Dear Friends of AERS:

It’s great to be back for another academic year!

We started off the new academic year with a tremendously productive meeting with our AERS Advisory Board. As usual, they offered excellent feedback on our departmental programs, and continued support. This year, AERS, CALS and U of I gave back, with the Alumni Association Award for Excellence. This was given to the Board at a luncheon honoring board member Dennis Conley (B.S. ‘64; M.S. ‘68) — at which he received the UI Silver and Gold Award for Alumni Excellence. Congratulations to Dennis and to the rest of the Advisory Board! More inside.

Another item I would like to highlight is the quality of our students. Inside this newsletter you will find a number of reports on our excellent students. From internships and scholarships, to fledgling careers, presentations and competitions, our undergraduate and graduate students are active and doing great things. Thanks to all of our friends and alumni who help us offer these opportunities to our students!

Hope you enjoy this latest edition of the newsletter!

Cathy
The AERS Department is proud to have outstanding students who are using their resources, knowledge and education to participate in internships and other opportunities as undergraduates.

One of these outstanding students is AERS sophomore, Brett Wilder. Last summer Brett had the opportunity to intern with Food Producers of Idaho. During his internship he had many different responsibilities. He maintained a sign-in sheet of those in attendance at each meeting, assisted with preparation and take-down of meetings, wrote and delivered letters on behalf of the organization, and maintained a detailed spreadsheet of legislators' votes on tracked legislation. In addition, Brett attended several committee hearings on important bills such as S1337, the agricultural security bill, and H571, concerning eminent domain with irrigation districts. Brett’s biggest highlight of this internship, and a large reason why he was offered the opportunity, was his involvement in the passage of increased funding for agricultural education and S1275 concerning agricultural education.

When asked why he chose to apply for this internship, Brett responded that he expected to learn about agricultural policy and spend a significant amount of time taking notes and working with members of Rick Waitley’s staff at Association Management Group – and he did. He said that traditionally, the position has only been available to college juniors and seniors, but Brett’s experience with Professional-Technical Education paired with his position (at the time) of Idaho State FFA President allowed him to ultimately land the internship.

Through his experience, Brett learned how to function as part of a management team and developed convention facilitation tactics. The internship exceeded his expectations by far and he now realizes the importance of working with people, the delicacy with which it must be done, and the hard work behind preparing for, setting up, and facilitating entire conventions. Brett’s interest in planning events has grown, and working amidst policy has made him realize that no matter the specialized industry, every aspect of agriculture is closely tied.

In close, Brett’s comment is that looking back, this internship has helped shape him into the person that he is today. Where he once went about life in a haphazard fashion, he now lives life deliberately. He attempts to think before speaking, pay attention to details, take time for self-reflection, and work at maintaining relationships. He’s gained the ability to find significance in any situation and now encompasses a deeper understanding and appreciation for the political process in the state of Idaho.

The World Congress of Environmental and Resource Economists (WCERE) held its 5th quadrennial conference in Istanbul, Turkey this last summer from June 27th to July 2nd. The organization aims to share ideas about advances in science pertaining to management of natural resources and environmental issues, and professors from many universities across the United States were present at the function.

AERS faculty member, Professor Levan Elbakidzie, was one in particular. At the conference, Levan had the opportunity to present one of his research papers and chair an informational session. He received positive feedback on his paper, and learned some new approaches to economic modeling pertaining to natural resource management. In addition, he attended several meetings and heard updates about ongoing research at other universities. When asked what he liked most and least about his experience, Levan answered that he enjoyed listening to some of the leading experts in his field from top schools, but wasn’t too fond of traveling for 20 hours. This was his first time traveling to Turkey, so he didn’t have any expectations going in, but he commented that the Turkish culture differs from ours in many respects. Both automobile and pedestrian traffic are more chaotic than in the U.S., and salesmen are much pushier when it comes to marketing. Conversely, Levan said that Istanbul offered some great food and fascinating historical landmarks.
Where Are Our Graduates Now?

Dillon Greiner
Northwest Farm Credit Services

Dillon graduated this past spring with a degree in agricultural economics from the AERS department. He was hired by Northwest Farm Credit Services (NWFC) before graduation, where he is currently a credit officer trainee. Some of his duties include analyzing financial statements, setting up and tracking customer budgets, and assisting loan officers with writing and servicing loans. He is also able to get out of the office quite often and visit customers’ operations to build relationships and ensure that everything is going well. His favorite parts of working for NWFC include interacting with customers, learning about new industries, and analyzing how operations differ within those industries. When asked if he enjoys his job, Dillon responded, “It has more than lived up to my expectations.”

