Richard DelFavero Donates $1.5 million for Endowed Chair

Richard DelFavero ('56 '58) has donated $1.5 million to establish the DelFavero Chair in Agricultural and Resource Economics. This generous gift is the second endowed Chair in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Since graduating more than fifty years ago, he has remained in an active role at the University. A member of the Founders Society of the UConn Foundation, he is a lifetime member of the UConn Alumni Association and established an endowed scholarship with the Department, the DelFavero Agricultural Economics Fund.

He was also honored with the Charles and Augustus Storrs Award on April 28, 2011, the highest recognition of the College.

DelFavero has roots in farming and graduated in 1956 with a degree in agricultural engineering and in 1958 with a master’s degree in agricultural economics. He had a long career in building with DelFavero Builders, a company started by his father, building hundreds of condominiums and buildings in the state. He has retired to northern Vermont to Hayward Farm, where he manages 125 head of cattle.

“[This gift] will allow us to recruit top-notch faculty to advance research, national visibility and ranking,” said Professor and Department Head Rigoberto Lopez. “We thank Mr. DelFavero and his family for their unwavering generosity and commitment to the Department, the College, and the University.”

Yizao Liu to Join Department as Assistant Professor

Yizao Liu will join the Department as Assistant Professor in Fall 2011.

She earned her undergraduate degree at Renmin University in China in 2006, her Master’s degree from University of Texas-Austin in 2008 and her Ph.D at the University of Texas-Austin in May 2011. The title of her dissertation was “Three Essays on Fuel Efficiency and Vehicle Demand Dynamics.”

Ms. Liu will have a 50% research and 50% teaching appointment in industrial organization and applied econometrics with a focus on food, energy, and the environment. Her article “Chatter Matters: How Twitter Can Open the Black Box of Online Word-of-Mouth” is currently Revise and Resubmit at Marketing Science; in it she used word-of-mouth data on movies from Twitter to investigate the effect “chatter” on movie box office revenues.

Ms. Liu said, “What excites me the most is having the privilege to work in a nice environment that is surrounded by brilliant minds. Those often bring unexpected inspirations.”

Professor and Department Head Rigoberto Lopez said, “We are thrilled to have Dr. Liu join a thriving Department of faculty committed to advancing research in the fields of agricultural and resource economics. Her work on the effect of social networking on revenue is especially timely. She will be an asset to our growing program.”
Faculty Profile: Joshua Berning

Joshua Berning was appointed Assistant Professor in August 2010. He was formerly a Post Doctoral Fellow with the Food Marketing Policy Center in the Department from 2009-2010. He holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Washington State University, a M.S. in Forest Resources with an emphasis in forest economics from the University of Idaho, and a B.A. in Economics from Valparaiso University. For his dissertation, he studied how the provision of nutrition information in grocery stores affects consumers.

His areas of interest include applied microeconomics, food marketing, and industrial organization. His recent research has focused on television advertising restrictions for soft drinks—long thought to be a cause of obesity due to empty calories and sugar content. Specifically, he has examined the impact of an advertising ban on consumer demand as well as firm behavior.

Asst. Professor Joshua Berning

He is currently developing research that looks at the effect coupons—which have increased in use since the recession that began in 2008—have on the food people buy. He is also developing research that examines how economic insecurity influences consumer behavior that effects health outcomes such as obesity. He submitted a grant proposal with Dr. Rui Huang to the USDA that would allow him to research how social media marketing can be used by farmers’ markets in the state.

Dr. Berning chose UConn because of the opportunity to conduct research in the area of food marketing, particularly using household level scanner data that is gathered at a point of purchase. Such data allows him to look at trends over time, and to perform a detailed analysis of consumers’ buying habits of particular products. He also enjoys the opportunity to interact with both undergraduate and graduate students at the University.

News Flash!

Anthony Ortiz has been awarded a David Boren Graduate Fellowship for 2010-11 to work in Indonesia on improving small-scale fisheries. He was awarded a FLAS Fellowship to study Indonesian in Summer 2010 at the Southeast Asia Studies Summer Institute at the University of Wisconsin.

Graduate students Taeyeon Yoon, Grace Lemunge, Alexander Maas, and Tsvetan Tsvetanov were nominated for induction to the Phi Kappa Phi honor society, the country’s oldest and most selective honor society for college students.

Lianna Meskun checked in from South Africa, where she studied this semester after being awarded the Dorothy Goodwin International Experience Fund. She said, “In addition to seeing the beautiful landscapes of the Table Mountain Range and the Indian and Atlantic Oceans’ meeting, I am able to see the beauty in people’s everyday work. The organizations that we are volunteering with and interning for are all working for a better South Africa, and the dedication and commitment that these people offer despite the overwhelming obstacles is amazing.”

Graduate student Rachael Shenyo was awarded a $2500 Tinker Foundation grant by the Office of Latin American and Caribbean Studies. She will use the grant money to perform research for her Master’s Degree Plan B paper. She will return to the Cuchumatans in the Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, to perform an economic impact analysis of a sheep genetics and management project she and her colleagues started in 2003, while she served as a Peace Corps volunteer in the region.

