

**Agricultural and
Resource
Economics**

Volume 9, Issue 1 ♦ Fall 2016

Reporter

Academic Programs Renamed

At the beginning of the fall semester two ARE academic programs were renamed. The undergraduate major in Resource Economics and the Master of Science program in Agricultural and Resource Economics both changed to Applied and Resource Economics. According to Department Head Rigoberto Lopez, the names of the two programs were changed to more accurately reflect the training students receive through coursework and, in doing so, align the programs with the contemporary job market. The name of the PhD program—Agricultural and Resource Economics—remains the same.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- ♦ Faculty & Student News
- ♦ International News
- ♦ Alumni Updates
- ♦ ...and more >>>

In Memoriam: Nataliya Plesha

On July 21, 2016, we learned of the passing of ARE PhD student Nataliya Plesha. Already an accomplished academic and an award-winning teacher, Nataliya was in the process of finalizing her doctoral dissertation when her life was cut short. As a tribute to the Department's beloved student and friend, Nataliya was posthumously granted her PhD in a ceremony that took place on September 29. With her family in attendance, UConn faculty, staff, and students gathered to commemorate Nataliya's extraordinary contributions and celebrate the life of a caring, dedicated and talented individual, who will be dearly missed.



New Faculty

The Fall semester saw two new faculty members added to the ARE Department: John Bovay (left), who joined as an Assistant Professor and Extension Economist, and Pengfei Liu (right), who joined as an Assistant Research Professor with the Department. John Bovay holds a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the University of California-Davis in 2014, and was an economist with the USDA's Economic Research Service, before coming onboard with ARE, where he will focus on food policy, food and agricultural economics, and Extension. Pengfei Liu earned his PhD from UConn ARE in August 2016, receiving several funding awards for his work as a graduate student. He will have a 100% focus on research in his current appointment, specializing in public goods provisioning, resource economics, and behavioral economics.



Faculty and Student News

One Professor's Research Goes From Global to Local

Nathan Fiala has begun a research project on the growth of extremely poor households, ones that face significant income, food and health insecurity. He will conduct primary quantitative data collection with a sample of extremely poor households in one of the major poverty centers in Connecticut such as Bridgeport, New Haven, Hartford and Willimantic, which have some of the most concentrated poverty in the US. The research poses two particular challenges. The first is how to identify the sample to survey because identifying and speaking with extremely low income households is not easy. To identify individuals that are willing to participate in surveys, Fiala will reach out to various stakeholders, including End Hunger Connecticut, Connecticut Food Policy Council, as well as various soup kitchens, SNAP offices and homeless shelters. The second issue is how to then conduct a survey with these individuals. This will be done through face-to-face interviews and consumption diaries. A team of undergraduate students will be trained in conducting surveys, with a PhD student overseeing the data collection team.



Nathan Fiala

EPA Awards \$800,000 to ARE Faculty

Three ARE faculty members will lead a new study via the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency that looks into the value communities and citizens put on water quality. Stephen Swallow, Pengfei Liu and Charles Towe are among the six investigators of "Valuation of Water Quality Change in Environment and Economy Context: Ecosystem Services across Gradients of Degradation and Local Economic Interest," with Swallow serving as principal investigator. The ARE faculty members join three other UConn professors from the Engineering and Natural Resources departments for the study, which will employ a preference function model to measure how communities value increases in water quality. The grant totals \$799,994, and the project is scheduled to run through June 2019.



Visiting Professors

During the Fall Semester, three professors from institutions around the globe came to UConn to work with ARE faculty on issues important to their areas of study.

Paulo Scalco, of the Federal University of Goias (Brazil) has been in residence since the summer, and has been working with Rigoberto Lopez on industrial organization and econometrics. Rene Villano, of the University of New England (Australia) joined Boris Bravo-Ureta to conduct efficiency and productivity analysis through the lens of international development. And Farhet Shaheen, of Sher-e-Kashmir University in India, is working with Farhed Shah on hydroeconomic modeling for river basin management. He will remain in residence at UConn through the Spring 2017 semester.



From left: Rene Villano, Paulo Scalco, Farhet Shaheen

Graduate Students Receive Fellowships

Ph.D. students **Jacques Julien** and **Tianjie Chen** have received a \$2000 Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship from the Graduate School, for Spring 2017.

Joanne Zegarra Kamiche has been awarded a \$2000 pre-doctoral fellowship by El Instituto, to support travel to professional conferences related to her research on access and use of information concerning agricultural activities.

