



The Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise

Happenings

www.hnfe.vt.edu

Volume 6: Summer 2012

In this issue...

Education at Work.....	2
Faculty/Staff Updates.....	3
Graduate Program	3
Dietetic Internship	3
Awards	4
Research Highlights.....	5
Food Tour	6

Message from the Department Head

Hello from Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise!

As we moved into our 51st year, our department continues to thrive. Our faculty are excelling in the department's mission of promoting health and wellness with an emphasis on translational science, service to the community, and providing a quality education to our students. Faculty are receiving grant funding in record numbers and collaborating in HNFE, the university, and beyond.

I'd like to highlight a few of our achievements and updates:

- **Fabio Almeida** and **Zhiyong Cheng** joined HNFE as tenure track professors.
- **Rob Grange** is now the assistant department head.
- **Janet Rankin** was elected the 56th President of the American College of Sports Medicine.
- **Multi-million dollar awards** were received from both NIH and the USDA.

As we work toward the next 50 years, we seek to impact the many health challenges facing our nation. I am confident our faculty, students, and alumni will find creative and viable solutions.

I encourage you to send us your news and updates; we value these connections.

Have a wonderful summer!

Susan Hutson



Susan Hutson



**50th Anniversary 5K
Run: April 9, 2011**

HNFE FAST FACTS

- Faculty.....**26**
- Undergrads.... **886**
- Graduates.....**56**
- Post-docs.....**3**
- and more than **six million dollars** of federal funding received annually

For the second consecutive year, DPD graduates have achieved a 100 percent pass rate on the National Registration Examination for Dietitians. Congratulations to all our dietetics alumni on their impressive accomplishments! We would love to hear about your activities since graduation—contact Heather Cox at hecox1@vt.edu or 540-231-5636.

Dietetics Program Honored as Exemplary by University

The **Didactic Program in Dietetics** won the University Exemplary Department/Program Award for 2011.

Programs were recognized for effectively linking assessment with instruction in order to improve student learning. The program budget was awarded \$10,000.

The award was presented to DPD director **Heather Cox** and former director **Susan Clark** in November.



From left, top: Carol Papillon, Brenda Davy, Renee Selberg-Eaton, Nicolín Girmes-Grieco, and Christina Caple (B.S. '12). Front: Nicole Famularo (B.S. '12), Heather Cox, Susan Clark, and Susan Hutson

Teach, Plant, Grow, Care ... and really be local



Students Elizabeth Tankovich and Elizabeth Brown helping at 3 Birds Berry Farm and learning the true meaning of "farm to fork."

Community nutrition, taught by **Elena Serrano**, is a required course for the dietetics undergraduate option. Students learn to apply nutrition and physical activity principles to community-based programs.

Graduate student **Katie Span** coordinated the placement of 35 students into various service learning sites that had missions related to food, nutrition, and health. Community partners included a local farmers market, a childcare center, a berry farm, a trailer park, and a women's center. Students could also create their own learning experience.

Service learning represents a win-win scenario for students, community partners, and instructors.

Comments from community partners:

"It was a pleasure to get to know the students and a testimony to your teaching that you are sending such good people into the community!"

"I learned a lot from this student: she often told us about what she was learning."

Student journal reflections:

"People often talk about going to third-world countries to serve, but we have a great need for service in our own backyard."

"People don't just want sympathy, they want to be understood and empowered. It's extremely hard to relate to a person, to empathize, if you can't get past feeling sorry for them."

"[Local service] opened my eyes that identifying the target audience is not enough; you need to identify the appropriate way to reach people to be effective."



Bill Sembello, the owner of 3 Birds Berry Farm, a community partner with HNFE 4624.

Small steps lead to a good beginning...

Elena Serrano and **Mary McFerren**, in partnership with Jennie Fisher from Temple University (primary investigator), received a five-year, \$3.7 million grant from the USDA, "Environmental and Behavioral Portion Size Strategies to Help Low-Income Mothers Reduce their Preschoolers' Intakes of Solid Fat and Added Sugar."

