C O N G R A T U L A T I O N S  T O  O U R  A E R S  S T U D E N T S  A N D
F A C U L T Y  2 0 1 6  A W A R D  W I N N E R S !

Outstanding Senior—Katie Vandenberg
Outstanding Junior—Wyatt Smith
Outstanding Sophomore—Austin O’Neill
Outstanding Freshman—Cole Lickley
Outstanding Advisor—Aaron Johnson
Outstanding Teaching—Stephen Devadoss

Be sure to check back in the June newsletter to see if any of our nominees win the CALS Award!

V O L U M E  1 6 ,  I S S U E  1  M A R C H  2 0 1 6

In this issue:
Ag. Econ students travel to Idaho’s State Capital 2
AERS Capstone Class overview 3
AERS Quiz Bowl Competitors 4
Student Internship Highlights 4
Student Scholarship Spotlight 5
Travels 6
Paul Lewin Award 7

A N O T E  F R O M  D R .  R O H E I M

Dear Friends of AERS,

As we approach the end of another academic year, AERS reflects back on an incredibly hectic but productive beginning of 2016. AERS was successfully completed 3 separate faculty searches during the past few months. We were pleased to have Norm Ruhoff join AERS in March as our newest Area Extension Educator, joining Ben Eborn. Norm will be based in Moscow, and add a marketing and risk management component to our extension program. A 1988 graduate of the M.S. program in Ag Econ here at UI, and with several years of experience in the private sector as a grain merchandiser and market analyst, he is a terrific asset for our department and stakeholders. Joining us in August will be Katherine Lee, currently completing her Ph.D. at the Univ. of Wyoming, to fill our position teaching and conducting research on natural resource economics, and Dr. Herman Tejeda, Ph.D. North Carolina State Univ., joining us as the dairy/livestock economics extension specialist. A Vandal welcome to all – be sure to look for more information on all three in forthcoming newsletters.

This newsletter highlights enriching experiences our students are getting in their senior capstone course by solving real world problems for several area agribusinesses. This experience is made possible through the willingness of individuals in these agribusinesses to collaborate with our students, and we are grateful to them and Dr. Aaron Johnson, course instructor, for their dedication to our excellent students.

Finally, congratulations to Assistant Professor Jason Winfree who was just granted tenure and promotion to Associate Professor, based on his excellence in research and teaching. Similarly, congratulations to Assistant Professor Paul Lewin who was awarded the University of Idaho Excellence in Outreach and Engagement second place award for his outstanding extension programming in regional economic development.

cathy
AERS STUDENTS ATTEND IDAHO’S LEGISLATIVE SESSION

On Sunday, January 21, ten students, Wyatt Andreason, Alan Berry, Jake Forsmann, Dain Johnson, Savannah McGarry, Shadrach McHargue, Al Ralloff, Tyler Renton, Ethan Sabala and Matt Sturzen and two advisors Drs. McIntosh and Taylor, departed Moscow for Boise to experience the Idaho public policy making process. Since the year 2000, AgEcon 410 has been helping students learn about how agricultural policy is made in Idaho.

The class was founded on an idea by former department head Jim Nelson, and is accomplished with a great deal of assistance from the Food Producers of Idaho. For the past 16 years students have met with leaders of Idaho agricultural organizations like the Idaho Farm Bureau, the Idaho Groundwater Users Association, the Milk Producers of Idaho, the Idaho Cattle Association, and the Idaho Grain Producers Association. Presentations from these and other legislative advisors help students learn how agricultural interests help shape policy in Idaho.

Students had the opportunity to dine and connect with state legislators, allowing for interaction with senators and representatives in an informal setting. This year they also met with Lieutenant Governor Brad Little, Attorney General Lawrence Wasden, Layne Bangerter Senator Mike Crapo’s State Treasurer Ron Crane, and State Director for Agriculture/Natural Resources/Environment. Students also attended meetings of the House and Senate Agricultural Affairs committees while in Boise.

