Engaging Students and the Community with Florida Agriculture

AEC Student Experiences West Africa Agriculture

Teaming Up to Stop Hunger
Engage and Give Back

G

reetings and Happy 2014! It’s another special year in the life of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and our partners in UF’s land-grant mission, the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station and Florida Cooperative Extension Service. This year we celebrate 100 years of Extension and the signing of the Smith-Lever Act, which on May 8, 1914 created the federal-state-county partnership we know as Cooperative Extension. 2014 is also the 50th birthday of IFAS, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, which is the structure that brings teaching, research and extension together at UF.

This issue highlights just a small sample of student and alumni activities and accomplishments. A common element in many of these stories is the importance of teamwork, whether students are competing for a national championship or raising awareness about hunger. You will find our students working with the latest technology, such as the futuristic BodPod and also addressing fundamental questions of access to safe food and clean water. In each case, CALS students are learning the skills they will need for success and for leading society into the future. It’s great to be a Florida Gator, especially in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences!

Go Gators!

R. Elaine Turner
Interim Dean

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Editor & Designer: Gretchen Wolff □ Adviser: Cathy Carr, Director, Alumni and Career Services □ Cover photo: Marisol Amador □ Stories were written by students in the course AEC 3041 The Communication Process in Agricultural and Life Sciences.
Two AEC Students Served as 2012-2013 National FFA Officers

BY SYDNEY STONE

T
two students in the Agricultural Education and Communication Department served the National FFA Organization while advocating for the organization and the agriculture industry.

Clay Sapp and Joenelle Futrell were elected as the 2012-2013 National FFA President and Eastern Regional Vice President at the national convention in Indianapolis in October 2012.

Sapp said several factors played a role in deciding to run for national office, but one particular experience helped him make the final decision.

“I had the chance to facilitate a chapter officer training a few months after I had finished serving as the Florida State FFA president,” Sapp said. “Working with those chapter officers allowed me to realize that I still had a desire to serve FFA members and build the organization that I loved.”

Sapp returned to the University of Florida as a full-time student in January. He said he looks forward to getting more involved on the UF campus while utilizing the skills he learned as the National FFA president.

“I am currently looking at trying to get more involved with organizations on campus that will allow me to explore creative ways to advocate for FFA, agriculture and leadership in the future,” Sapp said. “With the training and knowledge that I have received this year, I hope to speak in front of groups that haven’t had as much exposure to agriculture as others.”

The Spring 2014 semester marks Futrell’s first at UF. Instead of returning to the University of Kentucky, Futrell chose to enroll in the AEC department.

“I felt I needed something fresh,” said Futrell. “Through my travels I had the opportunity to look at multiple schools, and I felt UF was the best fit.”

Throughout the past year, Sapp and Futrell served as leaders to more than 500,000 FFA members and traveled across the nation to visit high school FFA chapters.

Sapp said he learned valuable lessons throughout his year of service that have shaped him into the person he is now and that he wants to continue to be.

“The one thing that I have learned that I will take with me throughout the rest of my life is that no matter how busy you may be, you can always make time for the things that you believe in and care about,” Sapp said.

Sapp said he credits many individuals for helping him reach his goals, but one in particular.

“I would be remiss if I didn’t mention my dad because he played a large role in developing me into the leader in agriculture and leadership that I have become,” Sapp said. “He was my high school agriculture teacher and FFA adviser, and he has provided so much guidance along the way.”

When his term as national president ended, he said he felt like he had put everything possible into his year of service.

“I felt fulfilled,” Sapp said. “It has been an amazing year and I have learned so much, so I took a lot of pride in knowing that I had accomplished more than I could have ever imagined when I took office last year.”

Sapp said he looks forward to using the skills he learned as a national FFA officer on campus.

“I am most excited to get more engaged on campus. I was only a student at UF for two semesters before I was elected into this position, so I hope to get more involved with student government and some of the social aspects that are offered on campus,” he said.

