



# Office of International Programs *Monthly Newsletter*

January 2012

## Kalita Developing Research Programs for Banaras Hindu University, India



*Prof. Kalita speaks with USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah*

As part of the Agricultural Innovation Partnership (AIP), Dr. Prasanta Kalita, ACES Professor of Soil and Water Resources Engineering, is working with Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to help this university establish its own research program in natural resource management. Kalita will be looking at best management practices for

crop production and environmental management in India and assisting BHU in developing technologies to improve the soil and water quality in India. The Ohio State University and Cornell University will join in the research efforts with Kalita. Additionally, Kalita along with Animal Sciences Professor Walt Hurley and Ms. Cheelan Bo-Linn of the UI's Center for Teaching Excellence will be helping BHU establish its own Center for Teaching Excellence. BHU is located in North Central India in southeast Uttar Pradesh.

On December 19-21, 2011, Kalita participated in a collaborative workshop as part of the AIP, "Harnessing Agricultural Education and Research for Rural Development," in New Delhi, India. This workshop allowed partners to review their progress thus far, and formulate plans for achieving AIP's overall goal to enhance India's food value-chain by expanding the capacities of state agricultural universities. Kalita spoke at the workshop about trends in agricultural science and biotechnology curricula at U.S. land-grant universities.

Kalita says, "This recent meeting was eye-opening and helped the partners become more focused on our individual roles as part of the overall AIP project. It also gave us the opportunity to meet with various industry and governmental officials from India who have much interest in the project." Specifically, Kalita will be working closely with TATA Chemicals Ltd., the industry leader in India. Additionally as part of the workshop, he had the opportunity to meet USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah, and all participants were invited to a gathering at the U.S. Ambassador to Delhi's residence.

AIP is a \$9.6M USAID grant led by Cornell University. Other partners, besides the University of Illinois College of ACES, are: University of Georgia, The Ohio State University, Tuskegee University, University of California-Davis, John Deere, TATA Chemicals Ltd, and Sathguru Management Consultants.

## Record Enrollment Expected for Zhejiang – ACES Award-Winning Summer Research Program

OIP is excited to announce that China's Zhejiang University (ZJU) is planning to enroll 32 students in the College of ACES' summer research program in 2012. This annual six-week program is in its third year. Last summer 16 students from Zhejiang completed the program. The program includes individualized work with an ACES faculty mentor to complete a research project, industry-focused field trips, and social and cultural activities. ZJU recently named the UIUC-ZJU summer research program as its best Study-abroad program. This honor is a testament to OIP's program coordination and the strong support the program receives from ACES faculty. OIP looks forward to expanding the participation of ACES faculty in this outstanding program.

## Korban Participates in the Middle East Water Livelihood Initiative (WLI) Project



Dr. Schuyler Korban, Director of International Programs, participated in the Middle East Water Livelihood Initiative (WLI) annual meeting that was held in Amman, Jordan.

The WLI is a USAID-funded project led by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), a CGIAR international center located in Aleppo, Syria.

The University of Illinois is a co-PI on this WLI project, along with five other U.S. universities, which operates in seven countries in the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Palestine) and partners with National Agricultural Research Systems (NARS), regional universities, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI). This meeting was focused on student exchange and regional activities as well as assessing outputs, and preparing work plans for the following year. This project is also planning to expand to include additional countries in North Africa, Tunisia, among others. The University of Illinois is actively involved in a research project at one of the benchmark sites (Lebanon) under the leadership of Dr. Prasanta Kalita and involving two of his graduate students, Joseph Monical and Kimberly Wojtulewicz.

## Faculty Feature: Dr. Hans Blaschek and the Global Industrialization of Biofuels



Dr. Hans Blaschek is a Professor of Food Microbiology/Biotechnology in the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition who specializes in biofuels. His work focuses on the genetic manipulation of microorganisms for biotechnological applications, examination of co-products as substrates for fermentation to value-added products, and development of an integrated fermentation system for biobutanol production and recovery.

Biofuels have the potential to address international issues such as climate change, rising energy costs, and fuel shortages; however, a global debate on their production and use is ongoing. Therefore, more research and education on topics related to biofuels are necessary.

As part of a collaboration with the Research Institute of Innovative Technology (RITE) based in Kyoto, Japan, Dr. Blaschek recently co-authored a textbook titled *Biomass to Biofuels: Strategies for Global Industries* (©2010, Wiley). With an international emphasis, this book addresses the challenges that have prevented the global industrialization of biofuels thus far. Specifically, the book discusses fermentation and downstream processing technologies; the biofuel markets around the world, including Brazil, the EU, the U.S., Japan, and emerging economies; and business issues related to biofuel production.

