Hello Friends of AERS!

Here it is, the end of another successful and dynamic academic year. This year’s graduates have packed up and left Moscow, looking forward to their new careers and in some cases to continuing their education in graduate programs. Our students have done really well in securing terrific employment opportunities. Several of the students were snapped up by employers months before they graduated. The department is thrilled that employers are so eager to hire our students!

I am also pleased to announce that AERS has hired Dr. Ekaterina Vorotnikova as a new Assistant Professor beginning in the fall. With degrees in Agricultural Economics and Finance from the University of Florida, Dr. Vorotnikova will be teaching and conducting research in risk management and commodity markets. She will enrich our students’ experiences, thanks to the donations from the CHS Foundation and Co-Bank, highlighted inside this newsletter.

Congratulations to our AERS Newsletter editor, Jessica Reynolds, on her graduation! Jessica leaves behind many friends and admirers in this department. We will miss her cheerful willingness to help faculty and staff in the department, and her excellent work producing our newsletters. Jessica has handed the baton over to Katie Vandenberg, who has some big shoes to fill, but I know she’ll do a great job too!

Have a great summer everyone,

Cathy
Congratulations to Dr. Levan Elbakidze and Dr. Phil Watson on their promotion to Associate Professor, with tenure, as of July, 2014. The AERS Department appreciates their dedication and hard work, and compliment them on this well-deserved promotion!

CHS and CoBank Donate to AERS and CBE to Support Curriculum in Risk Management

Recently, the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology (AERS) and the College of Business and Economics (CBE) jointly received a $250,000 donation from the CHS Foundation, in addition to $100,000 from CoBank, to expand student opportunities to learn about commodities trading. These gifts will help fund an expansion of the CBE’s trading floor used to support the Barker Capital Management and Trading Program. It will also expand curriculum and experiential learning opportunities in agricultural marketing, commodities markets, and risk management within AERS and collaboratively between AERS and CBE.

The Barker Capital Management and Trading Program was founded at the University of Idaho in 2004 and provides students with hands-on learning opportunities in risk management through incorporating trading and market analysis. Students learn to analyze different markets for security, options, and futures purposes to make decisions within the market. A portion of this program involves individual learning, but also includes a team aspect where students are given a portfolio to evaluate based on its different assets and goals. Approximately forty students participate in the program annually, but this expansion will allow the number of participants to increase, which will include students from AERS.

The gifts from the CHS Foundation and CoBank directed to AERS will give CALS students the opportunity to further their knowledge about trading agricultural commodities and managing risk. The curriculum around these subjects will be enhanced, and new experiential learning opportunities will be created.

To support the teaching and research programs in agricultural marketing and risk management, the AERS Department is pleased to announce the hire of Dr. Ekaterina Vorotnikova, Ph.D. in Food and Resource Economics, and M.S. in Finance, from the University of Florida, as a new Assistant Professor. We are confident she will develop a rich academic experience for our students in this area in collaboration with Dr. Terry Grieb, Director of the Barker Trading Program, and industry partners from the region.

Between the new faculty position and the ample opportunities these gifts will provide, AERS is well positioned to collaborate with Dr. Terry Grieb and the Barker Capital Management and Trading Program for the benefit of CALS’ students. Thanks to both CHS and CoBank for their generosity!

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DR. ELBAKIDZE AND DR. WATSON RECEIVE TENURE AND PROMOTION

Dr. Levan Elbakidze

Congratulations to Dr. Levan Elbakidze and Dr. Phil Watson on their promotion to Associate Professor, with tenure, as of July, 2014. The AERS Department appreciates their dedication and hard work, and compliment them on this well-deserved promotion!

Dr. Phil Watson
The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences had its annual spring awards banquet on April 28 when outstanding alumni, faculty, staff, and students were recognized for their accomplishments throughout the year. All these individuals were able to mingle during the social before the banquet and enjoyed a delicious prime rib dinner. Thanks to AgriBeef Inc. and Harvest Ridge Organics which donated products for the meal.

Each department is allowed to present its own awards at the banquet and also nominates students, faculty, and staff for the CALS awards. This year, the department award winners were:

Kaycee Royer received the Western Agricultural Economics Association Outstanding Senior Award.

Mahalingam Dhamodharan was the AERS Department Outstanding Graduate Student.

Amy Hilland was recognized by the Gamma Sigma Delta Honor Society for her Outstanding Master’s Thesis Award (First Place) from the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA).

Travis Chase received the CALS Outstanding Senior Award.

