Walker named interim dean of new College of Agriculture

Longtime AAMU scientist and administrator, Dr. Lloyd T. Walker, has been appointed interim dean and research director of the new College of Agricultural, Life and Natural Sciences. Prior to his appointment, Dr. Walker served as interim associate provost of academic affairs where he oversaw activities relating to undergraduate students. Additionally, Walker assisted the Provost in providing oversight for the Offices of Institutional Research, Planning and Sponsored Programs.

A food scientist (chemistry) by training, Dr. Walker was chair of the Department of Food and Animal Sciences before moving to Academic Affairs. In his nearly 20 years at Alabama A&M University, Walker has mentored and advised many graduate and undergraduate students. He has about 150 publications to his credit, including more than 50 peer review publications and three book chapters. He has also been and continues to be active in grantsmanship, having been associated with grants of over $10 million at AAMU and other collaborating universities.

Dr. Walker has also been involved in a number of local and national service activities. As a professional member of the Institute of Food Technologists, he twice chaired the South Eastern Section of the organization. He currently serves on two local (Huntsville) boards.

Ag College-China connection bearing fruits

What started about three years ago as an effort to test the growing global market for educational and cultural exchange opportunities in China, has mushroomed into laudable partnerships with nine major universities and research and agricultural institutions in the world’s most populous country. The College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences (formerly School of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences) has wasted no time in tapping into those partnerships which have already resulted into several exchange visits between faculty and students of SAES and her Chinese counterparts.

“The overall goal is to provide opportunities for faculty and students through cultural, educational and research interactions with Chinese institutions, to strengthen AAMU’s capabilities to develop globally competent faculty and students,” says Dr. Yong Wang, professor of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences.

It all started in 2008 when Dr. Wang and Dr. Zachary Senwo, former SAES research director, attended an international symposium on forestry education and global sustainable forestry in Beijing, China. Contacts developed at the symposium prompted Wang and Senwo, along with Dr. Xiongwen Chen, assistant professor of Landscape Ecology, to develop a project that was funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

AAMU researchers continue search for external funding

The search for supplemental funding to address the growing demand for quality research and innovation remains a continuing process at Alabama A&M University. And, in the face of an economic downturn and budgetary shortfalls, the quest for external funding becomes even more dire. In spite of these odds, our researchers and scientists have remained vigilant in tapping into available sources for funding opportunities, many of which are yielding very positive results.

The following is a listing of principal investigators and project directors who are responsible for some of the major awards received at the University in the last 12 months. Also listed are the titles of their research, award amounts, names of funding agencies, as well as Colleges the researchers represent. Congratulations!
China connection

National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) under its International Science and Education Program. The project, “Strengthening minority global perspectives: Collaborative partnership with China in agricultural research and education,” set in motion a stream of opportunities for SAES scientists, undergraduate and graduate students to explore in China.

“The program was envisioned to assist in attracting students and to enhance recruitment in agricultural and environmental majors,” says Wang, who just ended a 40-day visit to China. Last year, Wang again led a team of SAES experts and students to China, where among other achievements, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between SAES and the College of Forest Resources and Environment of the Nanjing Forestry University (NFU) in Nanjing, Jiangsu Province.

Dr. Robert Taylor, then dean of SAES, signed the MOU for the AAMU side, while Dr. Jin Chi Zhang, dean of the College of Forest Resources and Environment, signed for the NFU team.

The AAMU side also included Dr. Govin Sharma, professor of Plant Biology; Dr. Wubishet Tadesse, associate professor of GIS and Remote Sensing; Dr. Chen; Dawn Lemke, research associate and graduate student of GIS and Remote Sensing; Jasmine Mitchell, undergraduate student, Management Information Systems; and Na-Asia Ellis, undergraduate student, Environmental Science and Engineering. Group members held discussions, lectures and made presentations on their various disciplines, as well as toured labs and cultural sites.

