The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) is proud to announce that Gary Ochs has been selected to join the Agricultural Education Program faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, effective August 16, 2013. As a Teaching Associate, Ochs' focus will include teaching courses in the Agricultural Science Education (ASE) concentration, advising undergraduate students, and student recruitment.

Ochs brings to the position 13 years of experience in secondary agriculture classrooms. For the past five years, he has served as Agriculture Teacher and FFA Advisor at Red Hill Junior/Senior High School in Bridgeport, IL. Eight years prior to that, Ochs served as the Agriculture Teacher and FFA Advisor for Paris High School in Paris, IL. He has taught high school courses including Agriculture Science, Agribusiness Management, Greenhouse Management and Floral Design, Turfgrass and Landscape Management, and Agricultural Welding.

Since the start of his teaching career, Ochs has held numerous regional and state level positions in Agricultural Education, including service as co-chair of the Professional Development Committee of the Illinois Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers (IAVAT). He has served as a mentor to students through IAVAT and has served as a master educator for student teachers.

“Agroulture, agricultural education, and the University of Illinois are three of my biggest passions,” said Ochs. “I look forward to sharing my experiences with students and helping them develop the tools to become successful educators themselves. I’m thrilled to be joining the highly regarded faculty team at University of Illinois Ag Ed.”

Originally from Olney, Illinois, Ochs holds a Master of Science degree in Agricultural Education and a Bachelor of Science degree in Agricultural Education, both from the University of Illinois.

Erica Thieman, Ph.D., is also new to the Ag Ed Program this Fall. Her responsibilities will include both teaching and research for the Agricultural Science Education (teacher certification) concentration.

“I am excited to be joining the Illinois Ag Ed Family and College of ACES and to call Illinois my new home!”
Jacob Dickey and Brianna Harmon, juniors in the University of Illinois Agricultural Education Program, have been selected to promote agriculture and agricultural education through two nationally recognized organizations.

Jacob Dickey was selected to serve as a National Collegiate Agriculture Ambassador for the 2013-14 academic year. Jacob was chosen for this position by the National FFA Organization and was one of only 20 students from across the country to receive this honor. For his efforts as an ambassador of the program, Jacob will also receive a $1,000 scholarship for working 30 hours in his surrounding community to enhance the public’s awareness of the food, fuel, and fiber industry.

Sponsors for the program include BASF, Syngenta, CSX, and the National Pork Board as a special project of the National FFA Foundation.

Brianna Harmon was selected as only one of eleven future agriculture teachers to spend the next year promoting agricultural education as a profession as part of the National Teach Ag Ambassadors program. She will be paired with an assigned mentor teacher to help her plan, prepare, and present an agriculture lesson to a middle school classroom in Louisville, Kentucky during the National FFA Convention. She will also present lessons to schools throughout Illinois and assist the U of I’s Ag Ed Club with the Teach Ag campaign.

CHSAS Students, Faculty Visit U of I

Over 45 teachers, administrators and staff from the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences (CHSAS) took part in an all-day professional development in-service on Tuesday, August 20th organized by the College of ACES. These highly informative workshops gave teachers an inside look of the expectations and experiences new college students encounter after transitioning from high school. Faculty members from the departments of mathematics and chemistry provided informative presentations on the key teaching strategies high school teachers need to know to adequately prepare high school students.

During these workshops, faculty members presented hands-on demonstrations and led conversations on teaching techniques that provided real-world examples high school teachers can incorporate into the classroom.

Ag Ed Studies in Italy

Dr. David Rosch will be taking students to Italy this upcoming May 2014. The focus of the trip will be to examine the historical and contemporary differences in leadership practices between the Roman republic and empire and what is currently practiced in Italian businesses and government. Students who participate will visit Rome and its rich history of leadership, as well as Florence, Bologna, and Tuscany. The cost is currently being finalized, and the dates of the trip will be May 12-20, 2014.

2013 Ag Ed MS Graduates

Six students completed coursework for the Master of Science Agricultural Education Programs this past year. The students who completed the online or on-campus programs were:

- Sara Haag
- Brittany Hosselton, ag instructor at Tuscola
- Emily Warren - Naturalist Educator at the Wapsi River Environmental Center
- Wende Dallain, ag instructor at Chicago High School for Agriculture Sciences
- Kevin Larsen, ag instructor at Riverdale
- Wendy Leenerts, ag instructor at Arthur
Ag Ed Students and Affiliates Attend NACTA

The 59th Annual North American College and Teachers of Agriculture (NACTA) Conference was hosted June 25-29 by Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. Those attending the conference affiliated with the Agricultural Education Program included: Crystal Allen, PhD student in Animal Sciences, (MS in Agricultural Education); Lisa Burgoon, Minor in Leadership Studies Coordinator and Ag Ed faculty; and Alicia Schneider, MS student in Agricultural Education.