Three Generations of High School Agriculture

BY EVAN KEGLER

A\nfter graduating from the University of Florida last May, Andrew Heavner became the third generation of high school agriculture teachers in his family.

Heavner graduated with a degree in agricultural education and communication with a minor in plant science, and then accepted a teaching position at the Career Academies of Seminole. The small vocational school located in Seminole, Fla., will be his first opportunity to experience life as a teacher and FFA adviser.

“I teach at a pretty small school, but it is a unique program,” Heavner said. “The administration is very supportive of agriculture and the agricultural programs on campus.”

Having a passion for and background in agriculture played a major role in his career choice, Heavner said. His father, Howard Heavner, and grandfather, Bob Heavner, were both agricultural educators in Illinois. This influenced Heavner to be involved with agriculture early in his life.

“He always hung around and participated in a lot of the FFA activities,” Howard Heavner said.

Even though Heavner was involved with his family in agriculture from an early age, there wasn’t any “twisting his arm” or making him want to do it, Howard Heavner said. Instead, Heavner showed self-motivation, even when others might have dropped their agriculture classes, his father said.

“A lot of people would drop agricultural education for no reason,” Howard Heavner said.

Bob Heavner, like Howard Heavner, has also had an extensive career in agricultural education and was his son’s high school agriculture teacher.

The two-generation combination in Illinois makes for a 51-year legacy at the same school, Bob Heavner said.

Heavner’s teacher and mentor, AEC professor Kirby Barrick, Ph.D., said that Heavner has great aspirations for his future career in agriculture.

“I think he’ll do well,” Barrick said. “He is the third-generation agriculture teacher in his family, so he knows what he is getting into.”

Heavner attributes his teaching style to his father’s dedication to his students and the community.

“Being an agriculture teacher is a good way to give back,” said Heavner.

CALS offers future teachers the opportunity to gain a wide range of experience, which is important when going into the field, said Heavner.

“Do things you don’t have experience in because once you’re in the field you may be asked to teach a course you know nothing about,” said Heavner.

With Andrew Heavner beginning his teaching career this fall, the Heavner family has three generations of agriculture educators, Bob, Andrew and Howard. Photo courtesy of Andrew Heavner.
UF Students learned about the most food insecure countries at the HungerU mobile display and packaged more than 25,000 meals to feed those in need. Photos by Marisol Amador and Raychel Rabon.

CALS Students get Hands-on Research Experience with the BodPod

BY AMBER HUFF

T

wo University of Florida students gained practical research experience with a tool called the BodPod last summer.

A research study conducted at UF during the summer of 2013 examined body composition and the physical activity and food practices of college students.

Kaley Mialki, a senior in food science and human nutrition with a specialization in dietetics, said the study was divided into two parts. First, college students would sign consent forms, fill out electronic surveys, and complete a food and physical activity journal for one week.

Mialki said that in the second part of the study, students would return after one week with their completed journals and have their weight, height, and hip and waist circumference measured. She said that students then had their body composition measured by a device called the BodPod.

Kaela Shelnutt, Ph.D., an assistant professor with a joint appointment in the departments of family, youth and community sciences and food science and human nutrition, said the study was part of a multi-state research team project whose intent was to validate the College Environmental Perceptions and Behaviors Survey currently being developed by the NC1193 USDA Multistate Research Group.

“This survey will be used by the multi-state research team to develop a Healthy Campus Index that allows colleges to determine the healthfulness of their campuses,” Shelnutt said.

Mialki said that her part in the project was handing out fliers and setting up appointments for research participants. She also said that she enjoyed learning how to use the BodPod and walking students through the process.

“It made me think about research in a different way and value the research process,” Mialki said.

Mialki said that research is a great hands-on learning experience that allows a student to work closely with professionals and researchers.

“Don’t be intimidated,” said Mialki, “and know that there are a lot of research opportunities available.”

Mialki said that she did not expect many of the activities she took part in, such as interacting with people, to be a component of research.

“Not all research is sitting at a lab bench mixing chemicals,” said Mialki.

