Greetings!

Fall semester flew by, and we’ve already got a good start into spring semester. As you will see, there continues to be much that occurs within AERS. A special shout out to our students who competed very successfully in the case study competition at the Food Distribution Research Society conference held in Philadelphia during October. Third place! beating out teams from such distinguished programs as Colorado State University and the University of Kentucky. Congrats to those students and their advisor, Dr. Aaron Johnson!

Spring semester will be very busy and generate much change in the department. We wish the best to Dean John Foltz as he moves on to a new position as Special Assistant to the President for Agricultural Initiatives, and we welcome our new Dean Michael Parella formerly of UC Davis. Also happening this semester is a search for 3 new faculty – in the economics of crops, dairy/livestock and natural resources – and an area extension educator. It is an incredibly exciting, and busy, time in the department!

Thank you all for your continued support of AERS. Please enjoy reading the newsletter, and I wish you all the best,

Cathy
**AERS STUDENTS WIN AT FDRS FOOD MARKETING CHALLENGE**

This October five AERS students won third place in the Food Distribution Research Society (FDRS) Student Food Marketing Challenge. Students Cody Cook, Laura Griffing, Travis Chase, Brett Wilder and Logan Zepp traveled to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to compete in the FDRS Food Marketing Challenge. The marketing contest required students to apply their agribusiness knowledge to a live business case presented by a company executive on the day of the contest.

This year’s partnering company was The Mushroom Council and To-Jo Mushrooms, Inc. The Mushroom Council is an industry trade group that plays a key role in national promotion of fresh mushrooms. To-Jo Mushrooms is a family owned and operated grower and shipper of fresh and prepared mushrooms based in Avondale, Pennsylvania. Bart Minor, President and CEO of the Mushroom Council, and Kevin Delaney and Tony D’Amico, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, and President, respectively, of To-Jo Mushrooms, Inc., presented the case and judged the final presentations.

Nine university teams comprised of more than 50 undergraduate and graduate students competed. University of Idaho won third place beating out teams from Colorado, California and Kentucky. Top four teams were awarded plaques and cash prizes.

Dawn Thilmany, President of the Food Distribution Research Society said, "It was so valuable to have these key industry players at the competition for the students to interact with… bringing lessons they have learned in the classroom to life. The caliber of students we saw present gave us great excitement about the future leaders of the food industry.”

The FDRS Student Food Marketing Challenge team was coached by Dr. Aaron Johnson.

The Conley Fund, CALS Academic Program, and companies that participated in the Capstone Course projects provided funding for the team’s travel expenses.

Congratulations to Dr. Johnson and team members for representing the University of Idaho so well!

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**AYLA NEUMEYER INTERNS WITH NORTHWEST FARM CREDIT SERVICES**

This summer, Ayla interned with Norwest Farm Credit Services. She had a unique experience because she interned in their headquarters in Spokane as well as their Nampa Branch. While in Spokane, she worked in Marketing and Public Affairs. This was an incredible opportunity that gave her experience working with marketing and policy from a company standpoint. She was given the chance to travel to Washington D.C. for the Farm Credit Salute to Veterans event where they visited congressional offices for NWFCS’s territory to tell them about the opportunities there were for veterans pursuing agricultural occupations. She also had the opportunity to write an article for their company publication Yields learning more about the legal aspects of the company. While working in the Nampa branch, she was able to visit diverse agricultural operations and learn more about the financial aspect of agriculture. She gained an understanding of the financial industry as a whole and all the factors and risks that go into loans. Northwest Farm Credit Services gave her an excellent look at their company and opportunities to have experience in a wide variety of fields.
In November five CALS students including four AERS students attended the Agriculture Future of America (AFA) Conference. Henry Wilson, Abby Biedenbach, Emily George, Riley Merrigan and Zackary Reynolds made their way to Kansas City, Missouri for the National Agriculture Future of America Conference. Here they were joined by students from all across the country who are agriculture leaders in their communities, states and schools.

AFA was founded in 1996 and offers leadership and career development training for college students pursuing a career in an agriculture-related field.

The AFA mission statement is to create partnerships that identify, encourage and support outstanding college men and women preparing for careers in the agriculture and food industry.

