New Professor in Dairy Genomics

The Department of Animal and Poultry Science is pleased to announce Prof. Christine Baes as the Semex – Canadian Dairy Network (CDN) – Holstein Canada Professor in Dairy Genomics effective June 1, 2015.

Baes will serve Canada’s dairy sector through research, participation in key conferences and events, and training of genetics professionals.

“To be appointed to this position is a tremendous honour,” she says. “I look forward to continuing the department’s tradition of excellence in research and teaching and actively contributing to the success of the Canadian dairy industry.”

Baes has a PhD in animal science and six years of postdoctoral experience.

The position is supported by a $750,000 gift from Semex Alliance, Canadian Dairy Network and Holstein Canada.

Award Presented to Beef Industry Research Leader

Tim McAllister, a scientist who has helped reduce the impact of E. coli and mad cow disease on the Canadian livestock industry, has received the final H.R. MacMillan Laureate in Agriculture award from the University of Guelph and OAC.

McAllister was honoured on Feb. 18 during the OAC winter convocation and gave the convocation address to graduating students.

Awarded every five years, the $10,000 prize recognizes significant leadership in Canadian agriculture. A national panel of academic and industry leaders selects the recipients.

The award was established in 1964 by the late H.R. MacMillan, a 1906 graduate of OAC, to celebrate the college’s 100th anniversary. Since 1969, the award has been presented 10 times; this year marks the award’s last presentation.

“It’s a privilege to honour Tim’s exemplary industry and scientific leadership through the final instalment of the award,” said OAC dean Robert Gordon. “Not only is he an excellent scientist and science leader, but he also has the ability to translate his discoveries and knowledge into practical use, and this has bolstered his impact on the industry in Canada and beyond.”

McAllister is a principal research scientist — the highest research rank in the public service — for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC).

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Supporting the Next Generation

The OAC Alumni Foundation exists to support the development of future agri-food leaders. In this issue we provided our message space to the Student Federation of the Ontario Agricultural College (SFOAC) president to further connect OAC students with the extended family of OAC alumni.

Mark Ostrowski, B.Sc. ’79
OAC Alumni Foundation Chair

SFOAC Update

As I write this update, we are starting week six of the winter 2015 semester. It’s hard to believe that we are halfway done, but that’s the way it goes! Winter semester flies by with all the events that happen on campus. We have already hosted some memorable events this year such as our annual Good Times Banquet and the OAC Winter Games.

Every year for Good Times, the Student Federation of the Ontario Agricultural College (SFOAC) pulls out the old class banners from the library’s archives. I always find it exciting to unroll the banners one more time and let the classes of yesterday enjoy another “good time.”

It was pretty amazing that we had class banners from 1918 to 2018 (our first-year students) displayed together in the same room. I find it humbling to know that OAC students and alumni are part of a 140-year-old family.

That’s the beauty of being an Aggie. We are part of a bigger family, both here on campus and out in the working world, and we know how to have fun.

To all OAC alumni, if you’re ever on campus, stop by the Aggie lounge and say “hi.” We’d be happy to meet another member of our extended family.

In Aggie Spirit,

Elliott Armstrong
2014-15 SFOAC President

Signing Off as President

Where did the year go? I guess this is something we all think when an anniversary or significant date rolls up. It has been a busy year for the OAC Alumni Association (OAC AA), and as we approach our annual general meeting in May, it feels like we were just hitting our stride when we saw the finish line approaching.

It has been a good year for me as president of the OAC AA. I had the pleasure of working with many new OAC AA members on various committees that are working on advancing the many events that the OAC AA leads.

One thing that I really came to appreciate is the strength and the bond of the OAC Aggie brand. Over the past year, whenever alumni and current students were approached to participate in a project or event, the immediate answer was, “Yes, absolutely. Sign me up.” No hesitation, just a desire to be part of the Aggie family and give back. That is the value of our brand: it transcends age and time.

Signing off for another edition, on behalf of your OAC AA directors and members, I wish you and yours a safe and fantastic summer. Work hard, play hard and have fun. If you want to get involved in the OAC AA, just drop us a line. We’ll be happy to involve you.

