

The AEC Department *Review*

Fall 2006

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Graduate Program Experiences Growth

by Bonnie Pell

The graduate program for the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication is growing in more ways than one.

The master's and doctoral programs currently have almost 80 students enrolled. Associate professor and former AEC graduate coordinator Nick Place said the growth of the graduate program has not only been in numbers, but also in quality.

"The University of Florida is a great school that is respected both nationally and internationally," Place said.

With more students, the department has more opportunities to seek grant funding for research. Professor Ricky Telg said the research done by students and faculty together gives the department recognition. Today, the department is one of the top third- or fourth-ranked in the nation, Place said.

"UF is the place to be for graduate school," said associate professor Tracy Irani.

Irani, recently appointed as graduate coordinator, said that master's and doctoral students in the department can receive

a holistic experience throughout their education. Students are partnered with faculty and get exposure to the industries in which they are interested.

The doctorate program has seen much expansion since it was started in 2000.

More than 20 students are enrolled, most of whom will seek careers as university faculty. Doctoral graduates have been successfully placed in faculty positions at universities like The Ohio State University, Texas A&M University and Louisiana State University, Irani said.

Students have options with the diverse specializations offered by the department: agricultural communication, agricultural education, Extension education and leadership development. Place said the majority of students seeking their master's degree will pursue careers in human resources, Extension, communications, marketing or education.

The newest addition to the department's graduate program is the distance-delivered master's program. About 30 students are enrolled in the program, designed for Extension agents and agriscience teachers.



Just a few of the many graduate students in the AEC department.

Organizational leadership class gains insight from U.S. Navy

by Kathryn Campbell

University of Florida agricultural leadership assistant professor Hannah Carter and her organizational leadership class had the opportunity to get an inside look at the leadership techniques of one of the oldest organizations in the country.

The U.S. Navy's take on organizational leadership gave Carter's 12 graduate students a new perspective on leadership and the military.

"[The Navy] is historic and a great example of leadership," Carter said. "The class really learned a lot."

The group arrived at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville, Fla., on July 19, where they met with Master Chief Keith Taylor and Commander Marc Weeks of the USS Samuel B. Roberts.

Weeks lectured on the Navy's unique organization and why it works for them.

"[Weeks] really stressed how the military may be inefficient in its organization, but that it does not mean it's ineffective," said UF leadership development graduate student Elio Chiarelli.

The military is in constant change and it has traditions, which is why its unconventional organization works, Chiarelli said.

Taylor discussed the culture of the Navy and how it affects the Navy's leadership style. Taylor explained to the class that they have to know the culture they are dealing with before



University of Florida graduate students gather to eat lunch during a visit to the USS Samuel B. Roberts at the Naval Air Station in Jacksonville with UF assistant professor Hannah Carter in July. The group learned about U.S. Navy leadership from members of the ship's command and toured the ship.

they can implement a leadership style.

"The military has restrictions they have had to learn how to deal with," said UF agricultural communication graduate student Jimmy Varvorines. "But civilian businesses have restrictions also, and we will still have to deal with them."

After the lectures, Carter and her class toured the ship and had lunch with some of the crew in the ship's dining room.

Several of the students said the trip was the highlight of their summer, and they had a lot of fun learning about the Navy.

"It plucked us out of an educational setting and put us in a real-life situation," said UF agricultural communication graduate student Carrie Pedreiro. "It gave us an example of how to put the books to work."

Understanding why the military does what it does gave the students a new respect for the work and responsibilities of naval officers and enlisted members.

"Seeing the military in the movies and news is one thing," Varvorines said, "but to actually see it in real life was really different."

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Ag Communication alumna receives Horizon Award

by Kelly Aue

Agricultural education and communication department graduate Erin Freel Best received the College of Agricultural and Life Science's Alumni and Friends Horizon Award at the 2006 TailGator.

The award recognizes a CALS alumnus who has graduated in the past 10 years and has shown outstanding qualities of leadership in the agriculture community.

"I think the thing I learned the most is how to learn," said Best, a 1996 graduate, about going to UF.

As an undergraduate, Best learned how to get the information she needed to finish a project. She also learned how to work with the changing technology in agricultural media.

Best has worked for the Florida Strawberry Growers Association and started her own business. As co-owner of the agricultural communication firm The Market Place, Best has learned that the process of conducting a project changes from job to job.

