

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

CALS Connection

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Changing
the Face of
Conservation

Bringing Ag to
Local Classrooms

Students Create
Solutions for
Feeding the World

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For the Gator Good



You may have seen this catch-phrase on a billboard while you were driving on I-75 or as part of a commercial during a football or basketball game. When you read it, or hear it, what does it mean to you?

For me, “For the Gator Good”

means working together for something bigger than each of us individually. It means challenging ourselves to tackle issues that have meaning beyond the classroom and beyond the campus.

In this issue of *CALS Connection*, you will read about students and alumni who are working for the Gator Good. An important focus of our efforts this year has been food security – both at a local and global level. This is in keeping with themes from UF’s 2014-2015 Common Reading Program selection *The Good Food Revolution* by Will Allen with Charles Wilson, and from the larger initiatives at every land-grant campus around the country to address issues

related to global population growth and its impact on agriculture, natural resources, health, economies and society.

You will read about efforts to engage UF students and local elementary children with agriculture. You will also learn about efforts to address hunger, both locally and globally. I’m proud to report that the 25,272 meals packaged by CALS students in partnership with Stop Hunger Now have made their way to South Sudan.

Meeting local and global challenges requires commitment and teamwork, and it also requires leadership. An ongoing theme for CALS is providing opportunities for our students to develop the leadership skills they will need to effect future change. Two of these efforts, the CALS Leadership Institute and the Challenge 2050 Global Leadership and Change certificate program are also highlighted in this issue.

What are you doing, For the Gator Good? We invite you to share your stories with us at www.cals.ufl.edu/sharemystory. Together, our impact is greater.

R. Elaine Turner
Dean

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Students Create Solutions for Feeding the World

BY TAHLIA POLLITT

// I am never going to use this stuff” - the age old line muttered by college students across the nation in reference to their coursework.

The University of Florida’s College of Agricultural and Life Sciences is putting that phrase to bed with the development of its Challenge 2050 Project. The project is focused on addressing the challenges associated with a global population projected to exceed 9.6 billion by the year 2050.

“To address these issues, we need help. We understand that, as faculty, we are only so smart, but we have these amazing students,” Challenge 2050 academic coordinator Tony Andenoro, Ph.D., said. “These students are so smart, and they’re not biased by all of the barriers that have been created with years of cynical practice and policy-making and all those other influences.”

Challenge 2050 takes an innovative approach to teaching, in which students are asked to explore and propose their own solutions to these global problems. With discussion-based learning, students are encouraged to think in terms of health, environmental, economic, social and food systems, Andenoro said.

“Not only was the discussion part different from the typical ‘memorize and repeat,’ but it also explored a variety of subjects and systems,” past Challenge 2050 student Ana Fraisse said. “It challenges students to use different skills, writing, presenting and coming up with their own step-by-step plan for solving real-world problems.”

The program is currently offering an undergraduate Global Leadership and Change certificate, which consists of four courses. Challenge 2050 provides students with opportunities ranging from professional internships to undergraduate research projects, Andenoro said.

// ...As faculty, we are only so smart, but we have all these amazing students. //

The Challenge 2050 Project has received support from the community beyond just the university. The project brings together policymakers, industry professionals and university professors to share their experiences and to collaborate with students. At the conclusion of the program, students present their proposals to these professionals for review, Andenoro said.

“Not a lot of other programs have industry partners that actually come in. When they come in, we hold think tanks,” Andenoro said. “We get people from the university community and the local community to come in and talk about the issues that we’re facing revolving around Challenge 2050.”

All of those involved with Challenge 2050 will have an opportunity to share their progress and engage the public in their efforts on March 6. “One World” is an event that Challenge 2050 will host, in which students will have the opportunity to present their solutions. The event will be open to registration from the general public. Policymakers, industry professionals, undergraduate students, graduate students, extension agents, high school teachers and students from across the state, as well as university faculty, staff and professors are expected in attendance, Andenoro said.

“Our thought was - we have all these amazing innovations and solutions to the Challenge 2050 Project going on at the university,” Andenoro said. “Why aren’t we sharing these?”

For more information, visit <http://challenge2050.ifas.ufl.edu>.



