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May 2010

A Message from the Department Head

Another semester is complete. Commencement is always a great time to reflect on the outstanding accomplishments of our undergraduate and graduate students. Special congratulations should also be given to the students' families, friends, faculty and mentors for guiding and encouraging the students down their respective academic paths. We are certainly proud of our graduates and hope for continued success in the next stage of their careers.

The budget challenges facing the University of Illinois and the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences continue to be at the forefront of administrative responsibilities. I recently gave [congressional testimony](#) that outlined the challenges facing land-grant universities in an era of declining state and federal funding -- maintain the land-grant infrastructure, train the next generation of leaders and scientists, and address local issues of agriculture, food, and the environment. We urged the House Agriculture Committee to carefully consider these funding issues as deliberations proceed for a new food, agricultural, and natural resource policy framework in the United States.

The University of Illinois recently announced the hiring of our next President, Michael J. Hogan. He has a distinguished four-decade career in higher education with appointments at The Ohio State University, the University of Iowa, and most recently, president at the University of Connecticut. [Click here](#) for additional information.

In this issue, we highlight our Leadership Lecture Series, an ACE sponsored activity in Sierra Leone, and a research program with significant impact.

Paul

Dennis Hastert Inaugural Speaker for ACE "Leadership Lecture" Series

On February 8, former Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert spoke of his experiences on Capitol Hill to a large group of students and faculty in the Monsanto Room of the ACES Library, Information and Alumni Center. Hastert provided the inaugural lecture in the "Leadership Lecture" series, an event co-hosted by the College of ACES and the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics. Hastert was a Republican member of the United States House of Representatives from 1987 to 2007, representing Illinois' 14th congressional district. He was the longest-serving Republican Speaker in history, beginning his term as Speaker on January 6, 1999, and ending on January 3, 2007. ([view a slideshow on ACE website](#))

The "Leadership Lecture" series is an outgrowth of ACE 199: Agricultural Business Leadership and Policy, said Ron Warfield, past president of the Illinois Farm Bureau and one of the instructors for ACE 199.

Warfield, along with Dr. Paul Ellinger, began teaching ACE 199 in the spring of 2005. Warfield said that after seeing the benefits students experienced from discussions with men and women in key leadership positions, Warfield and Ellinger felt a lecture series that featured prominent leaders from a variety of disciplines could benefit the entire College.

"In the past, we've had speakers for our class who were of such high caliber, we knew

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many people would benefit from their presentations," said Warfield. "It's been a topic of discussion between the Dean's office and the Department Head for quite some time. When we learned that former Speaker Hastert had agreed to make a presentation, we decided there would be no better opportunity to get the series started."

"We hope to offer one leadership lecture each semester, and we plan to bring in speakers from government as well as from the corporate, entrepreneurial and academic sectors," Warfield continued. "Our philosophy for the series is the same as our philosophy for the class. What better way to develop leadership in our students than to have them interact with people who have been or are currently serving in leadership positions?"

Warfield said he thought Hastert's presentation was particularly effective because "People who have been in leadership and are now looking back can in some ways reflect on it better than when they were right in the middle of it."

"The students could see that regular people rise to that level of leadership. I hope it impressed on them that people just like Hastert are sitting around the table in our classroom. Hastert had no idea he was going to be Speaker of the House when he was sitting in college, but that's what happened."

Warfield said ideas for future speakers include the CEO of a major agribusiness or high-level administrators of the University. "We could talk about leadership in a theoretical sense," he concluded, "but this is a nuts-and-bolts way of looking at it."

ACE Students and Faculty Assess Nutrition and Food Security in Sierra Leone

In January, University of Illinois students traveled to Sierra Leone to participate in a short course on international nutrition and food security held at Njala University, and to assist in assessing the nutritional needs of several rural communities in the West African country. ([view a slideshow on ACE website](#))

"Students so often read and hear about the challenges of international development, but rarely do they see the reality with their own eyes," said Adam Austin, a U of I graduate student studying international and policy economics. "Our trip to Sierra Leone added real faces to our classroom lessons, and introduced us to an interpersonal aspect of our studies that we could never glean from a lecture hall."

Njala University was established in 1964 with assistance from the U of I and financial support from the U.S. Agency for International Development. Njala University is Sierra Leone's premier school for agricultural engineering, technology, applied sciences, and research. The university is reestablishing many of its programs following a devastating civil war that ravaged the country from 1991 to 2002. The conflict resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and the displacement of more than two million people, or about one-third of the population.