Peter Ilnyckyj, B.Sc.(Agr.) ’78
2014-15 OAC Alumni Association President

OAC Alumni Weekend 2015

This year’s Alumni Weekend is shaping up to be another fantastic opportunity to come back to campus, learn what’s new, tour facilities and meet up with classmates! With new and returning events, the weekend of June 12 to 14 is going to be a good one.

New this year is a celebration dinner and concert for alumni on Saturday evening. Dinner is a casual event featuring great food, great friends and a great time. The meal will include a buffet of themed food stations prepared by U of G’s award-winning food services staff. After dinner, the party continues at Peter Clark Hall in the University Centre, where you can dance the night away to music by the band God Made Me Funky!

A number of OAC classes are celebrating milestone anniversaries this year, and the following OAC classes are hosting reunions: OAC 1948, OAC 1960, OAC 1975 and OAC 1980. For a complete list of reunions and more information on Alumni Weekend, visit www.alumni.uoguelph.ca/alumni-weekend.

Contact Martin Straathof, OAC alumni advancement manager, at tstraath@uoguelph.ca for information on upcoming OAC events, how to get involved or general inquiries.
Alumni Support Alternative Learning

The OAC Learning Trust is an initiative that I am extremely proud of. It provides OAC students with opportunities to engage in hands-on learning experiences, often in an international context, to enhance their classroom knowledge and grow their global awareness.

In 2014, the trust distributed more than $35,000 to special experience initiatives for our students and supported a total of 19 projects.

This past year we supported four associate diploma experiences, including an international study tour in Belize. Twelve projects were supported at the undergraduate level, including a field course in international agriculture in Costa Rica, design communication workshops for landscape architecture students and the 21st annual Environmental Science Symposium. At the graduate level we supported three projects, including the Graduate Student Council Annual Colloquium.

The learning trust is unique and shows the dedication of our alumni to the success of future generations of students. That’s another reason why I am so proud of this initiative. The trust exists because alumni have decided to give back and extend support to ensure that current and future students have opportunities for learning, development and travel.

The most recent example of this was showcased at the OAC Good Times Banquet. On behalf of the OAC Class of 2007, Eric Hogervorst presented a $10,000 gift to the OAC Learning Trust. I commend and thank the ’07s for their dedication, support and leadership. I am proud of you.

It is because of generous gifts by alumni to the OAC Learning Trust that hundreds of our students have special learning opportunities that enhance their education through real-world experiences.

Robert Gordon, PhD ’96
OAC Dean

Continued from page 1

He has worked at AAFC’s Lethbridge Research Station since 1987.

“This is a well-deserved recognition of a researcher who personifies scientific excellence,” said Gilles Saindon, acting assistant deputy minister, science and technology branch, AAFC. “Tim’s hard work, commitment, knowledge and experience are an invaluable asset not only to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and the agricultural sector, but also to the entire country.”

McAllister has authored or co-authored almost 500 peer-reviewed papers, and he is a sought-after speaker and scientific collaborator across Canada and around the world.

His research in rumen microbiology, nutrition, beef production, food and environmental safety, E. coli mitigation and antimicrobial resistance in bacteria has been crucial for the livestock industry. His unique work and collaborations on prion inactivation helped Canada’s beef industry manage the effects of the devastating mad cow disease crisis in 2003.

“Obviously this is a huge honour and represents the combined contributions of many individuals within our research team and the numerous collaborators we have had over the years,” said McAllister. “Being paid to learn is a great job and one for which the challenges are endless, as there is always the opportunity to learn more.”

He is an adjunct professor at five Canadian universities and at Colorado State University, the University of Sydney and China’s Dalian University of Technology.

A contributing member of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, McAllister has received numerous international awards, including the Public Service Excellence Award from the Canadian prime minister.

He holds a B.Sc. in agriculture and an M.Sc. in animal biochemistry from the University of Alberta, and a PhD in ruminant nutrition and microbiology from U of G.
Out and About with OAC
A collection of photos featuring alumni and students
To submit photos, email Martin Straathof at tstraath@uoguelph.ca.

