A MESSAGE FROM THE
EXECUTIVE DEAN
OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

March 2007

Faculty and Staff Activities and Accomplishments

At the 2007 Rutgers NJAES Emma Lausten Symposium on Cook Campus, Michael P. Parrella, associate dean for agricultural sciences and professor of entomology at UC–Davis, received the Emma Lausten Horticulture Award from NJAES Director Mark Robson. Parrella is a Rutgers graduate who has made extensive contributions to floriculture integrated pest management (IPM). The 2007 symposium focused on the future direction of IPM in New Jersey. (Photo: Mark Robson, left, presents Michael Parrella, right, with the Emma Lausten Award.)

Distinguished Professor Dipak Sarkar (Animal Sciences) received the prestigious gold and silver medals from the Physiological Society of India for significant research contributions in the field of physiological sciences. Sarkar gave the Suva Mukherjee Memorial Oration lecture entitled “The Potential Use of Neuronal Stem Cell Transplant Therapy in Stress Disorders” at the award ceremony. The lecture was presented at the Annual Physiological Society of India Meeting in Kolkata on December 8, 2006.

Barry Jesse (Animal Sciences) was appointed as associate dean for academic administration within the office of Academic Programs and Research, replacing Les Small, who recently retired. Jesse will be responsible for oversight of all academic programs at the undergraduate level. He will manage curricular processes in coordination with the curriculum coordinators, and will support the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee and the Academic Forum. Jesse will also provide faculty oversight of the cooperative education and internship programs of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.

Nancy Maxwell (née Brill), field technician at RAREC, had her article, “My Turn: And on This Farm She Found a Future,” selected for publication in the March 5 issue of Newsweek magazine. The article can be found here.

Karyn Malinowski, director of Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension, received an assembly commendation from Assemblymen Jeff Van Drew and Nelson Albano, representatives of New Jersey’s first legislative district, to recognize her selection for the 2007 Rutgers Lifetime Achievement Award. An article profiling Malinowski’s work was featured in the Star-Ledger and can be found here.

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.

Julie Lockwood (Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources) served on the National Science Foundation review panel for Dissertation Improvement Grants in Ecology.

Sarah Ralston (Animal Sciences) was featured in the “Research Advances” section of the Fall 2006 issue of Association for Women in Science magazine. Her research and her role as director of the Rutgers University Young Horse Teaching and Research Program were described by author Carmen Drahil of Princeton University.

Patricia Brennan, senior extension trainer, was the recipient of the 2006 Financial Planning Association (FPA) New Jersey Friendship Award for increasing public awareness about the financial planning profession and championing support for the profession at FPA’s dinner meeting at the Woodbridge Hilton on December 5.

The Monmouth County 4-H Club–NJ Children’s Chamber Choir performed at the White House in early December and stayed at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Maryland, during their visit. Their performance aired December 15 on the Home and Garden Television network.

Brad Majek, Extension Specialist in Weed Science, has been made a Fellow of the Weed Science Society of America (WSSA). The recognition was bestowed upon Majek at the 51st Annual Meeting of the Weed Science Society of America in San Antonio, Texas.

Student Activities and Accomplishments

The Rutgers Turf Bowl Team, composed of Tim Sibicky, Christopher Skvir, Justin Hughes, Danielle Skoba, and Zane Raudenbush, finished in ninth place in the 2007 Turf Bowl Competition at the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America Education Conference and Golf Industry Show in Anaheim, California. The Rutgers undergraduate team competed against 80 other teams from colleges and universities throughout North America. The competition tested the students’ knowledge of all facets of turfgrass science, including pest biology and control, physiology, species identification, soil science, and turfgrass management. Richard Hurley and Bruce Clarke, Rutgers Turf Club Advisers, helped to prepare the team last fall by conducting a special problems course in turfgrass science designed to provide a practical review of key subjects in turfgrass science. (Photo l. to r.: Bruce Clarke, Christopher Skvir, Danielle Skoba, Justin Hughes, Tim Sibicky, Zane Raudenbush, and Richard Hurley.)

