

# COLLEGE OF ACES Office of International Programs



Monthly Newsletter

July 2013

## ACES welcomes Zhejiang students for fourth annual summer internship program



ACES welcomed 23 students from China's Zhejiang University (ZJU) on July 9, 2013, for a six-week research internship program. In its fourth year, the highly successful program for ZJU graduate students includes individualized work with an ACES faculty member to

complete a research project, industry-focused field trips, and social and cultural activities. The program, coordinated by the Office of International Programs (OIP) will culminate with a poster session on August 14, 2013.

OIP thanks the ACES faculty members who are serving as mentors for the 2013 ZJU summer program:

Juan E. Andrade	Mohammad Babadoost
Kaustaubh Bhalariao	Hans-Peter Blaschek
Gustavo Caetano-Anolles	Steven Clough
Hong Chen	Jeffrey Dawson
Hao Feng	Alan C. Hansen
Glen Hartman	Elizabeth Jeffery
Yong-Su Jin	Juan Loor
David Miller	Manabu Nakamura
A. Lane Rayburn	Lei Tian
Patrick J Tranel	Michelle M. Wander
Xinlei Wang	Yuanhui Zhang

ZJU, which is ranked among the top three Chinese institutions, began its partnership with the University of Illinois in 2009. To foster this relationship and strengthen research collaborations, ACES has proudly hosted dozens of ZJU's finest students during the past three summers. As a testament to the support of ACES faculty and the program's organization, in 2012, ZJU named the UIUC-ZJU summer research program as its best study-abroad program. Moreover, this program is serving as an excellent recruiting tool for new graduate students to our ACES programs.

## ACES renews and expands partnership with Mexico's CONACYT



(l to r): De Mejia, Cabrero, Korban, and Paredes

ACES has renewed its capacity-building efforts in higher education in Mexico through the CONACYT (Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología) program.

Two ACES representatives, Dr. Schuyler Korban, director of the Office of International Programs, and Dr. Elvira de Mejia, interim assistant dean for research, visited Mexico in mid-June to

meet with the Director General of CONACYT, Dr. Enrique Cabrero, and sign a new Memorandum of Understanding for continued collaboration with CONACYT. Specifically, CONACYT has agreed in principle to fund Mexican post-doctoral research at the University of Illinois. CONACYT will also continue to co-sponsor small research grants and doctoral students.

Korban said, "We are extremely happy to know that CONACYT is interested in sending their young scientists to the University of Illinois and specifically to ACES to pursue their education, as this will allow us to continue building our partnerships with universities in Mexico."

De Mejia added, "The scientific collaboration with Mexican researchers has always demonstrated successful outcomes. All of these initiatives will allow the training of talented scientists and the initiation or continuation of research that will bring new discoveries in all areas of ACES expertise."

Beginning in 2008, ACES has partnered with the Mexican government through CONACYT. As part of the previous agreement, which expired in 2012, the Office of International Programs coordinated calls for proposals for research between scientists from Mexico and faculty from ACES resulting in several successful projects.

## International Agronomy Day set for August 26, 2013

The Department of Crop Sciences is hosting International Agronomy Day on Monday, Aug. 26, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the U of I South Farms, allowing participants plenty of time to continue on to Decatur for the 2013 Farm Progress Show on Aug. 27-29.

## Babadoost provides education and builds relationships in Central Asia



*A field visit in Uzbekistan*

Following a whirlwind trip to Central Asia, Dr. Mohammad Babadoost, professor of plant pathology and extension specialist in the Department of Crop Sciences, foresees tremendous collaboration opportunities in identifying and managing plant diseases in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan, where he provided education, established connections, and enjoyed the opportunity to gage local food crops.

"Central Asia is an area with extremely diverse crop genetics. They need some assistance, but there is a huge potential to develop programs. They have a growing economy, a lot of productive agricultural land, and the people are very interested in learning how to manage plant pests, particularly plant diseases. Additionally, what we learn about their available food crops and resistant cultivars to disease will be useful for improving crop production in Illinois," Babadoost said.

Funded in part by an ACES Office of International Program's seed grant, Babadoost's visit, which occurred in early June, exceeded even his own expectations. "We had tremendous interactions. Immediately after I returned, I received an email asking me to be a co-PI in two major research proposals for USAID."

Babadoost's first stop was Almaty, Kazakhstan, the world's largest landlocked country, where he visited Kazakh National Agrarian University. He noted that Almaty, which is Kazakhstan's former capital, literally means "fatherland to apples." He has been invited to teach plant disease diagnosis and management at the Kazakh National Agrarian University.

During his visit to Uzbekistan, Babadoost identified fire blight of apple, a major apple disease. "They claimed they did not have fire blight in Uzbekistan. But I found it. So, they asked me to provide information on detecting this very serious disease, and the following day I was able to make a presentation on this and other apple diseases," he said.

Finally, in Kyrgyzstan, Babadoost visited Kyrgyz-Turkish Manas University to teach students and scientists about plant disease diagnosis and management. "The students and faculty were very excited and interested. Even the Dean of the College of Agriculture attended," he said. He also made a presentation "Phytophthora: A Global Problem with Historic and Continued Importance" in the international meeting "Microorganisms and the Biosphere Symposium (MICROBIOS-13)" in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Overall, Babadoost says there is huge potential for ACES to collaborate in these countries. "Though these three countries were in transition after the disbanding of the Soviet Union, this is a strong agricultural area, and good research programs and teaching programs are now being established. Extension is yet to be worked out," he said.

Babadoost's existing involvement in Central Asia focuses on a library assistance program where he has provided more than 2,000 books and periodicals for this area's libraries, research centers, and universities. It was through these publication activities that he received an invitation to speak at an international meeting in Kyrgyzstan, and the seed grant funding from OIP allowed him to increase the scope, and thus impact, of his visit.

## Seven Fulbright Scholars from Libya undertaking research and training in ACES



**Scholars enjoy iftar dinner with OIP's Suzana Palaska-Nicholson and Institute for International Education's Rachel Holskin, Assistant Director, Middle East and North Africa.**

ACES is hosting seven Fulbright scholars from Libya for a 10-week training program that includes research training (provided by ACES faculty and Illinois National History Survey staff) and instructional training for teaching (provided by the University of Illinois Center for Teaching Excellence).

This training program, coordinated by the Office of International Programs, began on July 8, 2013, and will conclude in mid-September when the scholars present their work at a poster presentation open to all ACES faculty, staff, and students.

The scholars, home university, mentor, and research topics include:

Asma Abushweka, University of Tripoli, mentored by Dr. David Wahl, working on aquaculture conservation and improvement

Abdurouf Gaja, University of Tripoli, mentored by Dr. Matt Wheeler, working on reproductive physiology

Nagiat Hwisa, University of Zawia, mentored by Dr. Keith Cadwallader, working on food chemistry and biochemistry

Marwan Keshalf, University of Tripoli, mentored by Dr. Rick Weinzierl, working on insect control in Bt and non-Bt sweet corn

Shaban Saad, University of Tripoli, mentored by Dr. Elvira DeMejia, working on chemopreventive activity of flavonoid compounds and immunochemistry

Shukri Al-Sherif, Zawia University, mentored by Dr. Elvira DeMejia, working on analytical chemistry of medicinal compounds

Abdulnaser Turkey, University of Tripoli, mentored by Dr. Jozef Kokini, working on nanochemistry and nanomaterials

These seven scholars, along with 25 additional Fulbright Scholars from Libya, recently completed a five-week intensive English language workshop on the U of I campus.