

AEC Review

Fall 2009

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.....
Editor: Holiday Griffin
Copy Editor: Angie Lindsey

Contributing Writers:
Chetley Breeden
Tiffany Dale
Andrea Davis
Sarah DeLoach
Jenna Eckersen
Chelsea Kauss
Kevin Kersey
Heather Nazworth
Mary O'Reilly
Chelci Owen
Colin Roberts
Avery Sams
Randi Sasser
Jessica Southard

.....
Agricultural Education &
Communication Department
University of Florida
305 Rolfs Hall
PO Box 110540
Gainesville, FL 32611-0540
352-392-0502
352-392-9585 Fax
<http://aec.ifas.ufl.edu>

Department of Agricultural Education and Communication ranked first in national study

By Jessica Southard

The University of Florida's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication ranks first in the nation.

A peer-ranking study conducted by The Ohio State University compared agricultural education and communication departments nationwide.



The department's distinguishing characteristics

were its graduate program, faculty and research.

AEC department chair Ed Osborne attributes the department's success to its innovative mindset and determination.

"A commitment to excellence runs through the fabric of the department," Osborne said. "It really does cut across everything that we do in teaching, research and extension."

The department's enrollment has increased over the past few years. The undergraduate enrollment is the highest it's ever been at 123. Ten years ago it would've been in the 50s, Osborne said.

The graduate program has grown significantly, said AEC graduate coordinator Brian Myers.

"Our graduate students are the most visible component of our department nationally," Myers said. "This is because we showcase our top-quality faculty, graduate students and the research they conduct at conferences."

Osborne said that the department's growth could be due to the development of new programs, such as a doctoral program, Distance Delivered Master of Science Program and the department's new project, the Center for Public Issues Education in Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Each program is unique in its design and has been successful. They are examples of the innovative mindset that earned the AEC department this designation, Osborne said.

This national recognition is beneficial to the

students throughout the department, said AEC undergraduate coordinator Ricky Telg.

"I think the No. 1 ranking will show prospective employers that we have a high-quality program," Telg said. "They can then expect our graduates to be good employees because they are learning the most up-to-date skills and knowledge for their respective fields."

This honor has an impact on the actions of the department as well, Osborne said.

"I think it means a continued effort along the lines of the same things we've been doing in the past, a commitment to excellence, innovation and forward thinking as things change," Osborne said.

It is important to use this ranking to inform the public about the department, Telg said.

"We need to leverage this recognition to receive resources so that we can continue to deliver a high-quality program," Telg said.

It should also be beneficial to the department in terms of faculty and graduate student recruiting, Osborne said.

"We will be placing our ranking on recruitment material to inform potential graduate students that not only do we think we have a good program, but it has been recognized by our peers nationally that we have a high-quality program," Myers said.

The last published study of university or college agricultural education programs, which offered insight from individual program faculties, occurred in 1987.

This new No. 1 ranking has informed AEC faculty that the department is moving in the right direction, Myers said.

"There is a temptation to sort of rest on that and that's exactly what we cannot do," Osborne said.

Texas A&M University and The Ohio State University ranked second and third, respectively. The results of the study were presented at the annual conference of the American Association for Agricultural Education held in May 2009 in Louisville, Ky.

Using Mobile Technology for Leadership Instruction

Heather Nazworth

Hannah Carter and Lisa Hightower will be giving a presentation at the International Leadership Association's Annual meeting in Prague to present their research on using mobile technology.

Carter and Hightower's presentation has been paired with professors from Virginia Tech and the University of Georgia who are also giving presentations on utilizing technology to teach leadership.

"Using Mobile Technology in an Extension Leadership Development Program" is an experiment conducted by Carter and Hightower. Carter, an assistant professor and director of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute at the University of Florida, and Hightower, a doctoral student at Virginia Tech, came up with the mobile technology experiment when Hightower was a master's student in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication.

On the first day of the first seminar for Class VII of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute, all of the participants were issued video iPods with a series of different

leadership podcasts.

"The iPod was not only to continue the leadership discussions, but to also make the leadership program participants more prepared before seminars," Carter said.