Graduate Scholarships

Stanley K. Seaver Scholarship Fund— Xi He

Charles J. Zwick—Leticia Riva

Stewart Johnson Scholarship Fund—Gabriel Marmolejos

Ellen Bishop Carder—Victoria Rose Croog, Gabriel Marmolejos and Timothy Murray

Paul Putnam Professional Development—Jiaoyuan

Huang, Jeremy Jelliffe, Pengfei Liu, Jacques Julien, Xi He, Zhenshan Chen and Yuan Niu

Faculty and Student News

Thanksgiving International Potluck

The **Agricultural and Resource Economics Graduate Student Organization** held a Thanksgiving multicultural potluck on November 18th at the Storrs Friends Meeting. Students, faculty and staff attended, contributing food and beverages, many that highlighted their country's cuisine. The event also featured a Talent Show for attendees who have a talent or hobby to share with the ARE family.



Carina Immer on the Spotlight

The December 14th CAHNR blog, Naturally@UConn featured ARE undergraduate student, **Carina Immer**. Carina, who is also minoring in Latin American Studies, was attracted to the interdisciplinary opportunities offered by the major in resource economics. Her minor complements her major, given her interests in labor rights and agricultural development in Central America. She has been interning with a fair-trade and single-origin coffee company called Vega in Estelí, Nicaragua and plans to graduate in May 2017, and hopes to work in the food industry, especially in international trade policy or sustainable food systems, or in sustainable energy.



Prof. Bovay and Undergrads Attend the NY Produce Show and Conference

Professor John Bovay attended the New York Produce Show and Conference at the Javits Center in Manhattan on December 6–8, where he gave a presentation on the “Economic Effects of the Food Safety Modernization Act”. Four undergraduate ARE majors—**Connor Cinque, Audrey Folta, Owen Maloney, and Vanessa Wolfe**—joined Bovay on the trip, where they had the opportunity to network with potential employers and tour the Hunts Point Produce Market in the Bronx. Wednesday was a busy day, when everyone attended the Keynote Breakfast, the Trade Show, featuring more than 300 exhibitors, and the Student Mentoring Program, which included a Q&A with former Walmart Senior VP Bruce Peterson and a panel of several other produce industry executives.

Undergraduate Scholarships

DelFavero Agricultural Economics Fund— Joshua Miller and Kevin Harris

Russell Palen Fund— Carina Immer, Brian Barrette, Katharine Eagleson, Kasey Mahan, Anthony Blake, David Benedetti and Anna Esposito

Irving and Justine Fellows Fund— Tyler Imbo

Marvin W. Kottke— Jack Sweeney and Meghan Patulak

CAHNR Scholarships— Evan Lyman, Daniel Munch, Alyssa Condon, Malia-Lin Cordero, Caleb Paul, Connor Cinque, Audrey Folta, Matthew Sniffen, Timothy Murray, Scott Caggainello, John Ciesta, Daniel Fortin, Christian Allyn, Keith Kreuger, Marina Coleman and Nikitas Petrides

Lars Demander

Lars Demander (MS 2015) was a keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Working Lands Alliance, on November 12th, in Hartford. Demander, who runs Clover Nook Farm in Bethany, CT, spoke about the importance of state funding and how it has been used to successfully transform his family's farming operation. Established in 1765, Clover Nook Farm has been run by eight generations of Lars's family and now operates a produce market that offers in products grown on the farm, as well as other locally grown fruits and vegetables.

CAHNR International

Marcela Pineda Santos and Manuel Gomez Lugo students from the Pan American School of Agriculture at El Zamorano University (<https://www.zamorano.edu/en/>) in Honduras will do four-month internships at UConn in spring 2017 (in ARE and Plant Science).

Chris Bruno Publishes in JFDR

ARE Undergraduate alumnus **Chris Bruno's** Honors Thesis, "Students' Willingness to Pay for More Local, Organic, Non-GMO and General Food Options," was published in the *Journal of Food Distribution Research*. Bruno, who was supervised by Prof. Ben Campbell graduated in May 2016, is now working for McLagan, a leading Performance / Reward consulting and benchmarking firm for the financial services.

JunJie Wu Named 2016 AAEA Fellow

JunJie Wu (PhD 1992) was named a 2016 Fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association - the AAEA's most prestigious honor. According to the AAEA, Wu "has made seminal contributions to the design of agro-environmental policy, spatial modeling of land use change and its economic and environmental impacts, and nature-human interactions in the evolution of rural and urban development." Dr. Wu is currently a professor and the Emery N. Castle Chair in Rural and Resource Economics at Oregon State University. He is also the editor of the *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*.



L-R: Natalie Viera, Victoria Croog and Chris Bruno at the May 2016 graduation ceremony

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