Yarelys Tifa, a graduating Senior, was featured by UConn Today as an outstanding student in the Class of 2011. Following graduation, she will begin a position with UTC Otis Elevator as a sales representative trainee. Read her full profile by visiting http://today.uconn.edu/?p=33429
Student News

Congratulations to Senior Andrew Marcus, who was recognized by the UConn Club as an Outstanding Senior Scholar-Athlete. Captain of the Men’s Tennis Team, Andrew is a member of the UConn Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and started a chapter of Kids Serving Kids in Washington, DC to recycle and distribute tennis rackets to underprivileged children.

Photo courtesy of UconnHuskies.com

Faculty News

Professor Robert Pomeroy has co-edited a book, Small Scale Fisheries Management: Frameworks and Approaches for the Developing World. He has recently been asked to join a research and extension project, Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM) in the Coral Triangle, supported by funds from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and administered by the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP). Dr. Pomeroy’s time commitment to the research project will be six months a year for each of the next three years. Please visit http://www.are.uconn.edu/research/coraltriangle.html for more information on this project. He traveled to Shanghai, China in April to attend the annual AquaFish Collaborative Research Support Program meeting and the 9th Asian Fisheries and Aquaculture Forum.

Professor Emeritus Ronald Cotterill was the recipient two prestigious awards this semester. He received the University of Connecticut’s chapter for the American Association of University Professors’ Excellence in Research Award and the Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association’s Award for Outstanding Public Service Through Economics. He is shown left at an AAUP awards ceremony at the State Capitol with State Representative Gregory Haddad (center) and State Senator Tony Guglielmo (right), both UConn graduates.

Michael Cohen has accepted an appointment as Assistant Professor of Marketing at New York University’s Stern School of Business. He will continue his research in quantitative marketing and Bayesian econometric models, as well as teach an undergraduate course in marketing principles and a Ph.D. course in Bayesian statistics in marketing. He graduated from UConn in 2009 with a Ph.D and has been both a post doctoral fellow in the Food Marketing Policy Center and assistant professor in residence in the Department.

Congratulations to the Department’s Administrative Assistant, Karen Nye, on her selection as the recipient of the UCANRAA Outstanding Staff Member Award. Karen has worked in the Department for nearly twenty-five years and is most deserving of this honor.
Congratulations to Jason Hoagland (B.S. ’01, MBA ’08). He was featured as one of Hartford Business Journal’s “40 under 40.” A senior loan officer and assistant vice president at Farm Credit East in Enfield, Jason began working with Farm Credit during a 2000 internship as an undergrad. He currently manages a $65MM loan portfolio in the Enfield office, trains new credit staff, and manages summer interns.

Won Il Kim (M.S. ’08) is now an Agricultural Officer at the Plant Production and Protection Division of the Foreign Agricultural Service in Rome, Italy, where he is responsible for sustainable and greenhouse horticulture.

Yoon Lee (Ph.D. ’09) stopped by for a visit in March following a trip from Seoul, Korea to New York for a conference on sustainability at the United Nations. He is a research fellow at the Korean Environment Institute in Seoul.

The Department was very glad to hear of the safety of three Japanese alumni who survived the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in that country. Shigekazu Kawashima (Ph.D. ’03), now Associate Professor at Miyagi University in Sendai, Japan, wrote to say that he and his family were alright, but that his university was badly damaged. Ryoko Kawai (Ph.D. ’96) wrote from Tokyo that she was fine and that her home had sustained little damage from the earthquake. Shinano Hayashi (former Ph.D student), now living south of Tokyo in Kamakura, wrote that he and his family have volunteered to deliver food and water to local elderly, amid rolling blackouts and the fear of radiation contamination. We send our thoughts to these alumni and to all of the citizens of Japan as they rebuild following these disasters.

After graduation Orlando Penaloza (M.S. ’99) worked for the Chilean Ministry of Agriculture in the National Institute of Agricultural and Animal Development and spent two years as Chile’s agricultural attaché to Korea. He has recently returned to Chile to work in the private sector.

Stefano Baldi (M.S. ’07) emailed to say he is working as an agricultural assistant for the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service in Rome, Italy. His former classmate Pasquale DiRubbo (M.S. ’07) is working as a policy advisor for Copa-Cogeca, the largest lobby in Brussels, Belgium for European Union farmers’ unions and agricultural cooperatives.

Alissa Becker (B.S. ’08) has been promoted to Sustainability and Philanthropy Manager at UNFI, Inc. in Providence, Rhode Island. She joined the company in 2008 as Environmental Coordinator. View her career profile http://www.are.uconn.edu/undergraduate/careerprofiles/abecker.html

Emeritus Professor Tsoung-Chao Lee caught up with László Rieger (M.S.’ 88) on a recent trip to Budapest. Dr. Rieger is currently the General Director of the Department of Rural Strategy in the Hungarian Ministry of Rural Development in Budapest and is responsible for long term strategy for the country’s rural areas, and issues relating to GMOs and biodiversity.

Congratulations to Mary Thuo (M.S. ’10), the recipient of the Sidney P. Marland, Jr. fund in Education Leadership for the award of outstanding minority graduate student in Education Leadership, Neag School of Education. She is a Ph.D. student in Adult Learning, Department of Education Leadership at the Neag School of Education, sponsored by the Peanut Collaborative Research Program (PCRSP).

Alexandre de Almeida (Ph.D. ’10) has been appointed Assistant Professor of Economics at Federal University of São Carlos in São Paulo, Brazil, one of the top ten universities in that country.