The goal is to prevent obesity in low-income preschoolers and promote age-appropriate food portions by using smaller cups, bowls, and plates. A state-of-the art nutrition education program will be developed and evaluated within urban Virginia locations for mothers participating in SNAP-Ed (a federal/state partnership that supports nutrition education for persons eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program).

Serrano was recently selected to the USDA Nutrition and Health Committee for Planning & Guidance for a three-year term.



Faculty/staff updates

Fabio Almeida was recently promoted to assistant professor; he has been with the department since 2007. His research focuses on the study of social relationships and its influence on the implementation of health behavior policies, practices, and programs using social network analysis and interactive technologies.



Zhiyong Cheng came to HNFE in April as assistant professor from Harvard Medical School. Zhiyong has a long-standing interest in the molecular mechanisms underlying mitochondrial dysfunction in diabetes, obesity, and cancer, with the hope to identify molecular targets to treat metabolic diseases.



Recent promotions to associate professor with tenure: **Jamie Zoellner** (2012), **Matt Hulver** (2011), and **Young Ju** (2011).

Susan Clark transferred to horticulture and is also an adjunct for HNFE.

Meredith Ledlie is the new community nutrition coordinator.

Stephanie Nelson (B.S. '03), joined the advising center as an academic counselor.

Carol Papillon was president of the Virginia Dietetic Association for 2011-2012, and **Heather Cox** chaired the annual meeting.

Yaru Wu and **Valisa Hedrick** are recent post-doctoral fellows.

Haiyan Zhang and **Louise Zheng** joined the department as research and laboratory specialists.

Graduate Program news

Graduate students now have three tracks available for study: **Molecular and Cellular Science**, **Clinical Physiology and Metabolism**, and **Behavioral and Community**. All students will now take two newly developed core classes. One course covers an overview of pertinent subject matter within the various disciplines. The second educates using a team science concept, bringing together students from different disciplines.

The program successfully hosted the first annual HNFE/Integrated Life Sciences Student Research Symposium in April. The forum, for HNFE and ILSB resident graduate and advanced undergraduate students, showcased and shared research findings. For more information on our programs, contact HNFEgrad@vt.edu.

Dietetic Internship prepares leaders

The program recently selected an emphasis of "Leadership and Professional Development" with the goal of having graduates influence their workplace, the profession, and public policy. The internship places interns at either Blacksburg (directed by **Carol Papillon**) or Northern Virginia (directed by **Susan Moore**) to complete the nine-month program. The upcoming class has 17 interns from 14 different universities.

Over the past five years, 95 percent of graduates have passed the national registration exam on their first attempt, and 70 percent are employed within 3 months of program completion. Alumni are encouraged to network by joining the LinkedIn group "Virginia Tech Dietetic Internship Alumni Network."



Kelly McGrath was awarded the "2012 Recognized Young Dietitian for Virginia" based on her professional leadership. She received her B.S. and M.S. from HNFE and graduated from the internship in 2012.

A community emerges into health

The Danville area boasts some of the highest rates of obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease in the state. To address these issues, researchers **Jamie Zoellner** and **Jennie Hill**, along with regional community members, formed the Dan River Partnership for a Healthy Community (DRPHC).

The DRPHC has implemented physical activity and nutrition projects that better understand obesity and provide healthy lifestyle initiatives for residents. Primary intervention plans are health-related social marketing campaigns, community gardens, and social support for physical activity.

The community-based participatory research consists of approximately 25 organizations and 50 members from the region. Check out their website: www.drhealthycommunity.org.



Left to Right: **Jennie Hill**, **Jamie Zoellner**, Bryan Price, Monica Motley, Delaware Clark, Sherri Right, **Terri Corsi**, and Constance Covington.

HNFE and CALS Honor Outstanding Alumni, Faculty, and Students

Catherine Woteki (M.S. '72, Ph.D. '75), the **Outstanding Alumna for 2012**, has had a distinguished career in government, academics, and industry.

