

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

CALS Connection

VOLUME 15 SPRING 2011

Alumni Provide Hands-on
Learning at Suwannee High School

USDA Award Recipients
Dedicated to Teaching
Excellence

**CALS Professor
Brings Science
and Learning to
Bahamian Youth**

LETTER FROM THE DEAN



Teaching excellence

I'll bet you remember your favorite high school or college teachers. I would also bet that the reason you remember them is not necessarily *what* they taught but *the way* they taught. Maybe it was their sense of humor, colorful anecdotes that brought clarity or good old-fashioned enthusiasm for the subject. Whatever the case, you remember your favorite teachers and how they inspired you to learn.

We are fortunate to have many of these educators in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, and this issue of *CALS Connection* highlights just some of our outstanding teaching faculty. In the last 10 years, faculty within CALS have received more than 40 awards from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. Furthermore, CALS faculty have won 12 United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in Teaching Awards since this program started in the early 1990s, which is more than any college of agriculture and related sciences in the nation. We highlight the two most recent recipients of national awards in this issue – Dr. Ricky Telg and Dr. Grady Roberts. I have no doubt that many will follow in their footsteps.

We are extremely proud of the excellence in teaching that our faculty bring to the classroom, but even more proud that this

In the last ten years, faculty within CALS have received more than 40 awards from the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture. Furthermore, CALS faculty have won 12 United States Department of Agriculture Excellence in Teaching Awards, which is more than any college of agriculture and related sciences in the nation.

translates into excellence in our students. Last fall semester, an astounding 828 students, or about 20 percent of our undergraduate student body, made the Dean's list. About 80 of those students were on the President's Honor Roll, earning a perfect 4.0 grade point average while carrying a 15-credit load.

Clearly, we have much to be proud of, and I hope you will enjoy reading more about the talented people who have continued the tradition of teaching excellence and help make CALS one of the best colleges in the nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Rieger'.

Dr. Mark Rieger
Interim Dean

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Graduate Connects People with Their Food

BY KATE TYLER

The Lapinskis are providing diversity to local agriculture and connecting with the community at their 2.5-acre farm in Jacksonville, Fla.

In 2007, Brian Lapinski, a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences graduate, and Kristin, his wife, started Down To Earth Farm.

"Reading about some of the pitfalls of modern agriculture got us into doing it ourselves," Brian said.

The Lapinskis use methods such as crop rotation, cover crops, composted animal manure for fertilizer and non-synthetic pesticides. The couple decided to start the

can lose more crops than conventional farming, Brian said.

Still, the reward is the ability to eat food straight off the vine.

"We are eating the food too," Brian Lapinski said. "We are very confident with eating right out of the fields."

Although the crops grown on the farm are not certified organic, Down to Earth Farm does offer consumers the opportunity to visit the place where their food is grown.

The farm supplies a 24-member Community Supported Agriculture group with fruits and vegetables seasonally.

A CSA group consists of members of

After three years of providing locally grown produce for the community and their family, Brian and Kristin Lapinski still love the thrill of watching hand-planted seeds grow into thriving, abundant crops.

farm after learning about these methods from other farms around the country.

"We wanted to bring a sustainable way of growing food to Jacksonville," Kristin said.

Farming sustainably is a challenge. Bugs and disease are harder to control, and you

the general public who purchase shares of a farm from the owner. As a result, the shareholder receives bags of fresh produce weekly throughout the farming season. Some of the members of the CSA volunteer their time to work on the farm.

"We are really proud and excited to have the CSA, especially the connections we have been able to make with the members," Kristin said.

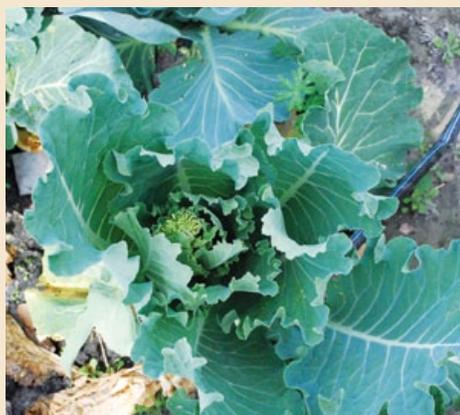
Down to Earth Farm also serves local farmers markets weekly, including Beaches Green Markets at Jarboe Park and Riverside Arts Market.

Brian, who has a master's degree from the department of family, youth and community sciences, was able to learn valuable lessons from his graduate studies.

