



...A report to Soil & Crop Sciences Faculty by David Baltensperger

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Department of Soil and Crop Sciences

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Happy 4th of July!

I hope that many of you have had the opportunity to participate in a bit of the rejuvenation that can occur from taking some of your annual leave. It is valuable to long-term impact that we maintain balance in our lives.

This week we had the opportunity to share in the memory of Dr. Ralph Waniska. Ralph is one of those recognized for his outstanding teaching and research and was also recognized for the balance in his life. His example will live for many generations with those he worked with.

Many exciting opportunities are emerging for research in bio-energy with discussions including several major corporations, federal grants, state initiatives and faculty ingenuity. Several were able to participate in our discussion this past week where as a department we recognized the need for development of a bio-energy web page to highlight our work, a seminar series to stimulate our thinking and the development of more cooperative/interdisciplinary grants to support our research. Thanks to Dr. Jürg Blumenthal for volunteering to lead the development of material for the

web page and to Dr. Don Victor for taking the lead on developing a bio-energy seminar. I want to wish each of you the best on the many proposals that are currently submitted and/or being developed. It is truly an exciting time.

On Friday we had a TAES/TCE discussion on bio-energy that was highlighted by the numerous breakout groups where it was possible to get a much better idea of the breadth and complexity of the bio-energy area. Just a couple of notes to consider: Texas has become the nations leader in bio-diesel capacity, the price of oil for many of our crops has risen to near \$0.30/lb--not long ago we were penciling canola with 40% oil at \$0.06/lb or roughly doubling in the oil value, new technology for cellulosic conversion is being announced almost daily, we can produce more alcohol per acre with sweet sorghum than corn grain. It is important that we approach our research with a new paradigm as many of the things written off earlier may now or in the near future, be viable economically for our producers.

It has been a fulfilling few weeks with the recruitment of several outstanding new fac-

ulty members to our department. We expect our new soil mineralogist and new wheat breeder to be relocating during August and ready to go in September.

The new soil mineralogist is Youjun Deng. He comes to



us from Desert Research Institute, Reno, Nevada. He earned his Ph.D. at Texas A&M University, his MS from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Nanjin, China and his BS from Huazhong Agricultural University, Wuhan, China.

The new wheat breeder is Amir Ibrahim and he comes



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to us from South Dakota State University with his Ph.D from Colorado State University. He received his MS from the American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon and his MS from the University of Gezira Wad Medani, Sudan.

We have also completed negotiations with Paul DeLaune, as our



new soil environmental scientist at Vernon. He comes from Fayetteville, Arkansas. He received his Ph.D. and MS from the University of Arkansas, his BS from Oklahoma State and his AS from Eastern Oklahoma State College.

Dr. Ambika Chandra will also



be joining our faculty this summer in the turf breeding position at Dallas. She comes to us from Penn State with her Ph.D. She received her MS and BS from Punjab Agricultural University of India.

Please join me in enthusiastically welcoming these new members to the Texas A&M system. A special thanks to all that served on the search committees and participated in the search process. We continue our search for an

extension forage specialist at Overton. It appears that we will be able to initiate recruiting to refill Dr. Waniska's position in the near future. As phase two budgeting is finalized, we should know where we stand on several other positions as well.

Congratulations !



Dr. Ganjunte is the winner of this issue's gold housekeeping award for his organization and update efforts on his lab at El Paso.

David

Position Updates

- Turf Breeding Position at Dallas - Ambika Chandra
- Environmental Soil Scientist at Vernon - Paul DeLaune
- Soil Clay Mineralogist at College Station - Youjun Deng
- Wheat Breeder at College Station - Amir Ibrahim
- Forage Extension Specialist at Overton - Open

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We're on the web!
<http://soilcrop.tamu.edu>