Mason Serves as Fulbright Specialist in Colombia

By Steve Mason

Dr. Steve Mason recently spent two weeks as a Fulbright specialist in Columbia working with educators, business developers and producers looking for ways to improve the Columbian economy.

The Corporación Biotec, an independent entity of the Universidad de Valle, Cali, Colombia, invited Mason to provide short-term training and assistance with positioning a Healthy Agriculture Seal (certification) for two industries. The first was with plantain production by poor farmers in the Department of Cauca and the second addressed potential for production of natural ingredients (largely from tropical fruit crops) for use in natural cosmetics in the Department of Valle de Cauca.

Mason was in Columbia May 18–31 and used his 35 years of research and education experience in the United States, South and Central America, Europe and Africa with maize, sorghum, pearl millet, soybean and cassava to deliver training sessions. The sessions focused on models of various value-added systems of maize and

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Calendar of Events

July 23: Nebraska Turfgrass Research Field Day, Mead, Neb., registration 8–9 a.m., program 9 a.m.–3 p.m.


July 29: Nebraska Manure Demonstration Day, 8:30 a.m.–5 p.m., Dawson County Fairgrounds, Lexington, Neb.

Jul. 30-Aug. 1: Soybean Precision Genomics and Mutant Finder Day Workshop, 9 a.m., East Campus Union.

Aug. 1: Sue Voss Retirement Party, 2–4 p.m., Great Plains Room, East Campus Union.


Aug. 13: 100-Year Extension Anniversary Open House will be held at the Haskell Ag Lab near Concord, Neb. Time of open house will be announced later. Trolley will be available for tours.

Aug. 21: West Central Crops and Water Field Day at Water Resources Field Lab at Brule, Neb.

Aug. 22: Quarterly Staff Meeting, 8–9 a.m., 150 Keim (note revised date).


Nov. 17: Quarterly Staff Meeting, 10–11 a.m., 150 Keim.

March 5–7, 2015: 18th Annual Nebraska Winery & Grape Growers Forum & Trade Show at the Omaha Marriott, 10220 Regency Circle, Omaha, Neb.

Sorghum production and use in the U.S. and Africa, and through discussion opportunities to transfer principles from these systems to plantain, tropical fruit and natural cosmetic ingredients. Participants included Corporación Biotec staff, farmers, rural community associations, university faculty and individuals from the private sector.

The training sessions and discussions concluded that the Corporación Biotec should increase emphasis in value-added production systems with special attention to market opportunities for these products. Commercialization of the existing Healthy Agriculture Seal (certification) may contribute economic benefits to producers, processors and consumers of these value-added agricultural systems. Mason recommended that Corporación Biotec adopt a new program emphasis on “research and innovation for value-added agricultural systems,” which could provide a more central programmatic focus and increased potential for economic impact.

Further, he recommended continued research and conversations between the industry and producers and also finding a way to integrate with the Columbian government’s programs and financing.

He wrote in his Fulbright report that, “Corporación Biotec is well positioned to identify and develop improved cultivars for these products, then to collaborate with community/farmer associations and technical production specialists … to develop and implement best management practices, including regulations for use of the Healthy Agriculture Seal.”

Mason has agreed to serve as a liaison between the Corporación Biotech and the University of Nebraska and the broader U.S. university community for potential faculty and student exchanges. He encourages other departmental faculty to consider participating in the Fulbright Specialist Program.

“The two-week Fulbright specialist assignment was a great learning experience for me, and hopefully useful to the Corporación Biotec,” said Mason.

The United States Department of State sponsors and supports several different programs, including semester to year-long educational exchanges for U.S. students and faculty and the Specialist Program for short-term (two to six week) projects. In addition, the Fulbright Specialist program provides for exchanges to address identified educational needs.

Walia Wins Travel Research Award

Harkamal Walia was among twenty participants who filled their “networking passports” with signatures gathered during conversations with colleagues at a university-wide faculty research retreat. Faculty travel research and faculty and postdoc technology awards ranged from $250 to $1,000. Walia won a $1,000 travel research award.
Weed Management Field Day was held on June 27

Field Day was well attended with more than 70 growers, crop consultants, and extension educators.

By Amit Jhala

Weed Management Field Day at UNL’s South Central Agricultural Laboratory near Clay Center was held June 27. Amit Jhala, Assistant Professor & Extension Weed Management Specialist was the organizer and tour leader. Field Day was attended by more than 70 clientele including growers, crop consultants, and extension educators. Registration started at 8:30 a.m. with a demonstration tour for weed control in soybean and corn starting at 9 a.m. Free lunch was provided at noon.

