Rep. Putnam advocates for Florida Ag

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LETTER FROM THE DEAN

One of the core values of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is student growth and development. Certainly the academic success of our students in the classrooms and laboratories is paramount. But those additional competencies in leadership and personal development are often keys to further success in the work place as well as in graduate and professional school study. That is why the College supports student organizations, personal development workshops and activities, internships in government, and leadership activities including our new CALS Leadership Institute funded by a grant from the USDA.

The terms “society ready” and “global community” are probably overused in higher education. The College, however, knows that well-educated graduates will not only contribute to their chosen profession but also to their community. And that community is defined in many ways, from the local town to, literally, the entire world. Leadership, whether part of the formal political process or not, is essential for orderly progress in society. Graduates of CALS are prepared to take their rightful place as caring, concerned and contributing citizens throughout Florida and beyond.
Five clubs, 20 pine saplings, 30 corn plants, one Prius, 150 screws and less than five days. That’s what created the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences’ Homecoming float for 2008.

More than 14 people from five CALS student organizations designed and built the float, themed “Fueling the Road to the Swamp,” sponsored by the Agricultural and Life Sciences College Council (ALSCC). Working with the idea of biomass, the float presented a life-size rendition of the process, starting with biomass, going to production plants, continuing to distribution, and then ending with consumption in the gas tank of a Toyota Prius hybrid.

“We developed a plan around the theme for the year and worked to design something that incorporated elements from multiple facets of agriculture,” said Maggie Lannigan, president of the UF chapter of American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE).

From start to finish, organization representatives worked together to create a float that would stand out from the crowd, she said.

Planning started five days before the Oct. 24 homecoming parade. The group set to work collecting materials and assembling components to complete the float, which depicted the process of producing biofuel from field to tank.

“Just getting the materials together was fun,” said Justin Phillips, UF Forestry Club member. “After getting the corn plants, we got to go collect a bunch of pines from the woods for the biomass.”

After four evenings of cutting, painting and problem solving, it was time to add the final touch, the car. They had to push the car up the ramp, which had been adjusted to accommodate low ground clearance and a lack of power to drive up an incline in reverse.

“We had to do some re-engineering to get it up the ramp, but once we got it there, it really pulled it all together,” said David Walker, ALSCC representative for ASABE.

Despite the technical difficulties, nothing slowed the team down, Phillips said, not even a little rain.

The day of the parade, rain dampened everything but the group’s spirits. On the parade route, people on the float chanted “Go Gators!” and did the chomp for a crowd of rain soaked spectators.

The idea behind the ALSCC is to bring departments within the college together. Among the six clubs to participate in the float-building were Agricultural Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow; UF Forestry Club; Student Chapter of the Wildlife Society; American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers; Family, Youth and Community Sciences Club; and Agricultural Economics Club.

Most of the team had never met each other before that weekend. Since the days spent in planning, constructing and, of course, representing the college in the rain, most of the group continues to keep in touch outside of class, Walker said.

“It was good to see members of Ag Council come together with limited resources to create a successful float,” said Allen Milligan, member of the Forestry Club. “It was one heck of a good time.”
Teach for the best

The second annual College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Teacher’s College, a program designed to assist new faculty members in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, wrapped up last November after a successful session.

The Teacher’s College is a recently created program that provides assistance to new professors on incorporating the latest knowledge on how people learn and effective teaching methods within their classrooms.

“Most professors have degrees in the subjects they’re teaching, not how to teach,” said Grady Roberts, associate professor in the department of agricultural education and communication and director of the CALS Teaching Resource Center.

Teacher’s College provides examples of teaching methods and styles in a classroom-like setting. Throughout the 10-week course, professors participate in activities similar to what they might use in their own classrooms, with their own students. The professors play the role of the student, and the instructors of the course try to model good teaching behaviors.

“[The instructors] try to instill that all of us are continuing to learn; we’re all in here learning together,” Roberts said. “In our professional and personal lives, we still continue to learn.”

The Teacher’s College creates an inviting atmosphere for the professors who participate, Roberts said. The instructors understand it could be intimidating to enroll in such a course and try to create an inviting, learning environment for the new professors.