"An important focus of our trip was to work in partnership with Njala University and World Vision of Sierra Leone to examine nutritional and food security concerns facing Sierra Leone and its people," said Paul McNamara, U of I associate professor of agricultural and consumer economics. "Our students shared in this joint effort, and experienced firsthand the food-related challenges that often confront an impoverished country in a post-conflict situation."

The short course on international nutrition and food security was organized by the U of I and Njala University and co-sponsored by World Vision of Sierra Leone and the World Vision Nutrition Centre of Expertise. The eight-day workshop focused on international nutrition, food policy, international development, public health, and agricultural development. Three U of I alumni also traveled to Sierra Leone. Dr. Eugene Terry (Ph.D. Plant Pathology), Dr. Saweda Liverpool (Ph.D. Agricultural Economics) and Dr. Barbara Yudell (Ph.D. Nutritional Sciences) assisted in teaching the workshop.

Eighty-two people completed the 8-day workshop, which included lectures and classroom presentations, group projects, and field trips. Participants came from the University of Illinois, Njala University, the Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute, as well as World Vision.

"A personal highlight for me was being able to deepen the friendships and connections with our colleagues at Njala University," McNamara said. "The people of Sierra Leone

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face plenty of difficult challenges, but they do so with a certain kind of grace and appreciation of life. It was uplifting to be around it." In addition to participating in the short course, the U of I students traveled to northern Sierra Leone to conduct nutritional assessments. Their findings are being used to assist the local communities and provide support to Village Hope, a grassroots organization formed to help poor, rural communities achieve their goals for education, health, and economic security.

"The most moving aspect of our trip was spending a few days in small rural villages to assess the degree of food insecurity in order to help Village Hope target intervention strategies," Austin said. "These experiences reaffirmed my desire to work toward the eradication of hunger and poverty, and gave me a fresh perspective on the importance of education as a powerful tool for personal and economic growth."

Program support was provided by the U of I College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) Office of Academic Programs, the ACES Office of International Programs, and the U of I Centers for African Studies and Global Studies.

ACE Professor Craig Gundersen Assists in Evaluating U.S. Food Security Programs



Dr. Craig Gundersen

In early February, representatives of the Eastern Illinois Foodbank shared results of a national study sponsored by Feeding America, the nation's largest domestic hunger-relief organization. The study is completed every four years by nearly 200 food banks and analyzes the effectiveness of emergency food distribution throughout the United States. Craig Gundersen, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, is a member of the Technical Advisory Group which, among other activities, reviews the content of this national study.

The *Hunger in America* study is composed of a report for the U.S. as a whole and reports for individual food banks. The study for the Eastern Illinois Foodbank reports that more than 100,600 people, including 33,198 children, receive emergency food each year through the Eastern Illinois Foodbank and the food pantries, soup kitchens, and other emergency food programs it serves. The food bank serves 14 counties in eastern Illinois.

"These findings represent a 133% increase in the number of individuals served since the last study was released in 2006," said Cheryl Middaugh, a food bank spokesperson. "The report reflects the skyrocketing unemployment figures and deflating investment payouts for retirees, among other factors, that have significantly increased demand at emergency food providers."

"This increase was substantially higher than for the country as a whole," said Gundersen. "This reflects both the continuing demand for services in the area and the concerted efforts of the Eastern Illinois Foodbank to expand services to meet this demand." Gundersen also noted that while the number of people in need of services may decline as the economy improves, there will continue to be a substantial number of people who are in need of services.

In addition to assisting with the review of this report, Gundersen is examining a recently established program designed to help low-income school children. In collaboration with colleagues Barbara Fiese and Brenda Davis Koester of the U of I Family Resiliency Center, Gundersen is studying the Backpack Program. The program has been established in several locations across the country, including in Champaign-Urbana. Through this program, food banks partner with local schools to identify children at risk for hunger. Volunteers fill donated backpacks with child-friendly, easy-to-prepare foods that are discretely distributed to children on Friday afternoon.

"The Backpack Program in Champaign-Urbana was piloted by the Eastern Illinois Foodbank during the 2006 school year and currently serves about 200 students," Gundersen said. "We are excited about providing insights to Feeding America and the Eastern Illinois Food Bank about this program."