Best also was part of the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, a

leadership program for professionals involved with agriculture and natural resources in Florida. As part of the Wedgworth class, she toured Greece, Ireland and the Czech Republic.

Best encourages students to "believe in their dreams." If students have the determination, they can make their dreams real, Best said.

"Now is a great time for agricultural communicators to be in the industry," Best said.

Best's former professor and adviser Ricky Telg nominated her for the Horizon Award.

"I was most honored that Dr. Telg nominated me," Best said. "I respect him so much. Dr. Telg means a lot to me."

"The Horizon Award recognizes a college alumnus who has made a significant contribution to agriculture," Telg said. "In my 11 years at the University of Florida when I think of the graduate who best epitomizes that characteristic, it's Erin Best."

Since graduating, Best has been actively involved with Florida agriculture.

"I think she was selected in part because of her leadership actions over



Erin Best, Horizon Award winner, pictured in front of The Market Place, the agricultural communication firm she founded.

the last several years," Telg said. "She has been a very active CALS alumnus and serves in many agriculture organizations. She's well-known as a strong supporter of Florida agriculture."

AEC Department creates one new specialization from two

In a continuing effort to improve the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication's undergraduate curriculum, two specializations have been blended into one new program. Agricultural Communication (AgComm) and Agricultural Leadership have been joined into one program – Communication and Leadership Development – starting this fall semester.

AEC undergraduate coordinator Ricky Telg said the new program was created for "several compelling reasons."

"The nature of agricultural communication and leadership undergraduate programs is evolving nationwide," he said. "Many

traditional separate programs are blending leadership concepts into AgComm specializations, and blending AgComm concepts into leadership specializations. We believe that we will set the standard for a new, blended leadership/communication educational program within the land-grant system."

Recent research conducted by former AEC professor Rick Rudd indicates that the leadership and communication skills and knowledge that students will learn in the blended program are exactly the skills and knowledge that agricultural industries are looking for in new hires.

Telg said the new blended program will draw on the strengths of both areas.

"In most leadership programs nationwide, such areas of strength as ethics and communications are cornerstones of the curricula," he said. "In communications, being able to function as a leader is essential in effectively communicating ideas. The Communication and Leadership Development program brings together the best of both worlds, with the high-quality AEC faculty in these areas."

As the new specialization is implemented, new leadership-oriented courses have been added to the curriculum. The new specialization will complement the recently approved university-wide, interdisciplinary Minor in Leadership, as well, Telg said.

Rick Rudd takes new position at alma mater

by Brittney Saranko

Although the Virginia Tech school song doesn't bring a sense of pride for most Gators, for former University of Florida's agricultural education and communication department professor Rick Rudd, it is an anthem that he recalls fondly as he returns to his home of the Hokies at Blacksburg, Va.

Rudd accepted the position as head of VT's Agricultural and Extension Education Department in June. As a VT doctorate recipient, Rudd is eager to return to the halls he occupied as a student.

Since his first day on Aug. 14, Rudd has begun implementing new projects at VT. He is already designing an innovative undergraduate program, revamping student recruitment initiatives and increasing the number of staff members.

Anna Ball joins faculty as assistant professor

by Sara Shepherd

Growing up on a 2,000-acre grain and livestock farm helped prepare the newest faculty member of the AEC department for her responsibilities as an assistant professor.

Anna Ball grew up in central Illinois showing cattle and working on her family farm.

"I would not trade my agricultural background for anything," Ball said.

She credits her background with 4-H and the National FFA Organization for teaching her how people are connected to the land.

"When you have animals, you are responsible for them," Ball said. "You still have to take care of them regardless of weather or health. It connects you to the land."

After graduating with her bachelor's degree from the University of Illinois, Ball earned her master's and doctorate degrees in agricultural education at the University of Missouri.



"Ultimately, I'm responsible for helping faculty achieve great things at the departmental level," Rudd said.

Although Rudd was excited about the move, leaving UF was a difficult decision. He said he enjoyed working with the UF staff, but his most cherished position was working with UF students.

"I had graduate-level students before I left, and I think leaving them to work with someone else was the most difficult part," he said.

As Rudd will miss UF, the Agricultural Education and Communication Department will also feel his loss.