Photo by Tyler Jones

CALS Program Leads to Career Success

BY TAHLIA POLLITT

UF provides students with seemingly endless opportunities for involvement outside of the classroom. For some students, choosing may be a daunting task.

Jonathan Dumas chose to take hold of the first opportunity that came his way. The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Leadership Institute was the first stepping stone that led him to a number of opportunities, and eventually his career with the United States Department of Agriculture.

“[The CALS Leadership Institute] really allowed me to identify my strengths and weaknesses and, with that, taught me not only how to lead, but also how to work with teams and work with people that had traits and characteristics that were not like my own,” Dumas said.

The CALS Leadership Institute aims to prepare students

to enter the workforce or a professional school with the skills needed to be successful in a global society, CALS LI program coordinator Natalie Coers said.

“CALS LI provides a unique opportunity for a selected group of students to grow together and individually,” Coers said. “Classroom discussions, a mentoring relationship, and an international service and learning experience build upon the dynamic, interdisciplinary connections students make throughout the program to maximize growth opportunities.”

The mentor aspect of CALS LI in particular helped to forge Dumas’ future success. The relationship he had with his mentor helped to influence further professional networking opportunities. His mentor also provided helpful guidance throughout the process of seeking and applying to internship and job

opportunities, Dumas said.

“He definitely provided me with some guidance as to how to go about applying (for internships),” Dumas said.

After his involvement with CALS LI, Dumas participated in the Loop Legislative Internship Program. This program was created by the Florida Farm Bureau Federation to help support CALS students participating in government internships at the state or federal level, Dumas said.

Through the Loop Legislative Internship Program, Dumas was able to intern with the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in Washington, D.C.

“I took my internship with APHIS very seriously, especially considering the fact that I wanted to work for the USDA following the completion of my college career,” Dumas said.

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Photo by Charlotte Emerson

“ CALS LI was my first college-wide involvement and leadership opportunity, and I think everything stemmed from that.”

CALS Students Talk Agriculture

BY ASHLEY MCLEOD



Students from the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences led an initiative to educate University of Florida peers and employees about agriculture this fall with the introduction of Feeding the Gator Good.

Feeding the Gator Good was coined after UF's For the Gator Good, a media campaign committed to making an impact in research areas including cancer treatment and ending world hunger. Feeding the Gator Good took place on Oct. 24 and served as a platform to spread awareness about agriculture and the issues that surround the industry.

Agricultural education and communication senior Clay Sapp developed the idea for the event.

"Feeding the Gator Good was created because a few peers and I saw a need for there to be a student event that engaged the University of Florida campus in critical conversations," Sapp said.

These conversations centered on the agriculture industry and what role UF plays in feeding the world, Sapp said.

A week before the event, a workshop was held for volunteers to teach them how to effectively communicate with others about agriculture.

Erin Freel, BSA '96 agricultural education and communication and owner of The Market Place, a company specializing in agricultural marketing, presented the workshop.

"It's a sad reality, but you may be the closest connection to agriculture for the students that you talk to," Freel said.

Volunteers then put what they learned into action as they talked to students on campus during the event.

"It was our mission to interactively engage students in learning and sharing about the agriculture industry," Sapp said.

More than 25 volunteers assisted with the event. They were stationed at two locations on campus. UF students and staff stopped by and entered to win a free iPad. The iPod giveaway helped to engage visitors in conversations about agriculture.

While speaking with the students and UF employees, volunteers discovered that media coverage of

the agriculture industry plays a major role in shaping public perception, Sapp said. Commercials and documentaries focused on agricultural practices were mentioned several times by students and staff throughout the day, Sapp said.

Additionally, he and some of the other volunteers worked to capture these perceptions through a survey tool. Sapp hopes to use the information to gauge perceptions that UF students have about the agriculture industry.

"This information will provide agriculturalists at the University of Florida with an idea of our strengths and weaknesses, and allow us to begin critical conversations of how we can continue to strengthen public perception," Sapp said.



Photos by Ashley McLeod

Changing the Face of Conservation

BY TAHLIA POLLITT

University of Florida students are working alongside students from four other universities across the nation to change the face of conservation.

