



AG SCIENCES 2008

A Monthly Newsletter for the College of Agricultural Sciences

April 2008

News in Brief

Hull Receives Black Award

Larry Hull, professor of entomology, has received the 2008 Alex and Jessie C. Black Award for Excellence in Research. The honor, which includes a \$1,000 cash award and a plaque, recognizes significant accomplishments in agricultural research at Penn State. Hull is based at the college's Fruit Research and Extension Center in Biglerville, Adams County.

Glenna Wins Buck Award

Leland Glenna, assistant professor of rural sociology, recently received the 2007 Roy C. Buck Faculty Award in the Agricultural Sciences for his article, "University Administrators, Agricultural Biotechnology, and Academic Capitalism: Defining the Public Good to Promote University-Industry Relationships."

The award recognizes the best refereed article by an untenured faculty member in the college whose research involves the social or human sciences published in a scholarly journal.

Underhills Endow Trustee Scholarship

A Penn State alumni couple, Lowell T. and Lois B. Underhill, of Wilmington, Del., have given \$71,000 to endow a Trustee Scholarship to benefit undergraduates enrolled in the College of Agricultural Sciences who have financial need.

University Names Distinguished Professors in College

Two faculty members in the college—Jill Findeis, professor of agricultural, environmental and regional economics and demography, and Virendra Puri, professor of agricultural and biological engineering—were recently named distinguished professors by the university.

The title of distinguished professor was established by the Office of the President to recognize a select group of professors with exceptional accomplishments in teaching, research and service.

Findeis is internationally and nationally known for her research on off-farm labor, farm household economics, rural employment, rural poverty and



Jill Findeis

rural policy, according to Steve Smith, head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology.

"Her expertise in statistical analysis and economic/mathematical modeling also has been called upon by national and international organizations," he says. "Her research program and philosophy exemplify the land-grant spirit."

Calling her the "consummate scholar in both research and teaching," Smith points out that Findeis chooses to research problems of importance to society and people, publishing in a range of outlets that makes her research accessible not only to professionals, but to practitioners.



Virendra Puri

Puri's international reputation in the areas of pow-
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Ag, Community Leaders Rally for Research, Extension

More than 160 agriculture industry representatives and supporters of county-based extension programs from across Pennsylvania rallied in the Capitol in Harrisburg March 18 to emphasize the need for robust state support of agricultural research and cooperative extension.

College of Agricultural Sciences Capital Day—part of Penn State's Capital Day events—was sponsored by the Penn State Agricultural Council and the Pennsylvania Council of Cooperative Extension Associations (PCCEA). Members of the two groups met with legislators throughout the day to demonstrate how state funding for agricultural research and cooperative extension is an investment that can enhance agricultural profitability, environmental quality, food safety, healthy families, vibrant communities and the development of renewable energy.

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From Dean Steele

With the end of "March Madness" on the basketball court and the upcoming Blue-White spring football game, Penn State sports enthusiasts are already looking ahead to the next season. The same is true in our student-recruitment process. We are approaching 100,000 applications to the university, an all-time high, and our college applications are holding strong as well.

Although there is still quite some time for students to make their final college choice, we expect to see another increase in overall enrollment next year in the College of Agricultural Sciences. Most of our current activity is focused on securing acceptances from the students who have been offered admission. I know that a number of you are

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Familiar Faces

QUESTION: *In response to recent shootings on campuses, a group of students has proposed that students and faculty be permitted to carry firearms on campus. What do you think?*



Deborah Topper
Research technician, Ag and Bio Engineering

"I do believe everyone has the right to protect themselves and to own and carry a firearm. I'm not sure students should be carrying firearms, but they should be allowed to protect themselves with something else, such as Mace."



Owen Thompson
Entomology lab technician/graduate student

"I'm a strong believer in the Constitutional right to bear arms, because I believe an arms-less society is a polite society. I disagree with 90 percent of the impingement on our right to bear arms, and I feel students should have the right to protect themselves."



Richard Stehouwer
Professor of Crop and Soil Sciences

"I think it's a terrible idea. Introducing more firearms would be producing more potential for catastrophe. I think we need to find approaches that work towards decreasing levels of violence in our society and not increasing it by introducing more firearms."



Brenda Coe
Extension assistant, Dairy and Animal Science

"Not a good idea. It just seems that it would possibly lead to more unforeseen shootings due to impulsive anger over anything. The people who can carry guns have gone through the proper procedure and training to do so; we should not just give out firearms."



