Benjamin Campbell will join the Department as Assistant Professor and Extension Economist, beginning in August 2012, with a 75% percent extension and 25% research appointment. He earned his B.S. and M.S. from Auburn University in 2001 and 2003 respectively, with the Masters thesis of “Fruit Quality Characteristics That Affect Consumer Preferences for Satsuma Mandarins.” Dr. Campbell earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics in 2009 from Texas A&M University, with the thesis of “Essays on Away From Home Eating by Adults and Children Within the U.S.”

From 2010 to 2012 he served as a Research Scientist in Horticultural Economics at the Vineland Research and Innovation Centre in Vineland Station, Ontario, where he established and ran the horticultural economics program and conducted market research and analysis, and new product integration in the Canadian horticultural market.

Dr. Campbell has an impressive publications record with more than nineteen articles published in peer reviewed publications and six articles currently in review, with an additional four working papers to date.

About his appointment, Department Head Rigoberto Lopez says, “We are very pleased that Ben is joining us and look forward to his contributions—the role of Extension economist is an important, new position, that will help to put current economic information into the hands of stakeholders who rely upon it, and his impressive record of publications so early in his career speaks volumes of his considerable scholarly abilities. We welcome Ben and his family to Storrs and to the ARE family.”

The Zwick Center is assisting dairy farmers across the state with results that impact their bottom line. A 2009 study by Center Director Rigoberto Lopez on the economic impact of the dairy industry in Connecticut galvanized support in the state legislature to create Connecticut Public Act 09-229, which established a fund to make quarterly support payments to dairy farmers when a minimum sustainable cost of production (COP) exceeds the milk price, based on USDA’s Vermont COP.

After USDA suspended publishing COP for Vermont in December 2010, the Zwick Center, at the request of the Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture Steven Reviczky, began estimating COP, following USDA methodology and data. These estimates, by Lopez and graduate student Adam Rabinowitz, have been the basis for more than $4 million in support payments to farmers in the last year, which have had an impact on dairy farm sustainability and the state’s economy.

Lincoln Chesmer of Greywall Farm in Lebanon, part of the Farmer’s Cow group of Connecticut farms, said, “The support we received from the state provided financial support to more than just Graywall Farm. We hired a full time equipment operator who has improved the drainage, access and the edges of our fields to increase the productivity of our land and ultimately our farm. We also hired a local contractor and electrician to make upgrades to our milking parlor and paid down revolving loans. At the end of the day the support payment not only helped dairy farmers but everyone we do business with here in Connecticut from veterinarians to Willard’s Lumber and everyone in between.”

With the ultimate goal of transitioning to Connecticut-based COP, Professor Boris Bravo-Ureta in partnership with UConn’s Cooperative Extension Service, is working to produce farm-specific business summaries with the assistance of graduate student Jeremy Jelliffe. Following the Cornell model, they are conducting farm-level surveys around the state in order to produce farm business summaries and cost of production that is specific to Connecticut dairy farms.

*portions of this article appeared in Naturally@UConn
Graduate student Rachael Shenyo.

Spotlight On: Rachael’s Shenyo’s Study of Climate Change

Rachael Shenyo has undertaken a research project in the Cuchumatanes and Sierra Madre Altiplano highlands in the Departments of San Marcos, Quetzaltenango, and Huehuetenango, Guatemala, in order to perform an economic impact analysis of the effects of climate changes on the region’s different altitudes. This work is an extension of work she and her colleagues started while she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in 2002.

The data collected is being used to create a business case for the creation of a non-profit organization that would serve a scientific and advisory role in assisting the coordination of policy makers, development specialists, and rural farmers and landowners. The expectation is that the non-profit could reduce the lag time of connecting emerging appropriate technology to the people who need it most, and thus be a very powerful tool for combating environmental degradation and climate change.

Rachael and her colleagues work with individuals who farm at the subsistence level 7,000’-13,000’ above sea level. They work with several of the various indigenous Maya Indian groups who inhabit the highland region, similar in many ways to Peru’s Altiplano region. The Guatemalan cloud forests/Altiplano region is considered to be one of the most ecologically vulnerable places in the world, and Guatemala has been listed as the country second most impacted by climate change in 2010.