According to Wang, the AAMU visit was reciprocated immediately with visits by faculty members and officials of NFU, who toured SAES facilities and experimental stations, and participated in programs organized by their AAMU partners.

As part of the same Chinese collaboration, an SAES team, few weeks ago, returned from a one-month visit to China. In continuing the research and educational activities developed last year, the team visited a new partner: the Northwest Agricultural and Forestry University (NAFU), where team members toured and held discussions with faculty and officials of the College of Animal Science and Technology in Yangling, Shaanxi Province.

“The recent visit here of the three faculty and officials of NAFU was an offshoot of our visit to their university,” says Dr. Regine Mankolo, research assistant professor in NRES, following the signing of the MOU, Dr. Taylor was awarded a certificate of Honorary Professorship.
who was selected for the trip to fill the need for a soil scientist on the team. That visit to NAFU, led by Dr. Wang, also included Drs. Tadesse and Chen. It also included students Stefanie Gresham, Stephanie Whitaker, Douglas Washington, Karleen Roberts and Kay Bell. “Professors presented programs and research base on their individual areas of interests,” says Mankolo. “We also visited several research stations, including medicinal plants and agro-forestry plots, on-campus science museums, and the International Collaboration Park, where research is done on all the major crops and plants of the world.”

The recent NAFU team visit to AAMU included the Dean of the College of Animal Science and Technology, Dr. Zhiying Zhang; Professor and Executive Vice President, Dr. Zhong Zhao; and Dr. Enkui Xie. According to Dr. Wang, more visits are being planned for AAMU faculty and students to conduct collaborative education and research in China. A new proposal has been submitted to the National Science Foundation to support a Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU)-China program at AAMU.

In addition to NFU and NAFU, SAES developed different levels of partnerships with the Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing Forestry University, Beijing Normal University, the Institute of Botany, China Agricultural University, the Institute of Soil Science, Nanjing Agricultural University, and the Shanghai Research Institute of Landscape Gardening.

“The overall goal is... to strengthen AAMU’s capabilities to develop globally competent faculty and students.”

Dr. Yong Wang

AAMU team tours the newly completed greenhouse of Beijing Normal University.

AAMU Students and faculty tour various sites in China during their visit.

Dr. Wubishet Tadesse gives a presentation about his research at AAMU during an exchange symposium.

Dr. Jianhui Xue, Vice President for Research and International Affairs of NFU, discusses collaboration between AAMU and NFU with Dr. Govind Sharma and Dr. Robert Taylor.
Dr. Padmaja Gugilla and Dr. Ashok K. Batra (Physics) - Published book chapter, “Novel Electroceramic: Polymer Composites - Preparation, Properties and Application.” Nanocomposites and Polymers with Analytical Methods, InTech, August 2011.


Dr. Malinda Wilson Gilmore (Chemistry) - Promoted to Coordinator of Chemistry.

Dr. Mohammed R. Karim (Mathematics) - Promoted to Professor.


Dr. Mira Kruja (Music & Fine Arts) – Promoted to Professor.

Dr. Sha Li (Curriculum, Teaching and Educational Leadership) – Promoted to Professor.

Dr. Fayequa Majid (Mathematics) - Promoted to Associate Professor.

Dr. Jamiu Odutola (Chemistry) – Named NASA Administrator’s Fellow for Faculty Research on “Sensitivity Enhancement by Atom-Optical Cavity Interaction.”