Dr. Blaschek is also the co-author of another new textbook stemming from an international collaboration, *Biofuels from Agricultural Wastes and Byproducts* (© 2010, Wiley). Co-written with Thaddeus Ezeji, a UI colleague, and Jürgen Scheffran, a Professor at the Institute for Geography and at the KlimaCampus of Hamburg University in Germany, this is the first textbook to focus solely on the production of biofuels primarily from agricultural waste and by-products.

Dr. Blaschek explains how international collaboration adds value to his research and educational projects: "Everyone has their own strengths. For example, the Japanese have a lot of industry support for their biofuel research. And they are obviously on an island without the resources we have and therefore have been forced to address acute issues that require alternative energy. They are leaders in waste conversion and are very good at reutilizing everything and developing biological-based approaches for liquid fuels."

To further promote the necessary international collaboration on biofuels, Dr. Blaschek actively participates in an international group known as *Clostridium XII* for its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting coming up in 2012, that focuses on microorganisms that produce bio-butanol. His other past international activities include facilitating student internships as part of the Professional Science Master's program in bioenergy being offered through the Center for Advanced BioEnergy Research (CABER) with the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil via a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Blaschek is of German heritage and consequently has many established professional relationships with colleagues in Germany.

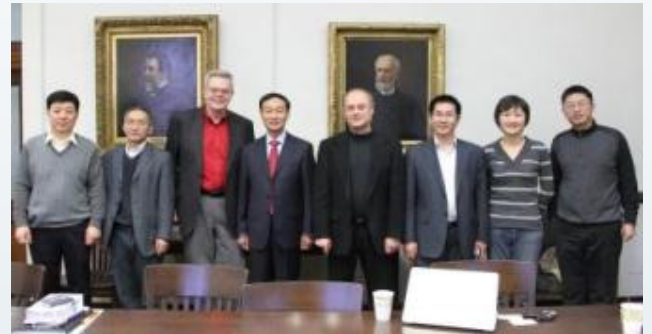
## OIP Bids Farewell to Teresa George

The staff at OIP said goodbye to their Office Manager Teresa George. Teresa, who is moving out of state with her family, has been with OIP since April 2007. Teresa has been a valuable member of the OIP team.

## Funding Opportunities

- **2012 Call for Proposals for the International Seed Grants Program - Deadline February 3.** Submit a single PDF of your completed application to: Ms. Suzana Palaska-Nicholson, OIP Program Coordinator ([spalaska@illinois.edu](mailto:spalaska@illinois.edu)).
- **OIP Accepting Proposals for 2012 CONACYT-Deadline February 15.** Each proposal should have at least one PI from UIUC and one PI from Mexico. Applications should be submitted by 5:00 pm on February 15, 2012, to Ms. Suzana Palaska-Nicholson, ([spalaska@illinois.edu](mailto:spalaska@illinois.edu)).
- Graduate students are invited to apply for Women and Gender in Global Perspectives Awards., Deadline February 15. For more information, visit [http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/WGGP\\_2012-13](http://intlprograms.aces.illinois.edu/WGGP_2012-13).

## Chinese Academy of Sciences Seeks Partnership with ACES



OIP hosted a high profile delegation from the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). The delegation included the following: Professor Ziyuan Duan, Deputy Director General, Bureau of Life Sciences and Biotechnology; Professor Wen Wang, Deputy Director, Kunming Institute of Zoology; Professor Runlin Z. Ma, Institute of Genetics and Developmental Biology; Professor Xuemei Lü, Beijing Institute of Genomics; Dr. Hongsheng Wang, Officer, Bureau of Life Sciences and Biotechnology; and Dr. Yuan Yao, Officer, Bureau of Life Sciences and Biotechnology. The group spent a day on our campus visiting with leaders and faculty from the College of ACES and the College of Veterinary Medicine. During their short visit, the delegates met with Dean Robert Hauser, Interim Vice Chancellor for Research Robert Easter, Dr. Neal Merchen, Dr. Schuyler Korban, and a select group Animal Sciences faculty. The main topic of discussion centered on developing a strong partnership between the Academy and the Department of Animal Sciences, as well as future joint research ventures. Dr. Neal Merchen, Head of the Department of Animal Sciences, noted that the CAS visit was highly successful and he was looking forward to greater collaborations between his department and CAS.