Dillon credits his education in the AERS department with helping him gain a better understanding of commodity markets and the drivers of those markets, which helps him evaluate the financial positions of customers relative to the commodities they produce. This knowledge is crucial in the agricultural lending industry.

Dillon is from Parma, Idaho, and his college summers included working construction, fighting wildfires, and interning at two different feedlot operations: JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding and Agri Beef Co. These experiences prepared him for his career with NWFC by giving him experience in the agricultural industry as well as teaching him the importance of a strong work ethic and a willingness to learn.

Adam Daggs
Winfield, LLC

Adam Daggs has landed an associate position with Winfield, LLC, a supplier and manufacturer of agricultural pesticides, nutrients, and seed. Originally from Kerman, CA, Adam came to Idaho in pursuit of a degree relating to the agricultural industry. During his time as an undergraduate student he completed several jobs and internships, including a summer field scout position with Simplot and a region agronomist internship with Winfield, LLC.

Last spring, Adam graduated with degrees in agricultural economics and sustainable cropping systems management. Daggs says that his degrees have helped him succeed in the job market because they’ve allowed him to meet specific job qualifications. At Winfield, LLC he is able to learn from long-time sellers because he has the ability to understand what they are dealing with in regards to their work. Adam chose to apply for this position because he wanted to work in agricultural input sales on the wholesale level, and he really enjoyed his summer internship with Winfield prior to being hired full-time. He likes how the company manages grower relationships, and believes in the business’ purpose and mission.

On a daily basis, Adam works with the staff at a partner retail location where he helps with product information and works around the fertilizer plant filling orders and handling grower and seller interactions. When asked what he likes most about his job, Adam replied that he is really enjoying the learning process. He says that every farm is a different experiment, and the variables are constantly changing from year to year. Every day he learns something new and attempts to use his knowledge to help growers make the most out of every acre. His least favorite part of work is the office time, but he understands that it’s a component of any job.

The AERS department would like to congratulate Dillon and Adam on their new careers! We wish them both the best of luck in their future endeavors!
The annual Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) meeting was held on July 27-29 in Minneapolis, MN. We are proud to announce that the AERS department was well represented. On top of the dissertation award won by Jeff Luckstead (MS UI 2008 & PhD WSU 2013) and the thesis award by Amy Hilland (MS UI), our undergraduate students were very active at the conference.

Our Academic Bowl team, Abby Beidenbach, Travis Chase, and Kaycee Royer, made it to the ninth round of the competition. They drew a bye in the first round and then went on to beat their first two opponents. Unfortunately, they ran into the team that won it all in their third game (and the spread between scores was much less than what Purdue did to the other team in the final). In the loser’s bracket, the team was dealt their second and final blow by the team that placed fourth overall. The round was very close, however.

Our two alternates were put on separate teams that were made up of students from other universities. Heidi Jamison and Katie Vanden-berg had strong individual showings on their respective teams. Unfortunately their teams didn’t fare as well and both were put out in two rounds. The upside is these ladies now understand the process and are ready, along with Abby, to return to the Academic Bowl in 2015.

In addition, at the AAEA Student Section business meeting Abby was elected to the secretary/treasurer office. She did a great job promoting her abilities and represented us well. She’ll play a key role in developing next year’s AAEA Student Section Academic Bowl.

Please congratulate these five students the next time you see them!

Professor C. Wilson Gray, AERS Extension Economist in Twin Falls, was recently awarded the Livestock Marketing Information Center (LMIC) Lifetime Achievement Award. This award honors his exceptional and dedicated service to the U.S. livestock industry and outstanding contributions to multi-state Extension programs and support of the Livestock Marketing Information Center. Wilson, the 10th recipient of this award, will be retiring from AERS on Dec. 31, 2014. Well deserved, and congratulations, Wilson!
Dennis Conley (B.S. ’64 and M.S. ’68) was presented with the UI Silver and Gold Award for Alumni Achievement in October. After graduation from UI in 1968, Dennis began his career with Basic American Foods (BAF) a potato processing company in Moses Lake, WA, for whom he worked for 38 years. Dennis’ career was marked by many accomplishments, resulting in leadership of both BAF, for which he served as Vice President, and another potato processing company, Sunspiced, Inc., for which he served as President. He also served as Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Northwest Food Processors Association.

