

# AAEC *News*

Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics

FALL 2014



Steve Blank



## Greetings from the department head

The Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics is in the midst of a period of renewal, growth, and success. As always, these positive developments are due to the hard work and dedication of the people of AAEC: our students, alumni, staff, and faculty.

During 2013 AAEC went through our 7-year external review, as required by our college, and the results of that accreditation process showed that our teaching, research, and extension programs are strong and focused on a bright future. As a result, we are growing, with our undergraduate majors increasing in number by about 58% in just over two years.

Our faculty members continue to be recognized for their world-class research and education programs. AAEC's record of excellence has attracted scholarly recognitions, such as the establishment of our first two endowed professorships within the department. Also, special programs led by AAEC faculty members are expanding the opportunities for learning by our students. For example, the Kohl Centre, directed by Dr. Kim Morgan, is increasing students' experiential learning through participation in real applied research and outreach programs that involve, and benefit, businesses across Virginia. Another initiative is the creation of the Center for Agricultural Trade. It will encompass both undergraduate and graduate courses in trade, supported by research conducted by students and faculty in collaboration with firms across the state and region. The education and outreach programs will expand both knowledge and the competitiveness of Virginia's industries engaging in trade anywhere on the globe. Dr. Jason Grant will direct the Center.

AAEC's alumni are a major part of our success. In addition to the generosity of financial gifts from alumni that build the endowments for professorships and scholarships for our current students, many alumni give their time and expertise to the department by volunteering to guest lecture in classes, participate in student club activities, and sponsoring students in internships. The loyalty of our alumni impresses and inspires me.

This newsletter contains just a few of the many stories that we could tell about the people of AAEC. I hope you will share your story with us.

Sincerely,

Steve Blank  
 Department Head and Professor

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## Students, professors examine ways to improve lives and agriculture in Ecuador

Corinna Clements, a senior from Round Hill, Virginia, majoring in agricultural and applied economics, and Austin Larowe, a senior from Woodlawn, Virginia, majoring in agricultural and applied economics and agricultural sciences, spent two weeks in Ecuador talking to farmers about a project they have been working on to curb deforestation by using a better variety of the naranjilla plant.

"This is an extraordinary country with a rich history of agriculture," said Larowe, who has traveled to 36 countries and now counts Ecuador as one of his favorites. "We want to help farmers here continue to succeed while addressing some of the many challenges they are facing."

Meanwhile, Elli Travis, an agricultural and applied  
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economics graduate student from Washington, D.C., spent the summer working with Ecuadorian farmers on ways to use text messages to improve the environment and boost profits by incorporating pest-management techniques into their practices.

All of the students work with Jeff Alwang, a professor of agricultural and applied economics who has been working in Ecuador and other South American countries for decades on ways to improve the landscape and livelihoods of the countries. Most of his work has been funded by USAID's Feed the Future Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resource Management and Integrated Pest Management Innovation Labs.

Alwang has also received funding for this work from the World Bank, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, the McKnight Foundation, and the government of Ecuador.

The work he and others have done in Ecuador over the years has helped empower women working in agriculture, reduce rural poverty, reduce the amount and toxicity of pesticides farmers use, boost production for potato and other farmers, and decrease the impact of agricultural practices on the natural environment.

"By working with partners and farmers in Ecuador, we have been able to find simple



*Indigenous farmers sell naranjilla fruit at colorful markets across the Andean country.*



*Clements and Larowe spend hours riding bumpy roads and climbing high into the mountainous countryside to interview farmers about the naranjilla.*

but effective ways to increase incomes while helping to protect the environment in extremely fragile areas," Alwang said. "It's immensely gratifying to see how many students and researchers from Virginia Tech have been to the country over the years to work with local partners and find solutions to help Ecuador. I can't wait to see what the next decade brings."