She said that this project clarified concepts she had learned in the classroom and even made her consider pursuing a career in research.

“Being a senior in recreation, parks and tourism, said that she initially thought research would be boring until she helped with this study.

“When I actually got involved with the research,” Jones said, “it helped me learn about myself, the university and students.”

Jones said that her duties included recruitment, making and handing out fliers, contacting different departments, and spreading the word about the study. She said that it was fun interacting with other students and her classmates.

Jones and Mialki conducted the research as part of the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences’ Summer Research Internship Program with the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station.

“Don’t be intimidated,” said Mialki, “and it may spark an interest in you.”

Jones and Mialki measure a student participant’s height, weight, and waist and hip circumference before having her body composition measured by the BodPod. Photos by Tyler Jones.

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Engaging Students and the Community with Florida Agriculture

BY GRETCHEN WULFF

I t is hard to imagine almost five acres, just down the road from the Florida Museum of Natural History, was almost lost to the weeds and forgotten. Originally a poultry farm, the Agronomy Teaching Farm is now an interdisciplinary teaching farm that features predominant and diverse farming systems important to the state of Florida’s crop production.

The Agronomy Teaching Farm, said Judy Dampier, Agrionomy Department biologist who, along with Diane Rowland, coordinates activities at the farm. “We are trying to make [the Agronomy Teaching Farm] as informative and engaging as possible for students and visitors,” said Dampier.

Andrew Thoron, Ph.D., assistant professor in the Department of Agricultural Education and Communication, used the farm this fall to teach AEC 4504 Curriculum and Program Planning for Agricultural Education. Students enrolled in this course have an interest in becoming high school agricultural science teachers and the farm provides a unique learning experience for these students unlike any other in the state, said Thoron.

“[Students] will have an authentic learning experience in the classroom as well as to share their knowledge with visitors. Large events such as the Agronomy Fall Festival give students the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom as well as to share their passion with visitors. The farm has hosted both local high school and international visitors. High school students participating in the Gainesville Summer Service Project, part of the UF Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership and Sustainability program (YELS), spent time working on the farm as a service project. The YELS summer program gives college bound high school students the opportunity to live, work, eat and play on the UF campus for five weeks each summer while learning about entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship, being inspired to solve social problems, and practicing sustainability. The farm hosted and helped organize a weeklong trip visiting various venues of agricultural interest throughout Florida for students from the Universidad Nacional de Agricultura in Honduras, said Dampier. “This is not just a UF resource,” said Dampier. “We’re here to provide services to the community as well.” To learn more about the Agronomy Teaching Farm visit http://agronomy.ifas.ufl.edu/teachingfarm/.

The initial goals are to meet the needs of current agronomy department courses, expand to meet the needs of the diverse departments across the University of Florida campus, participate in campus and community outreach, and improve the infrastructure of the facility, said Judy Dampier. Agrionomy Department biologist who, along with Diane Rowland, coordinates activities at the farm.

On site, the farm offers 3-4 acres of farm plots, a smart classroom, conference room and lab room. “The idea would be to have a class able to go out, collect samples and return to the lab,” said Dampier.

The farm supports 12 undergraduate and two graduate courses, ranging from tropical plant production and plant breeding to soil physics and curriculum and program planning. The farm is also home to a family of sandhill cranes and a hawk that nests and hunts nearby, said Dampier.

Each instructor that uses the farm is assigned a specific plot for his or her course. The remaining empty plots are filled with as many different crops as possible, said Dampier. Crops such as sesame and millet are planted for their rarity in Florida. Corn, cotton and peanuts are planted to show the diversity of agronomic crops grown in Florida. The farm also features a tropical nursery, fertilizer trial and plant breeding studies. The Agronomy Teaching Farm participates in the United States Department of Agriculture Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey (CAPS), a national agricultural program conducting surveillance, detection and monitoring of exotic plant pests of agricultural and natural plant resources and biological control agents. According to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website, the survey targets include plant diseases, weeds, nematodes and other invertebrate organisms.