"Dr. Rudd leaves big shoes to fill because he was well-respected in the department, college and the university," said AEC professor Ricky Telg.

While at the University of Missouri, Ball met University of Florida associate professor Jim Dyer.

"He told me to get my master's degree," Ball said. "We kept in touch and he informed me of the position opening here."

Students who have Ball as their professor can expect interactive and challenging activities.

"I have a very practical approach," Ball said. "I don't just talk. The students actually have to practice it."

Besides teaching courses in the AEC department, Ball directs the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences' Teaching Resource Center which provides workshops and other resources for professors to improve their teaching.

"One of the things I love most is talking to professors about challenges they face and how to improve their teaching," Ball said.

Ball has two young girls, Josie, 9, and Abby, 8, who attend Wiles Elementary School.

Admin office adds one

by Melissa Miller

Holly O'Ferrel is using her talents to master her new job as the administrative assistant in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication.

Supervising staff, taking meeting notes and managing accounts are some of the duties O'Ferrel completes on a daily basis.

Working with others is a major part of her job. O'Ferrel must communicate well with the public and her coworkers. She completes this task with her outgoing personality and passion for helping others.

O'Ferrel has worked at the University of Florida for the past four years. She decided to work at UF because she loves the Gators.

"UF also has phenomenal job opportunities," O'Ferrel said.

The position as administrative assistant is a challenging job, she said. O'Ferrel uses her talents of being detail-orientated, hard-working and business-wise to meet this challenge.

O'Ferrel said her favorite part of the job is working with people and the students. She relates well with the students because she is down to earth and part of a large family.

Shannon Washburn, assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, values O'Ferrel's positive attitude and dedication.

"Holly is really great. She is a very hard worker and gets along with everyone very well," Washburn said.

O'Ferrel is the mother of five children. Her active family is involved in several activities: sports, church, Girl Scouts and others.



Ag Comm students earn national scholarships

by Amanda Brumby

By applying for scholarships, two agricultural communication undergraduate students took advantage of some of the financial opportunities in the agriculture community.

Angelina Toomey, an agricultural communication senior, was the 2006 winner of the Turf and Ornamental Communications Association scholarship. Professor Ricky Telg gave Toomey the application and she worked on it a couple of months in advance.

"It was a very detailed application process," Toomey said.

This process included sending her resume, a news article and an essay along with the application. Her news article, "Gator Girl Goes Global," was later published in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences newsletter.

The application stated that the



winner of the scholarship would be notified on a certain day, but this was not the case for Toomey. Toomey did not get the news that she had won until two to three weeks after the stated date. She was notified and also invited to Napa, Calif., for TOCA's annual meeting.

Although Toomey was not able to attend the meeting, due to final exams, she did send the organization a thank-you letter. The letter must have made a significant impact because TOCA increased Toomey's scholarship from \$1,000 to \$1,500.

"I can't say for a fact,

that it was the thank-you letter, but I like to think that," Toomey said.

Ginger Larson, a senior with a dual major in agricultural communication and

photojournalism, was the winner of the Livestock Publications Council scholarship. Telg also advised her to apply to the scholarship.

"He always tells us, if you don't apply, you won't win," Larson said.

The director of the scholarship program notified Larson that she received the LPC travel scholarship to the Agricultural Media Summit in Portland, Ore., and was one of the four national finalists for the Forrest Bassford Scholarship. She was interviewed by three judges and was also paired with professionals throughout the process.

"This was a very rewarding experience," Larson said. "It opened a lot of doors, probably some that I don't even know of now, by making a lot of contacts and getting to know the profession."

She received both the travel scholarship and the Forrest Bassford Scholarship at the LPC banquet, for a total of \$2,000.



Department launches program to improve collaboration, outreach efforts

by Grant Pies

The Scientific Thinking and Educational Partnership (STEP) program at the University of Florida is bringing social sciences and core sciences together.

STEP, a collaborative effort among the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, Division of Continuing Education and the Genetics Institute, is focused on developing the critical thinking and decision making skills of faculty and students. According to the STEP Web site, enhancing these skills among university faculty and students may make UF more competitive in obtaining grants.

Tracy Irani, associate professor

in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, claims these skills will help them realize and communicate the broader societal impact of their research.