Alwang's work incorporates all three missions of the land-grant university. He is conducting

research focused on pest management and conservation agriculture. He conducts outreach by working with local governments and farmers to put his findings to use. And he has brought scores of graduate and undergraduate students to Ecuador to teach them about international development and let them gain experience by doing agricultural research in smallholder farmer communities.

Which is exactly what Clements and Larowe were doing this

summer as they examined the complex yet critical role that the naranjilla fruit plays in Ecuadorian agriculture.

Alwang has been working for years with the Ecuadorian national agricultural research agency Instituto Nacional Autónomo de Investigaciones Agropecuarias on ways to solve pest and disease problems faced by naranjilla growers.

To learn more about the students' trip and Dr. Alwang's work in Ecuador, visit [www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/08/080814-cals-ecuador.html](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/08/080814-cals-ecuador.html).

Photos and articles documenting their trip are posted on the Virginia Tech Research blog [blogs.lt.vt.edu/ResearchBlog/tag/ecuador/](http://blogs.lt.vt.edu/ResearchBlog/tag/ecuador/).

## Mary Marchant honored by the Southern Agricultural Economics Association

Mary Marchant recently received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southern Agricultural Economics Association, the organization's highest honor, for her commitment to scholarship in teaching and applied research.

To read more about Mary's accomplishments visit [www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/05/051514-cals-marymarchant.html](http://www.vtnews.vt.edu/articles/2014/05/051514-cals-marymarchant.html).





*Sarah McKay, Austin Larowe, and Wes Williams pose outside of the White House during the Truman Scholarship finalist interview process.*

## Three AAEC students honored as Truman Scholar finalists

Three AAEC students were honored as finalists for the 2014 Truman Scholarship, a prestigious award that goes to college students to help them attend graduate school in preparation for careers in government or other types of public service.

That three students from Virginia Tech were finalists was unusual, but having three with the same major — applied economic management — was extremely rare.

The students honored were Austin Larowe of Woodlawn, Virginia; Sarah McKay of Barboursville, Virginia, who is also majoring in animal and poultry sciences; and Wes Williams of Roanoke, Virginia. All are juniors.

“Virginia Tech has never had more than one finalist in a year, so we are very proud of Austin, Sarah, and Wes,” said Christina McIntyre, associate director of University Honors and advisor for applicants to major scholarships.

“Even though Austin, Sarah, and Wes are undergraduates, they are already working on solving some of the most pressing issues in society today,” said Steve Blank, the department head of agricultural and applied economics. “This is a testament to the high caliber of students in our department.”

Between high school and college, Larowe was a state officer of the National FFA Organization. He has also traveled to more than 30 countries. The experience opened his eyes to international agriculture and education needs and prompted him to found Feed by Seed during his first year at Virginia Tech. The organization focuses on global agriculture education, development, and advocacy and runs an 18-acre farm in Nicaragua, teaching local people how to farm to provide food for their families.

McKay is active in undergraduate research, campus and community organizations, global education, and government internships. She founded a garden program at the Virginia Tech Child Development Center for Learning and Research and works with children ages 2

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## Stephanie Myrick receives 2014 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Outstanding Senior Award

Stephanie Myrick of Woodbridge, Va., has received Virginia Tech's 2014 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Outstanding Senior Award.



Stephanie Myrick

Sponsored by the Virginia Tech Alumni Association and the senior class, the Outstanding Senior Award recognizes exceptional academic achievement and leadership by a graduating senior from each of the university's eight colleges. Recipients have a minimum grade point average of 3.75 on a 4.0 scale and are selected by faculty and students within the respective colleges.

Myrick received a bachelor of science in applied economic management with minors in civic agriculture and food systems and leadership and social change.

A member of the University Honors program, Myrick was a dean's list student and received numerous scholarships including the Austin Michelle Cloyd Honors Scholarship, William L. Gibson Jr. Scholarship, Janis and Leon Geyer Endowed Scholarship, and the Robert A. Belz Scholarship.

Demonstrating a talent for research, Myrick served as a research assistant and completed a six-week summer research internship on conservation agriculture in Ecuador last year.