"The iPod is also used to increase the leadership program participants' communication skills and set up a blog to post different podcasts that they find for their iPod."

"The participants found it very convenient to be able to download podcasts or leadership discussions and be able to listen to them in the car, on flights and at the gym," Hightower said. "Convenience is very important especially for this age group. They are busy with their own lives, jobs and families and the mobile technology program helps them accomplish their daily activities along with learning a little bit more about leadership than they knew that morning."

The Wedgworth Leadership Institute is a leadership program sponsored by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. The two-year program includes 10 seminars across the state and country, and an 18-day international seminar.

Carter and Hightower examined how the participants interacted with the iPods, what types of information the participants had on their iPod and what was challenging for the participants.

"I think the future is limitless as far as utilizing mobile technology to augment leadership programming," Carter said. "The only problem may be to keep up with the ever-changing technology and ways it can be incorporated into leadership programming."



New Face in Rolfs Hall: Gifford to Teach Leadership Courses

By Kevin Kersey

A man who dreamed of becoming president of the United States was welcomed into the Agricultural Education and Communication Department in July.

Greg Gifford received his three degrees



Greg Gifford

from the University of Nebraska including a bachelor of art's degree in political science and communication studies, master of science in leadership and education, and doctorate in human science with a specialization in leadership studies.

Gifford teaches AEE 3413 Interpersonal Leadership, AEE 4434 Communication and Leadership in Groups and Teams, and will teach two graduate courses which are currently in development.

"I feel myself as a facilitator of a community rather than a teacher or professor," he said. "There is so much wisdom to be drawn from other people, whether it is students or co-workers."

Gifford said he chose to apply to UF over other institutions because of the reputation of the AEC program and the college town aspect of Gainesville. The greatest aspect Gifford loves about his job is that he "can walk out of Rolfs Hall and onto campus, at any time of the day, and feel so

vibrant from all the activity and energy."

Gifford said, "I have not always wanted to be a college professor. As a child, I wanted to be president of the United States, and the professor aspect just evolved."

Gifford said he is willing to listen and to incorporate his students' thoughts into his courses, advising, and research.

"I want to hear feedback, because this is the students' program, not mine," Gifford said.

Gifford said he likes Gainesville and could see himself as a faculty member in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department for the remainder of his career.

When not in an academic setting, Gifford enjoys running and reading political blogs. He also confesses to his obsession of reality TV programs. Gifford also enjoys spending time with his border collie, Kelan.

Wedgworth Leadership Institute Visits Asia

By Sarah DeLoach

Class VII of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute traveled to Asia in the summer of 2009. The trip was to increase Florida agriculture and natural resources leaders' knowledge of Asian issues and expose them to Asian agriculture and natural resource industries.

The Wedgworth Leadership Institute is designed to provide the future leaders of Florida's agriculture and natural resources industries with greater skills and knowledge to adapt to the constant change in the industry, said program director Hannah Carter.

Though the application process is rigorous and the curriculum is intense, the program is prestigious, a great opportunity for any young leader, Carter said. Class VII consisted of 28 members, ranging in age from 25 to 55.

"Each class has a 22-month program with 11 study travel seminars," she said.

The most recent study travel seminar for Class VII was a trip to China, Vietnam and Hong Kong.

"We chose China, Vietnam and Hong Kong for this group because it was a place we haven't visited and an entirely different culture," Carter said.

The trip included climbing the Great Wall of China, exploring Halong Bay in Vietnam and traveling around the city of Hong Kong. The group also attended seminars that helped them better acclimate themselves to Asian culture and agriculture and natural resources industries.

"The individuals of Class VII have grown over the past two years in the WLI program, and I know they will make great things happen for Florida's agriculture and natural resources industries through their great leadership and network of friends they now share," said program coordinator Rochelle

Strickland.

Seven classes have completed their WLI program. Class VII will bring aspects of a culture different from any other previous WLI participants, Carter said.

"Our goal is to have Class VII reunite with the other classes that have graduated from the Wedgworth Leadership Institute at the annual alumni meeting to discuss each team's experiences traveling abroad," Carter said.

