

COLLEGE OF ACES Office of International Programs



Newsletter

September 2013

Greetings from our new Director, Dr. Alex Winter-Nelson



I had the good fortune to become Director of the ACES Office of International Programs this semester. In my few weeks in this position, I have already enjoyed warm welcomes, good

wishes, and great support from many of you. Thank you. This position represents an opportunity for me to work in an area that is near to my heart in a well-staffed unit that is based on a strong and supportive college. I look forward to building on the momentum that has been growing over time to continue to develop international research capacity and impact in the College of ACES.

I owe a debt of thanks to my immediate predecessor in this position, Prof. Schuyler Korban. This newsletter highlights many of the recent activities in the Office of International Programs which are products of his efforts and leadership. Our successful hosting of over 30 Fulbright scholars from Libya was a result of Prof. Korban's initiative in securing the grant and the OIP staff's efforts to implement the program. The role of many faculty members in hosting guests in their labs was critical to the success of the program and also indicative of the tremendous resource base the ACES faculty present for international scholarship. From the continued work of the Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) group in Africa, Asia, and on campus to the successful partnership between U of I faculty and colleagues at the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosi in Mexico, it is easy to find faculty and staff meeting global needs and furthering their research through international activities.

The demonstrated willingness of my colleagues in ACES to contribute their energy and talent to international activities makes leading the OIP an exciting prospect. I hope that readers will share some of this excitement as we move forward together.

MEAS project hosts Summer Institute to train extension educators from developing countries



Thirteen leaders in the provision of extension services visited the University of Illinois as part of the first MEAS Summer Institute. The institute served to strengthen and modernize the extension and advisory systems in the visitors' home countries, including Bangladesh, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Malawi, and Nepal, where urgent needs exist for these systems to address food

insecurity and poverty. MEAS Manager Andrea Bohn explains, "We based the content of the core seminar around a pre-institute survey, so the teaching was grounded in the participants' own experiences. The sessions were highly interactive and included case studies, models, presentations by outside experts, and visits to farms and a local extension office. The visiting leaders were an excellent balance in terms of age, gender, experience, and geography. They were highly engaged and brought their previous experience and great questions and were prepared to learn all they could to benefit their home countries."

A participant concluded, "This course resulted in a paradigm shift; most of my unanswered questions have been answered. I have learned many different successful approaches to extension service deliveries that work in many countries. I have learned that optimal advisory services should be demand-driven, farmer-centered, market-oriented, and should include technology development, dissemination, and adoption."

U of I faculty and staff who served as resources at for the institute included: MEAS Director, Dr. Paul McNamara; MEAS Manager, Ms. Andrea Bohn; Daniel Anderson, research specialist in crop sciences; Dr. Joyous Tata, postdoctoral research associate in agricultural and consumer economics; Dr. Richard Warner of the Prairie Research Institute; and Dr. Burton Swanson, emeritus faculty and internationally known expert on extension and advisory studies. Dr. Tahseen Jaffry, professor at Glasgow Caledonia, also led a half-day session on gender and extension.

In addition to the Institute's core seminar held at the U of I, the participants visited Fort Worth, Texas for the Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE) annual conference and Washington, D.C. for the annual Association for International Agriculture and Rural Development (AIARD) conference and MEAS symposium. In late 2010, the University of Illinois was selected as the lead institution to undertake the "Modernizing Extension and Advisory Systems (MEAS) project, granted by USAID. The MEAS Summer Institute was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). For more information on MEAS, visit <http://www.meas-extension.org/>.

"UP-Amigos" International Symposium highlights obesity and metabolic syndrome among Mexicans and Mexican Americans

Researchers who are investigating obesity and metabolic syndrome (MetS) among Mexican-origin populations convened at the University of Illinois in mid-September as part of a symposium inspired by the "UP-Amigos" collaboration between the University of Illinois and Mexico's Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí (UASLP).

