

Winter 2015 Agricultural Economics e-Newsletter



From the desk of Allen Featherstone

Another fall semester has passed quickly. As we get ready to wrap up the semester, I would like to highlight some of the departmental teaching, research, and extension accomplishments within the department.

Our undergraduate program enrollment has increased by 100% in the last ten years. The undergraduate student body consists of 40% transfer students that are made up of students entering from other Departments and from community colleges. Ms. Cherie Hodgson continues to lead our recruiting strategy, and bring diverse demographics into our student body.

During the fall, we hosted the annual awards banquet and awarded over \$200,000 in scholarships to our students. Our department continues to outperform the university average in graduation rates with an 80% graduation rate. We graduated 118 students during the year.

We continue to generate extensive and impactful research. As an example, Nathan Hendricks earned the 2015 Southern Agricultural Economics Association Emerging Scholar Award in July and the 2015 American Journal of Agricultural Economics Outstanding Journal article award. In this newsletter we will be telling the story of a team of researchers who are completing the final phases of data analysis on a large scale project located in northern Ghana.

Our achievements are directly related to the continued support of our alumni and corporate sponsorships. This support helps us provide our students and outreach programs the proper foundation to continue our tradition of excellence. We appreciate the dedication and engagement of our alumni and outside supporters. Thank-you to our generous donors who give back to the Department.

Please take time to learn more about the activities of our department. We also encourage you to share your career and family developments so we can keep your fellow alumni informed. Please email me at afeather@ksu.edu or Thomas Reust, our newly minted communications coordinator, at tomreust@ksu.edu with information you would like to share with your fellow alumni.

Student Highlights

Two new students join the QUEST for excellence

A program helping young leaders engage with other leaders has two new members from the agricultural economics program. Freshmen Emily Zwick of Wichita, KS, and Del Adcock of Assumption, IL, were formally inducted into the Honorary Quest program this fall. The Quest initiative pairs freshmen with seniors from the Blue Key honorary society to help them experience a deeper level of engagement with the community.

Emily Zwick says she applied to the program and underwent an extensive interview process before being inducted into Quest. The new members were treated to a visit to Dr. Bosco's house and then a retreat with Blue Key seniors who shared their experiences with the university. Zwick says one of the benefits of membership within Quest is meeting new students from other departments.

Zwick says, "It's nice because you actually get to know people and developing relationships and friendships."

Del Adcock believes the Quest program allows him the opportunity to get a better understanding of the inner workings of the university and work with other students to make a difference in the community. Adcock appreciates the opportunity to engage with the other students in the years ahead to broaden his experience at the university.

Adcock says, "It's just fun to go along for the ride and see what's coming in the future."

The inductees were recently treated with a meet and greet with the Kansas State University basketball team, and a sneak peek into the new rowing center facility on the north end of campus. Quest is sponsored by ConocoPhillips. For more information about the program you can visit the program here: <https://www.k-state.edu/bluekey/activities/Quest.html>.



Emily Zwick



Del Adcock

METSS hits ground running

The Monitoring, Evaluation, and Technical Support Services (METSS) program contributes technical assistance for achieving the developmental goals of the USAID/Ghana Economic Growth (EG) Office. The EG Office manages development programs that improve local health and livelihoods by generating market-driven mechanisms and nurturing commercial relationships that improve Ghana's industrial competitiveness. METSS is providing support for the massive USAID Feed the Future (FtF) initiative in Ghana.

Kansas State Agricultural Economics professor Vincent Amanor-Boadu, Ph.D, serves as the principal investigator for the program, and is backed by a large staff that includes undergraduate and graduate students. Recently, the program finished conducting a landmark survey measuring the progress forward for the initiative. The survey was the second in the series and included over 4,000 households in northern Ghana.

Department of Agricultural
Economics METSS team



Adjunct Assistant Professor Cesar Guvele is part of the METSS team and believes the study has developed a useful skillset amongst the enumerators he helped train in Ghana. Guvele enthusiastically promoted the value of conducting good research as it pertains to making policy decisions. The METSS team worked closely with the authorities in Ghana to recruit a team of dedicated young university students in Ghana. METSS team members from agricultural economics department from Kansas State University worked as trainers and provided oversight in Ghana. As part of the process, over 150 enumerators underwent rigorous training in Accra before heading north to gather the survey data over a huge geographical expanse covering 45 districts. The survey itself consisted of over 80 pages of questions to gather family demographics, health data and environmental conditions in the impoverished region.

Guvele says there was a focus behind the massive undertaking, “The idea was to capture what the impact of the Feed the Future project.” Guvele believes the process of conducting the survey showed young Ghanaian university students how to conduct good research, and emphasized the concept of self-efficacy throughout their staff of students and fellow researchers. That idea is reinforced within the undergraduate and graduate students at the Manhattan campus who are currently cleaning the data and providing other support functions within the METSS initiative.