Linda Rohleder, a Ph.D. candidate in Joan Ehrenfeld’s lab, was awarded a $350 scholarship from the Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries, to attend the 2007 Special Pinelands Plants course offered by the Pinelands Preservation Alliance.
Heather J. Orlando, a senior majoring in biological sciences and minoring in Spanish, and Tiffany S. Tsay, a senior majoring in biological sciences and minoring in mathematics, have been elected to Phi Beta Kappa, the oldest college academic honorary society in America. Phi Beta Kappa membership honors students who have done distinguished work in a liberal arts curriculum, including foreign language study, throughout their undergraduate years.

Inga LaPuma, a Ph.D. candidate in Rick Lathrop’s lab, has received a NOAA National Estuarine Research Reserve Graduate Research Fellowship. LaPuma will receive three years of funding at $20,000 per year. Her proposal was titled “Assessment of landuse and disturbance scenarios in the Jacques Cousteau National Estuarine Research Reserve watersheds using spatial modeling.” LaPuma also received a $500.00 student travel grant from NASA-MSU to go to the Landscape Ecology conference in April.

Grants and Fundraising Efforts

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 Bioexploration (GIBEX) 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. A workshop will be organized to develop partnerships with representatives from the pharmaceutical, nutraceutical, food, and cosmetic industries to further economic development. Raskin’s project was one of 10 selected from 85 submitted to the NCIIA’s Sustainable Vision program.

Dipak Sarkar (Animal Sciences) will receive $242,953 from NIH for year 8 of his grant, “Alcohol and Hyperprolactinemia.”

Mehmet Uzumcu (Animal Sciences) is beginning the second year of his NIH grant, “Epigenetic Effect of Methoxychlor on Ovarian Development.” The total award for this period is $163,400.

Laura Bovitz, Middlesex County 4-H Agent, received a $1,265 Youth-in-Action grant, established by Cumberland Farms through the National 4-H Council, for Project GIFT and a $250 Wal-Mart Community grant, to support the 4-H Project GIFT Event, December 2006.

Julie Lockwood (Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources) received a $152,000 grant from the Critical Ecosystems Science Initiative, National Park Service, for “Recovering small Cape Sable seaside sparrow subpopulations: The breeding and dispersal of sparrows in the eastern Everglades.”

Jeannette Rea-Keywood, Cumberland County 4-H Agent, received $1,500 Youth in Action Grant, established by Cumberland Farms through National 4-H Council, for 4-H Building Strong Families Community Garden Project.
Debi Cole, Atlantic County 4-H Agent, received a $1,500 Youth-in-Action grant, established by Cumberland Farms through National 4-H Council, for New York Avenue School Parent Resource Center.

Christopher Obropta, specialist in water resources, received $120,013 from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 319(h) Grant Program as a subcontract to the North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc. to assist in the development of a Watershed Restoration Plan for the Musconetcong River. Obropta also received $103,975 from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, 319(h) Grant Program as a subcontract to the New Jersey Institute of Technology to assist in the development of a Watershed Restoration Plan for the Neshanic River.

Barbara O’Neill, specialist in financial resource management, received $10,000 from the New Jersey Credit Union Foundation for working with the New Jersey Coalition for Financial Education to develop a tabletop youth financial simulation and teacher training. O’Neill also received $10,000 from the National Council on Economic Education for working with the New Jersey Coalition for Financial Education to update and distribute the newspaper tab “Money: What Young Adults Need to Know” and $1,200 from the Consumer Federation of America with the NJ Coalition for Financial Education for New Jersey Saves Week activities.

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.

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.

Gef Flimlin, Ocean County Marine Extension Agent (co-PI with Fred Wheaton, UMD, project coordinator), received $20,000 from the Fourth National Aquaculture Extension Conference, USDA funding for NRAC Extension Travel and Program Support, for the period September 15, 2006–August 15, 2007.

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 Jhilson 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.

*Full grants listings for March can be found [here](#).*

**Publications and Editorships**

**Jennifer Krumins** (Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources), a doctoral candidate in Peter Morin’s lab, has been selected to receive the 2006 JBS Haldane Prize for her article published in the journal *Functional Ecology*. In addition to the £250 prize money, the award includes a year’s membership to the British Ecological Society and a year’s subscription to *Functional Ecology*. The Haldane Prize recognizes the best paper published by a young author in *Functional Ecology*. The article, “Indirect effects of food web diversity and productivity on bacterial community function and composition,” appeared in the June 2006 issue.

