Notes From the Chair... by Heiner Lieth

As we go into the winter, we find ourselves planning for growth in the department, although we are temporarily constrained be shrinking finances from the state. While this can be very difficult, we are seizing the opportunities that present themselves and are working actively to create opportunities. I am currently developing three separate endowments in support of (1) floriculture, (2) nursery and (3) arboriculture. We also have opportunities here on campus.

New Office and Laboratory Space

The new Plant and Environmental Sciences (PES) Building is nearing completion in the central campus area north of Hunt Hall. Faculty from the Department of Agronomy and Range Science and the Land, Air and Water Resources Department will be relocating to this facility early 2002. The EH Department has also acquired space in this new building and three of our faculty members (Michael Barbour, Alison Berry and Truman Young) will be moving their research programs to new offices and laboratories. This will no doubt facilitate many opportunities for collaborative research among colleagues from all three departments. In future, we may be referring to the space in the PES Building as EH’s “North Campus Facility” and our original department complex will be renamed EH’s “South Campus Facility”.

Student Activities

The now-annual Fall Student Orientation and Spudfest served to introduce new EH undergrads and graduate students to the people and workings of the department as well as feed them enough baked potatoes to keep them carbo-loaded for weeks. Faculty members outlined their research programs and acknowledged the students working in their labs. Staff members described the services they provide and identified who could make sense of the many vagaries of college life. Then it was time to eat and department members went overboard to provide a banquet of potatoes and toppings, salads and desserts in an “all-you-can-eat” atmosphere. A good time was had by all, although one hungry graduate student remarked, “Spuds are great but why couldn’t it be a Steakfest?”

Congratulations are in order for Soo-Hyung Kim who finished his Ph.D. dissertation on Photosynthesis Models and Canopy Management Optimization in Cut-Flower Roses and has taken a postdoctoral position at the USDA research facility in Beltsville, Maryland. Rik Smith, a Ph.D. candidate working with Alison Berry, is team teaching ENH 144, Trees and Forests, with Michael Barbour and Carolyn Bledsoe of the Land, Air and Water Resources Department with a class enrollment of 102 students.

Faculty Pursuits

Michael Barbour, Truman Young and Richard Evans spent time in Barcelona, Spain developing a collaborative research project with colleagues at IRTA (Institut de Recerca i Tecnologia Agroalimentaries) involving water use of landscape plants. Alison Berry is on sabbatical leave at the Harvard Forest in Cambridge, Massachusetts, studying the impacts of urbanization on landscapes. Dave Burger is spending his sabbatical at UC Riverside and probably as many Southern California golf courses as he can find. In his absence, I am teaching ENH 1 Introduction to Environmental Horticulture and Urban Forestry with 48 students. Don Durzan is working with nuclear scientists in Ukraine to re-employ their expertise in the development of environmental sensing equipment. Truman Young is teaching the ever-popular ENH 6, Introduction to Environmental Plants, and has 56 students swarming over the campus to learn plant identification.

Michael Reid has been doing his usual globe trotting, spending time in Pisa, Italy to attend Ph.D. student, Antonio Ferrante’s, successful dissertation defense. Antonio plans to return to EH in December for several weeks. Michael then traveled to Mexico for a presentation to the Mexican Flower Council. He also gave the keynote address to a meeting of the International Floral Distributors in New York City in October.

I have also done some globe trotting myself, traveling to Germany to collaborate with colleagues on research and to visit the NTV (Greenhouse Technology Exhibition) in Amsterdam.

Tom Ledig of the Institute for Forest Genetics was recently elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science for “distinguished contributions to the conservation of genetic resources in forest trees and to knowledge of the genetic bases of rarity”. Congratulations, Tom!

New Visiting Scholars

Dr. Pushpendra Chauhan has arrived to work in my lab for a year. Dr. Chauhan is an associate professor at the College of Agricultural Engineering and Technology in Junagadh, India. His area of interest is greenhouse and nursery energy management.

Staff Happenings

Ron Lane has been working tirelessly with campus planners to secure acreage for the department’s future field research site. We will be losing our current field plots to construction of a campus conference center and hotel. Greenhouse staff member Ahmet Gulcu and his wife, Maria, welcomed their son, Adam Muhammad Hickmet Gulcu, born on Jumma, the 16th of Shaban, 1422 (that’s Turkish for November 2, 2001). Congratulations, Ahmet and Maria! GP