Students learn about all aspects of agricultural policy making in Idaho and are given the opportunity to interact with and ask questions from lobbyists, state elected officials, and agricultural organization leaders. This intense immersion in state politics provides an invaluable learning experience that would be hard to duplicate any other way. Students leave with a clear understanding of how policy is made, and how they can influence the policy making process. Matt Sturzen, a current student, said that “I wasn’t sure about the trip going in, but looking back, I realize I would have been a fool to pass on the opportunity. It was a great experience, whether you are interested in public policy or just wants to learn something new while having a good time, I definitely recommend it.”

Former students from this class remain involved as well—Wyatt Prescott the Executive Vice President at the Idaho Cattle Association and current president of Food Producers of Idaho took this class in 2007. Stephen Parrot, who is currently featured on the AERS web page, represents Northwest Farm Credit Services at Food Producers of Idaho, was a member of this class in 2011.
Each year seniors in Ag Econ 478 (Advanced Agribusiness Management) get the opportunity to gain real world experience with companies who bring challenges from within their industry for students to tackle over the semester. Students are grouped into teams of 4-5 students and given a project to address by one of the following companies. Here is a brief insight into the tasks the companies have asked the students to do.

**Simplot Food Group**
J.R. Simplot is synonymous with potato processing. Recently, Simplot combined the processing from three existing plants to a new, state-of-the-art processing facility that covers over 425,000 square feet. The new plant allows Simplot to advance production efficiencies and capture opportunities from by-products due to the consolidated production. While starch is already extracted from potato process water at the facility and sold in bulk to an outside firm, other opportunities to develop value from starch from off-cuts, culls and other potato streams exist. Potato starch has some unique properties for food and non-food applications, and is widely used in Europe. Are there feasible markets for potato starch and value added starch products, and if so, in what form do they need to be? The team working on this project will evaluate the market feasibility of the starch by-product to provide value to J.R Simplot.

**Simplot Animal Sciences**
The dairy industry is a vast and changing industry. Technology and progressive practices are often the key to success in the business. One area that is critical is the management of the breeding program, specifically the production of superior genetics. One method that can deliver is in-vitro fertilization. Simplot has developed a new process around this technology which they call SIMVTRÔÔ. The challenge is they need to understand the economics of this method versus other breeding management plans to determine the ultimate benefit to the dairyman.

**Simplot Plant Sciences**
Simplot’s Plant Sciences has been working for many years to develop genetically modified innate potatoes – GMO potatoes with only potato genes used. They have recently entered the market space with their first commercial Innate Potato product with many more to come. The challenge they face is determining the price for these products. For example, their next rollout will include genetics that are late blight resistant, as well as have expanded storage and reduced sugar-related defects. These traits will appeal to different growers in different regions depending on the late blight pressures they face. In the face of uncertainty and variability of interests, how does Simplot price this new product? The team working on this project will answer that question.

**Purina Mills**
Purina operates in a two tiered market. They are responsible for marketing to retailers and to end customers (the customers of the retailers). As part of the relationship they have to forge with the retailers, Purina often considers their challenges and looks for potential solutions. This project is a case in point. Purina is curious: How can a rural/suburban feed retailer justify hiring an outside sales person to help increase their market share? What increase in sales would need to be achieved to make this plan a success? What does the breakeven analysis look like? What is the potential return on investment? The team working on this project will consider when it works to bring on a new sales person in general and how feasible it is for a specific location.

**Thorn Creek Native Seed**
Being a small business requires a few people to wear many hats. When that business is trying to do something differently, sometimes the focus of those few people are concentrated on operations or other aspects of the business. However, with a little success comes the need and sometimes resources to consider adding more attention to the areas that have been neglected. That is the case with Thorn Creek Native Seed Farm. Jacie and Wayne Jensen have been working at building their native seed production process starting in 2004. Having made great strides in building the capacity to produce native seed, they recognize the need to put more attention to building the market demand for their product. The team working on this project will develop a marketing plan for Thorn Creek.

