College of Agriculture Takes Discussion Meet by Storm

Students and staff from the College of Agriculture took top honors recently at the California Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting, and one student went on to win the national title. In December, College of Agriculture Outreach Coordinator Shannon Douglass took a seven-member team to compete in the Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet in Sparks, Nevada. The students competed in discussions about everything from water rights to the perception of the family farm.

The CSU, Chico team, consisting of Grace Berryhill, Callie Borror, Sam Cooley, Garrett Driver, Sarah Hubbard, Jolene Monon, and Jenny Williams, walked away as the 2007 State Champion Collegiate Discussion Meet Team. Additionally, Shannon Douglass won the open competition for members 18-35 years old, and Grace Berryhill placed first in the Collegiate Discussion Meet. After winning at the state level, both Douglass and Berryhill had the opportunity to compete at the national level.

Berryhill competed against approximately 30 other state champions at the American Farm Bureau Federation Discussion Meet in Baltimore and walked away as the national champion. “I did not really know what to expect from the competition, but I knew that I wanted to do well, so I worked accordingly,” said Berryhill.

When Berryhill is not practicing and competing in discussion meets, she is busy at school as an agricultural education and animal science double major with a minor in Spanish. Berryhill concluded, “I am thankful for the support of the College of Agriculture faculty and staff, specifically Shannon Douglass and the students who were on the state discussion meet team.”

Chico State Walnuts Go Gourmet

The College of Agriculture took a step into the gourmet cooking-oil market this year with the first press of Chico State Walnut Oil. The specialty oil is usually a product of France, but with the help of local walnut-oil maker Rick Cinquini, the college was able to produce a trial batch of the delicate, nutty oil using nuts grown on the Chico State farm.

The effort to press walnut oil was the initiative of Dean Jennifer Ryder Fox and CSU, Chico President Paul Zingg. “We were looking for a high-end specialty product that would be unique to Chico State,” explained Dr. Fox.

When Chico farmer Rick Cinquini offered Dr. Fox a tour of Cinquini Farms, where he presses walnut oil in addition to olive and almond oils, Fox knew she had found a niche. “Since we already have a strong walnut program, and with the growing interest in heart-healthy oils, walnut oil was a logical step for our college to take,” Fox said.

Before walnut oil could be bottled for sale, the college first had to see if it could even be made. Using 300 pounds of walnut meats from the November harvest. Cinquini Farms first ground the meats and competing in discussion meets, approximately 30 other state champions at the American Farm Bureau Federation Discussion Meet in Sparks, Nevada. The students competed in discussions about everything from water rights to the perception of the family farm.

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Before walnut oil could be bottled for sale, the college first had to see if it could even be made. Using 300 pounds of walnut meats from the November 2007 harvest, the college was able to produce approximately 45 liters of oil. Staff from the University Farm bottled the oil by hand, then applied a label that was designed by CSU, Chico’s creative director, Alan Rellaford.

Limited edition bottles were auctioned at alumni events during the spring semester, bringing in $420 at the Red Bluff Alumni Reunion and $150 at the Colusa Alumni Breakfast. Since so few bottles were produced during the trial run, Chico State Walnut Oil is not currently available for sale. Dr. Fox has asked Agriculture Business students in the College of Agriculture to analyze the economics of producing walnut oil versus selling the raw nuts to determine if it is economically feasible. “If the financial benefit to the college is apparent, we hope to be able to add Chico State Walnut Oil to our retail product line in coming years,” Fox said.

How was Chico State Walnut Oil Made? University Farm staff set aside 300 pounds of walnut meats from the November harvest. Cinquini Farms first ground the meat into a thick paste, then spread it over round cylinders fitted with a rope mesh. The cylinders were stacked onto a mechanical press, which slowly squeezed together until the oil was extracted from the meats and ran into a five-gallon drum.