"Brian wanted to play an important role in a community and that is where our department helped him," said Mickie Swisher, associate professor and graduate



Brian Lapinski, a College of Agricultural and Life Sciences graduate, picks vegetables on an overcast day in Jacksonville, Fla.



Cabbage, one of several crops grown on the Down to Earth Farm, is almost ready to be picked and enjoyed.

coordinator for family, youth and community sciences.

Throughout his master's program, Brian focused on the community and social aspects of owning and maintaining a community-based organization.

"Brian is not just focusing on providing food; instead, his focus is on building and being a part of the Jacksonville community," Swisher said.

After three years of providing locally grown produce for the community and their family, Brian and Kristin still love the thrill of watching hand-planted seeds grow into thriving, abundant crops.

"It never gets old," Brian said. "Every time I harvest something I get excited." □

CALS Electives Broaden Horizons

BY EDWARD TOPOLESKI

University of Florida students have the opportunity to take a variety of electives within the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. The electives can fulfill general education requirements, but students can also take the courses to learn a new skill or about an industry they are unfamiliar with.

The Meat We Eat is a three-credit course designed to turn UF students into educated consumers of animal muscle products and to help them appreciate the steps involved in muscle food production.

"We want to show students how we work to feed a growing world population," said Chad Carr, assistant professor in animal sciences.

The course is the only one of its kind offered in Florida, and it covers all the details of animal meat production, including processing, retailing and the role of meat in a balanced diet.

Carr teaches his students about the proper selection of meats and how to properly cook and store animal protein products.

Biological sciences courses are designed to introduce students to basic concepts in science, such as the scientific method, and to help students become aware of the impact of scientific developments on the environment and society.

The Meat We Eat accomplishes that by requiring students to formulate hypotheses relative to the animal, meat and food science industry, Carr said.

"When the class is done, we want students to understand that meat is good, and it is good for them," he said.

The course is offered in the fall and spring and is open to all UF students.

"We want everybody to take this class, enjoy it and learn," Carr said. □

Examples of CALS Electives
AOM 2520 Global Sustainable Energy: Past, Present and Future
AGR 2612 Seeds of Change
ENY 1001 Bugs and People
ORH 1030 Plants, Gardening and You
AEB 2014 Economic Issues, Food and You
FOS 2001 Man's Food
FOR 2662 Forests for the Future
FRC 1010 Growing Fruit for Fun and Profit
PCB 1051 Exploring Your Genome
PLP 2000 Plants, Plagues and People
SWS 2007 The World of Water
WIS 2040 Wildlife Issues in a Changing World

UF and ABAC Sign Articulation Agreement

BY LAURA KUBITZ

Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College and the University of Florida are teaming up to help students who begin their academic career at ABAC to finish their degrees in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at UF.

ABAC, located in Tifton, Ga., signed an articulation agreement with UF to ensure a smooth transition for students who come

from ABAC to UF. This agreement will make it easy for students to finish their degrees in Florida.

"This is a good thing for UF and ABAC," said David Bridges, ABAC president. "Our Florida numbers are up considerably, and this agreement will provide a charted course."

CALS interim dean, Mark Rieger, said the intent of the agreement is to provide more opportunities for higher education and non-traditional students in the fields of agriculture and natural resources.

"I want to recruit

the best and brightest kids in Florida to come to ABAC," said Tim Marshall, dean of ABAC's School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

The joint institutional agreement is between the ABAC School of Agriculture and Natural Resources and CALS. The partnership will focus on majors in forest resources and conservation, agricultural education and communication, animal sciences, and food and resource economics, Marshall said.

"It shows there is a very positive relationship between ABAC and Florida," Rieger said. "For Florida kids to come to this environment, we know they will come back to the university well prepared."

For more information, call the CALS Dean's Office at 352-392-1963. □



Representatives from the University of Florida and Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College were present for the articulation agreement signing ceremony. Pictured from left to right, Paul Willis, Tim Marshall, Elaine Turner, David Bridges, Frankie Hall, Mark Rieger and Niles Reddick.

Professor Brings Science and Learning to Bahamian Youth

BY LAURA KUBITZ

A student explores the stromatolites he learned about in the Science and Stromatolite Summer Camp held by Jamie Foster, an assistant professor in microbiology and cell science, in August 2010 in Little Darby Island, Bahamas. (photo by Jamie Foster)

Underneath the clear, emerald waters of Excuma Cay, Bahamas, are ancient organisms that can only be found in the Bahamas and Australia. The Bahamians who call the string of islands home often do not understand the significance of their environment.