Awards and Recognitions

- The ACES and Paul A. Funk Awards program was held on Monday, April 19. Congratulations to:
 - **Robert L. Thompson**, recipient of the "Faculty Award for Global Impact"
 - **Nicholas Brozović**, recipient of the "Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching"
 - **Ryan Batts, Paul Ellinger, Darrel Good, Scott Irwin, Dale Lattz, Nicholas Paulson, Gary Schnitkey and Bruce Sherrick**, part of the *Farm Analysis Solution Tools (FAST)* Team with James G. Endress and Ruth F. Hambleton from Extension, winning the "Team Award for Excellence"
 - **Charles E. Olson (BS '68 Agriculture Economics), J. Dan Lehmann (MS '75 Agriculture Economics), and Mark S. Scholl (BS '73 Agriculture)**, recognized by the ACES Alumni Association through the "Award of Merit"
- The ACES Student Awards program was held on April 10. Congratulations to:
 - **Kacy Perry and Jeremy Stoller**, Bronze Tablet Recipients, who must rank in the top three percent of the students in the College of ACES graduating class. Their names will be inscribed on the Bronze Tablet, which hangs in the main library.
 - **Collin Reeser**, selected for this year's C.J. Elliott Award for outstanding graduating senior
 - **Jeremy Stoller**, recipient of the ACE Slam Dunk Award for earning highest GPA among freshmen entering in F06
 - **Matthew Briscoe**, recipient of the Warren K. Wessels Achievement Award
 - **George Witchek**, recipient of the Robert M. Harrison Leadership Award
 - **Jami Davis**, recipient of the Orville G. Bentley award
 - **Bob Schroeder and Callie Wilson**, acknowledged as the ACE Club Outstanding New Member and Outstanding Senior, respectively
 - **Jeremy Stoller**, a Chancellor's Scholar
 - **Jami Davis, Genevieve Larson, Alyssa Mielke, and Jeremy Stoller**, James Scholars
- At the May Faculty Meeting, the following annual recognitions were made:
 - **Eeshani Kandpal, Eric Micheels, and Kevin Patrick** as Outstanding Graduate Students
 - **Saweda Liverpool** for Outstanding Ph.D. Dissertation
 - **Xiaoli Liao** for Outstanding M.S. Thesis
 - **Nick Paulson** for the Earl M. Hughes Teaching Enhancement Award
 - **Alex Winter-Nelson** for the GSO's Outstanding Faculty Award
 - **Linda Foste** for the GSO's Outstanding Staff Award

Faculty Recordings

- Drs. **Bryan Endres** and **Madhu Khanna** presented at the *Second Annual EBI Biofuels Law and Regulation Conference* held on April 9, 2010. Dr. Endres focused on "Innovation and Regulatory Challenges." Dr. Khanna focused on "Potential Biomass Contributions to Green House Gas Reduction and Conservation." The videos may be viewed [here](#).
- "The Economics of the 2010 ACRE Decision" is a 20 minute webinar by **Gary Schnitkey**, describing the economic factors involved in the 2010 ACRE enrollment decision. The webinar may be viewed [here](#).

Academic Program

Congratulations to the following faculty and staff who were named to the "List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent" for Fall 2009:

- **Amy Ando** ACE 500: Applied Economic Theory
- **Flordeliza Bordey (TA)** ACE 261: Applied Statistical Methods

- **Bryan Endres** ACE 306: Food Law
- **Ross Hanig** (TA) ACE 100: Agr Cons and Resource Econ
- **Alex Lo** ACE 161: Microcomputer Applications
- **Kevin Patrick** (TA) ACE 240: Personal Financial Planning
- **Alexander Slade** (TA) ACE 100: Agr Cons and Resource Econ
- **Paul Stoddard** ACE 222: Agricultural Marketing

Upcoming Workshops

The Office for Futures and Options will host several two-day Ag markets workshops during 2010:

- **World Agricultural Marketplace and Risk Management Workshop:** June 21-22, 2010 and November 15-16, 2010. Topics covered include the world Ag marketplace, grain flow, transportation, regulation, hedging, basis trading, spreads, market reports, and options.
- **Intermediate to Advanced Agricultural Hedging Workshop:** December 13-14, 2010. Topics covered include hedge scenarios, the practice and benefits of rolling hedges, calculating the cost of carry and covering carry charges in futures.

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