A member of the SERVE living and learning community and Chi Delta Alpha service sorority, Myrick has a strong commitment to community service. She has mentored at-risk elementary school children, visited the elderly, coached at local youth soccer programs, and participated in a service trip to Honduras.

She is also an active member of the Student Alumni Associates, serving on its executive board as university outreach chair.

## New websites

**Center for Economic Education at Virginia Tech**  
[www.aaec.vt.edu/extension/cee/index.html](http://www.aaec.vt.edu/extension/cee/index.html)

**Kohl Centre at Virginia Tech**  
[www.kohlcentre.aaec.vt.edu/](http://www.kohlcentre.aaec.vt.edu/)

**New AAEC Extension Update Blog**  
[news.cals.vt.edu/fbm-update/](http://news.cals.vt.edu/fbm-update/)

## Save the Date:

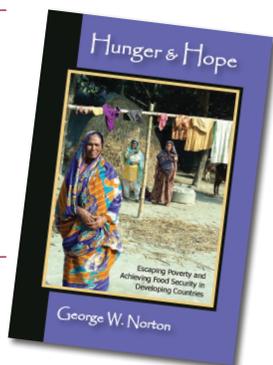
**Governor's Conference on Agricultural Trade**  
 Richmond, Virginia, March 9-10

Professor of agricultural and applied economics publishes

## 'Hunger & Hope'



George Norton



"I think it's important for students to know what's going on in the world, and also what's going on in agriculture around the world."

George Norton's recently published book, "Hunger & Hope: Escaping Poverty and Achieving Food Security in Developing Countries," is part memoir, part textbook and contains many personal insights and lessons that students and development professionals alike can learn from and relate to.

Norton uses agriculture and hunger as a baseline for discussions about poverty, and incorporates anecdotes from his vast experience as both a professor and development professional in the Peace Corps to illustrate the challenges of living in a developing economy. The book is ultimately geared towards high school and undergraduate students studying international agriculture and economic development.

"I think it's important for students to know what's going on in the world, and also what's going on in agriculture around the world," said Norton.

Many years of experience in the dusty back roads of well-worn development outposts like Bangladesh, the Philippines, Senegal, and Colombia illustrate his points to students who often sit in comfortable classrooms with limited exposure to the daily challenges of living in a developing economy. His anecdotes are sometimes scary, sometimes funny, and often compare his own experiences with those of farmers in the developing world.

For instance, he juxtaposes the dangers of unregulated use of pesticides in modern-day Philippines to his own stories of growing up on a farm and begging to ride along in the vehicle spraying crops so he could feel the splash of sweet-tasting pesticides on his skin.

Indeed, as Norton says in his book, his highest compliment may have come from an extension worker in Tanzania who once said that he seems more like a Peace Corps volunteer than a professor.

"One of the points I wanted to make by writing this book is that if development aid is to work, you can't ignore agriculture," he said.

## AAEC student elected National FFA president

In middle school, Brian Walsh was a shy kid with limited experience in the world of agriculture. All that soon changed once Walsh donned the coveted signature FFA blue jacket that so many of his friends wore.



Brian Walsh

As soon as Walsh joined his school's FFA chapter, he began to flourish, taking leadership roles in the organization and finding a home among the young agricultural enthusiasts.

FFA — which provides leadership, personal growth, and career success training through agricultural education — not only helped pull Walsh out of his shell, it put him on the national stage.

Walsh was recently elected president of the National FFA Organization, a prestigious role that makes Walsh the chief motivator of 579,000 FFA students across the country.

"I never expected this in a million years," said, Walsh of Woodstock, Virginia, a sophomore majoring in agribusiness and minoring in leadership and social change. "This is a very humbling experience."