Jamie Foster, an assistant professor in microbiology and cell science in the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, set out to help the local community of Little Darby Island, Bahamas, preserve their unique environment by organizing a camp to teach local children about what is in their backyard.

Stromatolites are microbial communities that form rocks by taking carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and releasing it out as calcium carbonate. The big, gray rocks formed by stromatolites can look more like stepping stones instead of ancient fossils. Some of the stromatolites found in the Bahamas date back 3.8 billion years.

In collaboration with CALS, the Young Bahamian Marine Scientists, the Bahamas Marine EcoCentre, the University of Miami and NASA, Foster organized a Science and Stromatolite Summer Camp for eight middle- and high school-aged Bahamian children. The camp was a mixture of classroom lecture and hands-on activities meant to teach the children about the scientific method using stromatolites.

"It was just a great way to connect

to kids that you might never have talked to before," Foster said. "The Bahamian kids can put up a wall, but this was a great way to interact and reach out to them."

Alina Chester, an anthropology and political science junior at UF, helped as a teaching assistant during the camp. Having spent part of her childhood on the island, she used the camp as an opportunity to get to know the locals and learn while giving back to the island.



The students and teachers enjoy a break from the heat by relaxing in the clear, crisp waters of Little Darby Island, Bahamas, during an outdoor lecture at the Science and Stromatolite Summer Camp. (photo by Jamie Foster)

In the morning, the campers listened to a short lecture and then got to perform hands-on activities to help reinforce the lessons. During the camp, the children launched rockets, designed their own experiments, created underwater maps of the stromatolites, isolated DNA and created news broadcasts about an issue they learned about at camp.

"For almost all of the kids, this was the most high-tech science they have gotten to be a part of," Chester said.

To help connect with the children, Foster teamed up with Nikita Shiels-Rolle, who works with the Young Bahamian Marine Scientists, to translate the information in a way the campers would understand.

"We wanted Bahamians teaching Bahamians," Foster said. "We provided the supplies and structured the lessons, but we wanted the kids to see a familiar face when translating this information. Nikita served as our Bahamian educator. She was an essential part of the team."

By interacting and teaching middle- and high school-aged children in the Bahamas, Foster said she has a better understanding of the diversity of people who walk through her classroom doors at UF.

The camp was a pilot program to help establish proper methods and procedures for running a summer

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Alumni Provide Hands-on Learning at Suwannee High School

BY ADRIENNE BOYETTE

Two College of Agricultural and Life Sciences alumni are bringing their diverse academic backgrounds to the classrooms of Suwannee High School in Live Oak, Fla.

By incorporating their backgrounds in plant science and environmental horticulture, De Broughton and Travis Tuten are helping students gain hands-on experience in a variety of agricultural sectors.

Their efforts are evident in their students' successes through the Suwannee High School Land Lab. The land lab, or farm, serves as an outdoor classroom for the Suwannee High School Agriculture Department.

The teachers use the knowledge gained in their respective programs through the University of Florida's CALS, leading not only to their success as educators, but also to the success of the Suwannee FFA Chapter, the Suwannee High School Land Lab and, most importantly, their students.

This outdoor learning environment is common in agriculture departments at many schools. The Suwannee High School Land Lab is a thriving agricultural operation and a working farm producing numerous agricultural commodities, Broughton said.

"As a plant science major, I took many classes that had labs with a production emphasis," Broughton said. "I have used these things to provide unique experiences for

Travis Tuten, B.S. '06 interdisciplinary studies, (left) and De Broughton, B.S. '06 plant science, (right).



Travis Tuten, Suwannee High School agricultural education teacher, assists students in cooking cane syrup.



Suwannee High School students strip the sugarcane of its dead shucks, or outer leaves, to ensure a clean harvest of the crop.

students beyond the traditional classroom."

The students are currently growing sugarcane and a variety of winter greens including mustards, turnips and collards, broccoli, squash, and acre peas. They also have a small fruit orchard with blueberries, blackberries and fruit trees.

The crops grown at the land lab are harvested by students and then sold to raise money for the agriculture department and the Suwannee FFA Chapter. One of the largest fundraisers is the chapter's cane syrup production and sales.

Using the sugarcane grown on the farm, students and Suwannee FFA members help grind the cane and make it into cane syrup. After processing and bottling the syrup, it is sold in the community to support the FFA chapter.