The trip provided Class VII with a unique look into Asian culture and made them appreciate the amenities they have at home, she said.

"While it's wonderful to have the opportunity to experience new places, it's also wonderful to return home and have a deeper appreciation for all that we are blessed with here in the United States," Carter said.

The Carl Loop Internship: Jumping into Politics Made Easy by Two AEC Students

By Colin Roberts

Two Agricultural Education and Communication students have learned more about legislative processes through a new Florida Farm Bureau Federation internship.

AEC students Ashley Allen and Brady Revels traveled to Washington, D.C., this summer as part of the Carl Loop Legislative Internship Program. This internship is named after former Florida Farm Bureau president Carl B. Loop Jr. The objective of the internship is to provide financial support to students interested in completing government internships at the state and federal levels.

During the course of the internship, time is spent in a variety of areas including government affairs, legal and foundation and group representation.

AEC senior Ashley Allen is currently working with Congressman Adam Putman at his district office in Polk County. Some of her responsibilities involve archiving articles, floor statements or any other published works from national newspapers dating back to 2001. Allen will continue her internship through December.

"I also got to spend a week at the D.C. office," Allen said. "We got a Capitol tour, saw all the monuments and had a lot of fun.

"The entire experience has been beneficial to me because it has exposed me to so many important political processes, I have been able to meet a lot of people and I believe this entire experience has helped me grow as an upcoming educator.

"I think it makes you a more valuable teacher, no matter what."

AEC undergraduate Brady Revels was allowed to choose his specific area of interest during his term. Revels was affiliated with the trade association Crop Life America.

"I was there for the Clean Water Act, cap and trade and the new tobacco tax," Revels said.

He would like to work on grassroots advocacy in the future because so many people still need to be educated in that area, Revels said.

"I have grown as a person and now have a better understanding of how government works, which will significantly help me as a teacher to teach my students," he said.

Cathy Carr, director of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences alumni and

career services, said those experiences will complement their preparation for going into teaching.

Carr, who oversees the Loop internship program, encourages students to start looking for internships at the state and federal level and to take the initiative and inquire about an internship program.

"There are a lot of opportunities

available for students to track down legislative internships," she said.

Prospective interns who hope to receive this internship should be aware of the high competition, Carr said. Qualifications for potential selection of the Carl Loop Internship Program are based on academic performance, leadership potential and future goals.

"It will be much more competitive a couple of years down the road than it is now," she said. "Students really need to spend time getting their information together."



AEC students Ashley Allen and Brady Revels received Carl Loop Legislative Internship Scholarships to intern as legislative aides over the summer. Allen is pictured with Congressman Adam Putnam.

University of Florida Graduate Student Realizes an Unusual Passion

By Randi Sasser

A leadership development graduate student has found an uncommon approach to connect her love for horses with the Old West.

University of Florida master's student Melissa Metcalfe was introduced to the sport of mounted shooting in February 2009. After learning about mounted shooting, she soon began practicing the sport. Metcalfe entered her first competition in July and won.

Mounted shooting is a timed sport that includes history, a horse, two .45 caliber single-action revolvers, 10 balloons and a rider.

"My friend's mom who competes in mounted shooting, took me under her wing and within five days I was borrowing her guns and practicing," Metcalfe said. "We have practices at the rodeo ground in Williston, and I have been hooked ever since."

She said that participation in mounted shooting is growing quickly. The two main organizations dedicated to this activity are the Single Action Shooting Society and the Cowboy Mounted Shooting Association.

SASS matches often have a theme or are tributes to someone. Her initial match was a tribute in her father's memory. He was involved in standardbred and thoroughbred horse racing.

In the SASS and CMSA, women and men wear "time pieces," clothing related to the Old West, when competing. Metcalfe said that following this requirement brings



Melissa Metcalfe competes in mounted shooting with her horse Manley.

fun to the competition and increases the competitor's involvement in the sport.

"You can't ride unless you are dressed appropriately," she said. "The whole organization is basically a tribute to American heritage."