Dr. Angela Wiley, associate professor of applied family studies, explained, "Our UP-Amigos group dates back to 2006 when I was a member of the ACES Academy of Global Engagement visiting Mexico. During this immersion trip, I met UASLP's Dr. Celia Aradillas Garcia, and we eventually formed UP-Amigos with our respective colleagues to focus on issues pertaining to obesity and metabolic syndrome in our respective countries. This collaboration has sparked a great number of projects and publications, and its members and outreach continue to grow."

"UP-Amigos" is an acronym formed from [U]niversity of Illinois and San Luis [P]otosí - [A] [M]ultidisciplinary [I]nvestigation on [G]enetics, [O]besity, and [S]ocial Environment. In addition to Wiley, the UP-Amigos team includes U of I's Dr. Flavia Andrade, Dr. Marcela Raffaelli, and Dr. Margarita Teran-Garcia. Many of the resulting research projects are supported by the ACES Office of International Programs and the U of I's Center on Health, Aging, and Disability.

In addition to encouraging dialogue between scholars working to control obesity and MetS in the U.S. and Mexico, the symposium attracted a high-level delegation from UASLP including its Rector (President) Arq. Manuel Fermin Villar Rubio. Rector Rubio opened the afternoon sessions, which highlighted current U of I campus research on obesity and MetS, by thanking the organizers and emphasizing the importance of the event: "It is very important for the health of Mexicans for us to be here."

Director of the ACES Office of International Programs Dr. Alex Winter-Nelson noted, "The UP-Amigos group, and its resulting projects, symposium, and visits are an excellent example of how an opportunity such as the ACES Academy for Global Engagement can serve as a catalyst for ongoing collaborations. The event was definitely a success both as a conference and also as a high-level networking session. I expect we will have more involvement with San Luis Potosí in the future."

ACES continues building relationships with ZJU through summer internship



For the past four summers, ACES has proudly hosted dozens of graduate students from China's Zhejiang University (ZJU) for a six-week internship that includes individualized work with an ACES faculty member to complete a research project, industry-focused field trips, and social and cultural

activities. This year's program culminated with a poster session on August 14, 2013.

Seven Fulbright Scholars from Libya complete 10-week research and training program in ACES



Laying the foundation for Libyan scholars and their U.S. hosts to identify areas of cooperation and to develop long-term institutional relationships, seven Fulbright scholars from Libya recently completed a 10-week program in the College of ACES.

The Fulbright program, coordinated by the Office of International Programs (OIP), included research training in natural sciences (provided by ACES faculty and Illinois Natural History Survey staff) and instructional training for teaching (provided by the University of Illinois Center for Teaching Excellence). The program concluded on September 10, 2013, with a certificate ceremony where the scholars displayed posters on their work and gave a short presentation on their research topics. OIP's Associate Director Suzana Palaska-Nicholson praised the scholars for their high level of productivity and engagement in their respective projects. She added, "We also want to thank our faculty mentors and their lab staff for their support of this program. It is obvious that meaningful connections were made, and the program was a true success." In addition to their research work, the scholars met weekly with Ms. Cheelan Bo-Linn of the U of I's Center for Teaching Excellence for instructional training in teaching, including institutional development and curricula development.

Allan Mustard gives U.S. embassy prospective on the state of agriculture in India



On August 19, 2013, the U of I Office of Public Engagement and the ACES Office of International Programs co-sponsored a special seminar with Allan Mustard, Minister-Counselor for Agricultural Affairs at the U.S. Embassy, New Delhi, India. Mustard led a discussion on the current state of agriculture in India from the U.S. Embassy perspective.

Mustard's duties include operating market research, market development, market access and technical assistance programs in India, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. Prior to his appointment at the U.S. Embassy in New Delhi, he served as the Minister-Counselor for Agricultural Affairs in Mexico City, Mexico and Moscow, Russia. Mustard is an ACES alumnus; he received his M.S. degree in agricultural economics in 1982.

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