Broughton and Tuten are continuing to expand the opportunities students have at the farm. From managing a herd of cattle, propagating plants in a new greenhouse, and raising catfish and freshwater shrimp, students are exposed to the vastness of the

agricultural industry.

"We cover a wide range of topics in the classroom, but the students always relate it back to the farm," Broughton said. "It gives them good experience to apply what they learn in class in a hands-on setting."

Broughton and Tuten said that the majority of their students do not come from an agricultural background, and the ones who are familiar with agriculture may not necessarily be familiar with production agriculture.

Tuten said these programs allow students to see potential career opportunities that they might not have learned about otherwise. He also said students greatly benefit from applying what they learn at the land lab.

"As a student in agriculture education and an FFA member, Mr. Tuten and Mrs. Broughton have encouraged me to pursue a career in agriculture," said Leslie Goolsby, a freshman at Suwannee High School. "I am planning to further my education and go to vet school." □

Alumna Provides Foundation for Student's Success

BY CHRIS DUGOSH

After attending an out-of-state university for two years, Brian Frank was left unsatisfied. He longed for a greater college experience and a personal relationship with his professors.

Frank was soon introduced to a UF food science and human nutrition graduate who not only became his mentor but also inspired his work.

After returning to his hometown of Miami, Frank volunteered his time at the Miami Veterans Affairs Hospital. There, he met Michelle Weiner, who was completing her medical residency at the University of Miami. Over time, the two developed a bond which led to Frank's position as Weiner's research assistant.

"Being an undergrad, Brian was very impressive," Weiner said. "He was open-minded with a huge drive to learn, so I felt comfortable asking him to be my assistant."

Through the beginning of their research, Weiner was aware of Frank's urge for a greater college experience. She began explaining her personal experience at UF, as well as the great opportunities she found

within the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences.

Taking her advice, Frank applied for and was accepted to complete a degree in biology, beginning his journey in CALS. With continued guidance from Weiner, Frank has become satisfied with his college experience at UF.

"The best thing about CALS is the one-on-one relationships you build with your professors," Frank said.

While completing his undergraduate degree, Frank continued collaborating with Weiner in the development of an innovative research project. The two pursued creating a device that would alleviate pain associated with lumbar spinal stenosis, which occurs when the space around the spinal cord narrows and puts pressure on the spinal cord and the spinal nerve roots.

The purpose of the device is to remove compression of the nerve roots. This

eliminates pain, numbness and weakness. Weiner served as the primary investigator and Frank helped with the hands-on creation of the device.

"Brian was a total blessing," Weiner said. "The device would not work the way it does if it was not for him," Weiner said.

The creation of the device brought phenomenal testing results. The product relieved pressure, allowing individuals to experience less pain. With such dramatic results, the duo has aspirations to get their work published.

Frank aspires to attend medical school at the University of Miami, which can be attributed to the foundation Weiner provided.

"She has been a true mentor," Frank said. "Words enough cannot describe how lucky I got." □

"The best thing about CALS is the one-on-one relationships you build with your professors." — Brian Frank



With their research, Brian Frank and Michelle Weiner aim to help alleviate pain associated with lumbar spinal stenosis. (photo provided by Michelle Weiner)



Michelle Weiner, a 2003 food science and human nutrition alumna, acted as a mentor for Brian Frank, who transferred into the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and hopes to attend medical school after graduation. (photo provided by Michelle Weiner)



Brian Frank assisted Michelle Weiner in creating a device to help alleviate pain caused by lumbar spinal stenosis, and the duo hopes to get their work published. (photo by Laura Kubitz)

Environmental Horticulture Professor Teaches Students with Their Senses

BY JOSEPH LAZZARO

A UF professor uses a centuries-old Chinese proverb to teach and inspire students who are mostly under a quarter century of age.

Hector Pérez, assistant professor of environmental horticulture, uses an ancient philosophy as the basis of his teaching strategy. "Teach me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand."