Classes Currently Utilizing the Agronomy Teaching Farm

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<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEC 4504</td>
<td>Curriculum &amp; Program Planning for Agricultural Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGR 3501</td>
<td>Environment, Food and Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGR 4212</td>
<td>Alternative Cropping Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>AGR 4214C</td>
<td>Applied Field Crop Production</td>
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<td>AGR 4231</td>
<td>Forage Science and Range Management</td>
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<td>Plant Breeding</td>
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<td>Physiology of Agronomic Plants</td>
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<td>Plants that Feed the World</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Principles of Plant Science</td>
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<td>PLS 6655</td>
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<td>Soil Physics</td>
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<td>SWS 4932</td>
<td>Urban Soil and Water Systems</td>
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The Agronomy Teaching Farm hosts 12 undergraduate and two graduate courses, as well as getting students and the community involved with agriculture. Photos courtesy of Judy Dampier.

Thoron also hopes to teach AEC 4228 Laboratory Practices in Teaching Agri-cultural Education at the farm to help students learn what it takes as an instructor to manage student projects and class laboratories.

The farm also hosts many student club activities and outreach events. Events such as the Agronomy Fall Festival give students the opportunity to learn outside of the classroom as well as to share their passion with visitors. The farm has hosted both local high school and international visitors. High school students participating in the Gainesville Summer Service Project, part of the UF Young Entrepreneurs for Leadership and Sustainability program (YELS), spent time working on the farm as a service project. The YELS summer program gives college bound high school students the opportunity to live, work,
AEC Student Experiences West Africa Agriculture Firsthand

BY SYDNEY STONE

An agricultural education and communication senior worked with the Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in Africa as part of an international experience.

Nicole Liles was chosen as one of six students across the nation to travel to Burkina Faso in West Africa. The Global Outreach: Africa program is an experience provided by the National FFA Organization and sponsored by the Howard G. Buffett Foundation. The GO: Africa program is an opportunity offered only to college students who are members of Collegiate FFA or who hold an alumni membership with the National FFA Organization, said Liles.

"Thankful, humbled and motivated. These three words describe my feelings as I think about my experience in Burkina Faso," Liles said.

Liles saw multiple perspectives of foreign aid and was personally impacted in a positive way by CRS.

"I learned of the hardships, as well as the positive impacts, of foreign aid administration through the gracious staff of CRS," Liles said. "Because of these eye-opening experiences, I am motivated to take what I have learned and share it." For two weeks the team of six worked with CRS in the agricultural division, and learned and worked within the agriculture and natural resources sectors in the country. CRS is a mission-based group headquartered in Baltimore and not only deals with agriculture, but also healthcare, relocation and other needs internationally.

"As the future of Burkina Faso lies on the horizon, these values of community, openness and generosity are advantages in progress toward a sustainable lifestyle," Liles said. "Because no matter the challenges they face, the people will always have each other." The opportunity to travel and see how other countries produce their food is one she could not pass up, said Liles.

"One word: GO! I would say if you’re thinking about it, do it. And then be prepared for your life to change," said Liles. "College may be the only time in your life when you have the freedom to take off and explore, so why not?"

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"Financial planning is a lot of math and technical things, and, as a result, if you don’t practice, then you won’t know it for the CFP exam," Gutter said.

David Melnyk, a finance senior, said his major courses are more focused on corporate finance and the certificate gives him a chance to learn personal finance.

"I’d like to become a financial adviser and be able to get to know my clients," said Melnyk. "The certificate steers me academically toward my career."

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The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences now offers a graduate-level and nine undergraduate-level certificates.

Certificate programs recognize students for completing a minimum of nine credits of specialized study with minimum grades of C or S in each course. Certificates may include additional experience including internships and international exchange. Both degree-seeking and non-degree-seeking students may pursue certificates at the University of Florida.

"Each of the certificatesspecific learning outcomes," said CALS Interim Dean Elaine Turner.

