



# Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

August 2011

## Zhejiang Students Complete Summer Research Program

Sixteen Zhejiang University students graduated from the University of Illinois College of ACES' summer research program on August 9, 2011.

The six-week program included: individualized work with an ACES faculty mentor to complete a research project in their respective lab, participating in two industry-related field trips to Chicago and St. Louis, and engaging the students in the American culture.



Photo courtesy of Teresa George

"These students amazed me with their discipline and their appreciation for education," said Carly Rakes, program coordinator of this year's program. "They are a special group of students, and they have a lot to offer, coming from such a prestigious university."

Yingying Xu, who worked within the ACE Department with Dr. Hayri Önal, took away many fond memories and a greater understanding of the ethanol industry and food security.

"My most favorite part was spending time at the university libraries, which told me that science has no nationality, and that knowledge belongs to everyone," said Xu.

We would like to thank all the ACES faculty who helped make this year's program a success and are already looking forward to next year.

## Delegation from Federal University of Lavras in Brazil Signs MOU

On August 12, a delegation from the Federal University of Lavras (UFLA) signed a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with the University of Illinois to establish future faculty and student collaborations.

Members of the delegation included: University President Antônio Nazareno Guimarães Mendes, Chancellor for Undergraduate Affairs João Chrysostomo de Resende Júnior, Vice Chancellor for Graduate Affairs Alcides Moino Junior, Professor Renato Paiva (a UI alumnus), and Professor Antonio Chalfun Junior, Director of International Relations.



UFLA Delegation with Dr. Korban, Dr. Wolfgang Schloer (Interim Associate Provost for International Affairs), and Dr. Matthew Wheeler at MOU signing ceremony. Photo courtesy of David Riecks, ACES ITCS

During their two-day visit to Illinois, the delegation met with several ACES faculty and high level campus administrators to discuss future collaborations in research, teaching, and student exchange.

"This is a great opportunity for ACES to develop a formal relationship with UFLA, a university that I am personally familiar with," said Dr. Schuyler Korban, Director, ACES Office of International Programs. "This is a new beginning for a long-lasting relationship that we hope to build with this wonderful institution."

## College of ACES Signs MOU with Rwanda Agricultural Board

Dr. Daphrose Gahakwa, Research Director of the Rwanda Agricultural Board, signed an MOU with the College of ACES on August 10, 2011 to strengthen collaborations between the two institutions. During her stay on campus, Dr. Gahakwa met with several ACES faculty and toured the Institute of Genomic Biology (IGB), and ERML's Biotech Center.

"We are looking forward to working with the Rwanda Agricultural Board and contribute in any way we can to strengthen the scientific capacity, knowledge, and exchange of information," said Dr. Schuyler Korban. "Rwanda is a country that has tremendous potential, and we would like to work there and pursue joint projects in several areas in education, research, and outreach."



Dr. Robert Hoefft (L), Dr. Daphrose Gahakwa (center), and Dr. Schuyler Korban at MOU signing ceremony. Photo courtesy of Joyce Knoblauch, ACES ITCS

## Erik Sacks Receives USDA Grant for Miscanthus Research

Dr. Erik Sacks, Assistant Professor of Crop Sciences, has received a \$1.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to pursue international efforts in his research of breeding *Miscanthus sinensis*.

“This grant will solidify and make a multi-lateral collaboration possible,” said Sacks. He and his colleagues hope to quantify the genetic similarities of this species internationally, to gain a better sense of how everything is genetically related.



Sacks on a *Miscanthus* collecting trip in northern Japan last fall  
Photo courtesy of Prof. Toshihiko Yamada of Hokkaido University

Partnering institutions involved in this project include: Colorado State University, University of California, Berkeley, Wuhan Botanical Garden, Hokkaido University, and Kangwon National University.

Sacks and his colleagues will be evaluating factors such as yield, flowering time, and the winter hardiness of the species across the regions.

“We’re really glad to have this opportunity to work together internationally as a team,” said Sacks. “I suspect that this will be the beginning of a long term partnership with these institutions.”

## New ACES Office of International Programs Website

We are happy to announce the unveiling of our new website. New features include updated news features, an international lecture series section, and featured resources for students and faculty. Check it out at: <http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu>.



## Faculty Feature: Dr. Prasanta Kalita Professor of Agricultural Engineering

**Q: What is your research focus?**

**A:** My research focus is on water and its sustainable use. There are several aspects of water research that I have been involved in the past for many years, including: irrigation, drainage, water quality and non-point source pollution control, water and watershed management, soil erosion and sediment control, best management practices for microbial pathogen control, and re-use of industrial wastewater for agricultural use.

**Q: What international ties do you have?**

**A:** I have been involved in several international collaborations, both in research and education. Some of these include teaching courses in Taiwan and India, advising a MS Researcher from Punjab Agricultural University, being a co-sponsor of the Norman Borlaug Fellows from Morocco and Tunisia, and providing a workshop to faculty from Uttaranchal State of India at Pantnagar.



Photo courtesy of David Riecks, ACES ITCS

I was also the co-Principal Investigator of a project funded by the USDA-AKI Program for India from 2006-2009. Here I worked on “Developing Remediation Technologies for Industrial Waste-Water for Irrigation”.

I am currently a team member for the Water and Livelihood Initiative (WLI) Project for seven Middle East countries, funded by the USAID, 2009-present, where I am actively working at a benchmark research site in Lebanon with my Ph.D. graduate student, Mr. Joseph Monical. This is a collaboration with ICARDA (International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas), LARI (Lebanon Agricultural Research Institute), and other involved parties.

**Q: What is the end goal of your projects?**

**A:** The end goal of my research projects vary depending on the project objectives. A common and overarching goal is to develop methods, technology and strategies for sustainable development and utilization of water resources for optimum crop production. Regardless of location, all our water partners are looking at issues that are affected by climate change, population growth and increasing demand on food and fiber production in a safer environment for sustainability.

## Deadlines Approaching for Funding Opportunities

Be sure to check for upcoming funding opportunities on the ACES Office of International Programs' website at <http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/funding>.