CALS Leadership Institute Experiences a Sustainable Latin America

Packaging Science Student Gains International Industry Knowledge

UF Environmental Horticulture Club Hosts Largest Poinsettia Sale in North America
LETTER FROM THE DEAN

Studying abroad

The Gator Nation Branding Campaign states – *The University of Florida is in Gainesville. The Gator Nation is everywhere.*

The second line is especially true for students in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Each year, more than 200 students study, intern or do research abroad, such that 15-20 percent of the CALS graduating class has been abroad during their academic career. CALS supports 16 study abroad programs in 14 countries, and we’re constantly renewing our portfolio as global issues and needs change. In addition, many graduate students perform all or part of their thesis or dissertation research in foreign countries where they become *de facto* UF ambassadors, bringing cutting edge science to areas with great need for expertise in agricultural, natural resource and life science topics.

So why do we do this? Research published in 2008 shows that students who study abroad grow in many ways. Compared to those who have not been abroad, they have stronger intercultural communication skills, more favorable attitudes toward other cultures, better foreign language skills, and improved confidence and self image. A 2003 study showed that even 10-20 years after graduation, people who studied abroad in college were statistically more likely to travel abroad again, speak a foreign language, and be involved with foreign cultures.

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Faculty travel abroad bringing back a wealth of new knowledge each year that enriches their classes and informs their research and extension programs. Earlier this year when the tragic earthquake occurred in Haiti, our faculty were there, and they’re still in Haiti helping the rebuilding process. Extending our expertise globally is not only the right thing to do, it makes us better back here in Florida.

On the following pages, you’ll find more detailed stories about students who have traveled abroad and taken the Gator Nation everywhere. Enjoy!

Dr. Mark Rieger
Interim Dean
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One UF student is protecting the food supply from foreign invaders. Sarahlynne Guerrero, an entomology and nematology senior, works with the United States Department of Agriculture to help identify insect samples and research the effectiveness of insect traps to monitor for exotic invasive species.

Guerrero identifies insect species by distinguishing between wing characteristics and by extracting the insect abdomen and viewing the genitalia under a microscope.

“The specimens come from surveys using various types of traps and pheromones for specific non-native moths,” said Julieta Brambila, national identifier for the USDA. “The moths we work with are of quarantine importance, meaning that they normally do not occur in the United States, that if they entered the U.S. may become major agricultural pests, and may become invasive, affecting not only agriculture but damaging native plants.”

Guerrero identifies insect species from all over the country that are sent to the USDA office in Gainesville. She most often uses a sticky trap to collect insect samples.

“It’s quite a nuisance because the wings get covered up by the sticky glue film that is characteristic of the trap,” she said. “It really hinders the process of extracting the abdomen and making that clear genitalia speciation.”

Guerrero is also involved in research to determine the effectiveness of four types of traps used by the USDA to monitor insect species. She checks the traps weekly for insect targets.

“We put in specialized pheromone bait for male moths,” Guerrero said. “We extract the traps every week and basically freeze them to make sure all of the insects are dead. I identify all the targets, which in this case are the corn ear worm and the old world bollworm.”

Guerrero uses the same process to identify insect targets from the traps that standard protocol for future trappings,” Guerrero said.

She is involved in all stages of the research project from setting up traps to preparing and identifying specimens. Guerrero also helps with analyzing results and presenting them at conferences.

The research can be used in any state, not just Florida, and will help better promote survey methods for target species, Brambila said.

Guerrero’s research takes tenacity.

“It’s pretty overwhelming at times,” Guerrero said. “Every week you have to go out to these fields and extract all these traps, and often times it takes up a good half of your day.”

Working with traps in a real-world environment also poses its challenges. Ants and raccoons raid the traps to eat the moth specimens, and cattle turned loose in the field can destroy the traps.

Guerrero plans to attend graduate school and continue to do research in international aspects of pest management.

“I’m really proud of the work I do because I am finding scientific data back up what the USDA does, and I’m actually contributing to make sure that our food system is safe and is not being eaten alive by exotic pests,” Guerrero said. “I’m so glad I have the opportunity to make a difference.”

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Packaging Science Student Gains International Industry Knowledge

BY LAURA KUBITZ

landing an internship or working part-time are common ways students build their resumes before entering the competitive job market after graduation.

For Wesley Taylor, a packaging science senior, industry knowledge came in the form of a trip to Italy.