Mounted shooting can be dangerous, so prior to each match, gun safety classes are conducted. When participating, rather than using traditional ammunition, the competitors shoot blanks, bullets filled with black powder that shoots approximately 20 feet. Metcalfe said that practicing caution is essential even when shooting blanks because they can injure a person or the horse.

Metcalfe grew up riding English which is very different from the typical Western

riding, which is implemented in mounted shooting. Her English riding history has helped her gain an advantage in this sport.

"Any kind of riding really would have helped because you have it together," she said. "A lot of times with Western, you're sitting in the saddle and that's great when you're approaching balloons, but when

you need to make up that time, you need to be able to get up in your half seat and be really light in your saddle, which is more common in English, and not interfere with your horse because ultimately it is all about time."

A variety of classes allow all ages to take part in this sport. Six instructional classes are focused on riding and shooting abilities. Class one is for beginners and six is the highest. Winners come from each class, as well as an overall winner. A separate class is available for children.

An additional course that Metcalfe said can be included in SASS matches is "cowboy extreme," where riders complete obstacle courses and often jump and shoot. In addition, a rifle shooting stage is added at the end of some competitions.

"Rifle is usually done after the full match with both pistols," Metcalfe said. "You shoot the first five balloons with your pistol, then when you go around your barrel, you do a straight line back and drop the reins to use the rifle for the final five."

Mounted shooting can be quite expensive. Fortunately for Metcalfe, she has been able to borrow the items to compete in the matches. After graduating with her master's degree, she plans to become more competitive in this rapidly developing shooting sport.



Melissa Metcalfe and her horse Manley.

A Visit With Indigenous Community Leaders

By Tiffany Dale

As farming methods are constantly changing worldwide, the results are not always positive as the Pastos, members of an indigenous community in southwestern Colombia, know all too well.

Throughout time, the Pastos have experienced negative impacts from changes in farming methods. They have developed a plan to revitalize the community by returning to traditional practices, said agricultural education and communication lecturer Marta Hartmann.

Two years ago Hartmann had the opportunity to meet two Pastos leaders, Eduardo Cuaical Alpala and Efrén Félix Tarapues Cuaical on the University of Florida's campus when they spoke about the plan for preserving their indigenous culture. Hartmann has maintained a relationship with the leaders and visited them this summer while in Colombia, her native country.

When Hartmann met with Cuaical Alpala and Tarapues Cuaical, they reviewed the progress of implementing the plan in their community. The Pastos leaders have been working to integrate traditional farming methods into their agricultural practices with hopes that the community

will reach the vitality that once existed prior to cultural and farming influences brought by colonizers, Hartmann said.

"It is important to realize that agricultural practices, natural resources management and environmental conceptions are intrinsically related to people's cultural beliefs, values and worldviews," Hartmann said.

The worldview of the Pastos includes four different components, which reflect the four cardinal directions (north, south, east and west). All four components directly relate the community to their land and nature.

"This indigenous culture clearly recognizes and honors the interconnectedness between the natural and social systems," Hartmann said.

Their relationship with nature is the foundation of the community's cultural make-up and serves as the driving factor to preserve their traditions, Hartmann said. The natural environment, government and justice, natural medicine and economic development, and ancestor and traditional education are the four areas that make up their plan to revitalize their cultural practices including farming.

"A community needs to empower itself

to be self-sustained and to be successful," Hartmann said.

As the Pastos strengthen their empowerment, through national recognition, within the community and from their environment, sustainability within the community will increase, Hartmann said.

Hartmann said she is pleased to see that leaders in her native country are undertaking the challenging and complex efforts to recover and revitalize the well being of indigenous cultures such as the Pastos. As the economic and sustainable growth of their non-monetary capitals, including social, natural, spiritual and intellectual, increase, the indigenous cultural vitality of the Pastos will continue to strengthen, Hartmann said.



Colombian native Marta Hartmann discusses the revitalizing plan with Los Pastos leaders as they implement traditional farming methods in their indigenous community.

Philpot Retiring After 36 Years of Teaching Ag

By Chetley Breeden

A University of Florida graduate and member of the Agricultural Education and Communication Advisory Council has decided to retire from teaching after 36 years of service.