He will spend the next year traveling nearly 150,000 miles in more than 40 states as he meets with CEOs of major agricultural businesses, interacts with high-level politicians in Washington, D.C., advocates for industry, and, perhaps most importantly, inspires the next generation of agricultural leaders. FFA has helped Walsh come a long way from that shy kid growing up in rural Virginia.

Please visit <http://news.cals.vt.edu/innovations/2014/01/>.

## AAEC staff member wins college May Employee of the Month

Frenda Haynie, undergraduate coordinator and academic adviser in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics, has been selected as the employee of the month for May for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.



To read more about Frenda's dedication to the department visit

[www.news.cals.vt.edu](http://www.news.cals.vt.edu)

# New faces

**Sarah Asebedo** is an Assistant Professor of Practice focusing on generational wealth transfer, financial conflict resolution, and the connection between psychological well-being and financial behavior. Dr. Asebedo also teaches in the undergraduate program.



Sarah Asebedo



Gustavo Ferreira



Liz Kersteter

**Gustavo Ferreira** is an Assistant Professor and Extension Economist creating and delivering extension programming in agricultural marketing, wine economics, web marketing, and agritourism. Dr. Ferreira also teaches in the undergraduate program.

**Liz Kersteter** is the Department's Program Support Technician and provides support for faculty members and the Program in Agricultural Trade.

**Catherine Larochelle** is a Research Assistant Professor focusing on impact evaluation of agricultural research on poverty, productivity, and policies.



Catherine Larochelle



JoAnna Lewis



Kim Morgan

**JoAnna Lewis** is the Graduate Program Coordinator, providing support to the graduate program, administers assistantships, and provides HR support to the department.

**Kim Morgan** is an Assistant Professor and Junior Faculty Fellow for the Kohl Centre. Her extension program focuses on new technology adoption of specialty crop producers and characteristics of consumers that buy directly from farms. Dr. Morgan also teaches in the undergraduate program.

**Susan Richter** is a Research Assistant Professor focusing on the microeconomic analysis of issues in development economics, specially examining the causes of food security and undernutrition. Dr. Richter also teaches in the undergraduate program.



Susan Richter



Martha Walker

**Martha Walker** is an Extension Specialist in Community Viability. While she has been in this role since 2005 she officially joined AAEC this year.

[www.aaec.vt.edu/people/faculty/index.html](http://www.aaec.vt.edu/people/faculty/index.html)

## Undergraduate spotlight: Frances Dowd

Frances Dowd excels both in the classroom and on the track for Virginia Tech. As a five year B.S./M.S. student, Frances is earning dual degrees in Applied Economic Management and Environmental Policy and Planning while also fulfilling requirements for a Masters in Applied Economics. To complement her classroom studies, she has taken advantage of hands-on research opportunities in the Department of Agricultural and Applied Economics. This past summer, Frances traveled to Ecuador to collect data from Ecuadorian farmers to assess the use of sustainable agriculture practices throughout the Chimbo watershed. She has also worked as a research assistant for the Virginia Land Use Value Assessment Program and presented her work at the Virginia Association of Assessing Officers' Convention.



Frances is a member of the Virginia Tech Cross Country, Indoor Track, and Outdoor Track teams. She is developing leadership skills as a team captain and has won numerous honors including Scholar-Athlete of the Year, NCAA All-American, and Academic All-American, among others. In her spare time, Frances also collected over 1,500 pairs of shoes and \$800 in donations during three annual shoe drives for the Soles4Souls and Nike Reuse-A-Shoe programs.

## Austin Larrowe named 2014-15 board of visitors student representative

The Virginia Tech Board of Visitors selected new undergraduate and graduate student representatives who will serve as liaisons between the student body and the board.



Austin Larrowe

The two student representatives are appointed to one-year terms. They will serve as ex-officio members on the Commission of Student Affairs and sit on a committee of the governing board. These non-voting members are required to maintain contact with university faculty, administrators, and Virginia Tech students.

Austin Larrowe of Woodlawn, Va., is a fourth year University Honors student majoring in applied economic management and agricultural sciences. He previously served as a member of the student advisory committee to the undergraduate representative to the board of visitors.