In addition to these award winners, the AERS Department nominated several other outstanding individuals to be recognized. They include: Chris Darby, Outstanding Staff Nominee; Dr. Chris McIntosh, Outstanding Advisor Nominee; Tanner Beymer, Outstanding Freshmen Nominee; Heidi Jamison, Outstanding Sophomore Nominee; and Katie Vandenbeng, Outstanding Junior Nominee.

Congratulations to the award winners and department nominees!

Dr. Larry Makus, Mahalingam Dhamodharan, & Dean John Foltz

Amy Hilland

Travis Chase & Dean John Foltz

Jessica Reynolds

AERS Department student employee, Jessica Reynolds, tied as first runner up at the Student Employee of the Year (SE0Y) Awards Banquet on April 15th. SE0Y is a recognition program designed to recognize the outstanding contributions students who work make to U of I while still attending college. The award requirements are based on GPA, hours worked per week, length of employment, and other achievements in and out of the classroom. There were 29 students nominated at this year’s banquet.

Congratulations Jessica!

Jessica Reynolds

As a part of their graduation requirements, each undergraduate major in the Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology Department must complete the senior capstone course Advanced Agribusiness Management (AgEc 478). The course is designed for the students to practice problem solving and applying material studied during their college careers. To accomplish this, companies are recruited to bring real-world problems with realistic constraints to the class.

In the beginning of the semester, the students are divided into teams to work on these projects. The students’ role is to think through each situation brought to them and over the course of the semester find a possible solution for the company with guidance from their coaches, faculty member Aaron Johnson and graduate student Hannah Hallock. Whereas each team works with an individual company to create a solution, every student engages in all the projects. This engagement comes through roundtables where each team presents an update and brings issues or questions to the class. The students not assigned to that team in turn offer feedback to help their peers. This provides each student with an opportunity to think through many different issues and projects, allowing them to broaden their outlook and knowledge.

This year, there were five companies participating in this integrated learning project.

Hillico Technologies Inc., asked students Michelle Faulkner, Zach Goddard, Stephen Kuther, Destry Olson, and Tara Stubbers to develop a return on investment tool dealing with product quality, production efficiencies, and agronomic impacts of a new technology. Stacy Lorentz, Sales and Marketing Director, and Shelbie Sigler, Marketing Assistant (’13 Agribusiness Major and UI alumni) were able to attend the presentation and listen to the students’ findings.

Union Pacific Corporation inquired about the market opportunities that exist for railroad transportation for the Idaho dairy industry. Students Rachael Ashley, Kayla Barkdull, John Dye, Tony Garner, and Jared Lund formed a strategic marketing plan that they presented to Union Pacific employees Dan Harbeke, (Director of Public Affairs), Emily Chappie (Business Manager – Refrigerated Food Products), and Sean Irby (Business Manager – Ag Products and ’03 Marketing Major and UI alumni).

Jim Miller (Director of Sales and Marketing) and Daniel Stenbakken (Certified Crop Advisor) from Primeland Cooperatives listened to students Samantha Breeding, Kirsti Hammer, Kirk Iverson, Ethan Parkin, and Josh Prow present their thoughts on how the cooperative can utilize GIS technology to generate revenue and improve the growers’ efficiency, effectiveness, and profitability.

Courtney Allred, Laura Griffing, Patxi Larrocca-Phillips, Ray Mosman, and Gavin Zenner evaluated Lindsay Creek Vineyards’ business structure to help them find the best way to grow their emerging business. Their presentation was given to the owners, Doug and Art McIntosh.

Northwest Farm Credit Services requested their team of students, made up of Alyse Armstrong, Emma McConnell, Haylee Palmer, Kaycee Royer, and Michaela Woempner, assist in transforming a client survey from relational to transactional without losing any key components or information. They presented their findings to Matt Kloe (Knowledge Center Coordinator). Michael Stolp (V.P. Market Research and Development) also worked with the team but was not able to attend the final presentation.

Working on these companies’ projects provides students with unique experiential learning opportunities they otherwise wouldn’t receive. The AERS Department, CALS and UI are all very appreciative and grateful for each company’s generous time and monetary donations made to support the education of our students. Company recruitment for project participation occurs throughout the year. Interested companies can contact Aaron Johnson at aaronj@uidaho.edu or 208.885.5489.
Steven conducted both factor analysis and data envelopment analysis (DEA) to help develop this single metric that tells how efficiently each county is using its resources with respect to other counties. With this new metric, Steven hopes that counties can make better and more appropriate investments to improve their overall socio-economic health.