Robert Philpot graduated from the university in 1973 with a bachelor's degree in agriculture education and in 1986 with a master's of agriculture degree. Philpot has been teaching agriculture at Williston High School for 36 years.

"I always wanted to farm growing up, but I just couldn't afford to do it, so I decided I would go teach agriculture," Philpot said.

The land in Florida is vastly different



Robert Philpot

than many other states and is tricky to understand, Philpot said.

"If you plan on teaching in Florida, you need to learn the agriculture around the area," Philpot said. "This is one of the reasons I chose to go to UF, that and I think that the education here is just as good, if not better, than anywhere else."

After graduating, Philpot went back to the small town he moved to in the ninth grade, Williston.

"I have always enjoyed teaching at Williston," Philpot said. "It has always had a good atmosphere about it."

Philpot's service goes beyond the classroom. He pushes students to do their best, whether at the local fair or competitions.

"Mr. Philpot was one of the best teachers I have ever had," said Nellie Gladwell, a 2007 Williston High School graduate. "He not only taught us so much, but he was always hands on and showed us how things were supposed to be done."

Philpot has been a major supporter for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences for many years.

"I have made donations, volunteered classrooms to other professors, and helped meat and livestock teams for many years," Philpot said. "I take interns about every time

they ask me. I would say I have probably gotten 15 to 20 of them through the years."

Taking pride in his work and his support for the university is something that he takes very seriously.

"Mr. Philpot is a hard working teacher who really cares about the students," said Ashley Clemenzi, a 1996 Williston High School graduate. "He is someone who I could go to, still to this day, if I ever need anything."

Throughout all of his support for the university, the university has helped him out whenever he had needed it, Philpot said.

"I have had many perks from being a former graduate," Philpot said. "The professors are always willing to help you when you need them, and over time, you can build really strong bonds with them."

When this school year comes to an end, it will not be the end of the road for this long-time teacher.

"I plan on staying involved with the Williston FFA and helping out my colleague Mr. Wilder when he needs me," Philpot said. "I am wanting to do a lot of traveling and stay involved with the university as much as I possibly can. A trip to Argentina for some dove hunting might also be in the plans."

AEC Spotlight: Awards & Accomplishments

American Association for Agricultural Education

Early Career Award:

Dr. Grady Roberts

First Place Innovative Poster:

Kirby Barrick, Mohamed Samy, Michael Gunderson, & Andrew Thoron

Journal of Agricultural Education Author of the Year

2nd Place: Grady Roberts with co-authors from Texas A&M

Tied for 3rd Place: Brian Myers & Shannon Washburn

Association for International Agricultural and Extension Education

First Place Graduate Student Poster:

Alexa Lamm, Amy Harder, & co-authors from Texas A&M

First Place Faculty Paper Presentation:

Grady Roberts & Lynn Jones (Iowa State)

Outstanding Early Achievement Award:

Kristin Davis (UF-AEC PhD, 2004), International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, DC

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Ambassadors

(Eight of the 32 CALS Ambassadors are AEC students)

Joanna Ballestros, Sarah Bursleson, Rusty Hartline, Bernie LeFils, Keri Milligan, Brady Revels, Carmen Smith, & Morgan Taylor

National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow

Short Feature:

3rd Place: Katie Wimberly

Electronic Media Video:

2nd Place: Seth Rogers

Photo, "Other" Category:

5th Place: Katie Wimberly

Design and Layout, Publications:

4th: Kati McWaters

Design and Layout, Graphic Design:

2nd Place: Seth Rogers

Association for Communication Excellence

Best research paper presentation:

3rd place: Katie Abrams & Courtney Meyers (AEC PhD grad now an assistant professor at Texas Tech)

Best research paper presentation:

2nd place: Courtney Meyers & Tracy Irani

Journal article of the year:

Tracy Irani (with faculty from Texas Tech, Oklahoma State, & Illinois)

Association of Leadership Educators Rising Star Award

Nicole Stedman

Loop Legislative Internship Program

(Two AEC students were selected, out of the three internship funds awarded)

Ashley Allen
Brady Revels



AEC Professor Wins National Leadership Award

By Avery Sams

An assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication won the inaugural Rising Star Award this summer from the Association of Leadership Educators.