Dr. Arjuna Ranasinghe (Mathematics) - Promoted to Professor.
Dr. Joan Fobbs Wilson, College of Education, Humanities and Behavioral Sciences - $746,665 - “Long-Term Training Rehabilitation Training: Rehabilitation Counseling” (Department of Education)

Dr. James Bukenya, College of Business & Public Affairs - $598,515 - “Microenterprise-Centered Development Strategy: And Education Program for Disadvantaged Entrepreneurs” (USDA); $200,000 - “Enhancing Agribusiness Curriculum and Increasing Student Experiential Learning through Global Internships” (USDA)

Prof. Teshome Gabre, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $500,000 - “Urbanization and Loss of Prime Agricultural Land in North Alabama Region: A Remote Sensing and Geographic Information System-Based Study” (USDA)

Dr. Padmaja Gugilla, College of Engineering, Technology & Physical Sciences - $483,768 - “Preparing Tomorrow Homeland Security Task Force through Education, Research and Curriculum Development at AAMU” (Homeland Security); $178,432 - Physics REU at AAMU (NSF)

Dr. Kaveh Heidary, College of Engineering, Technology & Physical Sciences - $388,896 - “Nano Technology Infrastructural Development for Education and Research” (Army Research Office)

Dr. Mohammad A. Alim, College of Engineering, Technology & Physical Sciences - $350,000 - “Acquisition of Scanning Electron Microscope with Energy Dispersive X-Ray Analyzer” (AFOSR)

Dr. Roger Richardson, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $348,106 - “Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Extension Team Project” (USDA)

Dr. Colmore Christian, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $300,000 - “Intensive Southeastern Training Expansion Program (InSTEP) for African-American Landowners” (USDA)

Dr. Andrew Scott, College of Engineering, Technology & Physical Sciences - $300,000 - “Innovative Methods for Computational Algorithms Utilizing Reconfigurable Devices” (Missile Defense Agency)

Dr. Wubishet Tadesse, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $257,035 - “CREST Sub-Project 2, Coupled Dynamics of Human and Landscapes” (NSF)

Dr. Zachary Senwo, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $228,403 - “CREST Sub-Project 3, Ecosystem Functions and Processes” (NSF)

Dr. Julio E. Correa, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $223,068 - “Strengthening the Small Ruminant Extension Program at Alabama A&M University” (USDA)

Dr. Yong Wang, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $207,412 - “CREST Main, Center of Forest Ecosystem Assessment” (NSF)

Dr. Roger Richardson, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $178,432 - “Innovative Methods for Computational Algorithms Utilizing Reconfigurable Devices” (Missile Defense Agency)

Dr. Razi Hassan, College of Engineering, Technology & Physical Sciences - $150,000 - “Targeted Infusion: Acquisition of a 90-MHz FT-NMR Spectrometer to Enhance Current Curriculum and Research in Order to Achieve ACS Accreditation in the Chemistry Program at AAMU” (NSF)

Dr. Gamalden Abdelrahim, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $149,816 - “Enhancing Recruitment and Retention in Animal Science to Build capacity in Pre-Veterinary Medicine Program at AAMU” (USDA)

Dr. Joao Fobbs Wilson, College of Education, Humanities and Behavioral Sciences - $147,110 - “Building Abilities of Students, Faculty and Alabama A&M University through Workshops in Food and Animal Science” (USDA)

Dr. Martha Vergheese, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $140,851 - “Enhancement of minority participation in functional food product development in food science programs” (USDA)

Dr. Pratik Banerjee, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $140,848 - “Enhancement of Minority Student Participation in Food Safety” (USDA)

Dr. Zulfiqar Ahmad, College of Agricultural, Life & Natural Sciences - $139,755 - “Molecular Modulation of the Catalytic Sites of Escherichia F1fo ATP Synthase” (NIH)
The book is intended to be used as a guide to the fundamentals of meat goat production, and to expand knowledge on goat reproduction, nutrition and health. General demeanor. Also, goats can easily be integrated as an alternative form of livestock for diversification. For example, they do not compete for the same type vegetation as cattle, sheep or swine, and tend to complement other forms of livestock production.

Meat Goats: Reproduction, Nutrition, and Health represents a compilation of work by Extension’s animal science team specialists Dr. Julio E. Correa, Dr. Maria L. Leite-Browning, and Robert Spencer, as well as Gregory Brann, a state grazing lands specialist at Tennessee Natural Resources Conservation Service, and F. David Gonsoulin, a retired livestock and grain market news reporter from the United States Department of Agriculture.