Larrowe is a member of University Council and serves as a Student Government Association senator. He is a member of the German Club, as well as Omicron Delta Kappa, the national leadership honor society.

Larrowe's service and volunteer work include founding Feed by Seed, an international agriculture education non-profit. He has dedicated countless hours of international community service in Nicaragua, Zambia, and Costa Rica. Larrowe has served as Virginia state vice president of the National FFA Organization.

*Truman continued from page 3*

through 5 and special-needs seniors to plant herbs and vegetables together. The garden allows intergenerational learning, sparking conversations about agriculture, nutrition, and diversity and reconnecting people with their food.

While on the Presidential Global Scholars international experience, Williams conducted a group research project on sex trafficking in Europe. The project ignited a passion for fighting human trafficking and slavery. Working with two other University Honors students, Williams won first and second places in a Challenge Slavery contest organized by the U.S. Agency for International Development and partnering agencies. The team launched the first-place idea, AboliShop — a Web browser extension that allows online consumers to check their shopping carts to identify products that likely used forced or exploitative labor in their manufacturing or distribution. Williams was also able to visit the White House to talk about anti-trafficking technologies.

## CALS Alumni Awards



### International Programs Award

Jackline Bonabana-Wabbi '03 MS AAEC and '08 Ph.D. AAEC

After graduation Bonabana-Wabbi returned to Uganda where she has been active educator, researcher, and friend to Virginia Tech.

She currently is a lecturer in the department of agribusiness and natural resource economics at Makerere University in Kampala Uganda.

Bonabana-Wabbi also serves as her department's graduate program coordinator, the chairperson of the research and publications committee, a member of the research and higher degrees committee, and has served as acting department head.

With extensive involvement in externally funded research projects, she is the economist working on climate change modeling in the region funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Bonabana-Wabbi has continued to be extensively involved with Virginia Tech research efforts in East Africa since her graduation. She is principal investigator on Virginia Tech's Integrated Pest Management Collaboration Research Support Program and collaborates both with Virginia

Tech faculty and graduate students on project research efforts in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania.

Her participation in this program has been a key factor in our university's ability to obtain sustained funding for this research in East Africa. Bonabana-Wabbi has facilitated research efforts of other Virginia Tech projects in Uganda including activities of Virginia Tech's Office of International Research, Education, and Development.

Bonabana-Wabbi is always ready to assist Virginia Tech faculty, students, and alumni when they are in Uganda, even when she does not have formal responsibilities in their research projects.



### Outstanding Alumni

Adam Shiflett '96 BS AAEC

Shiflett has had an outstanding career at Farm Credit of the Virginias, managing the dealer credit program strategic business unit, improving the products and services that Farm Credit offers, and helping agricultural producers and agribusinesses to be successful.

- He has been recognized several times by Farm Credit for excellence as a commercial agriculture loan officer.

- He has been instrumental in offering scholarships through Farm Credit and the Virginia Cooperative Council to high school students who enroll at the university.
- He has collaborated with Virginia Tech in hosting the National Institute on Cooperative Education and with CALS faculty in teaching and advising at Cooperative Education youth conferences.
- Shiflett has donated time and money through Farm Credit for many CALS Extension projects and programs throughout Virginia, and helped with internships and the new hire program at Farm Credit to give job opportunities to agriculture students from Virginia Tech.



### Leadership Award

James Pearson '87 BS AAEC

Pearson's career is defined by perseverance, service, hard work, and a philosophy that "you can't do it alone."

- He founded Carry-On Trailer in 1996 where he served as president/CEO until the business was acquired by American Trailer Works. He now serves as CEO of American Trailer Works, which is North America's largest utility trailer manufacturer with more than 1000 employees in the U.S.
- Pearson frequently returns to campus to provide guest lecturers to Ag Econ courses

and to mentor students in business development.