The Doris Duke Conservation Scholars Program (DDCSP) is a collaborative program that includes the University of Florida, Cornell University, North Carolina State University, the University of Arizona and the University of Idaho. Its aim is to diversify conservation efforts. To do so, the program affords opportunities for its students to develop skills in research, field work and interpersonal communication, all while forming professional networks.

“The idea behind the program is that we want to help to diversify the conservation workforce, so that in the future we will have more people from different backgrounds working on our environmental problems

“People who want to make the world a better place, those are the kinds of students we’re looking for.”

and hopefully coming up with more creative solutions,” program director Rena Borkhataria, Ph.D., said.

DDCSP is a two year program for students with an interest in conservation. Over the course of the program, students

will participate in research projects, leadership seminars, internship experiences, and eventually conduct their own research projects.

There are currently five students in the program at each of the five partnering institutions. All of the students come together during the first summer of the program for Conservation Leadership Week, an event sponsored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This provides an opportunity for students to interact and network with their peers as well as professionals in conservation, Borkhataria said.





Photos provided by Rena Borkhataria

“It was just great to sit and talk with the other students and mentors. We were able to understand how humble they are. They are just as hard working and passionate about conservation as we are,” junior Adreenah Wynn said.

Back at their home campuses, the students are guided by their faculty mentors and graduate student mentors. They also reconvene with regular group meetings where they are able to discuss new ideas and learn new skills. For example, some of their group meetings are focused on preparing for job and graduate school applications.

Much of their hands-on experiences come during the summer. Students are provided with with paid summer research experiences with faculty at their

home university, and they are assisted in getting internships with conservation agencies during their final summer in the program, Borkhataria said.

“DDCSP has given me a hands-on experience in the environment that I may have never gotten otherwise.”

“As an aspiring environmental lawyer, DDCSP has given me hands-on experience in the environment that I may have never gotten otherwise,” junior Nadia Kemal said. “This summer, I was able to participate in many field projects and gain knowledge of other aspects of the conservation field.”

Throughout all of their experiences, an underlying emphasis is put on diversity and communication, in the hopes of preparing students to work with people very different from themselves. This aids in communicating with stakeholders and dealing with environmental issues affecting people from many different ethnic and racial origins.

“People who want to make the world a better place, those are the kinds of students we’re looking for,” Borkhataria said.

The inaugural class of students started the 2-year program in fall 2013, and they are approaching their second and final summer of the program in 2015. The hope is to bring on four to five new students every year at each of the partnering institutions.

Bringing Ag to Local Classrooms

BY ASHLEY MCLEOD



Photos provided by Deanna Bayo

A group of students from UF's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences are reaching out to youth in the community with a farm to school program.

Members of the Organic and Sustainable Agriculture Club began volunteering at Gainesville's Joseph Williams Elementary School in fall 2013. They teach lessons dealing with sustainability, gardening and the basics of plant science, according to event coordinator Deanna Bayo.

The program began at Williams when a teacher expressed interest in including lessons involving sustainability, gardening and basic plant science to a parent of one of her students.

That parent happened to be Xin Zhao, Ph.D., UF horticultural sciences associate professor and OSAC faculty adviser.

"Williams Elementary had a gardening project already, so it was really a coincidence how it happened," Zhao said.

"I would really like to see us expand this to other schools."

As a horticultural science student, Bayo became involved in OSAC and quickly became the club's liaison to the elementary school.

Last year, the program was focused on the second grade classes at the school. Students

participated in educational activities, including learning stations, a farm field trip and food tasting, Bayo said.

"We really want to teach kids about where their food comes from and that it is possible for them to grow it themselves in their backyards," said OSAC president Kristin Balko.

In the learning stations, the students transplanted vegetable plants and participated in activities that taught them more about plant life cycles and composting.

For the food tasting, OSAC volunteers brought different agriculture products for the students to taste test. The students were able to enjoy the taste testing

while simultaneously learning about nutrition.

“One of the students shared that he had never eaten fresh tomatoes until then,” Zhao said.

Zhao advises OSAC’s volunteers who work with the elementary students on how to keep the lesson plans interesting to the children.

“I offered my input to keep lesson plans informative, while also keeping the younger people engaged in what they were learning,” Zhao said.

OSAC’s 12 volunteers go to the elementary school every three weeks to teach six different

second grade classes. However, this year they are in need of more volunteers, so they can expand to more classes.

