MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It’s all about people.

By the beginning of this summer the department saw Dr. Amar Mohanty sign on as our Premier’s Chair in Biomaterials and Transportation. Dr. Mohanty will be on campus as of late fall and will be joined by his wife and research partner Dr. Manju Misra. Dr. Misra will be appointed to the School of Engineering as an associate professor and she will have a cross appointment to our department. These appointments are a formal marking of the Universities movement into research into the Bioeconomy, and importantly to us they mark our department’s leadership in this area on behalf of the entire university.

Early summer was also the time for Dragon boating. Thank you to Istvan Rajcan and Wade Montminy for organizing this event and whipping the Secan Agronauts into shape – good enough shape for a 9th overall in a field of 33 boats... behold the paddle cry!

This summer also saw the continued arrival of many new graduate students to the department. Our intake this year has been much greater than any of the previous 5 years and we are thankful for it. Congratulations to the faculty who have successfully recruited so many new and excellent students. We also thank Jean Wolting, Bernie Grodzinski and Duane Falk for facilitating the intake and Eric Page, Liz Brauer and the GSLC for welcoming them and helping them to fit in.

In early September Jim Hoare was recognized for his outstanding commitment to the department and his often unsung IT support work with a University Community Service award. Jim was also awarded the Susanne Sproul award for his contributions both within and outside the university community. At this same ceremony our entire office staff team; Agnes Belosic, Deb Hilborn, Angela Hill, Judy Kelly, Jen Kingswell, Beth Livingstone, Angie Trivett, Jean Wolting and Jenny Van de Kamer were recognized with the Exemplary Team Recognition Award. We know we have the best support staff on campus and it is good to see it recognized in a formal manner in front of the entire university.

As we settle into the fall semester we reflect on the department’s role in the University and the broader community and we recognize that the role we play is a function of who we are. It’s all about people.
A Message from the Graduate Co-ordinator: 
A New Record for Graduate Student Enrolment

It should have been obvious to everyone in late May and early June that we were in the midst of an external review of our graduate program, the first real review as a joint department in over 7 years. But for me there was a deeper concern that I felt I could not express until now. I was concerned as a senior faculty member that PAg was experiencing too large a reduction in enrolment figures in both undergraduate and graduate programs to remain vibrant. It is not my place here to comment about the undergraduate programs but as we enter the Fall semester of 2007 I sense the first signs that the downward trend in our graduate enrolment number can be corrected. The projection for this fall is that we will have 85 students in PAg and that this return to at least levels of earlier years is due to active recruitment of 19 new students, a record enrolment number for us in a single semester. For those who live on results, the student’s and their advisor’s names are listed below in this “welcome”. There are 12 new MSc and 7 new PhD students. In addition, other files being processed indicate that there still could be additional students in place by the October cut-off date for fall registration.

This strong enrolment projection follows a period when the university and some faculty actively invested in recruitment. Is this an accident of 2007, or, rather a sign of a change that can be sustained? My assessment of this healthy enrolment number is that it may be a blip in 2007 but it is no accident! The high enrolment is the result of an aggressive attempt over many months to improve the pool of funding for graduate studies and by some faculty to recruit students who can compete well in their application for funds. I know as the Co-ordinator that when funding opportunities arose internally we were in most cases able to recognize and capture support because applications from faculty and student records when submitted were excellent. I must congratulate those in the faculty who took on the challenge in 2006-7 in helping to turn our faltering numbers around by becoming even more active in their willingness to share information on prospective students and support graduate programs through both external grant applications and internal competitions for graduate student support.

Unfortunately, we did not have the new enrolment figures back on May 29th and 30th 2007 when The Ontario Council of Graduate Schools’ (OCGS) external consultants, Dr. Daniel Cantliffe (University of Florida) and Dr. Graham Scoles (University of Saskatchewan) were on campus. But it was clear in talking to them before they left, that they had already gleaned information and recognized that there was a concerted effort to strengthen the graduate programs and the funding base. In my opinion their external report sent to the Dean of Graduate Studies recently was a fair document overall and challenged legitimately both upper administration and all in our department that includes the Chair, the Graduate Co-ordinator(s), the faculty and the students.
The report emphasizes the need for more communication and interaction between the faculty advisor, the advisory committees and the student. Both the Chair and I will be more vigilant in helping to maintain these working relationships. A departmental and university response to their external report is being prepared currently. But I will share some personal first reactions about this external report and what must occur now.

