

COLLEGE OF ACES Office of International Programs



Newsletter

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Notes from the Director

I recently had the privilege of joining colleagues from the International Food Policy Research Institute and the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies to help launch the Bangladesh Integrated Food Policy Research Program. This four-year program aims to modernize food policy in Bangladesh to ensure food security for the population of that country. The College of ACES has been invited to provide capacity building for the government of Bangladesh to help them achieve this goal.



Dr. Alex Winter-Nelson helps launch the Bangladesh Integrated Food Policy Research Program.

The reasons why ACES is a key player in the development of Bangladesh's food policy reflect a great deal about our college. First, we have been invited to participate in this effort because of the breadth and depth of our expertise. The program is integrated in the sense that it will be considering many parts of the food system, drawing on expertise in food science to consider fortification and processing, agricultural engineering to assess alternative storage technologies, and agricultural economics to analyze marketing policies and economic sustainability. Illinois offers Bangladesh the breadth of world class expertise needed to address an integrated program and interdisciplinary teams that can grapple with complex food systems. Second, we were invited because Illinois can provide scientists who are prepared to be teachers and trainers. In this capacity the ADM Institute for the Prevention of Postharvest Loss will provide online training to grain depot managers throughout Bangladesh and short courses for government employees charged with the storage and distribution of Bangladesh's food supplies. A third strength of ACES for this particular project is our existing presence in Bangladesh. Our AgReach program is already engaged in innovative work to strengthen extension systems in Bangladesh. The Appropriate Scale Mechanization Consortium (ASMC) is working with partners to develop equipment that will enable Bangladeshi smallholders to more easily adopt sustainable farming practices, and the ADM Institute for the Prevention of Postharvest Loss has been working to understand how to prevent degradation in quality and quantity of Bangladesh's stored grain. Finally, Illinois was chosen for this work in part because of the many great alumni we have from all over the world, including Dr. Shahid Rashid, who is leading this effort from the International Food Policy Research Institute. The launch of this program was a reminder to me that the international students who come through our campus often become valuable partners as we apply our research, teaching, and engagement for global impact.

Alex Winter-Nelson, Director, ACES Office of International Programs

ACES celebrates 10 years of the Global Academy

The College of ACES recently celebrated 10 years of its unique faculty training program, the Academy for Global Engagement (Global Academy). At this showcase event, Academy alums and other ACES faculty and staff were joined by colleagues from across the campus to reflect on the impacts directly attributable to this program. The attendees, warmly welcomed by Dean Kidwell, learned more about the Academy, listened to testimonials from previous participants, and met the new cohort of scholars.

Dr. Alex Winter-Nelson, director of the ACES Office of International programs, explained, "The Global Academy is rooted in the idea that there is great promise to increasing the impact of our activities by broadening the scope of application beyond our national borders. But there are barriers to international engagement, so the Academy aims to enable scholars to more easily overcome those barriers and achieve greater impact. Half of what we try to do is build capacity of individuals for international engagement. The other half has to do with the capacity of the institution." Winter-Nelson acknowledged the Arlys Conrad Estate for the gift that allows the Global Academy to exist and said he hoped the event would lead to conversations about engaging units outside of ACES.

Suzana Palaska, associate director of the Office of International Programs and manager of the program, explained how the Academy themes and immersion locations are selected each year and how the cohort is assembled. "Early intervention is very important when it comes to cohort recruitment. Putting the Global Academy program on incoming faculty's map, so to speak, ensures that they plan for it from the very beginning. It also allows for us to get to know them at the start of their careers in ACES and learn about their professional interests and goals as they relate to international engagements," said Palaska.

Palaska then introduced several former Academy fellows who shared testimonials of their experience. Finally, the newest cohort of the Academy was announced. These scholars are currently participating in an on-campus curriculum and will travel to Cuba during spring break to explore academic partnerships for ACES.

For more information about the ACES Global Academy, visit: <http://international.aces.illinois.edu/>

NIFA's Director of International Programs offers global perspective



Why should ACES engage globally?

This question was answered convincingly by Dr. Otto Gonzalez (pictured left) who serves as Director of the Center for International Programs at the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) when he spoke recently on campus as part of the ACES International Seminar Series. Using four categories, Dr. Gonzalez explained the

benefits of active international engagement:

1. Trade and food safety *A great portion of our food comes from other parts of the world so by sharing science, we are also protecting ourselves.* "We want people to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables. This is one of USDA's promotional messages. 'Eat your colors - Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables' - this is what we tell people. But even though we produce a lot here, half of our fresh fruits and nearly half of our vegetables are imported," Gonzalez said. The United States imports fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables from 64 different countries, he noted. "We need to share our science, including techniques for diagnostics, prevention, and detection, with other countries so they can better protect against microbial contamination which ultimately protects us as well," he urged.