**ConAgra**
Many agronomic factors impact the production of the crops grown on a piece of ground. One significant factor is the rotational plan for that acreage. This issue is but one factor of interest to companies like ConAgra that contract producers to grow potatoes. But is there an ideal rotation for the production of potatoes that hold the traits desired by the ConAgra? This project will determine an optimal crop rotation model as determined by potato quality traits and economics to the producer.
AMANDA YOCKEY INTERNS WITH KEYLOCK SOLUTIONS

Amanda Yockey, currently a junior pursuing a degree in Agricultural Business started an internship with KeyLock Solutions last fall, a farm appraisal, rural land valuation, and farm management software company, located right here in Moscow. She obtained the internship after a conversation with CEO and AERS alumna Ruby Stroschein, at the annual CALS BBQ in September 2015. “When I first began interning with KeyLock, I started as a research and marketing assistant for the company. I gained a much larger understanding on the information that is obtained during farm appraisals and rural land valuation, says Yockey. She spends time researching and entering sales comparables from Washington, Oregon, and Idaho into the KeyLock database for future use by appraisers, lenders, attorneys, government agencies, and agricultural producers. In addition she has had the opportunity to contribute to suggestions in changes made to the company website, product development and additions to the software, and different approaches to marketing the land management portion of the software. Just recently she expanded her internship into the customer relations portion of the company. In February, Amanda represented KeyLock at the Spokane Ag Expo and plans to continue to promote the company at future trade show events. She says, “without AERS/CALS I wouldn’t have had this great opportunity that I am truly thankful for.”

AAEA ACADEMIC BOWL STUDENTS PREPARE

This spring, seven students from the AERS, AVS, AEE, and PSES departments are preparing for the 2016 Agricultural & Applied Economics Association’s (AAEA) Academic Quiz Bowl competition. The contest is simple: teams of three compete head-to-head in an eight category; Jeopardy-style game. At the end of 15 minutes, or when all questions are exhausted, the team with the highest score wins. In the case of a tie, teams enter into an eight question “lightning round” where all questions are random and worth the same amount of points. The question categories are microeconomics, macroeconomics, agribusiness/finance, resource/policy economics, marketing, management, and potpourri.

The AAEA national conference is a great opportunity to interact and network with students and faculty from other universities and see current research. This year’s conference to be held in Boston, MA from July 31 to August 2, will also provide students with the opportunity to travel to some of our nation’s most important historical sites during days before and after competition.

Students currently practicing and preparing for this summer’s quiz bowl competition are: Abby Biedenbach, Colton Biedenbach, Travis Chase, Austin O’Neill, Dino Vinci, Brett Wilder and Dustin Winton. A combination of some or all of these students will represent the University of Idaho in Boston. Last year’s team from the University of Idaho consisting of Abby Biedenbach, Travis Chase, and Brett Wilder advanced to the semi-finals earning the title of 3rd place.

The group would like to thank their coach, Dr. Jason Winfree, and the numerous other AERS faculty and staff who have supported our team in and out of the classroom.

We’d like to thank the department and our donors for providing the financial support for our students to travel to the competition.

If you are interested in learning more about the event, please speak with Dr. Winfree or any of the students involved.
Heidi Jamison  
**Senior, Agribusiness**

**AERS Alumni Scholarship**

Tell us a little about yourself:  
I grew up just outside of Garfield, WA (population 600) on a dry-land wheat, barley, and lentil family farm. I am involved in many different organizations on campus including Kappa Delta Sorority, Food and Agricultural Business Club, a retired CALS Ambassador.

Why does earning a degree in Agricultural Economics appeal to you?  
Growing up as a farmer’s daughter in an agriculturally-based community was my backbone for 18 years, and I admit, driving trucks, mowing lawns, and fixing machinery are not my favorite jobs. However, through my FFA experiences and rural community involvement in high school I began to see the bigger agricultural picture and that inspired me to choose the agribusiness degree option.