“I would really like to see us expand this to other schools,” Balko said. “We just need more people who are willing to dedicate their time.”

Zhao said in addition to the abundance of benefits that this program offers to the elementary students, volunteers of the program experience many opportunities as well.

“Students in college can apply what they are learning and use it to educate the younger

generation,” Zhao said. “These club members have opportunities to develop professionally and become involved in community outreach.”

The club’s mission is to spread the knowledge and practices of organic and sustainable farming, plant and animal agriculture included. They aim to bridge the gap between farmer and consumer by educating the community on agricultural practices that will promote sustainability.

OSAC is accomplishing this goal as they educate future consumers at Joseph Williams Elementary School.



CALS Program Leads to Career Success cont. from page 4



Photo provided by Jonathan Dumas

His involvement with the Loop Legislative Internship Program proved to be another opportunity to develop personal skills and expand professional

networks while building lasting relationships, Dumas said.

Following his internship with APHIS, Dumas took part in a number of other internship and extracurricular activities, including the CALS Ambassador program, before graduating from UF with a bachelor’s degree in animal sciences. After completing his master’s degree at The Pennsylvania State University, Dumas accepted a job with one of the same organizations that he interned for as a student, USDA APHIS.

“CALS LI was my first college-wide involvement and leadership opportunity, and I think everything stemmed from that,” Dumas said.

Every day, CALS students are learning and growing through the opportunities the college provides for them. For Dumas, it all started with the CALS Leadership Institute.

For more information on the CALS Leadership Institute, visit <http://cals.ufl.edu/students/leadership-institute.php>.

— 2014 Award of Distinction —

Erny Sellers

BSA '59



Throughout his long and distinguished legal career, Ernest A. Sellers has never forgotten his UF roots and has made a personal commitment to give back to IFAS and the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. Sellers received his Juris Doctor in 1967 and has practiced agricultural law, litigation, real estate, products liability, crop damage and seed law in Live Oak ever since.

In addition to financial support of UF, IFAS and CALS, Sellers has given back through time and service. His nominator, Michael Olexa, Ph.D., J.D., noted that Sellers has regularly lectured before his undergraduate law classes offered through the Center for Agricultural and Natural Resource Law for the past 21 years culminating in hundreds of hours of preparation and lecture. Sellers has served on the IFAS Development Office's SHARE Council since 2003 and was recognized with its Volunteer of the Year award in 2012.

In addition to his service to UF, IFAS and CALS, Sellers has been active in his local Gator Club and volunteers for his local church, Suwannee County Hospital, Suwannee County Chamber of Commerce and Suwannee County Fair Association, among others.

He resides in Live Oak with his wife Norma.

Roger West

BSA '68, MS '70 Animal Sciences



Roger West, Ph.D., is a true IFAS Gator – by birth, education and occupation. Through a long and distinguished faculty career in the Department of Animal Sciences, West has influenced many students who now hold prominent positions in industry, government and academia. As a faculty member, West contributed new understanding of meat product safety and methods to reduce foodborne illnesses and served as department chair from 1985 through 1988. He retired in 2002.

West has served the industry through National Cattlemen's Beef Association, Cattlemen's Beef Board, Florida Cattlemen's Association and Florida Beef Council offices, and through volunteer roles with Florida Farm Bureau. In each of these capacities, West has been a staunch supporter of the land-grant ideals and the importance of each of IFAS' three mission areas -- teaching, research and Extension.

West continues to support animal sciences through donations of time and talent to meat and livestock judging teams and the Beef Teaching Unit. He has been a strong supporter of Block and Bridle, Gator Collegiate CattleWomen, and 4-H and FFA animal sciences programming.

West resides in Gainesville with his wife Ellen and was nominated by Geoff Dahl, Ph.D.

— 2014 Horizon Award —

Flint Johns

BSA '04 Food and Resource Economics
MAB '06



A native Floridian, Flint Johns received his associate's degree before transferring to UF in 2002. Throughout college, he worked part-time in construction and stayed active in the rodeo circuit. He met his wife Stephanie at an Agricultural Communicators and Leaders of Tomorrow meeting on his very first day at UF. Together, they reside in Okeechobee with their daughter and son.