Personal and Family Financial Planning is one of the newest certificate programs offered to undergraduate students. According to the UF Undergraduate Catalog, this certificate "requires 18 credits and addresses the Certified Financial Planner (CFP) Board of Standards education requirement for the certification examination, including insurance, personal investing, retirement planning, tax planning, behavioral finance and financial planning practice management.

The courses for this certificate give students a basis in finances that they will be able to utilize both now and in the future, said Michael Gutter, Ph.D., family, youth and community sciences associate professor and primary faculty adviser of the certificate.

One of the required courses, FYC 4001, Family Financial Management, provides an overview of family financial planning including an introduction to time value of money, financial goals based on family values, budgeting, credit, insurance, investments, estate planning, taxes and transfer of assets, according to the UF Undergraduate Catalog.

"I think this certificate is a very practical option for students, no matter what their major," said Turner, "because ultimately we all have financial decisions to make."

Gutter teaches students through a combination of lecture, self-learning, problem sets, readings and case studies to prepare them for the certification exam.

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For graduate certificates visit http://catalog.ufl.edu/graduate-certificates-list.
CRYSTAL KELTS SNODGRASS
BSA ‘03 Entomology and Nematology
Like many students, Snodgrass’ initial aspiration was to attend medical school; however, an internship with Bayer CropScience opened her eyes to a whole new world.
Snodgrass began her role as the Manatee County Vegetable Extension Agent in 2008. As a result of her work, Manatee County growers have reduced fertilizer rates by an average of 80 lb/acre, resulting in total savings of more than $1.1 million and a reduction of approximately 1.6 million pounds of nitrogen fertilizer applied in the environment.
Snodgrass resides with her husband John in Wimauma and was nominated by Monica Ozores-Hampton, Ph.D.

KELLY PADGETT MOSLEY
BSA ‘04 Agricultural Education and Communication
Raised on a 5th generation family farm, Mosley has been an ambassador for agriculture her whole life. While pursuing her bachelor’s degree at UF, Mosley served as a CALS Ambassador, Block and Bridle President, and Gator Collegete Women Vice President.
After graduating, Mosley began working for the Clay County School District where she has served as career and technical education specialist since 2008. She organized and implemented the Clay County Agriscience College and Career Fair to expose students to college and career opportunities.
Mosley resides in Green Cove Springs with her husband and daughter. She was nominated by Bridget Carlisle.

ANDY ANDREASEN
BSA ’74 Animal Science
MAG ’82 Ag and Extension Education
Numerous panhandle farmers and ranchers credit the success of their operations to Andy Andreasen. He received his training at UF and began working for Extension in 1983. Andreasen had a distinguished career in both Jackson and Washington counties, establishing the Northwest Florida Beef Production Conference and pioneering the UF/IFAS Beef Cattle Reproduction Management Schools. He is passionate about working with youth and coached numerous livestock and meats judging teams, giving young people the life skills they need to pursue careers in agriculture, veterinary medicine, human medicine and law.
Following retirement in 2012, Andreasen returned to his 98-year-old family farm to carry on a cow-calf operation, enjoy nature and do a little fishing. He resides in Marianna with his wife Jenny and was nominated by Shepard D. Eubanks.

ARLEN N. JUMPER
BSA ’53 Animal Husbandry and Horticulture
MAG ’58
Attending UF on a football scholarship, Arlen Jumper received his bachelor’s degree in 1953. After spending three years in the U.S. Navy, he returned and received his master’s degree in 1958. Jumper has been a leader in Florida agriculture for more than 50 years, having worked in the citrus, peach, timber, pasture and sod industries in Marion, Alachua, Lake, Polk, Orange, Martin and Palm Beach counties. He has been a major cooperator with IFAS in testing new varieties of grasses as well as new materials and methods for control of insects, weeds and diseases. Jumper has been instrumental in providing funds for research in turf through serving as director of Florida Turf Grass and Florida Sod Growers Co-op, both major contributors to IFAS Research.
Jumper was inducted into the Florida Agricultural Hall of Fame in 2003. He resides in Ft. McCoy with his wife Celete and was nominated by T. Richard Barber, Jr.