

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN AGRONOMY ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2008

Summer is always a particularly busy time for our students, not just in the field, but in their academics as well. During the summer, we welcome new students to the program through the on-campus orientation, host Agronomy 594 students in the hands-on workshop component of the course, and award the Deb A. Muenchrath Award and Virgil K. Webster Awards. Instructors are busy updating and expanding course material while students defend their creative components. We hope that this newsletter will keep past, present, and future agronomists up-to-date on the exciting activities of the program, and we invite you to keep in touch with us as well. Please let us and your fellow alumni know of your achievements and successes.

PROGRAM WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS DURING ORIENTATION

Eight new students were welcomed to the program during the on-campus orientation held July 24 and 25. Tips on learning at a distance, how to use the courseware, and how to utilize online resources such as the e-Library were discussed. Doug Doty (spring 2008 graduate) presented his award-winning Creative Component Defense as part of the orientation activities. New students also had the opportunity to interact with students nearing completion of the program and mingle with faculty and staff during the annual picnic held at Emma McCarthy Lee park near campus.

AGRONOMY 594 WORKSHOP FEATURES HANDS-ON LEARNING

Fifteen students enrolled in Agronomy 594 attended the on-campus workshop portion of the course from July 22 - July 25. The workshop is an opportunity for hands-on activities, field trips, and interaction with fellow students and faculty. This year's field trip line-up included a visit to the BECON Facility (Biomass Energy Conversion Facility) in Nevada, Iowa, which serves as a research and development facility for biomass technology, as well as a trip to Lincolnway Energy, also in Nevada, where students viewed firsthand the production of ethanol. Students also visited the North Central Regional Plant Introduction Station (part of USDA-ARS) which aims to conserve and research a diverse collection of germplasm. Students completed soil activities at FEEL (Field Extension Education Laboratory), which is a teaching and demonstration facility overseen by the Agribusiness Education Program from ISU. This was the second year in which students toured the local Prairie Moon Winery to learn about emerging viticulture in Iowa. Dr. Ken Moore, program director, shared information about biomass and intercropping research during a visit to his research plots and also provided demonstrations on setting up statistical studies in the field.



Above: Enjoying a cool summer evening at Emma McCarthy Lee Park.

Bottom right and left: A discussion on biofuels at the BECON facility.

Below: Agronomy 594 students stand in front of a mound of dried distillers grain at the Lincolnway Energy Ethanol Plant in Nevada, Iowa.





Left: Students use soil characteristics to identify and name soils at the FEEL facility during the 594 Workshop.

Right: Students examine grape plants at the Prairie Moon Winery north of Ames. The winery practices organic viticulture.

“An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest.”

— Benjamin Franklin

How has your masters degree paid off? Share with us and fellow MS students and alumni what a difference your degree has made. Encourage current students by emailing us with your stories of challenges and success.



Cyclists arriving at the ISU campus near Agronomy Hall. According to RAGBRAI’s website (www.ragbrai.org) “RAGBRAI is the longest and oldest touring bicycle ride in the world.” The average total length of the route is around 500 miles.

SIDE NOTES

MS students weren’t the only visitors to Ames during the last week full week of July. On Tuesday, July 22, thousands of bicyclists rode through town as a part of the 7-day RAGBRAI (The Register’s Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa) event. The cyclists stayed the night near campus and brought with them a number of festivities, including a concert by the band Styx and a local favorite, the Nadas. Because the route changes each year, this was a rare opportunity for visiting MS students to see Ames brimming with other summer guests and activities.

AWARD WINNERS NAMED

Deborah A. Muenchrath Award

Each year, the Deborah A. Muenchrath Award is given to the Master of Science in Agronomy student with the most outstanding creative component completed during that academic year (summer - spring). The award was created during the 2006-2007 academic year in honor of Dr. Deborah Muenchrath, who contributed significantly to the development of the program as a course developer, faculty member, and dedicated student mentor. Deb is remembered for her incredible creativity, amazing intellect, abiding commitment to students, and indefatigable spirit.

This year’s award recipient is Doug Doty, whose creative component was titled “The effect of land application of process water from acidulated soybean soapstock on corn production.” Doty is an Extension Education Director for Iowa State University in Fremont County Extension and lives in Sidney, Iowa. You can read his creative component or view a video recording of his award-winning presentation on the program website (<http://www.masters.agron.iastate.edu/students/creative/examples.aspx>).



2008 Award recipient Doug Doty (right) with Agronomy Department chair Dr. Kendall Lamkey.

Virgil K. Webster Awards

The Virgil K. Webster scholarship was established in 1977 specifically for students obtaining a graduate degree in agronomy with the intent of working in extension. Since then, the award has been modified to include distance MS students. Seven students were selected to receive the Virgil K. Webster scholarship for the 2008-2009 academic year.

\$1000 Scholarship:

- Eric Breuer
- Patrick Buckwalter
- Victor Green
- Vanessa McCracken
- Rebecca Wokibula

\$500 Scholarship:

- Melissa Hastings
- Nicholas Larsen