**Mark Robson**, director of NJAES, is an editor of a new book published by Jossey-Bass (an imprint of Wiley). The book, entitled *Risk Assessment for Environmental Health*, was released last month.

**Conference, Seminars, Other Events**

**Jerome L. Frecon**, Gloucester County Agricultural Agent, gave the Ernest Christ Memorial Lecture at the Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention, Hershey, PA, January 31.

**Nilgun Tumer** (Plant Biology and Pathology) was an invited participant at the NIH-organized conference on Optimizing Positive Hits for Potency and Safety in Anti-Infective Drug Development in Washington, D.C., February 7–8.

Postdoctoral Associate **Andre Hudson** was invited to make a presentation at his undergraduate alma mater, Virginia Union University on February 19. The title of his talk was “A New Pathway for Diaminopimelate/Lysine Biosynthesis.” He presented data describing a new lysine pathway in bacteria, most notably in pathogenic organisms that he is studying now as a post-doc in the laboratory of Tom Leustek (Plant Biology and Pathology). He reported that the Virginia Union students were very interested in the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences biotechnology undergraduate program and research opportunities available through the Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment.

**Jim Wohlt** (Animal Sciences) presented an invited talk, “Monitoring Dairy Heifer Growth: Tapes or Scales,” at the 2007 Delmarva Dairy Day held January 24 at the Delaware State Fair Grounds in Harrington. This talk was also published in the *Proceedings of the 2007 Delmarva Dairy Day, A Focus on Calf and Heifer Raising*. Coauthors with Wohlt were **Caitlin Reich** (an undergraduate animal science major) and **Jim Ferguson** (University of Pennsylvania).
Roger Locandro, professor emeritus, gave the keynote address at New Jersey Forestry Association’s Annual Meeting on March 3. The address was titled “Sustainable Forests—Suburban Shade Trees to Tropical Rain Forests.”

Members of the Cumberland County Board of Agriculture came to Cook Campus earlier this month for tours and informational sessions. They visited the turf farm (left) to learn about Rutgers’ turf programs and germplasm from Bill Meyer, the hort farms to learn about ornamental plant production from Joseph Goffreda, Tom Molnar, and Elwin Orton, and heard a presentation on GIS use in farming over lunch. The group finished their visit by touring Jim Simon’s (Plant Biology and Pathology) laboratory.

In Memoriam

The Cook community mourns the loss of Edmund (Ted) Stiles, professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Natural Resources. Stiles, who passed away March 7, will be remembered as a tireless champion for land preservation and conservation. Friends, colleagues, and former students have contributed their remembrances to an online “memorial,” which may be visited here. Stiles’ passion for teaching and outreach live on in the dedicated open spaces surrounding Hopewell, where he and his family lived. An op-ed recalling Stiles’ longtime leadership of the Friends of Hopewell Valley Open Space can be read here. A fellow Hopewell Valley resident, Rep. Rush Holt, has entered a tribute to Stiles in the Congressional Record; that tribute can be found here. On Saturday, March 24, a celebration of Ted’s life was held at Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association, with more than 500 attending.

Stiles is survived by two children from his first wife, Benjamin Wheeler Stiles of Durham, NC, and Kaelyn Elizabeth Stiles of Madison, WI; his second wife Michele Stiles of Hopewell; and three siblings, William Stiles of Oxford, OH; Judy Cook of Laurel, MD; and Joan Bell of Glendale Springs, NC.

Donations may be made to the Ted Stiles Conservation Fund c/o the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association, 31 Titus Mill Road, Pennington, NJ 08534.

Please send contributions, photos, and questions to Amanda Kolling, kolling@aesop.rutgers.edu, Office of Communications. Photos must be high-resolution and should add to the editorial value of a submission (i.e., the photo should represent some action, such as receiving an award or giving a lecture). The Dean’s Monthly Message is published on the last Monday of each month. Deadline for submissions is one week prior to publication.