“The course instructors are all very nice and use different teaching styles,” Roberts said. “This is great because it allows for the professors to see varying methods they can bring back to their own classrooms.”

BY MUSA FARMAND

Be on the lookout for up and coming local rock musician Braxton Adamson, a student in the food and resource economics department, and winner of the University of Florida’s Talent Night solo artist contest.

As a result of his victory, Adamson was invited to perform at Gator Growl on Oct. 24 at Ben Hill Griffin Stadium, in front of more than 30,000 students.

“It is pretty awesome to be able to say that I played at The Swamp in front of 35,000 people,” Adamson said.

The song Adamson played was one that he wrote entitled “Titletown.”

Adamson said that his song was dedicated to the success of the Florida Gator’s athletic teams in recent times, especially the football and basketball teams, which have brought three national championship trophies to Gainesville in the past four years.

Alex Jenkins, a student in the food and resource economics department and friend of Adamson, attended Gator Growl and heard Adamson’s performance.

“Having played music that I have written myself in front of people, I know how difficult it can be to put it all out there,” Jenkins said. “I can always appreciate someone who is willing to perform something that means a lot to them.”

Adamson said the influence for his song stemmed from the University of Georgia’s fraternity rock artist Corey Smith.

“I figured that since our Gators have been doing so well, someone should write a song about them,” Adamson said. “Corey Smith has been singing about his Bulldogs, so I figured someone should sing about the Gators.”

Adamson said he has been seriously playing guitar and songwriting since he was 14.

“I have played a lot of gigs with my dad, as well as with many different bands and musicians,” Adamson said.

Aside from being a student, his second occupation is his band 3 Story Fall. Adamson and 3 Story Fall can be heard at www.myspace.com/3storyfall.

BY CAITLIN SHAFNACKER
Rep. Putnam Advocates for Florida Ag

BY JASON DAVISON & KATELYN CROW

The University of Florida is tasked with developing the next generation of communicators and leaders to address the new and difficult challenges facing Florida’s agricultural industry.

Rep. Adam Putnam, the third-ranking Republican in the U.S. House of Representatives from Florida’s 12th Congressional District, gave this point to students attending a monthly meeting of UF’s Agricultural Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow on Oct. 7.

At the age of 26, Putnam became one of the youngest representatives to ever have been elected to the House.

Putnam, a UF alumnus, said, “One of the most important things that we need to produce from our universities is the next generation of agricultural leaders and communicators.”

Putnam said that the agricultural industry in Florida was facing many challenges and needed good communicators and advocates to survive.

“Pests and disease, marketing and weather challenges and managing water are among the greatest challenges that lie ahead,” Putnam said. “It is a young man’s game. The way to deal with these challenges on a long-term basis is through our youth.

“There is no question that agriculture needs communicators more than ever. There are a lot of issues out there that no one thinks affect agriculture, until they do.”

He said that even though the present job prospects for communication majors in the agriculture industry are good, graduates could face problems finding a job in the near future.

The challenge for the students will be that with harder economic times and declining commodities prices, Florida’s producers will not be able to support the current number of associations. A declining number of associations could mean fewer job opportunities for future graduates.

“As the amount of dues that individual producers can afford to pay to be in multiple associations declines, there will be an increased financial pressure on some of those associations (to survive),” Putnam said.

Those financially strained associations could consolidate with similar associations; the resulting conglomerates would need larger, savvier and more aggressive communications departments, he said.

Putnam also said that the students would have to confront an additional challenge to the industry beyond the age-old problems farmers have faced for generations.

“It’s not a marketing challenge. It’s not a pest and disease challenge. It’s not a weather challenge.” he said, “but it’s a public policy challenge that requires communicators (on the agricultural industry’s behalf).”

ACLT member Tom Adams said he found Putnam’s remarks honest, direct and interesting.

“He pointed out the good things that lie ahead for me as I decide on a career as a future agricultural communicator, but he also addressed the problems and challenges that will face that possible career choice,” he said.

Adams said that he was also pleased that Putnam did not put a political spin on the issues, especially since the country was in the middle of an election cycle.

