

A MESSAGE FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

April 2007

Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

Nilgun Tumer (Plant Biology and Pathology) was invited to serve on the National Institutes of Health's panel on Therapeutics and Diagnostics for Biodefense Toxins. She was also invited to serve on the Genetic Engineering and Transformation Panel of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wheat and Barley Scab Initiative.

Wendie Cohick (Animal Science) is serving on the Department of Defense's Breast Cancer Research Program Review Panel for Concept Proposals in the area of cell biology.

The 5th Tripartite Workshop in Biotechnology and Bioenergy was held April 9–12 at the Hilton Hotel, East Brunswick. It involved more than 150 participants from Rutgers University, Ohio State University, and the University of São Paulo, Brazil, as well as other institutions and corporations. Rutgers participants represented 15 different departments and units throughout the University. The four-day meeting highlighted the expanding research and educational exchange collaborations between the three universities.

Student Activities and Accomplishments

Shannon Galbraith-Kent and **Jennifer Krumins** (both of Ecology, Evolution, & Natural Resources) will receive Graduate School Teaching Awards for 2006–2007. Galbraith-Kent and Krumins will receive their awards at a ceremony held at the Zimmerli Art Museum on April 26.

MTV has chosen **Rutgers** as the winner (alongside Cornell University) of the “Break the Addiction” Challenge, a contest for the students doing the most to reduce their country's dependence on fossil fuels. Rutgers will receive a “green” make-over to one campus center, worth up to \$10,000.

Florencia Pascual (Food Science), a graduate student, has been awarded the American Oil Chemists' Society's Thomas H. Smouse Memorial Fellowship. This provides a \$10,000 scholarship and a \$5,000 research fund.


Steven Gray (Ecology, Evolution, & Natural Resources), a graduate student, has been chosen for a National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Estuarine Research Reserve Social Science Fellowship. The fellowship provides \$30,000 in funding over 18 months.

Grants and Fundraising Efforts

Chad Ripberger, Mercer County 4-H Agent, received \$2,000 from Lawrence Township Public Schools Extended Day Program for establishing a Junior Master Gardener program at two of their sites. Ripberger also received a \$1,400 Youth-in-Action grant, established by Cumberland Farms through National 4-H Council, for Get Moving—Get Healthy with 4-H Nutrition and Physical Activity Fairs.

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Ilya Raskin (Plant Biology and Pathology) has received a new award from the National Collegiate Inventors and Innovators Alliance (NCIIA) for a project titled “Enabling pharmaceutical bioexploration in Tanzania.” This \$40,700 pilot-year award will fund the expansion of the Global Institute for Bio-exploration into Tanzania through a partnership with the University of Dar es Salaam. Team members will train Tanzanian counterparts in the use of screens to identify plants with pharmacological potential and to set up a natural products database. High school and university students will assist in plant collection and screening. Raskin’s project was one of 10 selected from 85 submitted to the NCIIA’s Sustainable Vision program.

Jeri Beaumont, Union County senior project coordinator, Senior Meals Program, and **Fran Benson**, director of the Division on Aging in Union County, received \$10,000 over a two-year period from the New Jersey State Department of Health and Senior Services (Mission Nutrition Blue Ribbon Panel) to enhance congregate meal service delivery to minority/ethnic seniors in Union County.

Michelle Infante-Casella, Gloucester County Agricultural Agent; **Wesley Kline**, Cumberland County Agricultural Agent; **Peter Nitzsche**, Morris County Agricultural Agent; **Bill Sciarappa**, Monmouth County Agricultural Agent; **Rick VanVranken**, Atlantic County Agricultural Agent; and **Jhilton Ortiz**, Mercer County Senior Agriculture Program Coordinator, received a \$5,240 Charlie and Lena Maier Research Grant from the Vegetable Growers Association of New Jersey to conduct yield and quality research for commercial tomato varieties.

Jim Nichnadowicz, Union County 4-H Agent, received \$9,700 from the Schering-Plough Corporation for the 2007 Union County 4-H Summer Science Program. The program provides science education to 500 low-income youth each summer.

Linda Strieter, Gloucester County 4-H Agent, and **Luanne Hughes**, Gloucester County Family and Community Health Sciences, received \$10,760 for the Seeds to Success Youth Farmstand Project from Valero Paulsboro Refinery Benefit for Children Golf Classic, January 2007–November 2007.

Nilgun Tumer (Plant Biology and Pathology), **Wendie Cohick** (Animal Science), and **Xiao-Ping Li** (assistant research professor, Tumer lab) received a five-year, \$1.9 million award from NIH. Their research will focus on the mechanism of cytotoxicity of ricin, a plant toxin and ribosome-inactivating protein that has been classified as a Category B priority for biodefense. They will work with yeast and mammalian model systems to understand the molecular basis for the role of ricin in inhibiting protein synthesis and cell death. Identification of the ribosome binding sites of ricin will have a major impact on targeted drug development and can lead to the development of effective therapeutics against ricin.

Gladis Zinati, Extension specialist, **John Dighton** (Biology), **Rich Obal**, Monmouth County Agricultural Agent, **Jim Johnson**, Cumberland County Agricultural Agent, **Jerry Frecon**, Gloucester County Agricultural Agent, and **Carl Nordstrom**, New Jersey Nurserymen & Landscape Association, received \$106,562 from North East Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education for an integrated approach to developing nutrient management schemes for container-grown nursery crops.



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DEAN'S CORNER...



The Cook community mourns the loss of **Edmund (Ted) Stiles**, professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources, and **R. Kenneth (Ken) Totten**, a member of the Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture for 56 years. Ted's achievements as a dedicated and passionate conservationist continue to be recognized. He is a posthumous recipient of the 2007 Lifetime of Distinguished Leadership Award, which will be presented to his wife, Michele, at tomorrow's 14th Annual Awards Dinner at the Cook Campus Center. In addition, the county park on Baldpate Mountain, a thousand-acre tract that includes the highest point above sea level in Mercer County, is to be renamed the Ted Stiles Preserve.

Ken Totten, who passed away on April 1, defined community service. For nearly 30 years, Ken was active in the Hunterdon County Dairy Herd Improvement Association. As one of the founding members of the United Farmers and Landowners, Ken served as its treasurer. He was also a member of the East Amwell Agricultural Advisory Committee for 10 years and served as a director with Farm Credit for nine years. Ken was a member of the Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture for more than 60 years, and served on the Hunterdon County Board of Agriculture's Executive Committee. Ken's service to his community extended to his 50-year-plus tenure with the Amwell Valley Fire Company and his life membership with the New Jersey State Fireman's Relief Association, as well as his work as a member and trustee of the United First Presbyterian Church of Amwell.



These men who contributed so much and who were so loved and respected will be missed by us all.

Best regards,

Robert M. Goodman

Executive Dean for Agriculture and Natural Resources
Executive Dean of Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
Executive Director of the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

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