"I was shocked," said University of Florida assistant professor Nicole Stedman. "Winning this award was the last thing I expected."

Stedman, the current ALE secretary, was the director of Awards and Recognition from 2006-2008 and was familiar with the award nomination process.

Jennifer Williams, an assistant professor at the University of Georgia, who is currently coordinating the Awards and Recognition Committee, was responsible for nominating Stedman.

"Looking at who the bright and upcoming stars are, and looking at those who I'd like to emulate, I saw her passion for leadership and thought she would be a great person to nominate," Williams said. "I created

the award because I realized that there were plenty of awards to recognize established members, but none to recognize the newer ones."

The nomination process consists of an essay that is evaluated by seven current ALE members, five past ALE award winners and two current students. Applications are

evaluated using a points system.

Different point values are assigned to length of leadership, and service, with emphasis on type of leadership and service, significance of leadership and service and other significant factors.

Stedman, who teaches a variety of leadership courses, is no stranger to receiving honors from ALE. In 2006 she won the award for Outstanding Program of the Year while teaching at Texas A&M University. Stedman was an assistant professor at Texas A&M before she rejoined the Gator Nation.

She received her bachelor's degree from UF's Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences and her master's and doctorate from UF's Department of Agricultural Education and Communication.



Dr. Nicole Stedman (right) received the Association of Leadership Educator's Rising Star Award during a luncheon at ALE's annual conference this summer.

Eight AEC Students to Serve as CALS Ambassadors

By Andrea Davis

Eight students from the Agricultural Education and Communication Department have been selected to serve as College of Agricultural and Life Sciences ambassadors for 2009-10.

Joana Ballesteros, Sarah Burleson, Bernie LeFils, Keri Milligan, Brady Revels, Rusty Hartline, Carmen Danielle Smith and Morgan Taylor are the eight AEC students who have been selected to represent CALS.

The ambassadors are a chosen group of students who have exhibited exceptional academic achievement and demonstrated student leadership in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, the School of Forest Resources and Conservation, and the School of Natural Resources and the Environment.

"We accept around 30 students each year, and we strive to get a good representation of all the different majors within CALS," said CALS ambassador advisor Charlotte Emerson. "This year we have a high number of AEC students who are ambassadors."

Students apply to the program and must go in front of a panel of CALS faculty and staff to conduct a three-minute presentation addressing topics such as career opportunities for CALS graduates, information about the college or why students should choose CALS as an institution for higher learning, Emerson said.

"I chose to become an ambassador because I love agriculture and wanted to help potential students learn more about CALS, as well as the many career opportunities available upon graduation



Eight Agricultural Education and Communication students - Joanna Ballesteros, Sarah Burleson, Rusty Hartline, Bernie LeFils, Keri Milligan, Brady Revels, Carmen Smith, and Morgan Taylor - were selected as 2009-2010 CALS Ambassadors.

from the college," said AEC student and CALS ambassador Sarah Burleson.

Hosting alumni gatherings and special events, visiting high schools and community colleges for recruitment activities and attending biweekly meetings that involve leadership training, public speaking training and program preparation are just a few of the events the ambassadors do, Emerson said.

"I attended the alumni gathering 'Gator Gathering' in Highlands County, which is where I am from," said AEC student and CALS ambassador Morgan Taylor. "It was one of my favorite events because I got to meet and visit with CALS alumni from my area, and also got to speak that night about the college and my experiences being a

CALS student."

Along with events and alumni gatherings, the ambassadors also have the opportunity to take part in study abroad programs, Emerson said. The ambassadors have traveled to Egypt on a study abroad trip twice before.

"We had the opportunity to tour an 8,000-acre export farm where

fresh flowers, strawberries and grapes were grown," Emerson said. "We also visited Cairo University's agriculture college."

From gaining knowledge about public speaking and leadership, to hosting special events, to going on trips halfway across the world, the CALS ambassadors are presented with many learning opportunities, Emerson said.

