in the state of Minas Gerais (Brazil). The overall goal of the project is to characterize and understand the health benefits of local foods.

Q: What is the end goal of your projects?

A: The goal is introduction of new materials to improve human health, the discovery of several bioactive compounds from ethnic plants that promote health (i.e. *Ardisia* genus contains substances used to inhibit liver disorders), the training and education of scientists that return to their countries and represent a new generation of researchers that will continue the discovery and development of new products, and the interaction with food industry in the development of healthier foods and beverages around the world. The sustainability and impact of internationalization will be secured by increasing the quality and quantity of students applying for graduate programs that provide opportunities for international experience and by building active partnerships with international foundations. Thus a key goal will be the increased appreciation—among faculty, students, and staff—for scientific teamwork across cultures.