They spent the week attending workshops, listening to speakers and networking with agricultural businesses and leaders from all over the country. They had opportunities to learn leadership skills such as managing time, using body language and displaying their public image. They had the endless ability to look into their future career fields and expand their horizons in many areas of agriculture.

This was a wonderful opportunity for these students, and it was a great way for the University of Idaho to get their name out to the other students and businesses in attendance. Students were sponsored by the University of Idaho and agricultural businesses to attend.

University of Idaho Extension farm management faculty offered workshops in December reviewing the outlook for Idaho agriculture. Area Extension Economist Ben Eborn, and his colleague extension educators Joel Packham, Steve Harrison, Reid Findlay, Steve Hines, Jon Hogge and Carlo Moreno put together a stellar set of speakers to inform agricultural producers, lenders and others about factors affecting Idaho agriculture now and into the near future.

Judging by the attendance and questions, the workshop was very well received. Topics discussed were diverse, and included the Idaho winter weather forecast provided by Dr. Robert Gillies from the Utah State University Climate Center – spoiler alert – the weather is forecast to be drier than normal and warmer than normal in Idaho during December though February!

The global and national economic outlook was covered in depth by Doug Robinson of Northwest Farm Credit Services. Dr. Cathy Roheim of AERS provided an update on food markets, in particular changes in the U.S. market structure of the retail and restaurant sectors, and how this is affecting agricultural producers’ production practices. Dr. Garth Taylor of AERS provided the highlights of Idaho agriculture and the outlook for 2016. Several U of I extension faculty and others – including Kelly Olsen of the Idaho Barley Commission and Rick Naerebout of the Idaho Dairyman’s Association – offered up crop and livestock specific outlooks.

The workshops were held in Fort Hall, Burley and Caldwell, Idaho. Congratulations to the team for putting together an excellent and informative series of workshops!
WHERE ARE THEY NOW: STEPHEN PARROT

Stephen Parrott graduated in 2012 with a B.S. in Agribusiness from AERS. Immediately upon graduation he joined Northwest Farm Credit Services in Ontario, Oregon. He is a relationship manager and is able to contribute to his community and also help farmers and growers. Stephen manages a portfolio of ranchers and farmers and assists them with their financial needs.

“I help ensure that they have the proper cash flow,” he said. “They invest a lot of money into that ground, so I help secure financing needs that help them operate throughout the year.”

Northwest Farm Credit Services is a customer-owned financial cooperative, which allows Stephen to get involved in his community through the local FFA and 4-H groups. He also enjoys interacting with the farmers he works with.

“They are pretty fun to work with,” Stephen said. “They always have new, big and exciting ideas. They are always more than willing to show you what they’re doing or something new that they’ve tried.”

While at UI, Stephen took advantage of as many extracurricular opportunities as he could. He was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, Ag Business club, Student Alumni Relations Board, and Associated Students of the University of Idaho, serving as president his junior year. Stephen also completed several internships including a summer interning for U.S. Sen. Jim Risch.

Stephen said faculty members, like his advisor, Professor Chris McIntosh, helped shape his time at UI. Wherever his future takes him, Stephen’s main goal will be to continue his involvement with his community.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW: SHELBIE SIGLER

Shelbie Sigler graduated with an Agribusiness degree in 2013 and immediately accepted a marketing assistant position with Hillco Technologies at Nezperce. Shelbie has many different responsibilities as marketing assistant. She visits dealerships, takes sales calls and produces marketing materials. She also helped redesign Hillco’s website—her first big project after joining the company.

Shelbie is currently working on a project that shows farmers the return on investment of Hillco products which is being met with enthusiasm.

“If they’re not going to make money off a product, then there is no real reason to buy it,” she said.

Shelbie received many hands-on opportunities at UI that prepared her for her career, including participating in the Food Distribution Research Society Student Food Marketing Challenge. She and her team traveled to San Juan, Puerto Rico.

She also enjoyed the small class sizes at UI because it gave her the opportunity to get to know her classmates and professors.

“If you get to know your professors, they will really help you out—in school and even after school,” she said. “They helped me get the job I have now, and that means a lot to me.”

Shelbie hopes to advance within Hillco, but her ultimate goals are to stay in agriculture and stay close to her husband’s family.