"In order to be competitive globally, we must teach our students to realize the overall application of their work," Irani said.

The STEP program was officially created in July. It is currently focused on working exclusively with faculty

and students involved in genetics and biotechnology.

Both Irani and Lisa Hightower, STEP program coordinator, said faculty from other areas of science will want to work with the STEP program in the near future.

Hightower said scientists need to be able to explain how their research affects the general public.

"Scientists don't know how to talk about science to the public," Hightower said. "The public is not aware of the amazing research done at UF."

She said this lack of communication to the public can affect how certain projects are perceived.

"The perception of science affects science and industry," Hightower said.



Visit the STEP Web site at:
<http://step.ufl.edu>

Department faculty conduct Osceola County Leadership Program

by Katelyn S. Crow

An agricultural education and communication departmental leadership program is improving the managerial skills of Osceola County employees.

Osceola County Extension director Mary Beth Salisbury is spearheading a leadership enhancement program in the county after being introduced to the material at the University of Florida.

"The program did a good job of helping me identify some of my areas of strength and areas that needed further strengthening," said Salisbury, of the UF program she experienced in early 2000.

Agricultural Education and Communication Department faculty teach the program to Osceola County employees.

"The basic goal of the program is to improve the managerial effectiveness of Osceola County government employees," said Edward Osborne, chair of the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, who is involved in the teaching aspect of the program.

The program consists of a proficiency assessment followed by 12 monthly sessions that aid employees in developing various areas of leadership.

Before Salisbury began directing the program in 2002, no all-inclusive program existed to develop the

professional skills of Osceola County employees.

"I just didn't see that we had an in-depth program; it was just too much hit-and-miss," Salisbury said. "My perception is that people don't have half a day to come to a program unless they know they are going to get something out of it."

A secondary reason for the program is to enhance the partnership between Osceola County and UF.

"By bringing the expertise of the university down here (to Osceola County), it really does highlight that partnership," Salisbury said.

Osborne said his department also benefits from the program through an enhanced reputation and greater visibility. Osborne is reaping personal

benefits too, from teaching several sessions of the program.

"When you teach, you learn," Osborne said. "It develops my expertise as well."

As of this year, the program is a requirement for Osceola County employees. Forty hours of professional development is listed in the goals and objectives of middle and upper management employees.

"Since the first year, it has been a line item in my budget," Salisbury said. "I think when they (Osceola County officials) see the agricultural education and communication faculty bring the caliber of training they do, it says a lot."

The committee is comprised of: Bob Birkenholz, The Ohio State University; Kris Boone, Kansas State University; Susan Fritz, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Barbara Ludwig, Ohio State University Extension; and Kenneth Pigg, University of Missouri-Columbia.

The basic goal of the program is to improve the managerial effectiveness of Osceola County government employees.
- Edward Osborne, AEC department chair

Tracy Irani to serve as AEC graduate coordinator

by Kelly Aue



AEC graduate students will recognize a familiar face as their department's new graduate coordinator.

Tracy Irani, the AEC Department's new graduate coordinator, is looking forward to working with graduate students.

"I've always loved working with students," Irani said. "Grad students are a passion of mine."

As graduate coordinator, Irani will administer current and potential students.

"Every department has a graduate coordinator," she said. "Our job is to recruit and help potential students."

She will also be busy chairing the Graduate Committee, working with faculty and coordinating the department's graduate specializations: agricultural education, agricultural communication, agricultural leadership and extension education.

While working with the Graduate Committee, Irani will help make decisions on policy and student admissions.

Irani said students will not see any changes from what former graduate coordinator Nick Place had begun.

"Dr. Place and Jodi [Degraw, AEC academic support services coordinator] have done an excellent job," Irani said. "I hope to maintain what they have done."

Even though she will not be changing the graduate program this year, Irani wants to hear ideas for the graduate program.

"I really am interested in what students and advisors think about the grad program," Irani said. "We can work together to achieve success."

Department to undergo external review process

For the first time in 10 years, the AEC Department will be reviewed by an external committee.

In March, five faculty members from other universities will visit the department to evaluate programs and make recommendations for improvement.

Students assist at Florida Candidates Forum

by Melissa M. Miller

Six Department of Agricultural Education and Communication students assisted with the Eighth Quadrennial Farm Credit/Ag Institute of Florida Candidates Forum in September.

