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Faculty Profile: Marilyn Altobello

Marilyn Altobello’s interest in economics began as an undergraduate at Albertus Magnus College in New Haven, which led to a masters degree in the subject from the University of Massachusetts-Amherst. During her graduate studies there, she developed a passion for food and resource economics and stayed on to earn a second masters degree and a Ph.D. in resource economics.

After a year of working in Washington, DC for the USDA as a agricultural economist, she was hired as an Assistant Professor at the University of Arizona-Tuscon where she worked for two years. She joined UConn in 1978 as an Assistant Professor, and became an Associate Professor in 1984.

Her early work at UConn focused on the marine industry in the state, fisheries, and water resource issues. She was involved with the Long Island Sound Study and researched the economic value of the Sound for the Environmental Protection Agency and the benefits of improving water quality.

Her research and outreach in the nineties focused on land use issues and farmland preservation, and for the past twelve years she has worked on the Connecticut Farm Risk Management Program, analyzing programs for producers and advisors on products, markets, legal and financial issues, and human resources. Visit the project’s website at www.ctfarmrisk.uconn.edu.

Bumper Crop of Graduate Students for Fall 2011

More than forty five graduate students from around the world—including twenty who are new to the program this year alone—are enrolled in graduate programs, the largest number in the Department’s history.

This group includes three new fellows in the USDA’s Watershed Management M.S. program, and a diverse body of students from countries including Haiti, China, and Germany who are drawn to the program by its high ranking among peer institutions.

Graduate Programs Chair and Associate Professor Farheed Shah agrees that the Department’s superior ranking at the national and international levels is a major factor in explaining this year’s boost in enrollment. He added that the “Department’s doctoral program is now also being viewed favorably by the University in comparison with ones it offers in other disciplines. This is very encouraging.” He was referring to a recent report submitted to the Provost by the Committee for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Programs in which the ARE doctoral program is selected as among the few poised to achieve national distinction.

Ian Yue, a new Master’s student in the Watershed Management program from Wheaton College of Illinois said “I chose to attend the University of Connecticut for my graduate studies because it gave me the opportunity to pursue a degree program that integrates the natural and social sciences within a relevant and internationally-focused framework. Having the freedom to work at the intersection of these two disciplines, with the enthusiastic support of faculty across various departments, has been wonderful.”

“We are thrilled with this year’s crop of graduate students,” said Department Head Riguobert Lopez. “They are engaged in high caliber research and study, and we look forward to their contributions to the Department.”
**News Flash!**

The Zwick Center Names Advisory Board, Hosts Dairy Summit

The Food Marketing Policy Center, now renamed the Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy following the generous $1 million gift of Charles J. Zwick ('50, '51), has a new Advisory Board, a new look to its website, and a research agenda that will further the Center’s reputation for excellence. The center will have two main areas of focus: food marketing and industrial organization and environmental and natural resource economics.

The Center’s Advisory Board is made up of stakeholders and policymakers from around the country; the group held their inaugural meeting in November to set a research agenda and meet with the Center’s faculty members. That month the Center also hosted a dairy cost of production group that brought stakeholders, policymakers, and farmers together with researchers in the field to discuss needs and strategies and to chart a path towards a future where each state will set their own cost of production.

The Zwick Center’s website has a new look and an easier navigation of the many publications and resources of the Food Marketing Policy Center. Twitter and Facebook pages have brought the Center into a new era of communication with researchers and stakeholders. Visit www.ZwickCenter.uconn.edu, or email ZwickCenter@uconn.edu for more information.

Master’s student Justin Grimm-Greenblatt spearheaded a community garden effort that will partner UConn students, the Asian American Cultural Center, and the UConn Floriculture Greenhouse with a Windham school. They are hoping to break ground on their garden in the spring.

Undergrads Wesley Nichols and Carly Olson were selected by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture for two internships in Summer 2011.

Senior Cassandra DeLone has been accepted to UConn’s Urban Semester program in Hartford for spring 2012.