“I love the people in agriculture,” she said. “Working for a company that helps farmers out and helps their bottom dollar is really what it’s all about.”
WHERE ARE THEY NOW: RACHAEL ASHLEY

Rachel Ashley graduated in 2014 with a degree in Agricultural Economics. Once she graduated she took a position with FLM+, an agricultural marketing and communications agency. She found herself working mostly with other businesses and not directly with farmers and growers out in the field. This led to her decision to accept a position as a regional account specialist for Land O’Lakes crop division, WinField Solutions.

Rachael covers the West and Midwest regions, providing support to customers for their day-to-day operational needs.

“We help retail sellers and growers with everything from seed ordering to new employee training,” Rachael said.

While attending UI, Rachael participated in several internships and student groups that helped prepare her for her career. The hands-on agricultural economics courses she took helped set her apart from other in the workforce.

“My agricultural sales class was probably the most impactful class that I took because I got to practice real-life skills and not do just a paper assignment,” she said. “I talk to a lot of friends who went to bigger ag programs at Midwestern schools, and it seems like their experiences aren’t necessarily as applied as what the University of Idaho offers.”

Rachael first got involved in agriculture when she became an FFA member at her high school in Kuna. The people and culture of agriculture drew her in and now she can’t imagine a career in any other field.

“I love that I get to work directly with people who work in agriculture every day,” she said. “To be able to help those people whose blood, sweat, and tears go into their trade and their product is feeding and clothing the world is really rewarding.”

Reprinted from:
http://www.uidaho.edu/cals/aers

WHERE ARE THEY NOW: STACI LOILAND

After I graduated with my degree in Agribusiness, I worked for Lamb Weston (now ConAgra Foods Specialty Potato Products) in Hermiston, Oregon as a production supervisor. I left there after three years and moved to Meridian, Idaho where I was a sales specialist for Tru Green Chemlawn. When the company sold and my position was eliminated I spent some time in furniture sales and finally was able to move back home to Athena, Oregon and work in a call center as a customer support specialist. In 2012, my family and I made a move to south central Kansas where I am now employed by Diamond Ag Research. Learning the difference in agriculture from the Pacific Northwest to the Midwest has been a wonderful experience. I do contract research work and focus on wheat as that is where my main background is. I also work with corn, sorghum, alfalfa, soybeans and some vegetables. I am thankful for the opportunity that the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology provided for me while I was a student. I think it has been one of the main reasons that I have been able to obtain this great job.

Back row: Alan, Ember, Ric, Staci, MikealAnn
Front row: Hailey, Dena
AERS SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

Austin O’Neill
Sophomore, Agricultural Economics

AERS Alumni Scholarship

Tell a little about yourself:
I am sophomore currently studying agricultural economics with an emphasis in business and double majoring in animal veterinarian science with an emphasis in production. I am an avid outdoorsman. I am involved with several organizations including the Alpha Gamma Rho Fraternity, Food and Agribusiness Club, Student Idaho Cattle Association, Livestock Judging Club, and I am interning in the Advancement and Academic Program offices in the College of Agricultural and Life Science.

Why does earning a degree in Agricultural Economics appeal to you?
It is the most versatile degree the college offers. As well as it fits my interests in agriculture, meeting new business leaders, and becoming apart of different industries.

What are you future career goals?
To either Graduate with my bachelors degree and then a masters or move on to a career within sales of a company such as Zoetis or Purina.

How will your education at the University of Idaho help you accomplish these goals?
By giving me career ready classes, experiences that will help in the industry, as well as lessons that are directed to my interests.

Why do you love being a Vandal?
I love being a Vandal because I believe the best education and experiences happen here at the University of Idaho. I also love being a Vandal because of the sense of community given by all of the students, faculty and staff. It truly is great to be at the University of Idaho.

Kim O’Neill, Austin O’Neill

AERS ENDOWMENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Alumni Scholarship
Scholarship contributed to by alumni and friends. Supports full-time undergraduate students of any class standing seeking a degree in Agribusiness or Agricultural Economics. AERS department faculty focus awards based upon academic achievement and leadership potential.

Lindeborg Endowment
Scholarship established in honor of former AERS professor Karl Lindeborg. Awarded to at least one full-time student pursuing a degree in the AERS department. Preference is given to graduate students in Applied Economics. Selection is based on academic success and potential for success in his or her chosen field.