She served as the first undersecretary for food safety at USDA, the dean of agriculture at Iowa State, the global director of scientific affairs for Mars, Inc., and in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy.

Catherine is now the chief scientist and undersecretary for research, education, and economics for USDA. A nutritional epidemiologist, her research interests include nutrition and food safety policy.



Sean Heffron (M.S. '03), the **Outstanding Recent Alumnus for 2012**, is a cardiology fellow at New York University.

He completed his residency at Massachusetts General Hospital and clinical fellowship at Harvard. His current fellowship focuses on preventative cardiology research and how obesity and metabolic syndrome affects vascular disease.

A recipient of multiple awards and fellowships, Sean uses his unique gifts and training to advance medical and scientific knowledge.



Heather Cox (B.S. '97, M.S. '08), received the **CALS Outstanding Alumni Leadership Award for 2012** and has been a leader in establishing alumni connections.

She creates strong alumni relationships by guiding current students into successful career paths through teaching and mentoring. Later, she engages them as alumni who contribute to unique experiential and classroom opportunities.

Heather was also awarded the “**Distinguished Dietitian of the Year for Virginia**” at the annual Virginia Dietetic Association meeting.

2011 Outstanding Achievement Awards

Recipients for HNFE and CALS awards were **Nicolin Girmes-Grieco** (M.S. '01), who was honored as **Outstanding Recent Alumnus**; **Carolyn Miles** (B.S. '69, M.S. '71, Ph.D. '77), who received the **Outstanding Alumni Award**, and **Carol Papillon**, who was awarded the **Outstanding Faculty Service Award**.

Girmes-Grieco teaches undergraduate classes, serves on various committees, and advises approximately 50 students. Miles was the director of the Clinical Obesity and Nutrition Program at NIDDK. Papillon directs the dietetic internship program and teaches and advises undergraduates.



Girmes-Grieco



Miles



Papillon

2012 HNFE and CALS Outstanding Senior

Jessica Schultz graduated in May with double majors in consumer foods and agricultural science and a minor in civic agriculture. She was a summer scholar, a CALS Ambassador, and participated in numerous service events. Jessica also founded her own bakery business and spearheaded a community garden, where produce was donated to local food pantries.

“Her skills have led to outstanding academic achievement, and her altruism has led to noteworthy contributions in the surrounding communities,” said Bill Barbeau.



Jessica is now in Montana completing a farm apprenticeship where she will learn sustainable agriculture. Her future plans include graduate school and operating a learning center focused on traditional skill sets.

2011 HNFE Outstanding Senior

Jordan Bergloff graduated last year in Dietetics with a minor in food science and technology. While at Virginia Tech, Jordan volunteered with a women's resource center, a children's diabetic camp, a rehabilitation center, and a local elementary school.

“As the president of the Student Dietetics Association, a CALS Ambassador, a summer scholar, and a member of the ePortfolio Team, Jordan defined ‘outstanding senior’,” said Heather Cox.

She recently graduated from Baylor University Medical Center's Dietetic Internship and is job hunting in the Dallas area. She said, “I'm enjoying experiencing a different part of the country after learning as much as I could from a great clinical nutrition program!”



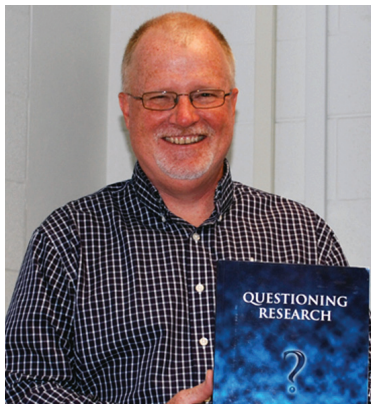
Open-Minded Skepticism

HNFE seniors learn how to critique research and evaluate health product claims through the course **Writing & Discourse**.