(Story follows on the next page)

Congressman Adam Putnam, R-Fla., addresses the Agricultural Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow, a student organization in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, on the need for effective communicators and leaders in Florida’s agricultural industry.
“He addressed the challenges that face Florida’s agriculture industry as a concerned citizen, patron and leader,” he said. “He didn’t frame the discussion as a politician trying to place blame on the other party for political gain.”

The congressman closed his remarks by taking questions from the audience. A majority of the questions pertained to the economic downturn in the country and the recent bailout plan for banks that passed the previous week by the U.S. Congress. Putnam said the downturn in the economy is not a typical, cyclical economic downturn.

“The country has not seen an economic collapse like the present situation since the 1930s,” he said.

When asked about his future political or personal plans, Putnam said, “In a political climate like this year, I would be happy to get re-elected.”

In February, Congressman Putnam announced that he is giving up his seat in the House to run for Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

CALS student gets Taylor-made internship in D.C.

By Lindsey Apuzzo

A n internship with a congressman is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for some students, and for agricultural education and communication undergraduate Morgan Taylor, it became a reality. “My dream has always been to live in Washington, D.C.,” Taylor said. “I didn’t know how I was going to get there, but I knew that’s what I always wanted to do.”

Taylor interned for Republican Congressman Adam Putnam in Washington D.C., from May to mid-June 2008. She said she found out about the opportunity through a friend of her father’s who is good friends with Putnam.

“My father’s friend gave Congressman Putnam my resume and told him I was interested in the internship,” Taylor said. “Then his office actually contacted me and asked me if I would apply for it.”

Prior to going to Washington, Taylor said she was most excited about the “big city life” and living on her own. She lived on Capitol Hill, right behind the Supreme Court, during her summer in Washington.

“Every day on my way to work, I had this huge grin on my face because I thought, ‘Am I really here? Is this real?’” Taylor said.

Taylor said her responsibilities included giving Capitol tours, opening Putnam’s mail, answering phones and helping redesign Putnam’s Web site.

“My favorite thing that I got to do was give the Capitol tours,” Taylor said. “That was the first thing I asked when I got the job: ‘Do I get to give tours?’”

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In February, Congressman Putnam announced that he is giving up his seat in the House to run for Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
The University of Florida’s senior vice president for agriculture and natural resources has traded his University of Florida orange for the lighter shade of orange at the University of Tennessee.

Jimmy G. Cheek was named the new chancellor of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in October, and assumed the position in February.

Cheek, who has been with UF’s Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences for 33 years, said his experiences at UF have helped prepare him for the responsibilities of becoming UT Knoxville’s chancellor.

“My time at UF has given me a complete understanding of what a major university is all about,” Cheek said. “It’s given me a fundamental understanding of the functions and constituencies of various colleges.”

Cheek began his career at UF in 1975 as an assistant professor in the department of agricultural and extension education, now the department of agricultural education and communication.

He rose through the ranks of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, serving as assistant dean from 1992 to 1999 and then dean from 1999 until 2004. Cheek was appointed senior vice president in 2005.

Carl Beeman, professor emeritus and former department chairman for agricultural education and communication, remembers hiring Cheek more than 30 years ago.

“Funds were tight in those days, even more so than they are today,” Beeman said. “I remember interviewing Jimmy, after which I had him over to my home for dinner and offered him the job.”

Cheek was instrumental in the growth and development of what has now become the agricultural education and communication department within CALS. Beeman said Cheek was always someone who could be trusted to provide an honest and dependable opinion on any topic.

“With Jimmy, his word is his bond,” Beeman said. “He is a man of absolute integrity.”

Although his departure is bittersweet, reactions to his new job at UT Knoxville have been positive, Cheek said.

“I have received over 600 e-mails, 100 written notes and countless phone calls,” Cheek said. “They have all expressed gratitude for my service and were delighted for me to have the opportunity to lead a major land-grant university.”

During his tenure at UF, enrollment in the college grew tremendously. In addition to the college name being changed from the College of Agriculture to the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, Cheek was particularly proud of expanded enrollment and maintenance of a diverse, high quality student body, he said.

Finding a replacement for someone as talented as Cheek will be a challenging process, said CALS Dean Kirby Barrick, who followed Cheek as CALS Dean.

“He is deserving of the opportunity to move to a new level of administration,” Barrick said.