Packaging science encompasses the research, design, innovation and business of making sure consumer products safely complete the journey from the factory to the store shelf. The University of Florida is the only school in the state of Florida to offer this program of study.

In one of Taylor’s packaging courses, Dr. Bruce Welt, associate professor and packaging science undergraduate coordinator, presented his students with the opportunity to submit an assignment to the Italian Trade Commission’s “Italian Packaging Technology Awards.” The 10-12 page papers had to address an innovation in packaging materials or in the packaging machinery manufacturing industry.

Taylor was selected as one of eight students throughout the U.S. and Canada to travel to Italy for two weeks in June 2010. Taylor and his travel companions made their way through Rome, Rimini, Venice, Milan, Parma, Bologna and Florence. They sampled exquisite Italian cuisine and immersed themselves in a historic and vibrant culture, all while gaining real-world experience and international exposure to the packaging industry.

When the group arrived in a new city, they would set off on foot to sightsee or have a guided tour of the historical sections of the area. On travel days, the group toured packaging companies, sometimes visiting two companies a day.

During his free time, Taylor took the opportunity to see the Vatican Museum and Sistine Chapel in Rome, the beaches of Rimini, the leather markets of Florence, and many famous chapels throughout central and northern Italy.

In Rimini, they had the opportunity to attend Packology, a packaging trade show where companies throughout Europe have their latest and most innovative machinery set up for demonstration.

“We saw a great number of packaging machines, some of which I had never even heard of in the classroom setting,” Taylor said. “It was beneficial to see them in person and have their finer details explained.”

Taylor was first introduced to the world of packaging science as a general business major. While browsing for an area of specialization, packaging stood out to him because he only needed a few more classes to fulfill the necessary requirements.

He then realized he would be better off as a packaging science major.

Taylor’s Italian experience helped him realize how different it is to work in an international market, not just in the packaging industry, but across all industries. His travels taught him that respect and attention to minute cultural differences can go a long way when working with people from across the world. Taylor believes he will have a different perspective than most out in the working world, and he will be able to effectively apply this knowledge in his career.

“Wesley is a very strong student and has tremendous potential to make it far in the packaging industry,” Welt said.

After graduation, Taylor wants to start out at a large company such as Procter & Gamble Co. or Kraft Foods to gain valuable package engineering experience.

In the future, he hopes to open his own package consulting firm that will work to ensure that the products we use and consume become more sustainable, efficient and safe.
As the plane began to descend, faint green mountaintops appeared in the distance and the lush, tropical forests of Costa Rica sprawled for miles.

In August, members of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Leadership Institute traveled to Costa Rica to learn about sustainable agricultural practices used in international markets and to experience Latin American culture.

“My first impression of Costa Rica was, ‘Oh my, I’ve finally reached paradise,’” said Rusty Hartline, agricultural education and communication senior and CALS LI member.

CALS LI is a sustainable leadership development program for undergraduate students currently enrolled in CALS. The 17-month program requires students to participate in workshops, attend conferences, complete a 50-hour practicum with a personal mentor and participate in 10-day study abroad trip.

The students who traveled to Costa Rica will be the first to complete the CALS LI curriculum. They will officially be done in December while the second group began their program in August.

The curriculum is designed to challenge students and prepare them to be global-ready leaders in an expanding international market.

One of the main objectives during the trip was to take part in sustainable agricultural programs created by EARTH University. EARTH University is a non-profit international institution dedicated to developing a sustainable world. Students from all over the world come to EARTH University to study sustainable practices developed by the institution.

“My favorite part of our trip was visiting EARTH University,” said Johanna Wilkes, food and resource economics senior. “While there, we were able to visit families in the surrounding community. It amazed me how happy and grateful these families were with so little. It was an experience I will never forget.”

CALS LI, with recycled products and materials bought by EARTH University, built a biodigester for a Costa Rican family. Inside the biodigester, microorganisms break down biodegradable material, such as manure from a cow, in the absence of oxygen. It then traps the methane gas produced by the manure and sends the gas through a hose to the house to be used for cooking.

For Jason Davison, agricultural education and communication graduate student, it was the most rewarding part of the trip.

“The biodigester will save the family about $20 a month, which is a lot of money there,” Davison said. “It is really going to improve their quality of life. They were very appreciative of our hard work.”

The group also had the opportunity to take in the sights. The group went zip lining through the rain forest, took surfing lessons and hiked to the base of a volcano. CALS LI students also attended a cultural event and learned about Latin American culture.

