SAES food and soil scientists honored for research

Research honorees from left: Dr. G. B. Reddy, Dr. Ipek Goktepe, and Dr. Salam Ibrahim

Three awards recently presented to SAES researchers underscore the importance of agriculture at N.C. A&T and across the state.

Dr. Ipek Goktepe was presented the Award for Excellence in Research by Gamma Sigma Delta, the honor society for agriculture. Receiving university awards were Dr. Salaam Ibrahim, recipient of the A&T Outstanding Young Investigator Award, and Dr. G.B. Reddy, recipient of the A&T Senior Researcher Award.

Goktepe has several projects under way related to her specialty in environmental toxicology. She is preparing to survey North Carolina farm workers and take skin samples from those who might have been exposed to pesticides, in order to determine the toxic effects.

“We suspect that there could be effects to the immune system through dermal exposure,” she said.

Goktepe is also testing various medicinal herbs and mushrooms for their antibacterial and cancer fighting effects. She has also developed a process for extending the shelf life of exotic mushrooms, which could be important to expanding the medicinal and edible mushroom industry that the SAES has been developing for the past two years.

Ibrahim also has a patent pending on a natural preservative that includes bifidobacteria and herbs. Several food and nutritional supplement companies are taking a keen interest in his research for its applications in food safety and nutraceuticals.

Reddy, chair of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Design, has spent the past 24 years researching nitrogen transformation in agricultural systems.

“We want to conserve and retain nitrogen within the system, both to reduce the need for added fertilizer and to improve water quality,” he said.

Recent projects have seen him collaborating with the Agricultural Research Service’s Coastal Plains Soil, Water & Plant Research Center in Florence, S.C., in examining the potential of constructed wetlands to remove nitrogen and phosphorus from animal waste, as well as research on catchments to remove pesticides and herbicides from agricultural runoff. He expects to have enough information in another two to three years to be able to make recommendations on how small farmers could construct and maintain wetlands for processing animal waste.
The president of the SAES chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta, Dr. Mohamed Almedina, presents John Paul Owens a special award for outstanding service to the chapter.

Another awards show dedicated to outstanding contributions by SAES Dean Alton Thompson and new signage; new leader of the SAES chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta also honored for outstanding service to the chapter.

Dr. Benjamin Gray, an assistant professor of rural sociology, teaches the principals of rural and students in particular,” says Dr. G. B. Reddy, chairman of the department of Natural Resources and Environmental Design. “He works with students to make sure that they understand the subject and relate the landscape architecture principles in his field trip design projects.”

One of the projects that the award-winning Farm Improvement team has helped steer through is the new poultry unit at the University Farm. When construction is complete and the facility is ready to go, the unit will have controlled environments for research into poultry production methods, classrooms, and a processing facility.

Dean Alton Thompson and Dr. Donald McDowell, associate dean for academic programs, congratulate Dr. Benjamin Gray, an assistant professor of rural sociology, and recipient of the Gamma Sigma Delta Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Kristi Wright, an SAES alumna (she received a B.S. in Agriculture in '98), was the keynote speaker at the Student Awards Banquet. Now an international finance manager with MCI in Atlanta, Wright had some timely tips to pass along to SAES students soon to start their ascents up the career ladder.

The university which recognized one faculty member from each of A&T’s seven schools and colleges. “I enjoy teaching,” Howard says of his instructor of the Year award. “It’s the hardest thing I’ve ever done.”

He has the experience to make comparisons. Before joining the A&T faculty in the fall of 1989, Howard was a vice president of the architectural firm Edward D. Stone Jr. and Associates PA, in Fort Lauderdale. Howard has a bachelor’s in landscape architecture from Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, and a master’s of landscape architecture from Harvard University.

“Mr. Howard has a passion for landscape architecture program in general and students in particular,” says Dr. G. B. Reddy, chairman of the department of Natural Resources and Environmental Design. “He works with students to make sure that they understand the subject and relate the landscape architecture principles in his field trip design projects.”

The award is an appreciated recognition of his classroom contributions, but Howard says the best reward for teaching is student success. “I like the personalities I encounter,” Howard said. “I like that you can take a person from the first day or two of their classes and work with them until they graduate and then see them do very well in the profession.”

SAES faculty and staff get laurels for talents and team work

Moses says, “because all of us want the very same thing and that is to see this farm move to a new level. Because of the fact that we all want that; we all support each other.”

The dean also presented a Collaboration Award to the Agricultural Communications and Technology Unit, directed by Robin Adams. Her staff consists of: Cheryl Brandon, Mike Bratcher, Stephen Charles, Ron Fisher, Alton Franklin, Laurie Gengenbach, Cathy Gant Hill, Joshua Loftin, James F. Parker and Lalil Runey.

SAES Dean Alton Thompson, chairman of the SAES Farm Improvement Project, initiated the Campus Farm Improvement Project, which he says is the most important thing that has happened at A&T in the last ten years. The project has resulted in a state-of-the-art poultry unit; the construction of a new dairy and swine units; the purchase of more than $750,000 worth of equipment; the construction of a new meat processing facility; and new leadership contributions.

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Raising chickens in pastures instead of pens, cultivating seedless watermelons, heat-tolerant lettuce, and disease-free tomatoes, are some of the latest farm innovations that will be spotlighted at the annual Small Farms Field Day at the University Farm on June 24. The Cooperative Extension Program at A&T’s horticulture specialist, Dr. Keith Baldwin (above), is the coordinator. To register for field day, or more information, contact Baldwin or Linda Shoffner at (336) 334-7956.