Jhala provided information about herbicide-resistant weeds in Nebraska and discussed herbicides being used for weed control in corn and soybean. He demonstrated several projects for weed control in corn and soybeans that included efficacy, crop safety and comparison of several new herbicide tank mixtures. Herbicide program in dicamba plus glyphosate-resistant soybean and Balance GT soybean (soybean variety resistant to isoxaflutole herbicide) were the main attraction of the tour. Research on volunteer corn control in soybean was discussed. Several herbicide programs were compared for weed control in corn and soybean in UNL’s unbiased standard comparison trial. Postdoctoral scientist Jatinder Aulakh and graduate students Debalin Sarangi, Zahoor Ganie, and Simran Kaur demonstrated their thesis research projects on various aspects of weed control in corn and soybean. UNL Dairy Store ice-cream was served after lunch. The field day was concluded at 1 p.m.

ASA, CSSA & SSSA Annual Meeting in Long Beach

Registration is now open for the International Annual Meeting for the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America. The meeting will be held Nov. 2–5, 2014 in Long Beach, Calif. Details can be found at https://www.acsmeetings.org/. In recent years, 30–40 faculty and graduate students have attended. If you plan to attend, please contact Kay McClure-Kelly, kmclure-kelly2@unl.edu, who will assign an office associate to assist you with travel arrangements.
Guretzky Researches Effects of Patch-Burning

Native grasslands have been invaded by introduced cool-season grasses such as smooth bromegrass (Bromus inermis) and Kentucky bluegrass (Poa pratensis). This study investigates effects of patch burning as a method to enhance warm-season grasses, vegetation heterogeneity, and nitrogen use efficiency in pastures.

Patch burning differs from prescribed burning in that only a patch or section of land as opposed to a whole pasture or grazing unit gets burned in a single year. In subsequent years, burns shift to different patches. The benefits of patch burning include increased heterogeneity of vegetation structure, litter, and forage mass across a pasture as cattle focus grazing on recently burned areas.

Recently burned areas are purported to be higher in soil nitrogen availability and forage quality and thus receive intensive grazing, while the unburned patches accumulate old growth. As burns shift to different patches over time, forage quality and grazing pressure shifts as well, thereby providing a recovery period for patches previously grazed intensively while enhancing heterogeneity. Heterogeneity in grasslands has been positively linked to greater wildlife diversity including abundance and diversity of grassland birds.

We began research investigating effects of patch-burning, nitrogen fertilization, and patch burning with nitrogen fertilization on botanical composition and animal performance at the University of Nebraska Agricultural Research and Development Center at Mead, Neb. in 2012. The study area consists of nine warm-season pastures invaded with cool season grasses. Portions of six pastures are burned each April with three of these pastures and three unburned pastures receiving nitrogen fertilization two weeks later. Pastures are stocked with yearling steers in May and grazed through July. Burns shift to different patches annually and are on a three year cycle.

By John Guretzky

Retirements

A retirement reception for Jim Specht, Francis and Dorothy Haskins and Charles E Bessey Professor of Agronomy and Horticulture, was held on May 30.

Specht joined the university faculty in 1974 as a soybean physiologist and geneticist to study soybean yield response to drought and water irrigation.

Early in his career, he helped Nebraska soybean growers by sharing information about proper irrigation for optimized crop yield and how irrigated soybean production could be more productive and more profitable.

He has also served on research teams funded by the United Soybean Board that led to better understanding of the soybean plant and how genetics may be used to make plants more tolerant of drought.

Please congratulate Les Korte on his recent retirement. Korte retired after 40 years of service to the university. He worked as a research technologist for George Graef, professor of agronomy and horticulture. A reception was held on June 23 in Keim Hall.
Bundles of Joy

**Leila Annie Werle**, daughter of Lia Marchi Werle (PhD student in entomology) and Rodrigo Werle (PhD student in agronomy) was born on April 13, 2014 at Saint Elizabeth Regional Medical Center. She was 8 pounds, 6 ounces and was 20 ¾ inches long. Leila loves to be outside and was “forced” by her dad to watch all the Brazilian games during the Soccer World Cup!

**Lillian Danforth** was born on May 15 weighing in at 6 pounds, 6 ounces and was 20 inches long. According to her mother, she has a healthy appetite and likes to cuddle. The proud parents are Kara and John Danforth. Kara is an administrative associate for Dr. Roch Gaussoin.

**Thalia Dunn** was born on Thursday, May 15, and weighed 6 pounds, 15 ounces and was 20 inches long. Cheryl is the Research Manager-Herbarium Curator for the department.

Department Welcomes New Employees

**Kay McClure-Kelly** joined the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture on April 14 as the Office Supervisor. She was previously the Administrative Coordinator in UNL's Electrical Engineering department. Kay started her career at UNL in the South Central Ag Research Lab and has more than eight years of university service.