Elizabeth Gutierrez, a graduate student in the department of agricultural economics, is working closely with her colleagues to clean the data from the survey. Gutierrez says the process was daunting at first, but the work allows her to engage with research in a different light as she sees the families impacted by the aid project. Gutierrez says, “We’re learning more to think deeply.”

Another METSS team member, Research Assistant Professor Kara Ross, agrees and says, “Working with the students has really been a rewarding experience and makes an important connection between the abstract data and the very real people who are the subject of the study.”

Arthur Capper Cooperative Center

For any cooperative, creating value for members is critical for success. As agriculture moves into a period of tighter margins, deploying capital and positioning the cooperative will be even more imperative for driving value back to the membership. The 2015 K-State Symposium on Cooperative Issues focused on creating member value. The Arthur Capper Cooperative Center (ACCC) hosted the symposium on August 19, 2015, at the K-State Alumni Center in Manhattan, Kansas.

With the focus on creating member value, leading agricultural and rural experts presented their views and insights on new technologies available to cooperatives and producers. Developments in rail infrastructure were also shared with the group. The day concluded with an open discussion with cooperative members who recently graduated from the KARL program.

Representatives from 26 different cooperatives were in attendance at the 2015 K-State Symposium. This ACCC cooperative education program is held jointly with the Kansas Cooperative Council's Leadership Roundtable and is open to all who are interested in cooperative issues.

Students gather at the Symposium (will add caption and formatting)



ACCC Cooperative Scholarships Awarded

The Arthur Capper Cooperative Center (ACCC) cooperative scholarship committee at Kansas State University awarded 18 cooperative scholarships totaling \$55,075 to College of Agriculture students for the 2015-2016 academic year. The ACCC has awarded \$611,584 in scholarships on behalf of the cooperative community since 1985.

David and Susan Barton Cooperative Leadership Scholarship: Linda (Lindy) Bilberry of Garden City, Agribusiness. Co-op connections: Garden City Co-op, Inc., Victory Electric Cooperative Association, Wheatland Electric Cooperative, Inc.

Otis and Mary Lee Molz Cooperative Scholarship: Kyle Anderson of Abilene, Feed Science and Management. Co-op connections: North Central Kansas Cooperative Association, DS&O Electric Cooperative, Tri-County Telephone, Great Plains Credit Union.

Matthew Kent Stamper Memorial Scholarship: Cami Roth of Sterling, Animal Sciences and Industry. Co-op connections: Ark Valley Electric Cooperative Association, Central Prairie Co-op, Farmers Cooperative Grain Company of Abbyville.

MAB Program Update

K-State's Master of Agribusiness (MAB) program is offering travel to Brazil to learn about the food and agriculture industry in that country. The trip is scheduled for June 11 – 20, 2016 and will include stops at an ethanol plant, crop and cattle farms, sugar cane and coffee farms, as well as professional visits to agricultural and food-related industries. Guided sightseeing tours will be arranged along with free time to explore, and two days at the beautiful Iguazu waterfalls.

Agriculture is a principal driver of the Brazilian economy. While sugar cane has been a primary focus, Brazil has become one of the world's largest exporter of coffee, soybeans, beef, sugar cane, ethanol and frozen chickens.

Allen Featherstone, Head of the Agricultural Economics Department and Director of the Master of Agribusiness program, thinks people will enjoy getting a different perspective on agriculture. "While Brazil is a direct competitor for U.S. agriculture, their perspective on many issues is very different than the U.S. perspective," Featherstone said. "Understanding management challenges in a region that deals with turbulent macroeconomic conditions, no formal government support, and few formal insurance markets will provide a keen insight into one of the biggest challengers to the U.S. agricultural system. Understanding the effects of the Brazilian Real devaluation will also be educational."

Previous international trips hosted by the Master of Agribusiness program have been to South America, Russia, Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand, and Europe. Travelers get a mix of cultural sightseeing and international agriculture, while building relationships with members of the group.

"The MAB trip to Southeast Asia was a great experience. We enjoyed learning about the culture, history and agriculture in the region. The business and industry tours really added to the experience. It was fascinating to learn how the different country's government structure has influenced business and agriculture. It added a glimpse of the culture we might not have otherwise taken in if we traveled on our own," Master of Agribusiness Alumna Leslie Svacina said.

More information about the trip can be found at <http://mab.k-state.edu/internationaltours/brazil2016.html> or by contacting Mary Bowen at 785-532-4435, mjbowen@ksu.edu.