What are your future career goals?  
In August of 2014 I began interning with Gem Valley Appraisal in Moscow, ID. I was intrigued by the occupation seeing as I enjoy economic analysis and assessment, and over the past couple of years my interest has evolved into the start of an appraisal career. I am excited to join the Northwest Farm Credit Services team in the upcoming months, and hope that 2016 will be the start of a great career path. Their job function may not fluctuate, but the properties they assess can vary immensely, making this profession appealing to my sense of diversity.

**Why do you love being a Vandal?**  
I love being a student at the University of Idaho and in CALS because I don’t feel like just another fish in the sea; I feel a sense of belonging within the Vandal Family, and am recognized as a person rather than a number. The University of Idaho and CALS makes students feel welcome and accepted, which is significant to me.
Each year the AERS faculty attend conferences and present their research. This year was no exception, and the department was well represented.

**SEMINAR SCHEDULE**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Speaker and Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 21</td>
<td>Yang Xie, University of California, Berkeley</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 27</td>
<td>Katherine Lee, University of Wyoming</td>
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<td>February 8</td>
<td>María González Ramírez, Iowa State University</td>
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<td>February 10</td>
<td>Levi Russell, Texas A&amp;M University</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 17</td>
<td>Hernan Tejeda, Utah State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 24</td>
<td>Ryan Larsen, North Dakota State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2</td>
<td>Almuhanad Melhim, Senior Economist, IHS Global Agriculture Columbia, MO</td>
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**GRANTS**

Congratulations to the following members of our department for the grants they have received:

- Paul Lewin “Innovation for Rural Entrepreneurs and Communities (Latina Entrepreneurs)” Award amount: $500,000, USDA
- J.D. Wulfhorst “USDA ARS Magic Valley Survey” Award amount: $5,920.
- Ekaterina Vorotnikova “Optimal Hedging Horizon Theory” Award Amount $47,702, USDA.

**PRESENTATIONS**

- Lewin, P. "Education, gender inequality and economic resilience in Idaho"; Moscow League of Women Voters meeting, March 2. Moscow, ID
- Garrido, D.; Montoya, V.; Equihua, Y.; Magana, N.; & Lewin, P. “Conozca sus derechos y responsabilidades”, February 27. Aberdeen, ID
- Albrecht, D. & Lewin, P. "Area Sector Analysis Process Overview", Valley County Commissioners meeting. February 8, Cascade, ID

**TRAVELS**

- Dr. Stephen Devadoss traveled to Tamil Nadu Agricultural University in India (December 17 – January 7) to collaborate research on a biofuel project.
- Dr. Chris McIntosh attended the ASSA Annual Meeting (January 11-14) in San Francisco, CA.
- Dr. Phil Watson attended the ESCOP annual meeting (February 2 -6) in Washington D.C.
- Dr. Norm Ruhoff attended the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives conference (February 9 –12) in Scottsdale, AZ. Dr. Paul Lewin attended the Western Regional Science Association (February 12-18) on the Big Island in Hawaii.
- Dr. Lorie Higgins attended Extension meetings (March 22-25) in San Antonio, TX.
- Dr. Ekaterina Vorotnikiva traveled to the Economics and Management of Risk in Agriculture and Natural Resources Meeting (March 17-20) in Pensacola, FL.
C O N G R A T S  T O  D R .  P A U L  L E W I N

A big congratulations to Assistant Professor Paul Lewin for being chosen as the second-place recipient of the University of Idaho Award for Excellence in Outreach and Engagement for 2015-16!

As his award letter from the University committee states: "Congratulations on this outstanding achievement! This is truly a prestigious award and one you richly deserve. Your excellence as a faculty member of the University of Idaho is well recognized and your contributions to UI outreach and engagement have made a significant difference in the lives of Idaho’s citizens."

He will be recognized at a dinner held to honor him and other university award recipients on Tuesday, April 26. President Chuck Staben and Executive Vice President John Wiencek will present him with the award and check for $2,500.