Initially my reaction was one of considerable relief that we had 7 years more to test our revised programs before the next review. A 7-year-pass was one of the best results possible and reflects the fact that despite some concerning statistics in our report to OCGS the externals recognized that we could turn the corner. Jean Wolting (our Graduate Secretary), forever the pragmatist, reminded me that it was equivalent to a 4-year-pass before the department would need to go through this exercise again. Her calculation is based on the fact that we are well into year 2 already because we were late on the last review round and we would need to prepare documentation for the next external evaluation 1 year before the next review and site visit. Thus, if correctly tallied and OCGS remember their long established timetables, we have 4 years to prove the trust afforded by this new 7-year license. Fortunately, this is my second and last year as Graduate Co-ordinator so the “fun” of experiencing an OCGS review process again will fall on one of my younger colleagues. Will she or he have a good news story to relate in 4 years?

I think it is possible. However, much effort will be required to make it so. Important changes must take place in the next few semesters. We hope to implement all changes to the calendar stemming from departmental discussions and votes in 2006-7. The changes to the curriculum, the prospect of more funding from large network applications (in the mil), new faculty arriving, are all factors that should sustain graduate activity. Maintaining the momentum we have this Fall is not going to occur automatically, but it is comforting to me that students will enjoy more structured programs and time tables to completion then have been experienced of late. One other reassuring trend hidden in the new enrolment numbers is that we were successful in recruiting students from outside Guelph. I am encouraged by the fact that 12 of the 19 new students earned degrees from outside our campus. Given the reality that our undergraduate numbers remain low, our graduate student core number appears sustainable.

In summary, a Warm Welcome to each new student (listed below) who is joining us this September and to the many returning. My hopes are for your continued success.

Best Wishes,
Bernie Grodzinski.
Graduate Co-ordinator, PAg
**MSc.**
Amelie Gaudin de Rodriguez, MSc, Manish Raizada
Joel Hemingway, MSc, Istvan Rajcan
Amy McNaughton, MSc, Istvan Rajcan
Siobhan Moore, MSc, Lewis Lukens
Blair Nameth, MSc, Manish Raizada
Adam Pfeffer, MSc, William Deen
Chase Phillips, MSc, Gary Ablett
Shezad Rauf, MSc, Barry Micallef/Bernie Grodzinski
Jeffrey Simpson, MSc, Barry Shelp
Michael Tessaro, MSc, Manish Raizada
Christophe Liseron-Monfils, MSc, Manish Raizada
Muhammad Riaz, MSc, Peter Pauls

**PhD**
Sameh, Mahmoud, PhD, Manish Raizada
Emilia Orozco, PhD, Theo Blom
Monica Parker, PhD, Mary Ruth McDonald
Mitra Serajazari, PhD, Art Schaafsma
Ildiko Szucs, PhD, Bernie Grodzinski
Mehrzad Eskandari, PhD, Istvan Rajcan
Helle Thomsen, PhD, Gopi Paliyath

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**NSERC - deadline date** please have application to department - October 5, 2007
http://www.nserc.ca/sf_e.asp?nav=sfnav&lbi=2a

**OGS - deadline date** to get application to department - October 19, 2007
http://osap.gov.on.ca/eng/not_secure/OGS.htm

**Information Sessions**
OGS - September 12, 2007, 2-4 p.m. in Rm 103, U.C.
NSERC - September 18, 2007, 9-10:15 a.m. in Rm 103, U.C.
I grew up on my family’s cash crop and hog farm just outside of Brussels, ON, and have been involved with primary agriculture my entire life. This is where I developed my love for farming and my passion for agriculture. I became interested in plants and more specifically plant genetics initially in high school biology classes and that interest grew during my undergraduate studies at the University of Guelph, where I obtained a B.Sc. (Agr) degree with a major in agronomy. That interest of plant genetics combined with my passion for agriculture has led me to where I am today, pursuing my M.Sc. degree in the field of soybean breeding. My advisor is Dr. Istvan Rajcan and my studies are part of the BioCar project, which plans on developing automobile interiors completely made from bioproducts produced from agricultural crops.