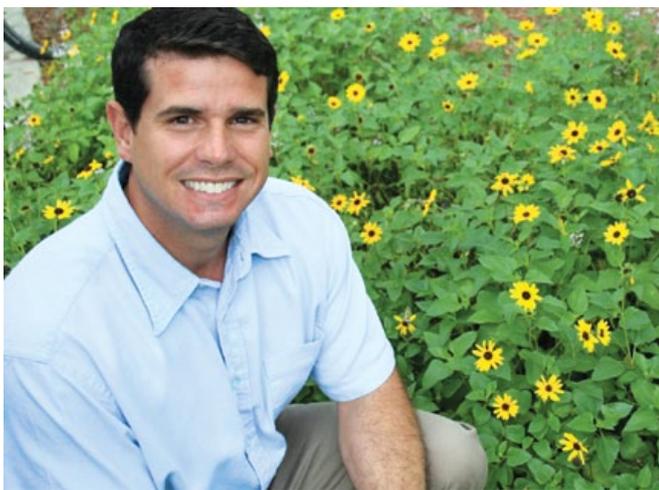
Pérez teaches his undergraduate plant

"We try to create more of a sensory approach to learning the plant material," he said. "The proverb captures exactly what I'm trying to achieve."

This approach is beneficial to students from outside the department who want to take his classes as an elective, or because they are interested in gaining more knowledge about the often overlooked

Hector Pérez, assistant professor of environmental horticulture, uses an ancient philosophy as the basis of his teaching strategy. He incorporates a hands-on approach inspired by the Chinese proverb: "Teach me and I forget, show me and I remember, involve me and I understand."

identification and plant propagation courses by incorporating the Chinese proverb and a hands-on approach in the field. In Pérez's class, students are encouraged not only to look, but also to touch, to sense and to feel the more than 200 plants they learn about in a semester.



Hector Pérez, assistant professor in environmental horticulture, uses an old philosophy to teach and inspire his students. (photo provided by Hector Pérez)

plant life around them. "I have students from all over campus," he said. "Some have zero plant experience. Others have a lot."

The students work on on-campus projects that try to incorporate more sustainability for the area. Pérez describes their research is "as green as it gets," and would like to see more valuable teaching resources, such as a wildflower teaching meadow and a botanical garden at UF.

The department's efforts help to prepare students for different careers and professions, he said. Many graduating students are recruited by major national and international landscape companies for middle management or curator positions in nurseries and botanical gardens, Pérez said.



Students use sandpaper to etch their way through seeds that are water impermeable in Hector Pérez's plant propagation classes. (photo provided by Hector Pérez)

Kara Monroe is a former student of Pérez. Monroe took both the plant identification and propagation classes.

"He has a hands-on approach to teaching, and I've always liked that," she said. "One thing that stood out compared to other classes is how he stressed scientific writing."

The company Monroe works for breeds annual and perennial plants, and wholesales them nationally.

"In order to have a \$2 plant grow correctly, you have to dig a \$10 hole," Pérez said. "There is a lot more to these jobs than you think."

Students also gain career and hands-on experience with department-sponsored trips to the Pacific Northwest, Costa Rica, the British Isles and more. "There are plenty of opportunities for internships around the nation as well," he said.

Pérez and the department take pride in being able to help students as thinkers, environmentalists and professionals.

"The thing that really drives me and makes me feel like I've been successful is when I can see, hear or feel the students learning," Pérez said. "To me, that's the greatest thing in the world." □

USDA Award Recipients Dedicated to Teaching Excellence

BY LAURA KUBITZ

The University of Florida now leads all institutions in the number of faculty recognized by the U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture Excellence in College and University Teaching Awards with 12.

The number of awards is a reflection of the dedication to teaching excellence held up by College of Agricultural and Life Sciences faculty members.

Two faculty members within UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences received awards for teaching excellence at the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities' annual meeting in November 2010.

Ricky Telg, a professor in agricultural education and communication, won a National Teaching Award. Grady Roberts, an associate professor in the same department, received the New Teacher Award, given to faculty with no more than seven years of teaching experience in higher education.

"The College of Agricultural and Life Sciences has a long history of promoting excellence in teaching among its faculty," said Elaine Turner, CALS associate dean, who won the USDA Teaching Award in 2006. "Teaching excellence enhances student learning, which, in turn, helps our students reach their goals and that's what CALS is all about."

Gail Kauwell, a professor in the food science and human nutrition department, received an Excellence in Teaching Award in 2000. When she received the letter informing her she had won, Kauwell had to read it a couple of times before it sunk in.

"Hands shaking, I gathered my mail and my food and went back to my office to read the letter again and to make sure I had read it correctly," Kauwell said.

She believes teaching begins with helping students to learn how to use what



Ricky Telg (left) and Grady Roberts (right), faculty members in the agricultural education and communication department, are recipients of the USDA/NIFA Excellence in Teaching Awards, boosting the University of Florida to having the most awards of any other college of agriculture or related sciences in the nation. (photo by Laura Kubitz)

they know when presented with problems and case scenarios and to develop skills that will assist them in achieving their goals. It means taking the time to mentor, encourage and empower students as well as finding ways to facilitate learning and personal growth.