Upon his retirement from BAF, Dennis asked his company to use his retirement bonus to set up an endowment for AERS, to be used to promote professional development of our students and faculty. Funds from this endowment have enabled many students to compete in the AAEA Quiz Bowl over the years, an enriching and rewarding networking experience, as well as travel to give conference presentations. Dennis has served on the AERS Advisory Board since its inception in 2002, and has provided guest lectures in many classes over the years. He is a terrific friend of the department, always willing and eager to assist, in any way possible. It is no surprise, therefore, that Dennis is one of 75 (out of 100,000 total UI alumni) to be honored with this award.

“"This is one awesome advisory board.""
Ms. Garima Tyagi, M.S. in Applied Economics, gave a very professional and informative presentation at the recent AERS Advisory Board meeting. Garima, a native of India, has long had a fascination for how consumer tastes and preferences for food are evolving in India, a rapidly growing economy. She presented some of her thesis research on potato production in India. Garima reviewed the growth of opportunities for potato processing companies in both India and the U.S. who are supplying the rapidly expanding consumer market in India. Garima hopes to graduate in December, and already has a position lined up with RaboAgriFinance in Richland, WA.

Aaron Johnson presented “Post Baccalaureate Education Opportunities: A Discussion on Universities’ Response to Pending Labor Skill Shortages” in June at WERA 72 in Santa Clara, CA. He collaborated with Scott Downey from Purdue University.


Levan Elbakidze, Garth Taylor, B. Fa’anunu, and A. Mamula presented “Evaluating a Water Buy Back Program” at the International Water Resources Economics Consortium (IWREC) annual meeting in September at the World Bank in Washington DC.


H. Uchida, Cathy Roheim and R. Johnston presented “Health Information Impacts on Seafood Demand: Experimental Auction Approach” in July at the XVIth biennial conference of the International Institute of Fisheries Economics and Trade (IIFET) in Brisbane, Australia.

Please tell a little about yourself: I grew up on a family-operated dairy farm in Parma, Idaho, with my parents and younger sister. I love hanging out with friends, listening to music, and exploring. Hiking, camping, fishing, and geocaching¹ outdoors are my favorite. Adventures are the best!

Why does earning a degree in Agribusiness or Agricultural Economics appeal to you? I’m the first person in my family to go to college, and agriculture is in my blood. It’s my passion paired with my degree that can open doors and provide me with more opportunities than if I were to pursue a different field.

What are your future career goals? After college, I want to travel and experience agriculture in the Mid-West, and dairying in Wisconsin, California and New York. I want to see what the world has to offer, but eventually, I want to settle down and take over the family farm and raise my own family there.

How do you think your education at the University of Idaho will help you accomplish these goals? The professors and advisors are always very helpful and encouraging. The university has so many opportunities, tools, and resources to help me achieve my dreams! Have you seen the library? It’s endless!

What clubs/extracurricular activities have you been involved with on campus? I just rushed for Sigma Alpha, and I am also slightly involved in the Agribusiness Club and CFFA. I’m hoping to find some other clubs to join! I love being involved.

Why do you love being a Vandal? Moscow is beautiful and the people are always nice! There’s always something to do, places to explore, and fun to be had!

¹Geocaching - a great outdoor recreational activity that’s similar to a scavenger hunt.
AERS WELCOMES NEW LIBRARIANS

Last semester, the AERS Department said goodbye to long-time Department Librarian, Jessica Reynolds, as she graduated from the U of I. Jessica was undoubtedly a huge asset to this department, and she will be missed dearly. Nonetheless, we would like to welcome our two new lead Librarians, Heidi Jamison and Katie Vandenberg to the department.

Heidi Jamison is originally from Garfield, WA and is currently a junior, majoring in Agribusiness. She was raised on a family-operated 1800 acre grain (wheat, barley, lentils) farm, and was extremely active in her local FFA chapter during high school. Now she enjoys being a student at the University of Idaho and is pursuing Agricultural Appraisal as a possible career path.

Katie Vandenberg was raised in Middleton, ID and is also currently a junior in the AERS Department, majoring in Agribusiness with an added Accounting major. She grew up on a family-operated dairy farm of approximately 3000 head and was involved in her local 4-H chapter for eleven years. Katie enjoys competitively riding horses and mules, hunting, fishing, downhill skiing, and participating in archery competitions. She too loves being a student here at the U of I, and is exploring several career options.

Heidi and Katie are both excited to be on board with the AERS Department, so please extend a warm welcome the next time you see them!