The students distributed materials, took photographs and organized materials. They directed attendees to the luncheon room and collected audience questions during the event.

The students were given the opportunity to meet and network with top agriculturalists in the state. Ag Institute of Florida President Casey Pace directed the students in their tasks and introduced them to top leaders.

"The Ag Candidates Forum provided me the opportunity to network and to meet important industry leaders and candidates," said leadership major Melissa Stanley.

Six candidates participated in the

program, addressing agricultural various issues, such as opportunities in alternative fuels, the greenbelt exemption and private property rights.

"Attending the Candidates Forum gave me a chance to meet influential people of the agriculture community and to discuss important issues that face us as an industry with them," said AEC master's student Allison Eckhardt. "It was a great opportunity to see what I have to look forward to as an advocate for agriculture."

The students made connections and developed communication skills that



Six University of Florida students networked and developed communication skills through assisting in the Eighth Quadrennial Farm Credit/Ag Institute of Florida Candidates Forum.

will help them in the future.

"It was a great opportunity to meet people I will be working with later on in the industry," said agricultural communication major Kelly Aue.

Fourteen graduate students join department, begin studies

by Michelle Diaz

The agricultural education and communication department welcomed 14 new graduate students this fall term.

Many of these students are looking for additional experience before entering the workforce.

"Being a graduate student allows you to take classes while getting work experience at the same time," said AEC graduate coordinator Tracy Irani.

Students going into the department's master's program usually enter right after they earn their bachelor's degree, Irani said.

Hannah Ranew is one of the newest members to the AEC graduate program. She is earning her master's degree in leadership education.

"I had a good relationship with my professors," Ranew said. "They were very encouraging and helpful about entering grad school."

Ranew said she believes getting a master's degree will give her an advantage over other employment applicants when she enters the job market.

"Some students go into the graduate program to

get a 'leg-up' in company experience or gain confidence before they leave school," she said.

Five new doctoral students and nine new master's students entered in the AEC graduate program this fall.

Many of these students become graduate assistants, whose responsibilities range from assisting in research to helping in classes. These experiences help students gain more knowledge and skills in the field they want to pursue.

"It definitely helped with conflicts," Ranew said. "You get to help out other undergraduate students with their problems."

After graduating with a master's degree or doctoral degree, students feel they have the confidence and experience they need to get a position they want, Irani said.

"The graduate program has a good success rate," she said.



Audrey Vail, Matthew Dettloff and Marlene von Stein are three of the 14 new graduate students who joined the AEC department this fall.

Agricultural education reaches from Florida to Egypt

by Christy Windham

One University of Florida professor went beyond American borders to educate agricultural professors.

Shannon Washburn, assistant professor in the agricultural education and communication department, recently visited Egypt to enhance the teaching methods of Egyptian university and secondary education faculty members.

"I never dreamed I would be doing this," Washburn said.

Washburn's trip was part of the Agricultural Exports and Rural Initiatives project funded by the United States Agency for International Development. The AERI project's goal is to increase and improve Egypt's current agricultural production.

"There can't be an improvement in agriculture without improving agricultural education," Washburn said.

The AERI project has several components to assist in the overall improvement of Egypt's current agricultural state, with Washburn being involved in the University Capacity Building component.

"The primary goal [of the University Capacity Building component] is to improve curriculum and teaching practices," he said.

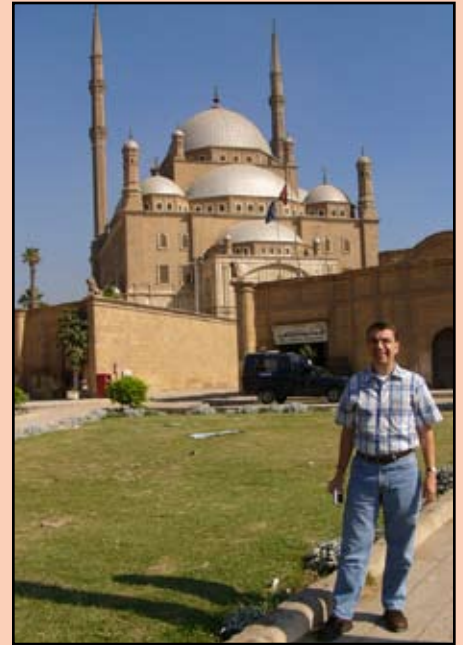
While in Egypt, Washburn and Ohio State University professor Jamie Cano performed faculty development workshops focusing on active learning strategies and proper use of visual aids for Egyptian university professors.