“Spending time in Costa Rica was one of the most exhilarating and rewarding experiences of my life,” Davison said. “I would love to go back, spend more time at EARTH University and experience more of the culture.”
Agricultural Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow Win Scholarship to Conference

BY ANDREA DAVIS AND LAURA KUBITZ

The University of Florida Agricultural Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow Club was the winner of the Yamaha-Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow Scholarship Program. It was the second straight year the club came away with top honors.

Yamaha Motor Corporation challenged individuals and clubs to incorporate ATV and side-by-side safety messages in a communications medium, such as a brochure or press release.

ACLT members submitted a package with three marketing pieces on the topic. Their application included graphic design components, a feature story and a video story board.

“The effort was completely student driven,” said Dr. Ricky Teig, ACLT adviser. “I handed them the application, and they did the rest. If they wanted their traveling costs lowered they would have to do the work. They stepped up to the plate and hit a home run.”

As the winner of the scholarship, UF ACLT received financial assistance to help eight members of the club attend the Agricultural Media Summit, the largest gathering of crop and livestock media professionals in the country.

“We also had the opportunity to speak with representatives from Yamaha, get our group’s picture taken with the representatives and view some of their new products,” said Tiffany Dale, agricultural education and communication senior.

The annual conference is held in various cities throughout the United States and brings together agricultural professionals and students for networking and educational opportunities. This year, it was held in St. Paul, Minn., July 24-28.

“Around 600 agricultural professionals and students were at AMS this year,” Dale said. “It was a great opportunity to network and meet with professionals in the agriculture industry.”

They met individuals representing John Deere, Syngenta and Bayer CropScience, as well as students from other universities.

“It was interesting to meet these students and professionals, knowing that one day, we will all be colleagues in the agriculture industry,” said Sarah DeLoach, agricultural education and communication senior.

It wasn’t all work and no play for the members of the UF ACLT. They had the chance to cruise down the Mississippi on a riverboat at the conference’s welcome party, as well as shop and explore the Mall of America, famously dubbed the largest mall in the U.S.

“We had a great time bonding with our fellow ACLT members and made memories to last a lifetime,” DeLoach said. “AMS was one of the highlights of my summer.”
In 2010, the University of Florida remained the largest recruiter of Peace Corps volunteers in the Southeast and became the fifth largest recruiter in the nation among large universities.

College of Agricultural and Life Sciences students are among those who strive to make a difference overseas.

Since 2007, about 25 CALS students and graduates have or will volunteer with the Peace Corps, and there are nine more students expecting to receive their invitations by spring 2011, said Amy Panikowski, UF Peace Corps recruiter.

"Food and resource economics, agricultural education and communication, wildlife ecology and conservation, and environmental science, all CALS majors, are the most common areas of study among UF Peace Corps volunteers," Panikowski said.

Panikowski is so busy that it is difficult for her see walk-ins, but she doesn’t like to turn anyone away. She even encourages freshmen who are interested in joining the Peace Corps to come by and talk about how they can prepare to apply when they get ready to graduate.

Panikowski strives to be highly accessible to her students, mentoring them through the entire application process from pre-application process to making sure they are ready mentally and emotionally for their service. She even corresponds with them while they are overseas.

Dr. David J. Sammons, dean of the UF International Center, served in the Peace Corps from 1968–1970 in the Philippines as a science education teacher at the elementary level. He also helped to improve food production by performing demonstrations on how to grow rice. Sammons joined the Peace Corps because he believed in its mission of peace and healing.

Whether it’s having a knack for human nutrition or a passion to help protect the environment, students within CALS have the skills the Peace Corps looks for in their volunteers, Sammons said. In turn, volunteering with the Peace Corps will help CALS students focus their interests and be in tune with their strengths.

“They will come away with a better sense of their professional interest and goals,” Sammons said.

UF students who have volunteered or plan on volunteering with the Peace Corps find they can lean on each other for support and guidance from the time they begin the arduous application process until they come home after 27 months of serving overseas, Panikowski said.

“The Peace Corps, although a challenge, is one of the best things that you will ever have an opportunity to do,” Sammons said.

“You will make a difference in the lives of others, have a thrilling experience, learn a lot, challenge yourself in important ways and leave something of yourself behind after two years.”

Jenny Haddle, an interdisciplinary ecology doctoral student, served in the Peace Corps from 2001–2002 in Morocco. Haddle worked with local schools to create environmental education programs, and served as a health volunteer, organizing vaccination drives and distributing birth control.