“We are really excited about this textbook. It has been years in the making and we hope it will prove to be an invaluable resource for meat producers around the world,” says Correa, lead author and Extension animal scientist.

To order a copy of Meat Goats: Reproduction, Nutrition, & Health, download a copy of the order form at http://www.aces.edu/pubs/docs/indexes/unpas.php. The cost of the book is $10.00, which includes shipping and handling. The book will ship within 2-4 weeks of ordering. For more information, please contact Dr. Correa at (256) 372-4173.
Area's best, brightest attend
HBCU-UP Summer Bridge Program

For six weeks this summer, Alabama A&M University hosted the HBCU-UP Summer Bridge Program with 28 of the best and brightest students from area high schools attending. Funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the program prepared and motivated “rising high school juniors and seniors” to choose majors in science, technology, engineering and math.

“It was designed to expose students to possible career choices in STEM fields, while working on skills necessary for their success as STEM majors,” says Dr. Mostafa Dokhanian, associate professor of physics and project director. “Since this was the second year to host this program, notoriety of its success spread, making our applicant pool larger and more competitive.”

Out of over 200 applicants, 30 students with GPAs of 3.5 or better, with high aptitude in math and science and an enthusiasm to learn, were selected to participate in the program, says Dokhanian. Two students dropped out midway through the program, he says. Participants were selected from schools such as Lee High, Butler High, Huntsville High, and Oakwood Academy.

The students took “mini” courses in math, professional writing, engineering, computer computations, nanotechnology, and physics taught by AAMU instructors and professors, says Dokhanian. According to Dokhanian, the program offerings were further enhanced by guest speakers and presenters from other institutions and industry. “For instance, on the first day of

the program, Dr. Jennifer English, professor of Electrical Engineering at UA Huntsville spoke to the students about the importance of STEM, and told them a personal story about how she chose engineering as a profession,” Dokhanian says.

Chief Scientist and Boeing Tech Fellow, Dr. William Seidlter, who is also a nuclear scientist, taught a one-week course on nanotechnology. He discussed “technology singularity and the future of technology for STEM students.” Also, Rhonwyn Watson, ethics advisor for Boeing, headed a discussion on the importance of ethics in the workplace and in school. She gave the students some strategies for dealing with unethical situations should they encounter a negative situation in their lives.

AAMU instructors and professors who participated in the program included Diane Leisher, math; Dr. Kathrynn Seidler Engberg, professional writing; Dr. Marius Schamschula, computers and computation; Dr. Nesar Ahmed, engineering; and Dr. Dokhanian, physics. In the engineering discussions, Dr. Ahmed was assisted by some of his colleagues from the School of Engineering and Technology, including Drs. Showkat Chowdhury, Michael Ayokanmbi, V. Trent Montgomery, Pabitra Saha, Venkata Atluri, Mohammed Karim and Ms. Tamarah Chowdhury. The professors discussed various aspects of engineering and technology.

The program ended with a recognition ceremony for the students. Each person received a certificate of achievement and a stipend check. It was followed by a luncheon.

The guest speaker for the closing ceremony was the Vice President for the Boeing Company Huntsville Site, retired Lt. Gen. Tony Jones, who received a warm reception from the students and their parents for his discussion on how to achieve dreams and the “kind of character it takes to be a leader.”

In a survey following the end of the program, the students said they were more confident about pursuing STEM careers. One participant, Elliot Hinton, of Oakwood Academy, remarked, “This program changed my life. I’m going to take my studying much more seriously, especially math.” He plans to major in engineering when he graduates high school.

The Summer Bridge Program is one of the seven programs under the HBCU-UP (Undergraduate Program) project. Dr. Juarine Stewart is the principal investigator of the project.
Send your ideas and event information to essence@aamu.edu for inclusion in the next edition or call 256-372-5675.