When I am not at school, I enjoy playing sports, especially hockey and soccer. I am also a member of the University of Guelph’s OAC Weeds Team, which competes in an international competition each summer where we are required to solve weed science related problems.

When I am finished with school, I hope to find employment in the agriculture industry where I can aid farmers by either providing services to help solve their crop related issues or conducting research to develop new ideas and products that will allow them to farm more efficiently and sustainably.

If you would like to see one of our past grads featured please drop them a line and have them send their feature article and picture to me at: jjkelly@uoguelph.ca
Like any ‘true’ Canadian, Monica is only partially ‘truly’ Canadian. She was born in Romania to her Romanian mother and Canadian father and immigrated to Canada as a one year old infant. Her parents were both science types, engineers, and her mother was distinguished by the Science Council of BC as the Woman in Science and Technology for the year as a role model to encourage young women to pursue an education and career in the sciences; hence, her interest in the sciences.

Unlike not being a true Canadian, she is essentially a true Vancouverite, having lived in the Greater Vancouver area since she immigrated to Canada. She completed her BSc and MSc at Simon Fraser University and within one week of her MSc defence, she was on a plane to South East Asia for a 6 month journey that lead her through the Philippines, Laos, Burma and Thailand.

Upon returning to Canada, she returned to Dr. Punja’s lab for one year to document the arrival of a previously unreported pathogen in BC, work that was much related to her MSc thesis. After completing this assignment, she was off to begin her overseas career as a volunteer teacher in Rwanda. She taught science in French to secondary students and who learned more during his period is debatable, the students in science or her in French.

After some small assignments with various NGO’s in Rwanda, she became a Technical Assistant for the Rwandan Ministry of Agriculture having a mandate to facilitate the government to develop and launch its horticultural sector. Her particular objective was to develop and implement a program for passion fruit, which was beginning to witness its demise in Rwanda in light of the disease problems plaguing the crop.

Following her assignment with the ministry, Monica shifted to the private sector and worked on an export flower farm as their Program Coordinator. In the end, she spent 6 years in Rwanda and had a truly unique experience in the country as for the most part, she lived and worked there independently without representation by an organisation.
Shawn Clark

First recipient of the GSLC

The GSLC is proud to announce Shawn Clark as the first recipient of the Graduate Student Volunteer Award. This annual award of $500 is presented to a student whose volunteer efforts have contributed significantly to the department. Shawn was nominated for this award by his fellow students and was presented with a trophy and cheque at the departmental picnic. Shawn was nominated because of his contributions to departmental functions including the College Royal display, the departmental retreat and numerous sporting events. Shawn has also played a role in the department’s course restructuring by participating in the GSLC course review working group and the OCGS graduate program review. Most importantly, Shawn initiated and moderated a graduate student journal club during which students presented and discussed current articles from a wide range of sources. This club not only expands students’ breadth of knowledge, but also allows them to practice presentation skills in front of a group of their peers. Overall, Shawn has demonstrated leadership and a genuine interest in the betterment of the Plant Agriculture department. Congratulations Shawn!

As is the only way to close a major event in her life, she ended her time in Rwanda with a journey, this time what was supposed to be a 6 week circle through Burundi, Tanzania, Kenya and back to Rwanda ended up being a 3 month journey beginning in Kenya and that saw her getting stuck in Lamu, technically Kenya but a place that beyond a doubt stands on its own.

She returned to Vancouver in mid August only to do an about face two weeks later and move to Guelph to further her education. She will be supervised by Drs Mary Ruth MacDonald and Greg Boland to do her PhD in Phytopathology and Plant Agriculture. She has been looking forward to this for almost 2 years now as it was in January 2006 that she first met with her Supervisors.