Turner Scholarship Endowment
Scholarship created by Raymond and Bonnie Turner. Awarded to at least one full-time student pursuing a degree in the AERS department with a minimum grade point average of 3.2. In order to qualify, students must show a financial need for the scholarship.

Described above are individual funds that have been established to support AERS activities. You can contribute any time by mailing a check payable to University of Idaho Foundation, Inc., 875 Perimeter Drive MS 443147, Moscow, ID 83844-3147. Please include to which scholarship or endowment you would like your donation designated. You may also contribute online at the UI Gift Website: www.uidaho.edu/give.

If you are interested in establishing your own scholarship or endowment, please contact Kim O’Neill at 425-359-2411 or kimoneill@uidaho.edu.
STUDENT AWARDS

Several students from our department received the UI Alumni Award for Excellence for their outstanding academic success, career and professional preparation as well as campus and community involvement. Those who received this award include: Trevor Kauer (Ag. Science, Communication, and Leadership), Anna Pratt (Agricultural Education), Heidi Jamison (Agribusiness), Katie Vandenbergh (Agricultural Economics), Ayla Neumeyer (Agribusiness), and Nate Fisher (Agricultural Economics). Congratulations!

AERS CELEBRATES THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The annual AERS potluck and ugly sweater contest was a huge success again this year. Participates in the ugly sweater contest were AERS grad-students (picture at left) L-R Cody Cook, Lauryn Ringwood, Laura Griffing and Admin Assistant Chris Darby. Faculty, staff, and graduate students came to celebrate the holiday season and share some laughs before the end of the semester. We would like to thank everyone for their participation and contributions—we are lucky to have such wonderful department members!

LR– Phil Watson, Aaron Johnson, JD Wolfhorst, Larry Makus
LR– Ekaterina Vorotnikova, Cathy Roheim, Haley Hildebrandt, Eli Kosse
LR– Dolores Garcia, Yao Chunyi
Each year the AERS faculty attend conferences and present their research. This year was no exception, and the department was well represented.

Congratulations to Paul Lewin, Project Director on the project “Research & Understanding: Rural Assistance for Latino Businesses (RURAL Biz)” has been informed that his project will be funded! This is a collaboration with, among others, the UI Law School. Great work, Paul!


GRANTS

Presentations

Travel

The Seminar Schedule

At UI, Ag Sci Room 104, Fridays 3:30-4:30 pm
At WSU, BLS 402, http://sec.wsu.edu/seminars

September 4 Stephen Devadoss, Professor, AERS UI @ WSU
September 18 Don Dillman, WSU Survey Research WSU @ WSU
October 9 Jay Coggins, Minnesota UI/WSU @ WSU
October 23 Jason Winfree, Assistant Professor AERS UI @ UI
October 30 Cathy Durham, OSU @UI
November 6 Jon Miller, Professor, Econ Dept. UI @ WSU
November 13 Marin Bozic, Minnesota Ag Econ @ UI
December 4 Eric Stuen, Econ Dept. @UI

Dr. Cathy Roheim attended the meeting of the Oceans Outcome Advisory Board (November 1-5) in Portland, OR.

Dr. Chris McIntosh attended the Montana Seed Potato Seminar (November 3rd–5th) in Missoula, MT.

Dr. Aaron Johnson traveled to the NW Regional Coop Institute (November 9th–10th) in Spokane, WA.

Dr. Garth Taylor attended the Idaho Water Users Association meeting (November 18th–20th) in Boise.

Dr. Jason Winfree attended the GMCC-15 the seventh International Conference (November 14th–21st) that was held in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Dr. Aaron Johnson traveled to the Far West Agribusiness Association meeting and Winter Conference (December 8th and 9th) in Kennewick, WA

Dr. Garth Taylor and Dr. Cathy Roheim attended the Ag. Outlook Meetings (December 7th-11th) in Ft. Hall, Burley, and Caldwell.
The following students graduated from the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology on December 13:

**M.S. Degree in Applied Economics:**

Anna Brown  
Haley Hildebrandt  
Hannah Hallock  
Elijah Kosse

Congratulations to all our graduating AERS students and good luck in your future endeavors!