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Walnut oil’s nutty flavor is delicious in salad dressings, tossed with cooked pasta, or brushed on steak or fish after it is cooked. It can also be used for baking or cooking, although the flavor of the oil changes slightly when heated. Since walnut oil is not as stable as some other oils, it should be stored in the refrigerator to prevent rancidity.
“Food for Thought”

...From the Dean's Desk

No doubt you’ve heard about the budget cuts looming for the State of California, and CSU, Chico is no exception. Each college and division in the University has been asked to look at budget reduction scenarios from 2.5 percent to 7.5 percent. While it will be many months before the true impact will be apparent, we expect that reductions of any magnitude will be painful in the College of Agriculture, given our already lean operating budget. Staff and faculty searches that we had counted on to help us grow our college may have to be put on hold, and we are all looking at ways to cut costs throughout the college.

The financial situation was not helped by the storm on January 4 that affected so many in our industry in the north state. We lost approximately 20 percent of our almond orchard, which will have to absorb our revenue stream for several years and has created an increased workload for farm staff as they work to clean out and replace downed trees.

Despite the gloomy budget picture, I’m confident in the ability of our faculty and staff to continue to deliver relevant, integrated, active learning experiences for our students. Within the past year, Chico State students have taken top honors in no fewer than four state and national competitions. From the Western Marketing competition last spring where our teams swept first place in both the domestic and export divisions, to the successes of the entire Young Farmer’s and Raider’s Discussion Meet team (see page 3), to our recent achievement at the California Association of Meat Processors meeting where the Chico State team placed first and swept the top three individual honors—Chico State ag students are making a mark around the state and across the country. It is the diligence and hard work of our faculty and staff that allows our students to demonstrate such excellence. So despite these tough budget times in which we will have to make some hard sacrifices, there is no doubt in my mind that the College of Agriculture will weather the storm as we always have—with confidence that our work, our mission, and our students matter. We will need your help more than ever, so I hope you believe these things matter, too. I look forward to meeting more of you in my travels, and please feel free to drop me a line any time at jrfox@csuchico.edu.

Until next time...

Jennifer Ryder Fox

College of Agriculture Partners with Elanco Animal Health

Elanco Animal Health recently partnered with the College of Agriculture to diversify their candidate pool and help students find jobs. Elanco Animal Health is a global research-based company that develops and markets products to improve the health and production of animals in more than 100 countries. Each fall the company visits California State University, Chico to interview qualified candidates for summer internships.

Additionally, each year Elanco Animal Health invites faculty to attend a retreat on Diversity in the Workplace, at their worldwide headquarters in Greenfield, Indiana. The objectives of the retreat include understanding what barriers are presented in the recruiting, interviewing, and retention process; identifying ways to increase the recruitment brand, interact with students and make their presence known, and utilize technology to reach students; and implementing those same tactics. Celia Johnson, who attended the retreat in 2006, said, “They know that students gain many skills and knowledge by attending college, and that the company is looking for and can better teach those characteristics to their employees.”

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About with 90 graduates from the College of Agriculture each year, there is a great deal of emerging talent ready to find employment in the agriculture industry. By partnering with Elanco Animal Health, faculty from the College of Agriculture have a better understanding of the characteristics that the company is looking for and can better teach those characteristics to their students.
In the 12 years Dr. Lee Altier has worked in the College of Agriculture at CSU, Chico, he has continued to raise the bar and challenge colleagues and students alike to expand their perspectives on global issues. Professor of Plant Science, Altier has taken a group of students to study in Thailand for the past three summers. It had been a three-week course focusing on resource management and ecology found in some of Thailand’s most rural areas, and is now expanding to a six-week program.

Dr. Altier is working in conjunction with Dr. Tony Waters, sociology professor, and Dr. Rob Burton, English professor, on campus. The goal of the collaboration is to create a theme section that will not only allow students to engage in the global experience of a lifetime but complete an entire theme requirement as well. “Each year the number of Chico students interested has increased, as well as the number of students from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma who we meet up with in Thailand,” Altier said.