Dennis Murphy
Professor of Ag and Bio Engineering

"I disagree because I think there will be a lot of unintended consequences such as guns going off accidentally, innocent people being shot and people trying to handle the gun while drinking."



Patrick Topper
Senior research technologist, Ag and Bio Engineering

"I do believe it's the right of every citizen in the United States to carry a firearm for personal protection, including those on a university campus."

University Names Distinguished . . .

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der mechanics and computational fluid dynamics makes him most deserving of being named a distinguished professor, according to Roy Young, head of the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. He notes that Puri's overarching goal is to achieve excellence in his program areas by integrating cutting-edge research and scholarship, resident instruction, and outreach functions.

Over the past few decades, Puri has worked to develop a comprehensive group of test devices and modeling protocols for characterizing powdered materials in agricultural and food applications. His work helps maintain ingredient accuracy by measuring the flow properties and bulk characteristics of powders. As a result of his analysis, the behavior of powders in any process or storage container can be compared, predicted and hence controlled. Companies are now able to compare ingredients provided by their suppliers, which results in uniform components and finished products. In addition to improving product formulation for quality and consistency, companies can reduce costs and increase speed of processing, blending or tableting.



Ag, Community Leaders . . .

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"These are Pennsylvania priorities, not just Penn State priorities," said Ag Council vice president Gregg Robertson, president of the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association. "From an economic-development standpoint, agricultural research and cooperative extension are job creators in such cutting-edge fields as biofuels and biotechnology. For the state to be competitive, we need to create the knowledge and then transfer the technology to our farms and industries.

"The land-grant research and extension system—which in Pennsylvania means Penn State—has been a model for how best to accomplish that."

At a media event highlighting how research and extension programs on crops and soils are helping to reduce soil erosion and runoff and enhance water quality, Sen. Mike Brubaker pointed out that Penn State's long-standing relationship with agricultural producers lends credibility to its science-based recom-

From the Dean . . .

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helping in this regard, and these efforts are indeed appreciated.

The annual budget process has kicked off in the commonwealth with President Spanier's testimony at the House and Senate Appropriation Committee hearings and our recent very successful Capital Day event in Harrisburg. Nearly 200 of our advocates descended upon the Capitol to carry our budget message to our legislators. By every measure, the day was a big success.

Our message continues to resonate with our legislative body. The day was capped off with remarks by President Spanier in the Capitol rotunda and music by members of the Penn State Blue Band, followed by a reception for our advocates, legislators and their staff. We will continue to keep you posted on our progress on the state front. Progress on the federal budget front continues. But as always, it seems to move slowly.

The College of Agricultural Sciences' strategic-planning process is in high gear with scores of college faculty, staff and stakeholders heavily engaged in the process of helping the college define, shape and focus its priorities in our teaching, research and extension mission. We are very much on track in meeting our July 1 deadline to have our plan submitted to the president and provost. More on the planning activities in next month's column.

mendations. "I see agricultural research and extension as critical, not optional," said Brubaker, chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Rep. Jess Stairs, chair of the House Education Committee, said public/private/university partnerships will be essential as the state moves toward energy independence and biofuels production.

"Although corn is the dominant feedstock for ethanol right now, in the long run we don't want to divert grains for food and animal feed to energy production," he said. "But if we're to economically produce ethanol from wood byproducts, switchgrass and other cellulosic biomass, university research and technical training will play a major role."



Letting the Chips Fall Where They May

At Penn State, thousands of potato varieties from around the globe are put through extensive crossbreeding programs, genetic research and intercollegiate collaborations. But once a year, the university's potato researchers switch from pipettes, computers and other high-tech equipment to potato peelers, slicers and a deep fryer. It's potato chipping time.

For a few days every February, research technicians Michael Peck and Chad Moore head for Building 949-46 at Penn State's Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rock Springs to fry and rate potato chips. They test four potato cultivars at a time, taking eight slices from the center of each to fry them in commercial fryers. They lay out 16 separate piles of chips on a table and meticulously evaluate them with a ten-stage, light-to-dark visual rating chart that shows the chips' levels of darkness immediately after frying.

Barbara Christ, head of the Plant Pathology Department, who oversees the potato research program and annual chipping process (and serves as a hands-on member of the chipping crew), says there's plenty of tasting, but the potatoes aren't being rated for flavor. Up to 240 discrete varieties are being rated for appearance only, as researchers find out which spuds can be turned into pale-golden, crispy chips after four months in cold storage. From exotically colored imports to table-quality tubers, each is evaluated for "chip-worthiness."