Resource Economics major Manisha Bicchieri was chosen by UConn Today for a video profile and article highlighting her commitment to the environment and to helping other students. To see her story and watch the video, visit www.today.uconn.edu; online readers can click here.

“Economic Impacts of Connecticut’s Agricultural Industry” was featured in UConn Today on November 30, 2011.

The article highlighted the contribution of agriculture and the role of the College in the state economy. For more information, click here or visit www.today.uconn.edu.

Graduate student Michée Lachaud spent the summer at the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington as intern in the Office of Evaluation and Oversight. From Port-au-Prince, Haiti, Michée is specializing his research on poverty economics, green accounting, and microfinance.

Above: Connecticut Commissioner of Agriculture Steve Reviczky, CANR Dean Gregory Weidemann, Lopez, and Massachusetts Commissioner of Agriculture Scott Soares.

Congratulations to Ph.D. student Christopher Jeffords, winner of the Association for Social Economics’ William R. Waters Graduate Research Grant for 2011.

Graduate students Mary Thuo and Betty Asekenye represented the Department at Cornucopia Fest in September by educating attendees about the Peanut Collaborative Research Program’s project in Africa.
Joshua Berning has an article written in Choices, Issue 14E titled “Evaluating excise taxes: The need to consider brand advertising.” With Stephen Swallow, Jon Volin (NRE), Thomas Worthley (NRE), he had a seed grant accepted by the USDA, NIFA, “Feasibility of a Local Wood Products Network for Rural Lands in Urbanizing Regions: A Pilot Study in Southern New England.”

Boris Bravo-Ureta was recently awarded a grant from the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, “Interaction between Productivity Growth and Environmental Factors for Multi-Output Farms with a Dairy Focus” for September 2011-August 2015. He served as the President of the Scientific Committee for the 3rd Regional Congress of Agricultural Economics that took place in Valdivia, Chile November 9-11, 2011.

Rigoberto Lopez hosted visitors from Vietnam’s Nha Trang University in November. From left, Nasrin Rashad, Lopez, President Vu Van Xang, Dr. Nguyen Thi Kim Anh, and Nguyen Ngoc Duy.

Farshed Shah has published “Economics of integrated watershed management in the presence of a dam” in Water Resources Research. Vol. 47. His co-authors were Yoon Lee (Ph.D. ’09) and current Ph.D. student Taeyeon Yoon.

Stephen Swallow was awarded the Del Favero Fellowship for 2011-2012. This fellowship prioritizes attracting or retaining junior or recently hired tenure-track faculty, is a renewable term appointment, and is intended for faculty who have demonstrated or have the potential for national scholarly reputation. He will receive the interest income from the initial down payment of the endowment given by Mr. Richard DelFavero earlier this year, for research support.
Alumni News

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

Sylvie Tchumtchoua (Ph.D. ’09), now a Postdoctoral Associate in the Dept. of Statistical Science at Duke, visited the Department in September as part of the Seminar Series and presented “A Functional Generalized Linear Model Approach to Demand Analysis.”

Master’s student Jeremy Jelliffe visited with Orlando Penaloza (M.S. ’99) during a visit to Chile this summer to study that country’s wine industry.

Congratulations to Richard Stammer (Ph.D. ’71) who was recently promoted to CEO of Agri-mark. He was formerly the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Agri-Mark, and President and Chief Executive Officer of Cabot Creamery.

Samantha Wallad (B.S. ’11) is an project manager/implementation consultant at Epic, an electronic medical software record company in Madison, Wisconsin.

Andrew Marcus’ (B.S. ’11) independent study: “Economics and Business of the Tennis Industry”, advised by Joshua Berning, helped him to develop a business plan that won the Connecticut Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation’s (CCEI) $10,000 prize in the Business Plan Competition, along with Jesse Silko (B.S. ’11). Andrew and Jesse are using the prize money to launch their new company, My Tennis Lessons, which connects students and tennis instructors. Check out their site at http://mytennislessons.com/