"I would definitely recommend the program to all CALS students," Burleson said. "Being an ambassador has been a great experience and has helped me to further enhance my public speaking and leadership skills."

AEC Alum Receives CALS Award



Each year at TailGATOR, CALS Alumni and Friends recognizes individuals for their outstanding contributions to UF, IFAS, CALS and the agricultural, natural resources, life sciences and related industries and professions. This year, H.E. "Ed" Jowers received the CALS Alumni and Friends Award of Distinction. He earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural education in 1964. He retired in 2008 after a 37-year career with Extension. He is pictured receiving his award with (l-r) CALS Alumni and Friends president Kevin Huesman, interim Senior Vice President Larry Arrington, Jowers, and CALS dean Kirby Barrick (far right).

2009 ATA Kickball Game



Alpha Tau Alpha, the agricultural education and communication honor society, sponsored the annual ATA Kickball Tournament at Lake Wauberg on Nov. 8. AEC faculty and students enjoyed playing kickball on a sunny Sunday afternoon. AEC department chair Ed Osborne grilled hamburgers and hot dogs, supplemented with side dishes and desserts provided by kickball players.

AEC Graduate Receives CALS Horizon Award

By Chelsea Kauss

Department of Agricultural Education and Communication graduate Sharon Spann recently received the CALS Horizon Award.

The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences' Horizon Award is given to young alumni who have graduated from the University of Florida within the last 10 years. Community and industry involvement are other criteria that need to be met to receive the award.

"It basically recognizes individuals who have already started being an active part of the University of Florida's alumni and also active in the agricultural industry in Florida," Spann said.

Spann received the award at CALS's TailGator event in November.

Some of the activities that contributed to Spann receiving this award include being

a former CALS Ambassador, member of the CALS Alumni and Friends Board of Directors, past co-president of Florida Agri-

where she is still able to impact issues related to agriculture.

Spann works in Seminole County where agriculture is sparse, she said.

"My boss has always been supportive of what I'm interested in (agriculture), and if an issue comes up, he always lets me do it," Spann said.

Debbie S. Clements and O. Patrick Miller nominated Spann for the award. They were Spann's Extension agents while being active in 4-H, and her family is still involved in 4-H, Spann said.

"I judged 4-H contests for them. We've kept in touch over the years," she said.

Being involved in Agricultural Education and Communication not only helped her receive the award but also helped her for her current career. Although she wanted to teach high school agriculture, the skills she learned are handy for her today, Spann said.

"The skills you learn through interaction with professors, technical writing and effective oral communication will help you no matter what career you go into," she said.



Spann is pictured receiving the Horizon Award with (l-r) CALS Alumni and Friends president Kevin Huesman, interim Senior Vice President Larry Arrington, Spann, and CALS dean Kirby Barrick (far right).

Women, and also being active in Florida 4-H.

Currently, Spann is a legislative assistant in the Florida House of Representatives,

AEC Student is the 2009 Florida Watermelon Queen

By Jenna Eckersen

On top of homework and studying, University of Florida student Jessica Southard's other job is to market watermelon for the Florida Watermelon Association.

Southard is in the Agricultural Communication and Leadership Development specialization and has spent many hours traveling for over 200 promotions endorsing the FWA.

Since the 41st FWA Convention in March 2009 where Southard was crowned Watermelon Queen, she has had several learning opportunities.

"The legalities of being in the communication industry have really opened my eyes to the challenge of appropriately getting ideas across to the public," Southard said.

Southard has promoted the FWA all around the United States and Canada. Southard has also had the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., and lobby for the United States Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association.

As Watermelon Queen, Southard said she enjoys visiting schools and teaching children about the nutritional benefits of watermelon

as well as the agricultural process of growing one.

Southard said she has learned how to balance her schedule, which can be difficult.

"I struggle on a daily basis to maintain traveling three to four days a week, as well as taking five classes, being a Sigma Alpha sister and spending time with my friends and family," she said. "However, I think that it is beneficial for me to have to deal with such a hectic schedule because in the field of communications, time is money and a hectic schedule is inevitable."