“He has worked hard for Florida agriculture in the broadest sense. It has been a pleasure to follow him as dean.”

After three decades of service to UF, Cheek is still pleased about the experience.

“The University of Florida is a great institution,” Cheek said.

“It has been a great opportunity to have been here for such a long period of time and served in so many different capacities,” he said.

“Those who are from here, work here or are currently enrolled here are blessed to be part of an outstanding community.”

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“With Jimmy, his word is his bond.
He is a man of absolute integrity.”

- Carl Beeman, former department chair for agricultural education and communication
For the past two years, one University of Florida student team has taken home the National Championship award at its annual conference, a feat only accomplished by one other university in the history of the organization.

The UF National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) team, known as Gator NAMA, won the competition in 2008 in Kansas City and again in 2009 at the Atlanta competition.

Gator NAMA is housed in the food and resource economics department and comprised of undergraduate students in the Agricultural Economics Club.

The National Agri-Marketing Association is the nation’s largest professional association for marketing and agribusiness. Each year, NAMA sponsors a student competition where teams create a marketing plan based upon research gathered by the team.

“The objective of the competition is for the NAMA team to best market the product they create,” said Amanda Saha, alumni and career development coordinator in the department of food and resource economics.

The NAMA team not only has to come up with a product, but also a written executive summary and presentation, including consumer demographics, purchaser data, goals, product positioning, price and in-depth promotion and marketing strategies.

For the 2008 competition, the team members developed the idea for Masher Meals which are fresh refrigerated, produce-based, value-added products that include whipped mashed potatoes with a variety of healthy sides, said NAMA team adviser David Barber.

The NAMA team worked hand-in-hand with the Russet Potato Exchange in Wisconsin and the Walt Disney Company to secure the rights to use the Disney name and characters for marketing strategies.

“For eight months they stayed focused on the goal, and I watched them grow into a dedicated, articulate and confident group of individuals, so I am extremely proud of their much-earned success,” Barber said.

Determined to repeat the success of the 2008 team, Gator NAMA 2009 created SunFruit, a grapefruit-pumelo hybrid developed as an alternative for those taking medications that interact with grapefruit.

The team called on Dr. Fred Gmitter, professor at the University of Florida Citrus Research and Education Center in Lake Alfred, Fla, to help develop a product that would recapture the grapefruit market lost due to interactions with common drugs.

“This team really outworked the competition,” said Lisa House, professor in the food and resource economics department. “They put in the time to make sure they understood everything about their product.”

The team’s unity also helped them gain another win.

“There was not one standout in the team; they all worked together as a team, which was something the judges noted in their evaluation,” House said.

NAMA members enroll in the Marketing Strategies in Agribusiness course. During this course, NAMA members work the entire semester to create their campaign product.
Grant leads a new group of Gators

BY JASON DAVISON

There is a newly acquired grant allowing the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences to lead the way in helping students develop new leadership skills.

CALS recently applied for and received a Higher Education Challenge Grant from the United States Department of Agriculture. The grant will help fund the new CALS Leadership Institute set to begin accepting students in fall 2009.

The project will be administered by program director H. Charlotte Emerson and co-director CALS Dean R. Kirby Barrick.

“The idea of a leadership institute came from a similar institute at the University of Illinois,” said Emerson, CALS’s director of student development and recruitment. “Since Dean Barrick (is) from there, it was something he had working knowledge of and wanted to see come to fruition here at UF.”

Barrick said CALS’s program could be expanded beyond the personal development modules that were the focus of the University of Illinois’s program.

“The main purpose is to provide students with the leadership skills and international understanding to succeed in the future,” Barrick said.

The project’s goal is to create a leadership development program for CALS undergraduate students. The leadership program will be called “Preparing Global Ready Leaders in Agricultural and Life Sciences,” and will focus on the globalization of agricultural business markets and trades.

“This program will allow students to analyze their own personalities, leadership skills and styles and put them to use in the marketplace,” Emerson said.

Emerson said the program would enable students to move beyond the academic study of leadership development, currently offered in CALS, into a real-life application of leadership theories.