Johns began working for Lykes Bros. Inc., the 4th largest US cow-calf operation, as a special projects coordinator immediately after graduation and was promoted to ranch manager in 2011. As ranch manager, he is responsible for cattle, farming and equipment operations.

Johns has demonstrated great leadership in the agriculture industry. He serves as the chairman of the Florida Cattlemen's Association's Animal Health and Inspection Committee, vice chairman of Florida Heritage Beef, LLC, and secretary of the Highlands County Cattlemen's Association. Johns has served as a guest speaker and tour host for numerous college and departmental activities and has served on advisory and planning committees for several UF/IFAS Extension programs and the UF/IFAS Everglades Research and Education Center. Johns also makes lasting contributions to his community through church, the St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and Relay for Life.

He was nominated by Travis Brown.

Luis Martinez

BSA '05, MS '07 Food Science and Human
Nutrition



Originally from Riobamba, Ecuador, Luis Martinez moved to the U.S. to attend UF in 2003. He served as a CALS Ambassador, an AGR Fraternity member and co-founder of the Ecuadorian Student Association. During graduate school, Martinez invented a coffee processing technology to enhance the flavor and aroma of coffee. This technology is currently being used by Coffee Primero, LLC.

Upon graduation, Martinez took a food scientist position at Darifair Foods where he was responsible for product development and corporate programs for 28 manufacturing plants. He spent two years as a food scientist for Coca-Cola in the Global Juice Innovation Center where he developed unique beverage products currently offered at McDonald's. Martinez returned to Darifair Foods in 2013 as a product innovation and quality manager responsible for 52 manufacturing plants.

Martinez was the 2013-2014 chair for the Florida Section of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT). During his term he nearly doubled the scholarship allotment to support undergraduate and graduate students, increased funding for student/alumni events, and implemented industry sponsorship opportunities to help cover the cost of student attendance at meetings.

Martinez lives in Jacksonville with his wife Marisabel and his 6-year-old son Luis Alejandro. He was nominated by Gillian Dagan, Ph.D.

Developing Students, Changing the World

BY CATHY CARR

This fall, the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences hosted three Solutions Seminars focused on the themes of global awareness, hunger and poverty.

Solutions Seminars are a series of student development programs that the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences offers to its undergraduate and graduate students. These events help students to develop both leadership and life skills, making them more effective as both college students and alumni.

“We chose these themes for fall because they relate so closely to the 2014 University of Florida Common Reading Book, *The Good Food Revolution*,” said Charlotte Emerson, director of student development and recruitment for CALS. “All of our students can benefit by increasing their global awareness and understanding of the complexities of hunger and poverty.”

Students from First Year Florida and other campus groups were invited to participate in Solutions Seminars this fall.

The first Solutions Seminar, held in September, focused on the

idea of community being more than just the town you live in.

“My portion of this event was helping students understand that we have a connection to people at all levels,” said Levy Randolph, student development graduate assistant for CALS. “We have the power to make an impact, be it in our state, our country or even sometimes across the world. When we make those impacts, we may be impacting one area, but it could take away from the impact that we could have in another area.”

Students walked away from this event with the knowledge of how they can impact the world by starting locally, said Rachel Morgan, agricultural education and communication senior. Morgan was encouraged that she could make a big difference by starting locally.

The second Solutions Seminar, held in October, focused on poverty in all aspects, including food, financial, access to housing, clothing and Internet. Randolph helped facilitate a poverty banquet for the 125 students who attended the event.

“My hope is that students comprehend poverty and what it means to be impoverished on a global scale,” Randolph said. “We wanted to make sure students understand that poverty exists right here in Gainesville.”

During the day-long November Solutions Seminar, students as well as CALS faculty and staff had the opportunity to package meals for Stop Hunger Now, an organization that distributes food and life-saving aid to vulnerable families around the world. More than 100 volunteers packaged more than 25,000 meals which were sent to South Sudan in December.

“Solutions Seminars are a great way for students to better understand how they can make an impact and use their skills and talents,” said Randolph. “They serve as an opportunity to have a discussion about issues at hand, professional development and scholastic aspirations.”

CALS hosts five Solutions Seminars each academic year. To learn more, visit <http://cals.ufl.edu/students/solutions-seminars.php>.



Photos by Tyler Jones