In addition to other events and opportunities, in February 2010, Southard will travel to Texas to compete in the National Watermelon Queen pageant. She will be judged in a panel and video interview, speech, and knowledge of the watermelon industry.



Florida Watermelon Queen Jessica Southard has traveled throughout the United States and Canada to promote Florida's watermelon industry since being crowned Watermelon Queen in March 2009. She will travel to Texas in February to compete for the title of National Watermelon Queen.

AEC Professor Finds Time for Woodworking Hobby

By Mary O'Reilly

An Agricultural Education and Communication associate professor is finding time outside of the classroom to develop a woodworking hobby.

At a young age, Grady Roberts watched his father experiment with woodworking. It wasn't until he was in college, as an undergraduate student, that Roberts really explored the art of woodworking.

"Everybody should have a hobby," Roberts said. "It's what I do that's not work-related to get my mind off things."

Roberts, an associate professor of agricultural education, has made about over half of the furniture in his house. He constructs items such as tables, chairs, bookcases and desks.

"I can build a quality, well made piece of furniture for the same price as going to the store and buying a cheaply made piece of furniture," Roberts said.

Roberts' most recent creation is an elaborate custom closet inside his house. His



A wooden chair built by Grady Roberts.

favorite piece is a desk with flaws that only he can pick out.

"There is satisfaction in taking raw materials and building it into something useful," Roberts said.

Mission style furniture, Roberts' most common style, is a design that emphasizes

simple horizontal and vertical lines that highlight the grain of the wood.

"The New Yankee Workshop" television show has played a key role in the development of his skills, Roberts said.

"Woodworking isn't something you learn overnight. It's something you build up," Roberts said. "It's all about trial and error."

Roberts primarily works with red oak, due to its low price tag. Going directly to a lumber distributor, instead of a hardware store, also saves money, Roberts said.

Other tools needed for woodworking come with several different prices, depending on the quality. Roberts always wants to buy the newest gadgets to improve his craft.

Once Roberts completes all his personal projects, he plans to sell his work, Roberts said.

AEC Grad Emerson Directs Student Recruitment Efforts

By Chelci Owen

Charlotte Emerson is the director of student development and recruitment, and develops new ideas for Student Solution Seminars. She also recruits new and transfer students into the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Emerson received her bachelor's degree from the University of Florida in Agricultural Education and Communication with a specialization in agricultural education. She then went on to get her master's degree from Florida Gulf Coast University in 2001, with a specialization in education curriculum and instruction.

"I am [also] nationally board certified in career and technical education," Emerson said.

After returning home to Gainesville post-graduation, Emerson began working in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Some of her main tasks within the college are student development and recruitment.

"I taught agricultural education for 11 years before taking this position in August of 2006," Emerson said.

Her current position allows her to utilize some of her past teaching skills, as she keeps in close contact with incoming freshmen,

as well as transfer students. She prepares incoming students by making sure they meet all of the requirements and prerequisites that are necessary for admission.

"I enjoy watching them grow and become better leaders, and if I have a small part in that transformation it is well worth the time," Emerson said.

Newly recruited transfer student Heather Nazworth knows first-hand just how helpful Emerson can be to new students.

"She was very helpful. She was able to answer all of my questions and really prepare me to transfer from a community college to a big university," Nazworth said. "She gave me lots of insight as to what I should look forward to and expect."

Not only does Emerson work with incoming students, but she is also involved with current students. She is dedicated to programs such as the CALS Ambassadors and Solutions Seminars, which are a series of student development programs designed for students to gain leadership and life skills that will be necessary after graduation. Graduate student Micah Scanga works as a graduate assistant to Emerson and helps her coordinate and execute Solutions Seminars several times

a semester.

"Mrs. Emerson is very organized and goal oriented. She is excellent at planning programs and implementing ideas," Scanga said. "Above all else, her skill set in planning and organization stand out. Her experience sets her apart from any other person I have worked with."

When Emerson is not working, her top priorities are her faith and her family. Emerson said her mother has been her greatest influence and attributes her hard work ethic to her mother.

"You may not be the smartest in the group, but if you work hard, you will be able to achieve and make things happen for yourselves and others," Emerson said.



Charlotte Emerson