

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN AGRONOMY ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

FALL 2008



As we enter the busy winter break and prepare for the spring semester, we want to take a moment and look back over the developments of this fall. Our goal with this newsletter is to keep past, present, and future students connected; and we invite you to keep in touch with us as well. Let us know how your degree has affected you and encourage other students with your success.

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF AGRONOMY WORKING FOR YOU, THE PROFESSIONAL AGRONOMIST

As Dr. Ken Moore reaches the end of his term as President of the American Society of Agronomy, he shares some of the ways ASA can benefit you.

One of the highlights of my year serving as President of the American Society of Agronomy (ASA) was interacting with the leadership of our professional agronomy programs. Many of you are probably aware that ASA supports two professional certification programs, the Certified Crop Adviser (CCA) and the Certified Professional Agronomist (CPAg) programs. Both programs certify the credentials of professionals working in agronomy. Certification is based on passing standard qualifying examinations. The CPAg program also requires a B.S. or higher degree in addition to passing an exam. There are presently about 13,000 CCAs and 650 CPAgs certified by ASA.

One of the benefits of being certified is recognition of your knowledge and experience by employers, clients, and government agencies. In fact, some federal agencies including USDA and EPA recognize CCAs as qualified technical service providers. Other benefits include access to continuing education courses, publications including Crops and Soils magazine, enhanced employment opportunities, and belonging to a network of professionals working in your area. If you are not already certified, I encourage you to look into it. Most of you are already qualified for the CPAg certification, which is the higher level of the two programs.

Beyond certification programs, ASA is looking into new ways to better serve professional agronomists. This past year a Professional Agronomy Taskforce was created to assess the status of the profession and develop strategies for strengthening it. The taskforce is co-led by our own Department Chair Kendall Lamkey and Howard Brown of GROMARK and includes a number of representatives from agronomic businesses and organizations. We are looking forward to a lot of good ideas and recommendations from the taskforce; ones that will make our services to you and other professional agronomists the best they can possibly be.



You can read more insights from Dr. Moore by visiting his President's Blog found on the ASA website at <https://www.agronomy.org/society-info/presidents-blog/>.

This is an exciting time for the profession. The level of knowledge and technical expertise required to be successful continues to grow each year. You already recognize that or you would not be a part of the Agronomy M.S. program. Take that next step to distinguish yourself from other agronomists. Become a part of ASA by participating in our certification programs.



Dr. Moore is the Master of Science in Agronomy program director. In addition to his responsibilities in teaching and research, he also served as the president of the American Society of Agronomy.

"If you are not already certified, I encourage you to look into it. Most of you are already qualified . . ."

FACULTY PROFILE: DR. BEAVIS

Dr. William Beavis joined the faculty in the M.S. program last spring, teaching Agronomy 513. Students may not be aware of his unique accomplishments, however, and the special position he occupies at Iowa State University.

Dr. Beavis came to Iowa State to fill the newly-formed George F. Sprague Endowed Chair of Crop Genomics. (To learn more about this position and the research pursuits of the Population Genetics group, visit <http://www.agron.iastate.edu/GFSPopGen/index.html>). In

addition to his distance program course, he teaches Advanced Plant Breeding on campus and is working with another professor to develop a new course in molecular plant breeding. Dr. Beavis is perhaps best known for the effect which bears his name (the "Beavis Effect") which describes the "bias in estimates of genetic effects in QTL analyses of populations with poor power" (<http://www.agron.iastate.edu/GPSPopGen/personnel.html>). Before coming to Iowa State, Dr. Beavis spent 12 years with Pioneer Hi-bred and served as CSO and COO for the National Center for Genome Resources. His industry experiences put him in a good position to comment on the importance and relevance of material he teaches in Agronomy 513.

"As the application of biotechnologies and information systems become more prevalent in Agronomy, a working knowledge of Statistics has become more critical for the practitioner. There are a lot of claims and hyperbole with the emergence of any new technology so a fundamental ability to critically evaluate the real impact of the technology is needed. Statistical inference is the arbiter for such evaluations," Dr. Beavis said.

Because of his background within industry and research, Dr. Beavis is an excellent choice for students seeking a major professor.

MASTERS PROGRAM SPREADING THE WORD

The M.S. in Agronomy Program has been an active presence at conferences and trade shows, spreading the news about the opportunities offered through this online degree. In August, the masters program was represented at the Farm Progress show, held in Boone, Iowa (<http://www.farmprogressshow.com>). The show features exhibits from agribusinesses, industry, manufacturers and agricultural suppliers and offers demonstrations for the latest in agricultural technology. Several Master of Science in Agronomy students were also at the show representing their companies. More recently, program representatives shared information with visitors to Ames for the Integrated Crop Management conference (<http://www.aep.iastate.edu/icm/homepage.html>), held at the Iowa State Center. If you know of an agriculture-related event where attendees would be interested in learning about the program, let us know and we can send brochures and sample CDs.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR FALL GRADUATES

As of fall 2008, we have 54 graduates with around 110 active students. Congratulations to following students who earned their master's degrees this fall.

- **Mark Hitz**, Soil Conservationist for the National Resources Conservation Service in Carthage, Illinois
- **Laura How**, Research Biologist for Monsanto in Wentzville, Missouri
- **Ryan Siefken**, Agronomist for Hoegemeyer Hybrids in Freemont, Nebraska
- **Fred Engstrom**, Agricultural Science Research Technician for USDA ARS GEM (Germplasm Enhancement of Maize) in Ames, Iowa
- **Michael Keller**, Areas Sales Manager for Baicor in Blackfoot, Idaho



Dr. Beavis, who teaches Agronomy 513, is involved with research in Marker Assisted Breeding and occupies the George F. Sprague Chair.

NOTEWORTHY FACULTY

Dr. Steven Fales, who teaches Agron 592, is has been busy serving as an officer in the newly-formed, provisional Bioenergy and Agroindustrial Systems division within the American Society of Agronomy.

Dr. Rick Cruse, instructor for Agron 532, is featured on the ISU homepage in the Two Minutes profile. Read the short article at <http://www.iastate.edu/news/twomin/2008/cruse.shtml>.

Dr. Elwynn Taylor, who teaches Agron 503, is featured in an article in the latest issue of STORIES in Agriculture and Life Sciences. Check it out online at <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/stories/archives/2008fall/elwynnTaylor.php>.

Dr. Mark Westgate, who has taught the summer workshop course Agron 594, was recently named editor of "Crop Science", the Crop Science Society of America journal. To learn more about what this new responsibility will entail, read the full article at the ISU Agronomy site (<http://www.agron.iastate.edu/> and click on news.)