After graduating, she will pick up her career where she left off, only this time in a different location. Where, what, well only fate and the future behold. One thing that she is sure of though, she has witnessed poverty on less than the 1US dollar a day proverbial threshold and she wants to contribute to creating wealth in the developing world to reduce poverty that is the unfortunate reality of too many of the world’s inhabitants, while simultaneously promoting environmentally friendly and sustainable livelihoods. For now while she will be in Canada, she will try to endure the Canadian winters without complaining and accept the fact that she must begin to wear socks.
Let us congratulate

Praveen Saxena who will be awarded the 2007 OAC Alumni Association Distinguished Researcher award and

Manish Raizada who will be awarded the 2007 OAC Alumni Association Distinguished Teacher Award.

Praveen and Manish, you bring honour to the department through your extraordinary efforts and we congratulate you on being selected as the recipients of these prestigious awards. Well deserved!

Thanks to Angela Hill and all the former students who had written glorious letters for Manish and Dr. Dennis Murr who nominated Praveen [and did all the hard work!!!]

It is very gratifying to see that we have got all the three [Helen Fisher- OAC distinguished Extension award last year] in two years!!! Our next goal should be to hit the home run - get all three. We from the award committee will do our best to reach that goal.

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HUME TO BE HONOURED
(taken from the June 14, 2006 at GUELPH)  

At the convocation ceremony for the Ontario Agricultural College June 15 at 2:30 p.m., retired crop science professor Dave Hume will be named University professor emeritus.

Hume began his teaching career at U of G in 1966 and became chair of the Department of Crop Science, which later became the Department of Plant Agriculture, in 1992. From 1999 to 2001, he served as executive director of the U of G/OMAFRA research partnership. In 2001, he was named U of G's interim associate vice-president (research) for agri-food and partnerships. He returned to teach in the Department of Plant Agriculture in 2003 and retired in 2005.

During his career, Hume made significant strides in the expansion of the soybean crop in Ontario. His work also provided the foundation for the expansion of spring canola and the introduction of winter canola in Ontario. He was the first scientist in the world to publish research on day-length insensitivity in soybeans and the impact of cool night temperatures on soybean seed production and to identify the physiological reason for improved yields in modern soybean cultivars.
Congratulations to Zeinab Yadegari & Ali Taheri on the birth of their baby daughter, Dorsa was born Saturday, June 16 @ 3:24pm. All the best to mom, dad & baby Dorsa.

Dennis Paul Slater arrived on July 1st. He weighed in at 7 lbs. 15 oz. Mom, Dad (Susan and Paul) and Dennis Paul are all doing great! Congratulations

Number 11 for gramma Kelly on the Simcoe campus. Makayla Rose was born on Saturday Sept. 15, 2007 Weighing in at 9 lbs 4 oz. In Ormond Beach Hospital, Florida
At the Vineland Centennial Celebration’s Community Day in August 2006, a bench to the memory and legacy of Moses F. Rittenhouse was dedicated. On June 19, 2007, The Moses F. Rittenhouse Memorial Bench was unveiled under the impressively large wing nut tree on the grounds of the Vineland Campus. The unveiling ceremony was a simple one with Dr. Alan Wideman (Vice President-Research, University of Guelph) and Mr. Larry Rittenhouse (descendent of Mr. Moses F. Rittenhouse) speaking.

The Bench is representative of the continuing legacy of a new era at the Horticultural Experiment Station - Vineland. Mr. Donald Ziraldo, Chair of the Interim Board of Directors for the recently created Vineland Research and Innovation Centre (VRIC), introduced the new CEO, Dr. Jim Brandle, for VRIC. Dr. Karl Volkmar (Research Manager, AAFC – London) and Deputy Minister Bruce Archibald (OMAFRA) provided supporting comments.

Prior to the ceremony, staff from AAFC, OMAFRA and University of Guelph gathered for a barbecue.