The cultural differences between Morocco and America became apparent to Haddle right away.

“In Morocco, they speak an unwritten Berber dialect, which is something I have never dealt with before,” Haddle said.

Despite the challenges, Haddle has already been nominated to return for a second tour with the Peace Corps. This time she hopes to go to southern Africa and work in forestry.

With an education in agricultural and life sciences, Haddle feels more prepared for her second round with the Peace Corps.

“I think food security is a really big issue, and the knowledge we gain in CALS will be very applicable there,” Haddle said.

CALS Students and Alumni Serve as Peace Corps Volunteers

BY LAURA KUBITZ
Nothing sparks the holiday spirit more than a crisp, cool breeze, a sip of hot cocoa and the vision of pink and red poinsettias.

Since 1996, the University of Florida Environmental Horticulture Club has hosted a poinsettia show and sale. The event attracts attendees from Orlando, Jacksonville and Daytona and is the largest poinsettia show in North America. Last year alone, the club sold 2,500 plants to more than 800 visitors.

The show originated as a poinsettia research trial and open house for the commercial industry. The poinsettia sale began when people from outside the industry came to the open house and the club designated an extra day for the public to come and enjoy the plants. They then decided to make a fundraiser out of the show and offer plants for sale.

The club uses the profits from the sale to take an international trip each May to see horticulture in places such as Costa Rica, France, Holland and British Columbia. This year, the club is planning a trip to England.

The poinsettias are planted the first week of the fall semester to be ready in time for the sale. Environmental Horticulture Club students work in rotations, including weekends and holidays, to water the crop.

“Producing the large number of varieties and making them all reach their peak for the sale date is a challenge,” said Dr. Jim Barrett, a professor in the environmental horticulture department. “The students may not have much information on the particular growth and flowering characteristics on many of the new varieties of poinsettias.”

The 2010 Poinsettia Show was held in the greenhouse complex behind Fifield Hall on Hull Road on Dec. 9 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

In the show portion of the event, the club conducts a survey to determine which new varieties of the poinsettias are the most popular among the attendees. Poinsettias of
2009-2010 CALS Scholarship

Alumni and Friends Leadership Award

LAUREN MICHELLE FOSTER graduated with a B.S. degree in food science and human nutrition with a nutritional sciences specialization. The Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla., native worked as a research assistant for the past two years with Dr. Wendy Dahl, food science and human nutrition assistant professor. Foster’s honors thesis focused on vitamin D absorption in college students. As an undergraduate, Foster was an active leader in Delta Delta Delta sorority, the American Medical Student Association and the Gator Green Team. She helped establish Greeks Going Green which has expanded to 11 chapters nationwide.

Larry J. Connor Medal of Excellence Award

ALISHA WAINWRIGHT, of Orlando, graduated with a B.S. degree in botany. Wainwright was involved in a variety of activities around campus and in the community. She was the founding president of Students Working for Educational Equality and participated in a project makeover for Marjorie K. Rawlings Elementary School. Wainwright was also a member of the English Language Institute and the Lakes, Vegetation and Landscape Faculty Senate Committee. Wainwright attended summer programs at the University of Chicago and the University of Notre Dame.

Larry J. Connor Medal of Excellence Outstanding Junior Award

GAVIN BENJAMIN ROLLINS, from Melrose, Fla., is an agricultural education and communication senior. Rollins is a member of the Army ROTC, Golden Key International, Collegiate Farm Bureau, Ag Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow, and Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity. In addition, he serves in the Florida Army National Guard and is a member of the Keystone Heights City Council. As part of the Student Leadership University, he has also mentored teens around the country for the past five years. Rollins has received numerous awards for academic achievement, diplomacy, leadership excellence and military service.

Larry J. Connor Medal of Excellence Outstanding Senior Award

STEPHANIE SUZANNE STOPKA, of Gainesville, graduated with a B.S. degree in food science and human nutrition with a nutritional sciences specialization. She was a member of the CALS Honors Program Advisory Board and was secretary for Alpha Epsilon Delta pre-professional organization. In 2009, she presented her research with the University Scholars at three different national conferences. Dr. MaryBeth Horodyski, orthopaedics and rehabilitations associate professor writes, “I know that Stephanie has the drive, discipline and professionalism needed to be successful as a physician and work in the research and academic settings.”