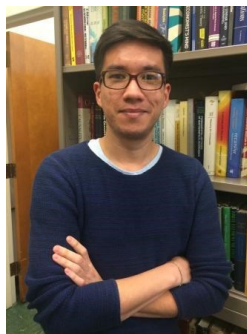
2. Emerging and reemerging diseases as threat to food safety *Plant and animal diseases often initiate elsewhere, so it is beneficial to address them before they arrive in the United States.* Gonzalez provided multiple examples of how diseases threaten our food safety. Wheat blast, which causes plants to be absent of seed, somehow made its way from Latin America to Bangladesh. And the cost of the 2013 Asian influenza in chickens amounted to \$1 billion worldwide. "Not only are the birds lost, but faith in the industry is lost," he said. "In working with other countries we are able to share information and test out resistances in different areas of the world. Being able to protect ourselves from these emerging and reemerging diseases is a strong case for global engagement," he said.

3. Climate trends as a threat to food security *Uncertainties in climate are contributing to global food insecurity.* Using a color-coded map of the world, Gonzalez demonstrated that "The areas already most affected by food insecurity are also the areas being most affected by variabilities and uncertainties in climate." "Many of these areas are already dry, and the changes in rain patterns are further exasperating the situations," he added. And droughts and lack of access to water often contribute to migrations, further compromising food security. He noted that NIFA has already worked with Tanzania to develop a climate change resistance plan to adapt to the changing climate.

4. Conflict *Much of the world's conflict is rooted in a lack of resources.* "Another reason to engage with the rest of the world is to prevent conflict. Because so much of conflict is rooted in the loss of people's livelihoods, often which are agricultural," he said. To conclude the first segment of his presentation, he said, "There are lots of good reasons to engage globally, but I've found these categories to be a handy way to summarize them," he said.

More about NIFA: <https://nifa.usda.gov/>

Spotlight on Students: Andres Ham studies impacts of minimum wage in Honduras



As part of the ACES International Graduate Grants research program, Andrés Ham, a PhD student in Agricultural and Consumer Economics advised by Dr. Kathy Baylis, traveled to Honduras to study the consequences of minimum wage policy in a developing country.

"Minimum wages in developing countries tend to be sizable, are less likely to be rigorously enforced, and labor markets are often segmented into formal and

informal sectors with minimum wage policy only covering formal workers. Given that most developing countries implement minimum wage policies, understanding their consequences on labor markets is critical for economic growth, developing effective labor policy, and poverty alleviation," says Ham. While in Honduras, Ham consulted with the National Statistics Institute, the Director of Wages in the Ministry of Labor, as well as sources outside the government including employers' and workers' organizations, and various other stakeholders.

"Together these viewpoints provided a comprehensive understanding of minimum wages in Honduras from the perspective of government, employers, and workers. This insight allowed me to qualify my results and better explain my findings," says Ham.

Considering formal and informal sector jobs, Ham's findings suggest that the costs of increasing minimum wages outweigh the benefits in this developing country. "The policy implication is that setting high minimum wages has detrimental effects on labor markets, well-being, and compliance," says Ham. His research was featured in the World Bank's Development Impact blog (link here: <http://blogs.worldbank.org/impactevaluations/should-developing-countries-increase-their-minimum-wages-guest-post-andr-s-ham>), was shared on social media by the World Economic Forum, and was reported by a local newspaper in Honduras. The impact of Ham's work continues:

"The exposure received by the study prompted the government, employers, and unions to verbally commit towards increased cooperation to help solve some problems with minimum wage policy in Honduras. Currently, I am assisting the Ministry of Labor to help design a formula to measure changes in worker productivity, a key input to decide minimum wage changes. This addresses one of several jointly identified priorities: a systematic way to decide annual increases in minimum wages, improving enforcement, and creating safeguards to mitigate the negative effects from minimum wage hikes," says Ham.

Ham is one of twelve ACES graduate students who received funding as part of the third round of the Graduate Student International Research Grants Program.

For more news items on international activities in the College of ACES, visit <http://intlprograms.aces.edu>. To receive an electronic version of this newsletter, visit <http://illinois.edu/gm/subscribe/7045>