As the Office Supervisor, Kay is the contact point for faculty and staff who need assistance from the Office Pros pool. She will also be working with the department curriculum committee and making arrangements for visiting scientists and scholars.

A native of Nebraska, Kay married and moved to Lincoln in 2008. She is married to Bill Kelly, senior producer at NET. She has four grown children (two boys and two girls), and five grandchildren (one girl and four boys).

In her spare time, Kay enjoys reading (mostly fiction) and spending time with her grandchildren. She started quilting a couple of years ago which occupies many winter hours. In the summer, her gardens contain both vegetables and flowers.

“There is nothing better than growing my own food,” said Kay.

The department is pleased to welcome **Dr. Daren Redfearn** as a Forage and Crop Residue Systems Specialist. Dr. Redfearn’s start date was June 16.

Dr. Redfearn’s previous experience included 14 years as an Extension Forage and Pasture Management Specialist at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Okla., and four years as a Forage Research Agronomist at Louisiana State University Ag Center in Franklinton, La.

A native of Mt. Pleasant, Texas, he earned his Ph.D. in Agronomy with a Range & Forage Specialization and his M.S. in Agronomy from UNL. His bachelor of science degree in Animal Science was obtained at Texas Tech University.

Dr. Redfearn has been married for 27 years to Kasi Redfearn and the couple has two children, Kelsi, 23, and Shelbi, 21. Kasi recently accepted a position as a librarian at McPhee Elementary School in Lincoln.

In his free time, he enjoys spending time outdoors, primarily hunting and fishing. “If I have to be indoors, I like to cook,” he said. “My self-proclaimed specialties are etouffee, gumbo, and red beans and rice, BBQ and a pretty good pot of chili.”

Please welcome **Dr. James Schnable** to the department as an assistant professor on May 1. Dr. Schnable previously worked as a postdoctoral researcher at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis.

A native of Ames, Iowa, he earned his B.A. in Plant Biology and Genetics and Development from Cornell University in 2008, and his Ph.D. in Plant Biology from the University of California-Berkeley in 2012.

Dr. Schnable’s research interests include: Comparative Grain Crop Genomics; High Temporal Resolution Phenotyping Technologies; and Gene Regulation in Response to Abiotic Stresses. He is located in the Beadle Center.
Department Welcomes New Employees

The department's new Soil Extension Educator is a familiar face around the department. **Brian Krienke** earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in Agronomy from UNL and is presently working toward his Ph.D. under the supervision of Dr. Richard Ferguson. Brian started in this new position on May 19.

A native of Pierce, Neb., Brian is happily married to Abbey Krienke. In his free time, he enjoys backpacking, climbing, gardening, gathering friends together for game nights and helping on the family farm in Pierce.

The department is happy to welcome **Judy Fredrick** as an Office Associate. Judy has previous experience working in university settings when she worked at University of Houston and The University of Memphis.

Judy earned her Bachelor of Business Administration in Management Information Systems from The University of Memphis. Before starting her recent position, she was a User Experience Designer at Cabela's in their corporate office in Sidney, Neb. and a Usability Analyst at International Paper in Memphis, Tenn.

"After 20-plus years of designing software and web applications in a corporate setting, I am thoroughly enjoying my return to a university campus," she said.

Judy grew up on a farm northeast of Stanton, Neb. She has an older sister, younger brother, five nieces and nephews, three great-niece and nephews with twins on the way, and says family gatherings are always a blast. Hobbies include singing and kayaking (sometimes at the same time). She also likes to hike and backpack, sew, crochet, scrapbook and anything crafty.

**K. Denise Wally** joined the department on April 29 as a Research Technologist II for Dr. Charles Wortmann.

A native of Oklahoma, Denise earned both her bachelor's degree in Forestry and her master's degree in Forest Water Resources with an emphasis in Stream Ecology from Oklahoma State University. She also has her secondary science education teaching certificate from UNL.

Denise's hobbies include gardening, kayaking, biking, hiking, 3D mixed media art, ceramics, poetry and fiction writing, music, Lego construction, astronomy, geology/rock collecting, reading, science fiction/fantasy movies, and bird watching.

Having lived in seven different states, Denise has lived in Lincoln for the past 13 years. She worked for UNL when she first moved here in 2001, then left, and has come back to work here again.

"The most interesting thing about working for UNL is the opportunity to meet people from so many different countries and cultures," Denise said.

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**Conclusions**


Our sympathy is also extended to **David Orr**, following the death of his sister, Martha Ahmed, 33, Lincoln, on Thursday, June 5, 2014 at St. Elizabeth Regional Medical Center in Lincoln.

**Travel Tips**

Faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to rent a vehicle from Transportation Services when traveling by vehicle. If you travel more than 44 miles in a day, it is more cost effective to rent a vehicle for transportation than to pay personal mileage reimbursement. For additional information, please visit [http://transportation.unl.edu/](http://transportation.unl.edu/).

