

# MASTER OF SCIENCE IN AGRONOMY ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2009

Summer is always an especially busy time for Master of Science in Agronomy students, and for the program itself. It brings both students just entering the program and students nearly finished with their degrees together on campus to meet with the faculty, researchers, and staff that help make the program possible. It is a time to recognize the accomplishments of students through the annual presentation of scholarship awards. Summer is also a time for many students to defend their creative components and take the final steps toward graduation. We expect that your summer has been just as busy, so here are a few updates to keep you informed. 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. Thank you for being a part of the Master of Science in Agronomy distance community!

**“It’s been a pleasure meeting them this week and I wish I could have met them sooner.”**

## AGRON 594 WORKSHOP OFFERS A VARIETY OF TOPICS

Twenty-two students came to campus July 21-24 for the Agronomy 494 Workshop course, which consisted of 4 days of field trips, hands-on demonstrations, and presentations. The full schedule of activities included a visit to the Nevada Ethanol Plant, the BECON (Biomass Energy CONversion) Facility, the ARS Plant Introduction Station, the Field Extension Education Laboratory (FEEL), and a tour of ISU’s biomass conversion plots at the Sorenson farm. New to the docket this year was a trip to the Picket Fence Creamery, near Woodward, Iowa, which is a family-operated, grass-based dairy farm that processes the milk on farm for local distribution. Students also had the opportunity to enjoy local food at Corn Crib Catering near Madrid, Iowa, and see how local beer is made during a brewery tour at Olde Main Brewery in Ames.

This year’s course was taught by Dr. Steve Fales, but included tours and lectures from a number of other researchers and faculty members, including Drs. Mary Wiedenhoef, Ken Moore, Rick Cruse, Bill Beavis, Gene Takle, Emily Heaton, Candace Gardner, and Ph.D. student and researcher Scott Flynn.

## ORIENTATION WELCOMES NEW STUDENTS

Nine new students were welcomed to the program during the two-day on-campus orientation, held in conjunction with the Agronomy 594 Workshop. There are currently 118 active students in the program, making it the largest masters program in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Even though orientation is not required, the value of being able to connect right away to other students and faculty is clear. One student, looking back on his experience, regrets not being able to attend his orientation because of the missed social opportunities.

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## NO SHORTAGE OF COMMUNITY

It is often said that distance students face additional challenges in making social connections to their peers, but the orientation and workshop activities offer opportunities for casual connections between students, including the annual picnic and volleyball game. Many students correspond regularly via email or phone with classmates and enjoy the chance to talk face-to-face during the on-campus portion of the program. Students who have spent many hours engaged in online discussions with one another find that, even though they have never met in person before, they actually know each other quite well.

## CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to all the students who have earned their master's degree this summer!

- **David Wallace**, Complex Manager for Southern States Alcolu SC, living in New Zion, South Carolina
- **Dave Rectenbaugh**, Senior Research Associate for Pioneer Hi-Bred, International, living in Adel, Iowa
- **Bradley Ott**, Co-op manager, for Harvestland Co-op, living in West Manchester, Ohio
- **Libby Tarleton**, Program Assistant with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County, living in Cutchogue, New York

## ARE YOU ON FACEBOOK? SO ARE WE!

Join the "MS in Agronomy" facebook group! It's another great way to stay in touch or get to know your classmates in an informal way. And don't forget to show agronomy pride by adding yourself to the "i'm an agronomist" group as well. The "i'm an agronomist" campaign is the ISU Department of Agronomy's way of reaching out to current and future agronomists.



## Student profile

Check out an article on MS student Mark Bogner, featured in the ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences spring issue of STORIES magazine. You can download a PDF of the entire publication, or just read about Mark at <http://www.ag.iastate.edu/stories/archives/2009spring/MarkBogner.php>

## CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS

### 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.



2009 Award recipient Jason Steffl (left) with Agronomy Department chair Dr. Kendall Lamkey.

This year's award recipient is Jason Steffl, whose creative component was titled "The Effect of Fungicide Treatment for Gray Leaf Spot on Silage-Specific Maize." Steffl is a Product Development Agronomist for Dow AgriSciences and lives in Redwood Falls, Minnesota not far from his family farm. 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>).

### 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. Four students were selected to receive the Virgil K. Webster scholarship for the 2009-2010 academic year.

### \$1000 Scholarship:

Dan Braaten  
Patrick Buckwalter  
Alan Keninger  
Vanessa McCracken