Jack L. Fry Award for Teaching Excellence by a Graduate Student

DR. WILLIAM PELLETIER received his Ph.D. from the department of agricultural and biological engineering. He received a B.E. in food engineering and M.Sc. in agrifood engineering from Université Laval, Québec, Canada in 2000 and 2002, respectively. Pelletier’s talent in the classroom is reflected by the outstanding comments from student evaluations, as well as recognition from faculty and staff. Dr. Dorota Haman, agricultural and biological engineering chair said, “William's teaching has been outstanding because of his dedication to and love of teaching, his mastery of the subject matter and, above all, his willingness to go the extra mile.”

Graduate Teacher/Adviser of the Year

DR. GAIL KAUWEll is a professor and director of the Master of Science – Dietetic Internship Program in the food science and human nutrition department. Kauwell strives to develop students’ competence, self-confidence, problem solving and critical thinking skills. Peers cite Kauwell’s work ethic, constant drive for improvement, unwavering enthusiasm and caring spirit as keys to her success as a graduate teacher and adviser.
Undergraduate Adviser of the Year

Dr. Kate Fogarty is an assistant professor in the department of family, youth and community sciences where she leads teaching and extension programs in youth development. Fogarty advises 50 undergraduate students and is faculty adviser to Collegiate 4-H. Her expertise in youth development and non-formal education has fostered her growth as an academic adviser.

Undergraduate Adviser of the Year

Janna L. Underhill is coordinator of academic support services in the food science and human nutrition department. Underhill serves as the adviser to more than 300 students and co-advises the Food Science and Human Nutrition Club, which has grown substantially in the number of members and variety of activities under her guidance. Underhill was also the 2009-2010 university-wide professional staff adviser of the year.

Undergraduate Teacher of the Year

Dr. Nicole Stedman is an agricultural education and communication assistant professor. She teaches AEC 3413, Working with People: Interpersonal Leadership Skills and AEC 3414, Leadership Development. She strives to prepare students for leadership roles in their careers and community. Experiential learning is a key element of her classes, including case studies and interactive simulations supported by technology, including Facebook, Twitter and Second Life.

Undergraduate Teacher of the Year

Dr. Suzanne Smith is an associate professor specializing in human development and family relations in the family, youth and community sciences department. A UF faculty member since 1988, Smith was instrumental in launching the family, youth and community sciences academic program. Current students, alumni and peers value Smith’s professional dedication and personal compassion.

Jimmy G. Cheek Graduate Student Medal of Excellence

Dr. Andrew C. Thoron received his Ph.D. from the department of agricultural education and communication with a specialization in agricultural teacher education. As a graduate student, Thoron served as a teaching assistant for eight different courses, supervised teaching interns, developed curricular units for the Scientific Thinking and Educational Partnership, and served as graduate adviser to Collegiate FFA. Dr. Edward Osborne, agricultural education and communication chair, described Thoron as an “exceptional graduate student who has excelled in every graduate student role.”

Poinsettia Sale continued from page 9

different shades of red and pink and plants with different flower forms are displayed to visitors find out what they are interested in. The information gathered in the survey is given to plant breeders, wholesale growers and retailers to help them decide which types would be best in commercial production.

Chris Hill, UF Environmental Horticulture Club vice president, is in charge of the poinsettia operation. He meets with Barrett each week to discuss how the poinsettia crop is doing and to decide which further action to take.

He manages the 15-20 club members who care for the plants on a daily basis, and he also has a pesticide applicator license that allows him to use pesticides and growth regulators to keep the plants healthy and within target growth ranges.

“This experience is teaching me what it takes to grow a great crop of plants and how to manage a crew of workers,” Hill said. “My goal is to be in some type of manager role in my future career and this is a great experience that I can present to potential employers.”
In July, students from the Department of Food and Resource Economics Quiz Bowl Team earned both first and second place at the American Agricultural Economics Association annual meeting in Denver. This has only been done once before by UF in 1995. John Lai, Stephen Morgan and Jerrod Penn, the Orange Team, won first place, and Celeste Sununtanasuk, Lane Register and Felipe Martinez, the Blue Team, won second place. (Pictured from left: Austin Gerber, Felipe Martinez, Lane Register, Celeste Sununtanasuk, Melissa Short, Dr. Mikael Sandberg, Kristen Kovalsky, Johanna Wilkes, Stephen Morgan, John Lai and Jerrod Penn)