Previous work identified methodologies that reduced the impact of deforestation, and focused on providing alternative livelihoods to the people living there. Future directions will involve efforts to expand agricultural education, identify cheap protein sources for people and animals, develop new markets, introduce fast-growing sustainable fuel crops, improve water storage, and to further diversify production options in the highlands. It is hoped that an innovative social entrepreneurship model can be used to provide a framework for other development regions in fragile ecosystems to use for their own efforts. Her project was recently featured in UConn Today; please visit http://today.uconn.edu/blog/2012/03/graduate-student-helping-others-adapt-to-climate-change/
Congratulations to Boris Bravo-Ureta, who was chosen as the recipient of the 2012 College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Excellence in Research Award.

Yizao Liu presented “Whose and What Chatter Matters? The Impact of Tweets on Movie Sales” at NYU’s Stern School of Business’s NET Institute Conference on Economics in April.

Farhed Shah, with Yoon Lee (Ph.D.’09) and current Ph.D. student Taeyeon Yoon, published “Optimal Watershed Management for Reservoir Sustainability: An Economic Appraisal” in Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management.

Syma Ebbin was elected eastern region Chair of the Long Island Sound Assembly. She organized the Legal Solutions of Coastal Climate Change Adaptation in Connecticut conference, funded by National Sea Grant Law Center with matching funds from The Nature Conservancy and CT Sea Grant.

US Senator Richard Blumenthal provided the lunchtime keynote address.


Ph.D. student Chen Zhu presented “The Use of Voluntary Marketing Initiatives to Improve the Health Profile of Kids Cereals” in the International Industrial Organization Conference in March at George Mason University School of Law at Arlington, Virginia. The paper is a joint work of Zhu, her advisor Rui Huang, and Michael Cohen (Ph.D. ’09).


As part of his work with the US Coral Triangle Initiative, Robert Pomeroy co-organized with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration an expert consultation on the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on tropical nearshore fisheries and ecosystems in March 2012 in Bohol, Philippines.

Faculty Update

Students and donors were honored at the Scholarship and Awards Banquet on March 16, 2011. Above left: Graduate students Alexis von Rhode, Elena Castellani, and Eric Njuki. Above right: Graduate students Ian Yue, Eileen Underwood, Huadu Zheng, Chen Zhu, and Tsvetan Tsvetanov at the Scholarship and Awards Banquet.

Resource Economics undergrads will participate in internships this summer at: Citibank-Institutional Clients Group, New York; Sikorsky Aircraft-Bridgeport, CT; Paragon Sports Marketing, Chicago, IL; Travelers, Hartford, CT; and US Department of Trade, Middletown, CT.

Robert Pomeroy, fourth from right, in Bohol, Philippines.

Alumni Update

Benaissa Chidmi (Ph.D. ’06) was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure at the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics at Texas Tech University, effective Fall 2012.

Chelsea Briggs (B.S. ’11) is a Marketing Consultant at AXA Equitable in Farmington, CT, where she works to support the Life Marketing and Communications team with all of their external communication efforts, as well as with graphic design.

Eisenhower Douglas, (M.S. ’77), visited the Department in April. He is the Chief Economist of Trade and Sustainable Development in the Commonwealth of Dominica. He earned his Ph.D. in Economics in 2008 from the University of the West Indies with the thesis “Sustaining Economic Development in a Small Island Developing State: the Case of Dominica.”

Samuel Franco (B.S. ’11) is a associate business manager at Cargill in Iowa City, Iowa. Cargill is an international producer and marketer of food, agricultural, financial, and industrial products and services.

Kendall Erskine (B.S. ’11, with Honors) is a Marketing Strategist at New Benefits in Dallas, TX, a discount medical & lifestyle benefit provider.

From the archives: Professor Rigoberto Lopez, far right, and a group of Resource Economics students visit the World Trade Center in New York to observe the commodity futures exchanges, circa fall 1992.

Do you have news for the Alumni Update?
Send to ResourceEconomics@uconn.edu