- This fall he was a guest speaker for "Innovate", the newest living and learning community on campus which gives 35 students the chance to immerse themselves in the many facets of entrepreneurship.
- A member of the Ut Prosim Society, he is a key-contributor to the Kohl Centre, which provides experiential learning opportunities for agribusiness students and he supports leadership training for members of the Corps of the Cadets through the Rice Center for Leader Development
- He has recently been named a Professor of Practice in the department working with the Kohl Centre and serves on the department's advisory board
- He is also a member of the Corps of Cadets alumni board and the Virginia Tech Foundation board.
- He has been successful professionally and has been generous to Virginia Tech in many ways. In the spirit of Ut Prosim, we are pleased to recognize him with the Outstanding Alumni Leadership Award.



### Recent Alumni

Alicia Morris '02 BS AAEC; '04 MS AAEC

Morris conceptualized, piloted, and launched Farm Credit University, a nationally recognized eLearning training program for lenders and producers

- Farm Credit University includes face-to-face interaction of participants, webinars, online discussion, and mentoring
- Since 2004, it has enrolled over 2500 students from 38 states and 70 lending institutions
- It's Ag Biz Planner curriculum was endorsed by the U.S. Farm Credit Administration as a cutting-edge resource for young, beginning, and minority producers
- Morris serves on the advisory board for the Department and the Kohl Centre at Virginia Tech.



Jed Cohen

### Graduate student Jed Cohen selected for Outstanding Master's Thesis Award

AAEC graduate student Jed Cohen has been selected to receive the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association's prestigious Outstanding Master's Thesis Award for The Effect of Mountain Pine Beetle Induced Tree Mortality on Home Values in the Colorado Front Range. Dr. Klaus Moeltner served as Jed's advisor.

Jed's findings informed both government agencies and local constituents on the substantial financial losses suffered by residents and municipalities in affected areas. He spent his third year of his Ph.D. program as a visiting researcher with the Energy Institute at the Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Austria. He is working on an EU-wide project to foster local acceptance of new energy infrastructure, helping to facilitate the path towards green energy and a reduction in carbon emissions in Europe.

Please update your information at the Alumni Association website at

[www.alumni.vt.edu/gateway](http://www.alumni.vt.edu/gateway)

Select "View and Update Your Profile".

## Recent publications

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Baral, R., Davis, G.C., You, W. 2013. National, regional, and state level estimates of returns to scale in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. *Journal of Agricultural & Applied Economics*. <http://purl.umn.edu/149096>

Boatwright, Jessica, Kurt Stephenson, Kevin Boyle, and Sara Nienow. 2013. "Stormwater Control Infrastructure and Residential Property Values." *Journal of Water Resources Planning and Management*. [http://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/\(ASCE\)WR.1943-5452.0000356](http://ascelibrary.org/doi/abs/10.1061/(ASCE)WR.1943-5452.0000356)

Bosch D., J. Pease, R. Wieland, D. Parker. 2013. "Perverse Incentives with Pay for Performance: cover Crops in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed" *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*. <http://purl.umn.edu/159224>

Kurt Stephenson, et al. "Technical Analysis for Nutrient Crediting of Manure Conversion Technologies" Mid-Atlantic Water Program Technical Report, 2013. [http://www.aec.vt.edu/people/faculty/URLs/Kurt\\_Paper.pdf](http://www.aec.vt.edu/people/faculty/URLs/Kurt_Paper.pdf)

Norton , George W., Alwang, Jeffrey, and William A. Masters, *The Economics of Agricultural Development: World Food Systems and Resource Use*, 3rd Edition, Oxon, UK, Routledge Press, 2014. <http://ecagdev.agecon.vt.edu/>

Peterson, E., J.H. Grant, D. Roberts, and V. Karov. 2013. "Evaluating the Trade Restrictiveness of Phytosanitary Measures on US Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Exports," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics*. <http://ajae.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2013/05/13/ajae.aat015.abstract>