Seated: Donald Ziraldo, Chair, Board of Directors, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre; Larry Rittenhouse, descendent of Moses F. Rittenhouse and Heritage Historian
Standing: Dr. Alan Wildeman, Vice-President (Research), University of Guelph; Dr. Bruce Archibald, Deputy Minister, Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs; Dr. Jim Brandle, CEO, Vineland Research and Innovation Centre; Dr. Karl Volkmar, Research Manager, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada; Dr. Danny Lee Rinker, Chair, VCC and Faculty, University of Guelph
On Tuesday July 31, 2007, the OAC Weeds Team arrived at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Coached by Dr. Clarence Swanton and assisted by Allan Kaastra, David Van Dam, and Daryl Vermey, one graduate and four undergraduate teams of University of Guelph students on the OAC Weeds Team competed in the 2007 Northeastern Weed Science Society's Collegiate Weed Science Contest. The purpose of the contest is to provide an educational experience for students in northeastern Canadian and U.S. universities by broadening their applied skills in agriculture and to test what they've learned. A total of 45 graduate and undergraduate students participated from six universities. The universities represented were Guelph, Nova Scotia Ag College, Cornell, North Carolina State, Penn State, and Virginia Tech.

All students participated in weed identification, herbicide identification, farmer problem solving, and sprayer calibration. For weed identification, the students had to identify a particular species and also choose a correct biological characteristic of that weed. In herbicide identification, students were shown injured crops and weeds and had to identify the herbicide that caused the injury, name its chemical class and mode of action, and choose a chemical or physiological property of the herbicide. During the farmer problem solving event, students were presented with customer complaint scenarios in invasive weed management in a riparian zone, perennial weed control in orchards, turfgrass, pasture, vegetable crops, or agronomic crops like corn and soybean. Sprayer calibration had two components for the students, a written math test and the assembly and calibration of a backpack sprayer.

For the fourth year in a row, Guelph's undergraduates won the Weeds Contest and, for the third time in a row, swept the top awards. The first place OAC Weeds Team members were Craig Reid, Jeff Hyatt, and Scott Snowe; the second place team was Joel Hemingway, William Judge, and Adam Pfeffer; and the third place team was Margaret Caldecott, Kelly O’Connor, and Lisa Dirksen. The team of Caldecott, O’Connor, and Dirksen were the first all female OAC Weeds Team that Guelph submitted into the contest. Reid, O’Connor, and Pfeffer were the top three undergraduate individuals at the Weeds Contest. Reid received the top individual mark overall in both the undergraduate and graduate categories which was the first time that an undergraduate accomplished this feat. Reid had the top marks in herbicide injury identification and weed identification. Several team members were acknowledged for their top ranking in solving individual farmer problems. The graduate student team also performed well and placed third out of 9 teams. The third place graduate student OAC Weeds Team members were Allan Kaastra, David Van Dam, and Daryl Vermey.

Guelph undergraduate teams have dominated the Northeastern Weed Science Society's Collegiate Weed Science Contest with 13 first place finish wins since 1983. Special thanks go to Peter Smith and Dr. Kris Mahoney for their contributions to the success of the 2007 OAC Weeds Team. Congratulations and good luck in 2008!
HAPPENINGS

ANNUAL SUMMER BAR B Q
Sorry I missed it but I hear a great time was had by all
Anyone look familiar???
WINNING RECIPE

This year’s winner of the dessert contest is Jean Wolting. Below Jean has shared her fabulous recipe. Congratulations and thanks Jean.

Banana Split Squares

Base:
- 2 cups oreo cookie crumbs (you can also use graham wafer crumbs)
- 1/3 - 1/2 c margarine, melted
- 1/4 brown sugar

Mix and press into a 9 x 13 baking dish. Bake at 350 for 5 minutes.

Let cool.

Layers:
- Cover the cookie crumb base with a layer of your favorite ice cream flavor (I buy rectangular cartons and open the whole carton and slice the ice cream.)
- Cover with a layer of bananas (slice the bananas on an angle you’ll get larger pieces)
- Cover with a layer of chocolate sauce
- Cover with a layer of cool whip
- Sprinkle with peanuts

Freeze.

Cut in squares and serve.

Enjoy

Turfgrass Management Program

I am pleased to report that the Associate Diploma in Turfgrass Management Program was ranked #2 in North America by the U.S. trade publication Turfnet. The article can be found on page 12 of the July, 2007 edition. You can view it online at:

http://turfnet-digital.com/

Credit for the ranking of the program should be shared by faculty, staff and especially our students and graduates who have done such an exceptional job representing the program across North America and beyond.