Steven received guidance from Dr. Phil Watson, who has experience with teaching and researching economic development methods. Because his research was focused on economic development issues for the counties of Idaho and the U.S. as a whole, Steven’s research was funded by a grant provided by the U.S. Economic Development Agency (EDA).

Steven grew up in Boise, Idaho, and now resides in Fort Collins, Colorado. After Steven graduates, he hopes to be employed at a company or organization that needs an economist looking for data analysis: “I am currently looking for a career where I can apply the economic skills that I have learned over the course of my undergraduate and graduate education. Whether that career is an extension of my current research or uses certain skill sets from my research and schoolwork, such as econometrics, I hope to make a meaningful impact in how a company or organization performs.”

The AERS department wishes Steven the best of luck in his future endeavors!
Heidi Jamison
Sophomore, Agribusiness
AERS Alumni Scholarship Recipient

Why did getting a degree in Agribusiness or 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, moving 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 as I matured and that inspired me to choose the agribusiness degree option. Without food, fuel, clothing, and shelter, no one would be able to sustain existence, and I feel proud to be a part of something that makes life on Earth possible. Additionally, I have always had an interest in business and money matters. My mom is an accountant and she has taught me the importance of being frugal and organized with dollars. She works hard with my dad to budget our family’s money and make smart investment choices, and I believe that her education and business experience has helped with that process tremendously. Thus, I also wish to become business savvy so that I, too, can make educated decisions not only within my own future household, but within my career as well. In the end, earning a degree in Agribusiness is a great fit for me because as the name implies, it entails courses relating to both business and agriculture, which are the two key areas that I’d like to focus on learning more about.

What are your future career goals?
As a student at the University of Idaho, majoring in Agribusiness, my part in the agricultural industry will be to help improve the financial and economic standing of various agricultural sectors. While I have not yet settled on a particular career of choice, my interests are slowly becoming more specialized. At this time, I am most intrigued by professional areas concerning agricultural appraisal, loan officiating, business fraud investigation, and risk management. I plan on obtaining my Agribusiness degree for certain, while keeping in mind the possibility of double majoring in either accounting or another business specific area. Earning a Master’s degree is also a possibility. Regardless of whether or not I earn these additional degrees, I hope to use my knowledge, experience, and research to educate those who carry unanswered questions and make a positive agricultural economic impact, so as to leave my community a better place for future inhabitants.

What is your favorite thing about being a Vandal?
I love being a student at the University of Idaho 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 makes students feel welcome and accepted, which is significant to me. I was raised in a small, rural town and can attest to the fact that a supportive community makes all the difference when it comes to the success of students.

“Thanks to all the alumni and friends who have supported the Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology (AERS). Your gifts make it possible to fund scholarships, professional development and experiential opportunities for our students. Every gift makes a difference and is sincerely appreciated.”

AERS SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

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.

The Karl and Grete Lindeborg Scholarship Endowment
Scholarship established in honor of former AERS professor Karl Lindeborg and awarded to a deserving graduate student in Applied Economics, based upon academic achievement and potential for success in their chosen field.

Raymond G. and Bonnie K. Turner Agricultural Economics Scholarship Endowment
Scholarship created by Raymond and Bonnie Turner to students pursuing a degree in AERS, based upon scholastic ability, academic promise, and financial need.

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.

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MAY 2014 GRADUATES

B.S. Degree in Agricultural Economics with listed major:

Courtney Lee Allred, Agribusiness  
Alyse Gabrielle Armstrong, Agribusiness  
Rachael Deanne Ashley, Agribusiness  
Samantha Noel Breeding, Agribusiness  
Adam Harris Dags, Agricultural Economics  
Michelle Jo Faulkner, Agribusiness  
Anthony Douglas Garner, Agribusiness  
Kirsti Ann Hammer, Agribusiness  
Emma Kate McConnell, Agribusiness  
Ethan Dallas Parkin, Agribusiness  
David J. Prow, Agribusiness  
Kaycee May Royer, Agricultural Economics  
Tara Leigh Stubbers, Agribusiness  
Gavin Joseph Zenner, Agribusiness

M.S. Degree in Applied Economics with listed emphasis:

Kevin Allen Decker, Applied Economics  
Mahalingam Dhamodharan, Applied Economics  
Steven Alexander Turi, Applied Economics

Congratulations to all graduates and we wish you luck in all your future endeavors!

It’s been a pleasure being the student editor for AERS News over the past few years, but the time has come to graduate! If you have information you would like to include in our next newsletter please contact the NEW editor, Katie Vandenberg, at our mailing address to the left or at vand8488@vandals.uidaho.edu.

Thank you, Jessica Reynolds