Questioning Research, written by **Jay Williams**, was designed to assist students in this endeavor.

Through this text and the course, students use open-minded skepticism and effectively communicate their findings.

The book allows readers to become more thoughtful and informed researchers, clinicians, teachers, and consumers. It is available at *Amazon.com*.



Jay Williams

YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

Or at least **Josh Bostic** believes so. The recent graduate of the science of food, nutrition, and exercise option said, "Obesity-related illnesses are the second leading cause of death, yet our medical system emphasizes prescription drugs. I believe that our nation's health will worsen until we realize diet and exercise offers more than altering superficial appearance."

This past spring he gave a plenary presentation at Harvard University's National Collegiate Research Conference 2012. His undergraduate research (mentored by Susan Hutson) concentrated on branched chain amino acid metabolism, and how it affects various cellular processes. He is now a graduate student in the molecular track.

After he completes his master's with the department, his next stop is attending a research-based medical school. This self-proclaimed biochemistry nerd—and oatmeal aficionado—has a career goal of becoming a research physician in oncology or endocrinology.

Josh's passion for health and nutrition, research, and daily oatmeal, will surely prepare him to be the change he seeks.



Want to lose those pregnancy pounds faster?

Samantha Harden explaining how resistance bands are used.



Samantha Harden, a Ph.D. student under **Paul Estabrooks**, had the goal of helping pregnant women achieve a healthy weight. Excess weight gain during pregnancy can lead to a variety of issues from gestational diabetes to a longer postpartum recovery. Appropriate gains can reduce back pain and cancer risks, increase self-esteem, and lower anxiety.

Her research partnered her with Carilion's prenatal healthcare in Roanoke. Participants met in groups to learn about healthy food and safe activity options as their pregnancy progressed. The setting provided opportunities for interaction and setting group goals, while enjoying friendly competition. Most women believe pregnancy is the time to "eat for two," but Harden taught eating "twice as healthy."

She found the research inspiring because participants overcame barriers to physical activity and healthy eating and left feeling confident, healthy, and proud — while gaining the appropriate weight. She hopes her study will continue to reach more women with similar outcomes.

Harden recently defended her dissertation on "Group Dynamics in Physical Activity Promotion: Theory, Research & Practice." She is spending the next year as a post-doc with the department.



facebook.com/VTHNFE

Bread, granola bars, and chicken parts!

Bill Barbeau has led the **Food, Nutrition, and Wellness Tour** for more than ten years as part of the Science of Food class. This year, tour stops included **Maple Leaf Bakery** in Roanoke, which specializes in artisan breads; **McKee Foods** in Stuarts Draft, which makes granola bars; and **Perdue Company's Bridgewater plant**, which processes nationally sold chicken parts.

One student said, "In terms of food processing, after taking the class and learning about different production mechanisms, the tour was extremely beneficial to see food produced on a large scale. It was one of the most interesting trips I've ever been on, and I hope future students continue to have this opportunity."

In past years, the group has visited other Virginia plants such as New World Pasta, Miller Milling Company, Hood Dairy, National Fruit Products, Smithfield Foods, Hershey Foods, and a shrimp processing plant in Virginia Beach.



Bill Barbeau (back row, second from left), **Heather Cox** (front row, on left), and students pose inside Perdue Company.



The Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise

Happenings

is published annually by the Department of Human Nutrition, Foods and Exercise

338 Wallace Hall, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg, VA 24061
540-231-4762

www.hnfe.vt.edu
facebook.com/VTHNFE

UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION:

We want to know what you are doing!
Share your news and help us keep our mailing list current by sending updates to the address above or online at
www.alumni.vt.edu/gateway/index.html

Are there ways you would like to be involved with scholarships, student internships in your workplace, volunteering, etc.?

We would love to hear from you!

Virginia Tech does not discriminate against employees, students, or applicants on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Anyone having questions concerning discrimination or accessibility should contact the Office for Equity and Access.

VT/0512/WEB/APSC-16