Washburn and Cano served as coaches while the university faculty taught the secondary education teachers new teaching practices. The university faculty continued performing these workshops for the secondary teachers even after Washburn and Cano left Egypt.

"When school started [in Egypt] Sept. 15, the university faculty members had trained 500 secondary education teachers," Washburn said.

While the objective of the current University Capacity Building component of the AERI project has been met, further secondary education teacher development is still needed, Washburn said.

"Additional training could be used in the areas of lesson planning, utilizing the school farm as a teaching tool and developing leadership



University of Florida assistant professor Shannon Washburn traveled to Egypt to teach more than 500 Egyptian educators about agricultural education skills," he said.

Even though Washburn went to Egypt to teach, he also gained professional development skills.

"It made me a better teacher," Washburn said. "I saw what education would look like if we took away all the toys and focused on the bare-bones of teaching."



IFAS faculty complete leadership program

LEAD IFAS, a leadership and administrative development training program for faculty and staff, graduated a new group this fall. The two-year program, coordinated by the AEC Department, enhances and develops participants' leadership skills.

Department faculty members Tracy Irani, Ed Osborne and Ricky Telg presented workshops on a number of leadership topics this fall.

IFAS deans must nominate participants for LEAD IFAS. This is the fourth class to graduate from the program.

Hartmann attends African leadership program

by Jacqueline Thompson

While others were relaxing this summer, Marta Hartmann went to Africa in order to help promote gender equality in agriculture.

Hartmann, a lecturer in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department, went to Mombasa, Kenya, where she participated in a leadership workshop aimed at providing a mentoring relationship for young, female scientists from East Africa.

"The goal," Hartmann said, "is to provide an opportunity for these scientists to work closely with international specialists in their field of agricultural science."

While in Africa she also visited the University of Nairobi in Nairobi, Kenya. She met with faculty and students to discuss research projects on which the University of Florida collaborates with the University of Nairobi.

Hartmann said they also discussed potential collaboration between Strengthening Agricultural and Environmental Capacities through Distance Education and Locally Relevant Research Projects and UF's Gender, Environment, Agriculture and Participation program, which she directs.

"Building highly successful mentoring relationships is the best way to facilitate global exchange of knowledge," Hartmann said.

Scientists from different countries working together in a collaborative atmosphere serve to foster mutual learning, Hartmann said.

"The trip was an empowering, uplifting and energizing experience not just intellectually but emotionally as well," Hartmann said.

She also visited the University of Makerere in Kampala, Uganda. While she was at both African universities, she took the opportunity to meet with

the deans and other faculty in the agricultural departments.

"What impressed me the most was to see a group of women scientists and to learn of their achievements," Hartmann said, "and see their efforts and how much they are gaining and advancing not only professionally but also personally, through these mentoring programs."

Hartmann stayed in a place that was located along the coast in Mombasa. She said it was "like paradise" with top facilities. The area was also fascinating because of the blend of Middle Eastern, African and European cultures, she said.

"The University of Makerere, one of the top universities in Africa, was especially attractive to me because they have provided leadership in terms of dealing with gender issues, not only academically but also in the work force," Hartmann said.

Department scholarships given to 20 students

The AEC Department awarded a total of \$12,100 in scholarships to deserving undergraduate students for the 2006-2007 school year.

The recipients are listed below:

Jennifer Nobles	Andrea Adams
Jerry Lipham	Melissa Hinton
Bonnie Pell	Angelina Toomey
Melissa Miller	Jessica Copeland
Meaghann Faison	Annah Lovelace
Alicia Sears	Christy Windham
Brittney Saranko	Chad Lyons
Jake Raburn	Justin Sharpless
Kelly Aue	Brady Revels
Sara Shepherd	Jenna Shelby



connecting people and agriculture

Department members receive awards

North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA)

Jim Dyer and Brian Myers – Outstanding Journal Article Award
Rick Rudd – Teaching Award of Excellence
David Jones, Nick Fuhrman, and Emily Rhoades – Graduate Student Teaching Awards
Nick Place – NACTA Teacher Fellow

American Association of International Agricultural and Extension Education (AIAEE)

Nick Place – Outstanding Achievement Award
Curt Friedel – Outstanding Graduate Student Research Paper
Kristin Davis – Outstanding Overall Research Paper
Nick Place began term as president.

Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow (ACT)

Ginger Larson, Alison Eckhardt, and Angelina Toomey received student photography and public relations awards

American Association for Agricultural Education (AAAE)

Nick Place – Early Career Award
Jimmy Cheek – AAAE Fellow
Katy Groseta, Brian Myers, Jim Dyer, and Shannon Washburn – Poster Award
Jim Dyer began term as Southern Region VP.

Wedgworth Leadership Institute goes international

by Brittney Saranko

On a cabin deck tucked away on southern Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula, with a clear view of the Pacific Ocean, Eric Kaufman discovered the importance of exploring the agricultural industry overseas.

As the program coordinator for the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agriculture and Natural Resources, Kaufman traveled with a 30-person group to Brazil, Ecuador and Costa Rica. In August, the class of agricultural leaders explored industrial and developing countries to gain a better understanding of international farming practices.

"The biggest thing the trip is able to accomplish is giving the participants a new perspective," Kaufman said.

He said that the 18-day seminar was an insightful experience for several of the members. Many of them had never before witnessed poor living and economic conditions.

WLI director and AEC faculty member Hannah Carter said that for many, this was their first trip abroad, so at first they were reserved. However, Carter said she did notice growth in their confidence throughout the trip.

"One of our goals is to get the



Participants in the Wedgworth Leadership Institute visit an old plantation in Araras, Brazil, that grows coffee, citrus and sugar cane.

participants to see the big picture and how they work within it," Carter said.

As representatives of Florida agribusiness, the participants were able to learn about the differences in how international businesses manage their organizations.

After meeting with private business leaders, participants toured various farming operations, including Brazilian citrus and Ecuadorian cocoa

production.

Carter said the WLI experience tries to show its members first-hand situations that represent issues facing agriculture by exposing them to different cultures and customs.

"We want people to feel like they're involved," she said. "The trip abroad was an invaluable part of this because it allowed the participants to better synthesize what they learned."

Sixth group of Florida leaders graduates from Wedgworth Leadership Institute

by Lauren Schild

They are presidents and vice presidents, directors, managers, sales representatives, and lobbyists of varying career backgrounds from every region of Florida. But one thing they all have in common is that they are striving to be leaders in Florida agriculture and natural resources.

The 22 members of the University of Florida's Wedgworth Leadership Institute's sixth class graduated in October. The institute has had a total of 138 graduates from its previous five classes since 1991.



WEDGWORTH
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

This close-knit group of friends and colleagues spent time over two years exploring agricultural issues on local, national and international levels.

"I came away with a greater understanding of the impact of agriculture, not only here in Florida, but on a global scale," said graduate Ila Levin, vice President and director of purchasing for Hoodridge Unlimited. "I got to see firsthand how the political process works in Washington, D.C., and how all of the different ag industries can work together to make a positive impact."

Participants must commit their

time, a difficult task as they all have full-time careers and families, said institute director Hannah Carter. Class VI attended 10 seminars, each ranging from four to 19 days long, in Florida; Washington, D.C.; California; Brazil; Ecuador; and Costa Rica.

Participants interacted with people in all kinds of agricultural industries, from artichokes to wine, and discovered that they shared many similarities.

"This is a leadership program for agriculturists," Carter said. "The underlying goal of the program is to encourage participants to become more actively involved, whether it is in national or state politics, or it is in their church or school board."

AEC Department Photo Album



1 - ACLT members traveled to Plant City, Fla., to visit agricultural companies.

2 - Several ACLT members attended the ACT National Convention in Portland, Ore., this summer.

3 - At the National Alpha Tau Alpha Conclave in October, CFFA members presented a skit to highlight the club's activities and events from the past year.

4 - During the department's spring banquet, nine students were inducted into Alpha Tau Alpha.

5 - Some of the faculty and students who competed in the Department's 3rd Annual Alpha Tau Alpha Kickball Tournament.