1 • Prof. Andy Robinson and son Matt are perhaps the first father and son to sport matching class jackets. Andy is a professor in the Department of Animal and Poultry Science and the honorary class president for the OAC Class of 2018, Matt’s class year.

2 • Kemptville Campus instructor William Hennessy plays volleyball at the 2015 OAC Winter Games.

3 • Students from the Alfred, Guelph, Kemptville and Ridgetown campuses came together in January for the 2015 OAC Winter Games.

4 • Scott Allan submitted this photo of his grandfather James Allan (second from the left) as an OAC student in 1914.
5  • Ridgetown takes on Guelph in a game of broomball at the 2015 OAC Winter Games.

6  • Scott Allan submitted this photo of his grandfather James Allan (centre) taken in residence with his friends in 1914.

7  • Campus d’Alfred student Chloe Russell cheers on her volleyball teammates at the 2015 OAC Winter Games.

8  • The graduating Class of 2015 (The Bulls) shows off their class spirit at the Good Times Banquet in January.
Field crops research is vital to the prosperity and growth of Ontario’s agriculture and food sector. Crops research led by U of G and conducted on farms across Ontario and at several research stations managed by the Agricultural Research Institute of Ontario play an essential role in the delivery of student education, improved crop performance and the sustainability of Ontario’s crop industry.

A need exists for a strategic reinvestment in cropping systems capacity across the province, and Ridgetown Campus is excited to play a strategic role in this reinvestment. The campus is planning for the future construction of a Sustainable Crop Research and Innovation Centre to complement other longer-term investments across the province.

“Leading-edge crop research is fundamentally important to the global competitiveness and profitability of Ontario agriculture,” says Ridgetown Campus director Ken McEwan. “Strategic reinvestment in cropping system infrastructure is needed in order to serve our many agricultural stakeholders for decades to come.”

The Ridgetown Campus Agri-Food Foundation is working to raise the $3 to $4 million in private sector funds as part of the multi-million dollar initiative.

The foundation’s capital campaign is off to a terrific start, having raised $1.2 million, including leadership support by Dave and Brenda Baute of Maizex Seeds, who recently made a $500,000 commitment to this initiative.

“We are humbled to be able to make a difference at the Ridgetown Campus, where our gift will help retain and attract innovative crop scientists and train future farm leaders,” says Dave Baute. “Agriculture has been good to us, and in turn, we are keen to ensure that Ridgetown will succeed in the future.”

To help build awareness of the project the foundation is planning a 5K “Sod Buster” event on July 12. More information is available at www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca.

Research Centre to Focus on Sustainable Crops

New Food Science Profs Join OAC

The Department of Food Science has two new researchers on its team: Gisèle LaPointe and Michael Rogers.

“We’re excited to welcome two new faculty members to the department, including Prof. Gisèle LaPointe, who most recently was professor and chair in the Department of Food Science at Université Laval,” says U of G food science chair Art Hill.

LaPointe joined the department as the holder of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario (DFO) Professorship in Dairy Microbiology. Her position is supported by a $2-million gift from DFO. Her research interests include microbial ecology, metabolic activities in food and beneficial microbes.

LaPointe was selected for the professorship because of her expertise in food microbiology, particularly her focus on microbial molecular genetics of dairy ecosystems. She spent 2009 at U of G as an invited professor at the Guelph-based Canadian...
Research Institute for Food Safety. Michael Rogers also joined the department as an associate professor. “Rogers is a PhD graduate from Guelph, coming to us most recently from a faculty appointment in the Department of Food Science at Rutgers University,” adds Hill. “It’s wonderful to have him back home.”

Rogers attained both his M.Sc. and PhD in the Department of Food Science at U of G. Prior to returning to Guelph, he held faculty positions at Rutgers University and the University of Saskatchewan and was director of the Gastrointestinal Physiology Center at New Jersey’s Institute of Food, Nutrition and Health.

Rogers’s research program focuses on fundamental crystal physics (self-assembly of molecules), practical molecular gastronomy, and food form and digestibility.