"We've tried some red and blue chips, but usually we're using white- and yellow-fleshed varieties," Christ says. "Mike and Chad have done everything from getting seed, to field prep, to planting and cutting. They work with growers to determine test plot size and surf the Web for data on potatoes in other programs. They're experts on growing potatoes."

That's appropriate, she explains, because while many researchers and commercial outfits are growing and developing hundreds of varieties, not many places actually give them the chip test.

"We're actually one of a very few programs that does chip processing," Christ says. "The University of Maine and Penn State are the only two on the East Coast that do as much chip processing, and I think we do much more than most across the country. If someone has something from Idaho, they may ask us to put it in our chipping trials. Our reputation is built on the amount of testing and processing that we do."



▲ Mary Alice Gettings enjoys teaching and empowering citizens with whom she works.

Name: Mary Alice Gettings

Hometown: Cranberry Township, Butler County

Job title: Nutrition and Food Safety Educator. Provides nutrition and food-safety education to citizens and co-chairs Food Safety POW Team

Office or work location: Beaver County Cooperative Extension, Monaca, Pa.

Working at Penn State: 14 years for the college and Penn State

Partner: Fiancé Patrick Albright

Last book read: "The Secret"

CD (s) currently in your CD player: Amy Winehouse—Back to Black

Favorite musicians: Hall and Oates ("I am showing my age")

All-time favorite movie: Toss-up between Animal House and Grease

Favorite actor: George Clooney

Favorite food: Chocolate

Favorite restaurant or hang-out: Monterey Bay Fish Grotto, Mount Washington, Pittsburgh

Hobbies: Traveling, shopping and cooking

Little-known claim to fame: Won penmanship contest in 2nd grade and a "present-past-participle" contest in 5th grade

Thing you are proudest of: My nephew, who got accepted into Penn State's Schreyer's Honors College and is majoring in Aerospace Engineering next year.

How you relax: Watching TV ("It's completely mindless")

Favorite part of job: Teaching and empowering citizens I work with.

Along with the University of Maine, Christ gets potatoes from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Beltsville, Md., development facility, from Cornell University and from commercial concerns across the country.

"We get seed from Minnesota, Michigan, North Dakota and Idaho," she says. "Everyone shares data, so we may see information on some clones that interests us. We share our findings back, and if we liked the clone, we may ask if we can get more seed for another year's test."



Research technicians Chad Moore (right) and Michael Peck turn potato samples into chips in a Rock Springs plant pathology research facility as they evaluate several varieties for color retention characteristics after frying.

Up and Coming...

April 5. Spring Judging Workout, Ag Arena, UP, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Contact Dan Kniffen, (814) 865-7809.

April 12. Spring Bargain Fling, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Dale Olver, (814) 863-3914.

April 14-15. Hardwood Log Grading, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Mike Powell, (814) 863-1113.

April 19. Little International/Dairy Exposition, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Dan Kniffen, (814) 865-7809.

April 25-26. Colleges Against Cancer Relay for Life, Ag Arena, UP (lawn area). Contact Dana Trabucco, (717) 341-1823. For donations: www.pennstaterelay.org.

April 26. Quarter Horse Sale, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Brian Egan (814) 863-0569.

April 30. 4H and FFA Grassland Evaluation Contest, Ag Arena, UP. Contact Marvin Hall, (814) 863-1019.

May 3-4. Central Pennsylvania Orchid Show, Ag Arena, UP. Saturday, 1-7 p.m.; Sunday, noon to 5 p.m. Contact Jay Holcomb, (814) 863-2258.

May 10-13. AAUW Book Sale, Ag Arena, UP, 9 a.m.-9 p.m. daily. Contact Suzanne Kerlin, (814) 237-5271.

FACULTY/STAFF ALERTS

Bell Scholarship Applications

Applications are now being accepted for the Family and Consumer Sciences Scholarship in honor of Helen E. Bell, established to provide scholarships for Penn State staff and faculty with extension appointments who are responsible for adult or youth programming at the county, multi-county, regional or state level that affects Pennsylvania families, and who wish to pursue graduate degrees or to engage in other professional-development experiences related to their extension responsibilities. Bell retired from Penn State in December 1983 as professor emerita of home management extension.