The five-day conference was filled with interesting and beneficial information for teaching agriculture. Conference attendees were from the United States, Canada, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Peru. The conference included poster sessions, concurrent sessions, workshops, keynote speakers, tours, and networking opportunities.

Schneider commented, “I met people from all over the U.S. that specialized in various aspects of teaching and research. One of the most beneficial parts of the conference for me was the concurrent sessions qualitative thesis and also about new advances in the field [of Agricultural Education].”

Conference participants were also able to choose from four tour options: Historic Blacksburg, New River Valley Farm, Civic Agriculture and Food Systems, or Floyd County Sustainable Community Tours.

During the conference, Crystal Allen was nominated as the Journal Awards Chair beginning in 2014. The committee is responsible for judging more than 50 published journal articles and determining the winners of the E. B. Knight, Jack Everly, Honorable Mention, and Top Teaching Tip awards.

Article provided by Crystal Allen and Alicia Schneider.

Students Earn County Fair Queen Honors

While some students spent time at county fairs exhibiting projects or showing livestock, two of the Agricultural Education students competed and won their respective Queen Pageants. Danielle Brown, a Senior in Agricultural Leadership Education from Bismarck, was crowned Miss Georgetown Fair Queen. Kirsten Blackford, a Senior in Agriculture Science Education from Paxton, is Miss Fisher Fair Queen.

Brown states, “Being a county fair queen is not all about glitter, high heels, and fair week. Being a county fair queen is about being a positive role model, promoting agriculture, and representing the exciting things your county fair has to offer. I am honored to be able to represent the Georgetown Fair over the next year. I am very excited for this opportunity of a lifetime. I cannot wait to see what God has planned for this farm girl as I take on the title of fair queen this year.”

Similarly, Blackford says “With this opportunity, I will be able to travel around the state promoting agriculture and the county fair system. I love how I can continue to promote agriculture to my community and the state while being queen. I have had the great opportunity to meet Representative Shimkus while he spoke on the Farm Bill and many other pieces of legislation.”

Blackford and Brown will compete at the Miss Illinois County Fair Queen Pageant this January in Springfield. Congratulations to both of them on this honor, and good luck in January!
Lahey Studies Abroad in Australia for Semester

During the Spring 2013 semester, Shelby Lahey participated in a study abroad experience through the College of ACES in Perth, Australia. Lahey, a senior in the Agricultural Leadership Education concentration, says the experience was, “the chance of a lifetime. I met several people from across the globe and am glad to still be in contact with these people.”

During her time in Australia, Lahey attended the University of Western Australia, which is located in Perth, WA. She comments, “It truly was a change from Champaign. Instead of squirrels running everywhere it was peacocks and ducks. The buildings were a more open style with hardly any doors to open.”

Lahey attended classes during her semester abroad, but also had the opportunity to travel. “I met an Australian that came to U of I on the Angus Youth Australia Scholarship which allowed her to compete on the university livestock evaluation team in 2012. I visited her and her farm quite often. It was a great way to learn not just in the classroom, but also in-person. I helped her father take care of the cattle and visited her family’s winery and dairy farm.”

One of the most memorable aspects of the experience was the chance to visit many wildlife parks and see the famous kangaroos, both tame and wild. “Australians consider kangaroos to be the equivalent to deer in the Midwest. On their cars they have a ‘roo bar’ so the kangaroo does not go through the windshield.”, Lahey says. “It is a beautiful country and I am looking forward to going back in 2015!”

Professional Development Workshops for Teachers

Fifteen 1st-5th year high school ag instructors from across the state participated in a two-day professional development workshop hosted by the Ag Education Program on August 1-2, 2013. Funding for the workshops was provided by the Illinois State Board of Education Growing Agriculture Science Teachers (GAST) grant.

Workshops were presented by master educators on topics related to the Biological Science Applications in Agriculture (BSAA) and Physical Science Applications in Agriculture (PSAA) curriculum, and stress management. Presenters for the workshops were Sue Schafer, Taylorville High School; Mindy McDermott, Waterloo High School; and Dr. Erica Thieman, UIUC Ag Education Assistant Professor. Workshops were also presented during the first week of classes for current Agricultural Education students. Kristin Myers, Tri-Valley High School Agriculture Instructor presented a hands-on workshop about the BSAA curriculum, and Ryan Wildman conducted a workshop about the Agricultural Mechanics curriculum. Wildman also provided instruction on completing the Incentive Funding Grant application and the National Chapter Award application.