He sees his research as cross-disciplinary between food science and nutrition, and aims to avoid new food blunders such as trans fats, which were introduced by food scientists and blacklisted by nutritionists a decade later.

“We look at how these new foods behave in the consumer, in the gut and how they influence health,” explains Rogers.

This year marks the 35th anniversary of the OAC Class of 1980’s graduation. To celebrate, the class has embarked on three class projects to support OAC students, including a renovation of the OAC student lounge.

“Thirty-five years is big. Aggies have always tried to give back and we decided we wanted to do something to celebrate,” says classmate Doug Richards. The Class of 1980 will also celebrate their anniversary by getting together on Alumni Weekend.

“Our class was a big year with just under 400 graduates,” he adds. When we set the class project goal we decided we wanted to raise $80,000 in total for the three projects. A lot of us are well into our careers. OAC got us our jobs, and we owe a lot to the college.”

The student lounge offers a place to socialize and study.

“I love the lounge,” says student Leslie Bowman. “I go there to catch up on schoolwork and talk to friends. I’ve made connections there that I know will last forever. It’s been an important part of my time here as a student.”

Today, the OAC student lounge on the second floor of Johnston Hall is also home to the Student Federation of the Ontario Agricultural College (SFOAC).

With input from students, a new layout has been proposed, including an open meeting and study space, an updated office for the SFOAC, a board/meeting room and an upgraded student lounge area. The estimated cost for renovations, new furniture and technology upgrades is $300,000.

For more information on the Class of 1980 projects, including the OAC student lounge project, contact Martin Straathof at tstraath@uoguelph.ca or 519-824-4120, Ext. 56842.
Learning the Art of Adaptability

Seven years after receiving her undergrad-uate degree, Ashley Honsberger decided it was time to reset her career path. She enrolled in the M.Sc. in capacity development and extension at the School of Environmental Design and Rural Development.

Through the gradual adaption of her original research idea, the project morphed into looking at women’s empowerment and inclusive markets in Nepal.

In October 2014, she set out for eight weeks of research in Nepal to study the extent to which being engaged in a commercialized market contributes to an individual’s empowerment.

In October 2014, she set out for eight weeks of research in Nepal to study the extent to which being engaged in a commercialized market contributes to an individual’s empowerment.

Based in Kathmandu, she conducted 69 interviews with mostly female farmers. She attended training sessions for women focused on off-season vegetable production and spoke with key stakeholders.

“In our classes we were taught about the importance of community entry and the process of building trust. Without this you are essentially a foreigner walking into a party you’re not invited to,” Honsberger explains, “but when you actually experience the concepts, that’s when you fully understand their significance.”

Her adaption skills became crucial while conducting research in the field.

“I thought certain things were going to be very important to the women,” she says. “I asked questions like, ‘Are there things you aren’t allowed to do or find hard to do because of your gender?’ They all said ‘no.’”

When her notions of gender disparity didn’t materialize as planned, she adapted her research focus. She changed her questions to learn more about the benefits of commercial enterprises rather than the barriers.

After returning to Canada in December, she is now finishing her thesis.

“Going in you are making a lot of assumptions, but objectively you need to comb through the data and look for themes and clusters of ideas. You have to illuminate their story based on a solid framework,” she says.

Across OAC, there are 650 graduate students in 26 programs, coming directly from undergraduate studies or returning to enhance their careers. For the full version of Honsberger’s research story, visit www.uoguelph.ca/oac/ahsleys-adaptability.

Upcoming Events

June 12 to 14
U of G Alumni Weekend
More details at www.alumni.uoguelph.ca

July 12
Ridgetown Campus Agri-Food Foundation 5K “Sod Buster”
More details at www.ridgetownc.uoguelph.ca

Sept. 11
OAC Alumni Association Golf Tournament
More details at www.uoguelph.ca/oac/golf

Sept. 19
U of G Homecoming
Guelph vs. McMaster football game

Are You Following...

@OACAggies
Follow the official Twitter account of the Student Federation of the OAC

@OACGrads
Follow the official Twitter account of the OAC Graduate Student Council

OAC Alumni News

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For more information, contact:
Martin Straathof
519-824-4120, Ext. 56842
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