“As a part of the program, students will complete 14 leadership modules, work with a mentor presently in the industry and be able to participate in an international travel capstone at the conclusion of the program,” she said.

Nicole Stedman, an assistant professor who teaches leadership courses in the department of agricultural education and communication, said the institute will provide students with additional learning experiences on leadership beyond the academic classroom.

“Giving students that practical orientation would be a wonderful complement to any academic program,” Stedman said.

She said in the past it was difficult to provide students with a genuine real-world experience that allowed them opportunities to practice different leadership theories.

“In a controlled program like this, you’re going to hopefully produce a positive experience for the student to apply those theoretical keys learned in the academic course work,” she said.

Emerson said the institute would be looking for exceptional academic students in CALS with differing cultural and social experiences to participate in the program. The committee will select 30 students for the initial group to enter the program, spanning 17 months.

“We want a vast array of students with differences in cultures, majors and backgrounds,” Emerson said. “We want this group not only to learn from this experience, but also from each other.”

She said the initial group of students will be required to assess their growth and development as a leader at the end of the program.

Emerson said even though the current grant only allows for two groups to complete the program, everyone hopes the program will continue well beyond the first two groups.

“If it benefits our students, we want to be able continue that experience for them,” she said.
TailGATOR 2008 Awards

Award of Distinction

Sherwood “Buddy” Johnson earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in agriculture from UF in 1966 and 1968. He and his wife Patricia own and operate Sherwood Johnson & Son Groves Management Inc., Buck Hammock Groves Inc. and Hilliard Groves Inc. Johnson is a third-generation citrus grower and his son and daughter are involved in the family business, as well.

As a UF student, Johnson specialized in fruit crops and was a member of Alpha Zeta and Phi Kappa Phi. He is a charter member of the UF National Alumni Association, chaired IFAS’s SHARE Council, has been on the board of directors of the St. Lucie County and Florida Farm Bureau and is a former chairman of the board for Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc. He also serves as president of the Treasure Coast Agriculture Research Foundation and is a longtime supporter of the Indian River Research and Education Center. In 2005, he was inducted into the St. Lucie County Agricultural Hall of Fame. Johnson’s nominators are Barney and Hariot Greene.

Horizon Award

Emily Eubanks earned her bachelor’s and master’s degrees from UF in agricultural communication in 2001 and 2004. She resides in Micanopy with her husband John and their children, Will and Kaitly, and is the communications coordinator for the UF/IFAS Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology. Besides writing news releases and providing Web content, Eubanks helped create the “Gardening in a Minute” radio segment, which won five national awards in its first year and won three more this year.

As a UF student, Eubanks served as secretary/treasurer for the National Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow and was actively involved in the agricultural education and communication department. Eubanks is an active volunteer, serving on the program committee for CALS Alumni and Friends, leading the Stars and Stripes 4-H Club and coordinating Web activities for the Alachua County Cattlemen’s Association. She is a member of Christ Community Church in Gainesville, the Association for Communication Excellence, Garden Writers Association, Alachua County Farm Bureau, and Alachua County Cattlemen’s Association. Eubanks’ nominator is Sarah Graddy.

CALS Alumni and Friends Scholarship

Kristin Harrison is a sophomore majoring in microbiology and cell science. Originally from Montverde, Florida, Harrison graduated from East Ridge High School where she was recognized as a National Merit Scholar. A UF Collegiate FFA member, Harrison was active in FFA throughout high school, participating on the state champion teams in parliamentary procedure, meats evaluation, sales and services, and land evaluation. At UF, Harrison participates in the Florida Student Honors Organization and Gator Christian Life.

She is a member of the Pre-Vet Club and spends her free time volunteering for the Alachua County Humane Society. In summer 2008, Harrison worked at West Orange Veterinary Hospital in Winter Garden where she gained hands-on experience assisting with vaccinations, grooming, blood work and surgical monitoring. After graduation, Harrison hopes to attend the UF College of Veterinary Medicine. She is the daughter of John and Dawn Harrison.
Will Eubanks takes a hard look at the life of bees at the CALS TailGATOR 2008. Dr James D. Ellis Jr., assistant professor in the department of entomology and nematology, was there to educate visitors on the agricultural benefits of bees, such as pollenization and the production of honey.