Rob Witherspoon, Director
Guelph Turfgrass Institute & Environmental Research Centre
Plant Agriculture Awards Breakfast
On September 6th, 2007 I joined colleagues and friends at the Awards Breakfast in the soccer dome at the University of Guelph. Staff, faculty and students enjoyed a fantastic breakfast as well as the camaraderie. Thank you to those responsible for this great morning. Congratulations to all the winners.

Jim Hoare (below) was recognized for his outstanding commitment to the department and his often unsung IT support work with a University Community Service award. Jim was also awarded the Susanne Sproul award for his contributions both within and outside the university community.

Presidents Award for Exemplary Staff Services
From left to right Back Row: Agnes Belosic, Beth Livingston, Jenny VandeKamer, Jean Wolting. Front Row: Jeninifer Kingswell, Angie Trivett, Angela Hill, Deborah Hilborn and Judy Kelly

Godfrey Chu
Presidents Award
25 yrs Service
Prof. Thijs Tollenaar
Zorka Szlavnics
Donna Hancock
Have you experienced the UoG Portal?
By Jim Hoare, IT Tech.

MyPortico (https://myportico.uoguelph.ca) is your University of Guelph Portal to an array of online services and information resources which are based your UoG userid. Services available include: WebMail, UoG News, ‘People Search’, Calendar, MyPortico Forums, Briefcase, ‘My Library Account’ (status of your borrowed books, fines and more) and for students: Courselink. Once logged into MyPortico, your single login allows you switch between these services without needing to log into each one separately.

One little known feature of MyPortico is “MyBriefcase” that needs further explaining. Briefcase allows individuals to maintain a personal set of folders and files. Briefcase represents your personal file storage in the University of Guelph’s Central File Service (CFS). This quota is not the same as that for your email! Currently, the MyBriefcase quota for students is 100 MB, and the quota for faculty and staff is 400 MB. The advantages of Briefcase include: a) it provides access to your files via the Internet and b) it provides a highly secure storage location for your files.

For further information on this feature, refer to: https://myportico.uoguelph.ca/NetHelp/default.htm

Navigate to MyPortico Content, then Collaboration, and finally to Briefcase.

COMING EVENTS

2007

International Plowing Match and Rural Expo 2007 - Leeds Grenville County
September 18 to 22, 2007.
For more information go to: http://www.plowingmatch.org/

Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show - October 2 to 8, 2007, at the Simcoe Fair Grounds, 172 South Drive, Simcoe, Ontario.
For more information go to: http://www.norfair.com/

Royal Agricultural Winter Fair - November 2 to 11, 2007, at the Direct Energy Centre, Exhibition Place, Toronto, Ontario.
For more information go to: http://www.royalfair.org/

Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Convention—February 20 and 21, 2008, Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario.
For more information go to: http://www.ofvc.ca/
WebSites

The Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada (OACC) hosts Canada's national website for organic research and education. In addition to information on organic certification, research and extension materials, virtual farm tours, and publications and links to other organic agriculture web pages, this site includes a very comprehensive listing of courses in organic agriculture. The courses are web-based, campus-based (credit and non-credit), Canadian and international. Information on curriculum development for organic agriculture education is also provided. http://www.organicagcentre.ca/Courses/course_welcome.asp

Not necessarily organic but devoted to reducing your personal agroecological carbon footprint, The “100 Mile Diet” has become a popular idea recently. Here are some websites and articles that discuss the practicality of eating only locally produced food i.e.

Becoming a locavore: http://www.locavores.com/
About the diet: http://100milediet.org/category/about/
Sudbury Foodsheds: http://www.foodshedproject.ca/
Manitoba: http://100milemanitoba.org/
Food Down the Road (Kingston): http://www.nfu.ca/on/Releases/background%20info-food%20down%20the%20road.htm
Edible Toronto: http://www.edibletoronto.com/
Tools: 100 Mile mapping link: http://100milediet.org/map/

The book that brought the idea to the public’s attention, “The 100-mile diet: a year of local eating” is available in the library.