Any regularly employed staff or faculty member with an extension appointment who has had at least 12 months of full time, continuing employment with Penn

State Cooperative Extension is eligible to apply by May 16. First consideration will be given to a staff or faculty member enrolled in a full- or part-time graduate degree program that relates to his/her extension family and consumer sciences program responsibilities. If no applicants are pursuing graduate degrees, consideration will be given to individuals participating in other continuing professional-development experiences offered for graduate credit. Scholarship funds may be used during fall semester 2008, spring semester 2008 or summer semester 2009. Applications should be forwarded to Dennis Calvin, associate director of cooperative extension, in 217 Agricultural Administration Bldg.

The scholarship was initially funded by friends of Helen Bell upon her retirement from Penn State. Subsequent gifts have established an endowed fund. Contributions to this fund continue to be welcomed and should be sent to the Office of Development in 230 Agricultural Administration Bldg.

Extension Conference Survey

The Extension Annual Conference Committee has developed an online survey to solicit input on the types of conference topics that participants would find valuable, would feel comfortable presenting, collaborating on or seeking external funding for. It also will assay the adequacy of support to attend the conference and general demographic information. This short survey will help the conference committee to be more effective in serving extension's needs at this year's meeting and at future professional-development opportunities. Access the survey at http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=XmlamgLUlfM c7AAQB30UPQ_3d_3d. When finished taking the survey, please select "Done" and not "Exit this survey." If you hit "Exit this survey," your responses will not be counted.

CAS Information Technology Training

The IT department is offering a wide variety of trainings over the next few months. A complete list of topics, dates and times along with a description about these trainings is available online at <http://it.cas.psu.edu/TechTraining.htm> (click on "Scheduled Training"). To register about these trainings, click on the topic, enter your information and click "Submit." At least six registrations are required to hold a training, so register as early as possible.

ON THE MOVE...

New Faces

Martha Montes, nutrition education advisor in Lancaster County

Milea Perry, program aide in entomology

John Tooker, assistant professor of entomology

Partings

David Bayer, extension educator in Mercer County

Chad Beam, systems administrator in information technologies

Sharon Jones, nutrition education advisor in Lancaster County

Myneesa King, program associate in Allegheny County

Jeffrey McClellan, senior extension associate in crop and soil sciences

Paul Webster, associate extension educator in Potter County

Retirements

Ruth Nyman, coordinator of research and administrative services for grants and contracts

Promotions

Thelma Brodzina, staff assistant V in entomology

Andrea Lego, staff assistant VI in forest resources

Sarah Pickel, program associate in entomology

Norman Rill, research support associate in crop and soil sciences

Anita Sprankle, administrative assistant IV in agricultural and extension education

MORE ABOUT US...

Deaths

David J. Beattie, associate professor of ornamental horticulture from 1977 until his retirement in 2006, died Feb. 9 at the age of 68.

Noteworthy

John Skelly, professor emeritus of plant pathology, and **Dennis Decoteau**, professor of horticulture and plant ecosystem health, are the recipients of the 2007 Environment and Natural Resources Institute Innovation Award. The award recognizes college faculty, extension educators and staff who have made outstanding and innovative contributions in the environmental and natural resources field.

C. Clare Hinrichs, associate professor of rural sociology, recently served as co-editor for a new book, *Remaking the North American Food System: Strategies for Sustainability*, published by the University of Nebraska Press. Hinrichs authored a chapter and edited chapters written by academics from around the country, including **Joan Thomson**, professor of agricultural communications, and **Audrey Maretzki**, professor emerita of food science and nutrition.

Dennis Buffington, professor of agricultural and biological engineering, was recently appointed to Penn State's Task Force on Globalization of Outreach and Professional Education.

Craig Altemose, senior extension educator in Centre County, was named president of the Pennsylvania Agronomic Education Society at its 50th Anniversary Celebration and Conference. **Paul Rebarchak**, coordinator of farm and greenhouse operations for crop and soil sciences, was selected as Member of the Year from the 200-member society's public sector at its recent conference. Rebarchak is a past president of the society and currently represents the organization on the college's Ag Council.

COMMENTS...

If you have comments about this issue of *Ag Sciences 2008* or suggestions for future issues, please call Jeff Mulhollem at (814) 863-2719 or send e-mail to jjm29@psu.edu. Send Back Page items to Gary Abdullah at gxa2@psu.edu.

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