"I find great pleasure in catching glimpses of the 'ah-hah moment,'" Kauwell said.

Michael Kane, a professor in environmental horticulture, received the Excellence in Teaching Award in 2009. The professors he had in his undergraduate and graduate years took the time to be mentors, build his confidence and nurture his curiosity for the plant sciences. These experiences are the root of his teaching philosophy, he said.

Kane strives to provide students with positive but challenging learning experiences; enforce accountability; provide current and professional-looking class handouts; develop laboratory exercises that are organized and exciting; and to be an exceptional mentor for his graduate students.

"When my wife and I attended the awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., we had the opportunity to meet the other teaching award winners," Kane said. "I quickly realized that we all shared a common trait — a deep and sustained desire to work closely with our students and colleagues and be innovative in our quest to become more effective teachers." □

The University of Florida now leads all institutions in the number of faculty recognized by the USDA Excellence in College and University Teaching Awards.

Alumni Recognized at TailGATOR



JACK VOGEL,
B.S. '69 in forestry.

"In his quiet way, Jack and the talented and diverse group of professionals he employs have reached all corners

of the state, helping to keep Florida's forests well managed and a green and growing asset for all." — George Blakeslee, associate director of the School of Forest Resources and Conservation



PAUL WILLIS,
B.S. '79 in agricultural and extension education.

"Mr. Willis is the kind of man that leaves an impression wherever he goes.

The extent to which he cares for students is extraordinary; he goes above and beyond for people." — Micah Scanga, Alpha Gamma Rho brother and CALS graduate student



BRIDGET CARLISLE,
B.S. '95 in animal sciences, M.Ag. '05 in agricultural education and communication.

"Bridget has the respect and appreciation of

the commercial livestock industry in Polk County. She has a strong client-centered attitude and focus. She is genuinely interested in keeping the business of cattle ranching a viable one for years to come in Polk County. I hope she intends to serve the rest of her extension career right here!" — Nicole Walker, director of the Polk County Extension Service



GILLIAN FOLKES DAGAN,
B.S. '00, Ph.D '04 in food science and human nutrition.

"Gillian is one of the most respected young

food scientists in the U.S. She is excelling in her career, is a clear leader in our profession, and remains very committed to helping our department and UF." — Charles Sims, professor and interim chair in the food science and human nutrition department



FRANKIE HALL, B.S. '79 in agricultural and extension education.

"Frankie Hall is, and has always been, a person of infectious enthusiasm. His

'can do' attitude and high level of energy contribute to his ability to get things done. If there is a project he believes in, he will see it to completion." — Saundra

TenBroeck, associate professor in the department of animal sciences

For more information on these outstanding alumni, visit www.cals.ufl.edu/tailgator.

Bahamas continued from page 6 science camp. Many of the activities were improvised, but the camp was a success, Foster said.

Based upon assessments completed by Foster at the beginning and end of the camp, students were inspired to pursue more education. Foster is even trying to help one of the campers obtain an internship at UF or NASA.

For Juwan Rolle, 11, the camp gave him a glimpse of what his future could be like. Since the camp ended, Juwan friended Chester on Facebook and has been asking what college is like.

"He is a scientist at heart," Chester said. "He was ready to jump into every challenge. I think the camp opened his eyes to possibilities he may not have known were an option for him." □

SAVE THE DATE
15th Annual
TailGATOR

SATURDAY,
SEPTEMBER 17, 2011
www.cals.ufl.edu

For more information on **CALS**, visit our website at cals.ufl.edu



BUGS AS GRUB — Bugs are no longer a treat for just fish and birds. In February, students in the class “The Insects,” got the chance to dine on the insects they are studying in an entomology and nematology course. Rebecca Baldwin, assistant professor, used the lesson to teach her students the benefits and destructive impacts of insects on humans. The class learned they likely eat insect fragments on a daily basis, and many cultures depend on insects as a protein source. Insects are used as coatings for candies, vitamins and medicine, and insect dyes are used to color juice and cosmetics. Learning about insects as food provides a cultural education, but also opens a window into how our food is grown, processed and stored.

Pictured from top left to bottom right: students from “The Insects,” Michelle Williams and Rebecca Baldwin. (Photos by Christy Chiarelli)