While the rigor of daily life, hygiene, and demands of trekking to remote villages can be taxing on students early on, the life lessons and opportunity to gain a new perspective are priceless. Kristina DeMoulin, a senior kinesiology major and exercise science minor said, “It was a wonderful experience, and I wish it would have lasted longer. It’s great to be surrounded by Thai culture or any other non-American culture at that, because you realize that, because you realize there are other ways of living a fulfilling life.”

Altier is no stranger to the physical demands of life abroad, having spent two years in the Peace Corps in Nepal. “The pace of life has picked up since my first visit to Nepal 12 years ago, there is running water and electricity,” Altier stated, “and the community is now turning towards utilizing market agriculture.”

Altier is working with Burton and Waters to allocate the budget, logistics, and transportation for the trip in summer of 2008.
Let your former classmates know what you’ve been up to!

Your Information »
- Year you graduated
- Your major
- What you do, and where you live
- Your e-mail address

Send To »
California State University, Chico College of Agriculture
Plumas 317 CSU, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0440

Call, fax, or e-mail us at »
Tel: 530-898-5844
Fax: 530-898-5845
E-mail: sdeforest@csuchico.edu

To the right is a list of alumni we’ve heard from recently. If you would like to be included in the next newsletter, let us know!

Where Are They Now?

2006
Randee Prada
Ag Teacher, Turlock High School
rprada@turlock.k12.ca.us

2004
Nate Bisio
Walco International Inc.
Purchasing and Marketing
Aoste.bisio@walcointl.com

Adam Davy
Bar & Ale, Sales
9775 Red Bank Rd.
Red Bluff, CA 96080

Megan Huber
California Cattlemen’s Association
megan@calcattlemen.org

2002
Josh Davy
UCCE Farm Advisor
JDavy@ucdavis.edu

Breanna Owens
Environmental Consulting
Gallaway Consulting
bre.owens@yahoo.com

1970
John Jackson
Yolo County HazMat Specialist
jjcjack@wild!love.net

1968
Bruce Fraser
Fraser Farm
fraserfarm@hotmail.com

1966
Bill McMorran
Farmers Equipment Co., Sales
billmcmorr@verizon.net

In Memoriam

Jack Nolan 1920–2007
Mr. Nolan served as a teacher, advisor, and mentor in the agriculture department from 1958 to 1980. He was inducted into the College of Agriculture Hall of Honor shortly before his death.

Dr. Mel George Named 2008 Distinguished Alumnus

Dr. Mel George

In 30 years as Range Management Specialist for the UC Davis Cooperative Extension, the College of Agriculture’s 2008 Distinguished Alumnus has earned countless awards and certificates; consulted in Morocco, Tunisia, China, and Albania; published more than 80 refereed research publications or journal articles; and led efforts throughout the country in grazing and watershed management. And the road to his laudable career began with a range management course at CSU, Chico.

Mel George grew up in nearby Gridley and became the first in his family to attend college, pursuing a degree in agriculture. It wasn’t until the beginning of his senior year when George took the Principles of Range Management course that would determine his future career. The instructor, Roy Miller encouraged him to look into graduate school and helped George to obtain an assistantship in the graduate program at Texas Tech. After receiving his master’s degree, then serving two years in the Army, George went on to earn a PhD at Utah State University. In 1978 he accepted the position of cooperative extension rangeland management specialist at UC Davis, and he’s been there ever since.

During his 30-year career with UC Davis, George has transformed the range extension program from one focused on agronomic improvements on rangelands to a broader focus on issues of ranch management and environmental quality. He has helped ranchers increase profitability through grazing practices, and led efforts statewide that enable landowners to proactively address water quality issues on their property.

Mel George was named Outstanding Alumnus at Utah State University in 2000 and received the prestigious James H. Meyer Distinguished Achievement Award at UC Davis in 2007. Despite all that he has accomplished in his career, it wasn’t until he began to receive such awards that he grasped what an impact his work has had. “That’s when I realized that other people thought I’d done a lot of cool things,” George recalled. “Up until then, I’d just been working.”

With friends and family in attendance, Mel George accepted the 2008 College of Agriculture Distinguished Alumnus Award at a dinner on April 25 in the Bell Memorial Union.

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