**Welcome Back Breakfast!**

(with Doug the Wafflemann)

- **Date:** Monday, August 18
- **Time:** 8:30–10 a.m. (come and go event)
- **Location:** 150 Keim Hall & Courtyard (weather permitting)
- **Who:** All faculty, staff, and postdocs
- **Go Big Red!**

**Further Details:** The breakfast includes 9-inch Belgian waffles, pork link sausages, butter and 4 kinds of syrup (including sugar-free), and drinks.

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Please send news, information, announcements, and photos to Kay McClure-Kelly at kmclure-kelly2@unl.edu or Kathy Schindler at kschindler1@unl.edu.
Technology Updates

While not fully operational yet, new equipment has been installed in 150 Keim. The work should be completed soon and new instructions will be posted by the computer. Installation of new technology (computer and presentation equipment) is also underway in 199 Plant Sciences Hall. If you have any issues/questions or would like training on the new equipment, please contact Warren Werner at wwerner2@unl.edu.

Other changes for the department include replacing our current file server. While the name of the server will change, your folder, file name and location will remain the same. You are strongly encouraged to take this time to delete any old files, so we are not moving unnecessary data. If you experience any mapped network drive connectivity issues during this transition, please contact Warren Werner wwerner2@unl.edu.

Department Website

The Department of Agronomy & Horticulture website is currently transitioning to the new UNLedu Web Framework 4.0. This will give the department website a fresh new look. This new design provides wide layouts for content and further improves the responsive design efforts. This template brings an easier-to-use mobile navigation, more page elements, and automatically delivers optimized presentation to any device type.

Fran Benne is currently working to transition the site and hopes to have the entire site done by the end of July. The whole university system will be switched to the new template by Aug. 15. If you have any questions or notice problems with any department webpages, please email fbenne2@unl.edu or call 472-1524.

Student News

Congratulations to our May Grads!

M.S. in Agronomy
- Stephen Hornung
  Adviser, T. Shaver
- Kyle Kocak
  Adviser, G.L. Graef
- Stacy Martin
  Adviser, P.S. Baenziger & T. Hoegemeyer
- Evan Sonderegger
  Adviser, G. Kruger
- Laura Stevens
  Adviser, R. Ferguson

M.S. in Horticulture
- Benjamin Loseke
  Adviser, P.E. Read

Ph.D. in Agronomy & Horticulture
- Christina Bavougian
  Adviser, P.E. Read
- Tadele Kumssa
  Adviser, P.S. Baenziger
- Oswal Montesinos Lopez
  Adviser, P.S. Baenziger

Marissa Grooms Wins Annual Engler Quick Pitch

One of our upperclassmen, Marissa Grooms, won the 2nd annual Engler Quick Pitch held on April 17 in the Junior/Senior division. Her presentation was accepted out of 71 entries competing with 14 other students at the event. Martha Mamo was her adviser.

She presented a business idea to develop a soil sampling lab for area producers with a high level of customer service. “Her presentation skills in and out of the classroom are exceptional,” David Lambe said.

Grooms received $1,000 for her efforts in this event. She graduated this spring with a degree in agronomy and took a position with Cargill.

Borlaug Fellowship Recipient

Jon Luetchens has been awarded a Borlaug Fellowship. According to the Center for Global Food Security, “the U.S. Borlaug Fellows in Global Food Security program is funded by the United States Agency for International Development to expand the pool of U.S. food security professionals who have the scientific base needed to effectively study and manage the global landscapes in support of sustainable food systems.”

Luetchens will travel to the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center near Mexico City during the spring semester, 2015, to conduct research on high-throughput phenotyping for monitoring response to water stress throughout the developmental stages of maize.

He is pursuing a M.S. in agronomy and is advised by Aaron Lorenz. He grew up on a farm, attended Elmwood-Murdock High School, and received his bachelor’s degree from Dordt College in 2013. Luetchens enjoys playing and watching all kinds of sports and taking road trips. He is interested in using this experience as a springboard to work at an international research center in the future.

Chengchou Han Takes Second Place In Competition

Agronomy graduate student, Chengchou Han took second place and was awarded $500 in the third annual New Venture Pitch Competition.

CornSoyWater, the pitch by Han derived from his Ph.D. project, involved a web application (http://hprrcc3.unl.edu/cornsoywater) that provides real-time data to help corn and soybean producers determine when to irrigate their fields. He competed as part of UNL’s AGRO 888 class, Business Management for Agricultural Enterprises, taught by Associate Professor Dave Lambe.

Ultimately, judges based their final decisions on how likely they would be to invest their own money in the proposals.