STORIES
IN AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES

SIGNING OFF FROM CENTRAL CAMPUS

It has been my pleasure and great honor to tell the stories of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences for the past 14 years. As I write this, I approach the end of this chapter of my time in the college. As you read this, I will be a few months into my new role at the Iowa State University Alumni Association as a senior director of communications and magazine editor.

In closing this chapter, I’d like to share a few stories about STORIES magazine itself — stories that illustrate the power and impact of this special publication.

- The feature on Craig Morris (’92 meat science) in 2012 helped reunite him with a favorite professor in time to share his appreciation before his treasured mentor F.C. Parrish passed away. Craig sent me a photo of him at F.C.’s bedside — both of them smiling. It’s a connection I’ll never forget.
- Bob Walton (’61 PhD animal science) tore an article about then Dean (new President) Wendy Wintersteen from the Growing Leaders issue in 2016 and carried it in his pocket as he visited campus to receive the Henry A. Wallace award. During the awards dinner he pulled out the article to show how he was inspired by her leadership to increase his financial investment in the college.
- Recent grad Rebecca (Lyons) Runyon (’18 agricultural studies, ’19 MS agricultural education) shared that an issue of STORIES given to her by her uncle inspired her to become an Iowa Stater. Her entrepreneurial and innovative spirit flourished here. She now shares STORIES with other prospective students — the ripple effect continues.

Thank you for allowing the STORIES team to help you connect, engage and share with the college in meaningful ways like these. A special thank you to those of you who reached out to me to follow an issue and those who trusted us to share your story within these pages. The relationship we have nurtured between alumni and the college is valued and strong.

Thank you to my colleagues in CALS for being outstanding collaborators, talented communicators and treasured friends. I’d like to offer special thanks to communications specialist Whitney Baxter for stewarding this issue through press; to Haley Cook, former assistant director of alumni relations, who recently began a new adventure of her own as strategic outreach coordinator for President Wendy Wintersteen; and to Brian Meyer, associate director of strategic relations and communications, who hired me to bring STORIES to life.

I’ll always be a #CALSproud alum. I look forward to continuing to tell the college’s stories and keep connected with you through my work in the ISU Alumni Association. I hope to see you at future college events like the CALS BBQ and ISU Alumni Association events like Cyclone Central Tailgates and the Cardinal and Gold Gala.

Sending warm wishes from central campus,

Melia Reicks Licht
mreicks@iastate.edu

Dear alumni and friends,

Greetings from your ISU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences! Since our last issue of STORIES magazine in 2020, so much has happened and we are thrilled to report to you that the Cyclone family is well and thriving and striving for ever greater impact as we fulfill our purposes.

For everyone everywhere it’s been more than a year of living amid the COVID-19 pandemic and seeing the compelling nature of our collective responses to the disease. Now, as we return to some new-normal with COVID-19 hopefully in the near-view mirror, we think of all that was lost and learned, and dedicate ourselves to always doing better.

The pandemic has challenged us to teach and learn differently, to redirect some of our research and sharpen its focus on problem-solving, and to double-down on our commitment to service. This issue of STORIES has “service” as its core theme — and that is on purpose, as we renew our determination to always make a positive difference and improve the landscapes and thought-scapes of our world. There is much to do.

This past year with the incredible generosity of so many, we surpassed the ISU Foundation’s nine-year fundraising goal of $1.5 billion, set back in 2012, with CALS donors contributing more than $240 million to that effort. These lands - some to be spent in the near-term, some in endowments for the long-term - are the margin of excellence for us. At the same time, we’ve had a record year of gaining research support from a wide variety of sources, totaling nearly $600 million! We also have seen new projects and facilities taking form: the opening of the Robert T. Hamilton Poultry Teaching and Research Facility, the groundbreaking for the turkey facility, the construction of the Kent Corporation Feed Mill and Grain Science Complex, the new apiary yielding the sweetest honey, the renewed ISU Creamery churning out the very best ice cream and cheese, ISU’s new Student Innovation Center buzzing with activity, and so much more.

Among our sentient faculty and staff, it has also been a year of success and change. We have seen incredible people retire from the college and the hiring of a new generation of thinkers and doers to stand on their shoulders. Some of these changes you’ll read about in these pages. Every such change could use a full page to celebrate the people who make such a difference! Our students, as always, are remarkable and come to us brimming with possibilities, and, as graduates, leave us brimming with even more. We are so proud of them. After all, the success of any college is best measured by the success of its alums. CALS alums do amazing things, as we dedicate ourselves to help them achieve via the CALS Advantage — to know their disciplines and inter-disciplines like no others, to always be innovative and entrepreneurial in spirit and actions, to advocate for what they believe and the purposes and intents of the college, and to lead at every level.

Thinking of you, wanting to hear from you, and wishing you all the best on behalf of the college.

Thinking of you,

Daniel J. Robison
Endowed Dean’s Chair
College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
robison@iastate.edu
CALS RANKS HIGH WORLDWIDE

The 2021 QS World University Rankings of agricultural and forestry programs ranked Iowa State University in the top 4% worldwide - 14 out of 451 institutions in 2021. Iowa State’s agricultural programs remain in the top 10 (No. 6) among 65 U.S. higher education institutions. The agricultural and biosystems engineering graduate program ranked second nationwide, according to U.S. News & World Report, and Iowa State ranked No. 11 for undergraduate entrepreneurship programs, according to Princeton Review and Entrepreneur magazine.

2021 GRADS PACK THE JACK

The accomplishments of nearly 747 CALS students were celebrated May 7 and 8 during university commencement celebrations in Jack Trice Stadium (undergraduates) and Hilton Coliseum (graduate students). Visit stories.cals.iastate.edu for links to:

- Congratulations messages from Daniel J. Robison, endowed dean’s chair, and CALS faculty and staff
- Undergraduate address by Lexie O’Brien (21 microbiology)
- Feature videos of spring 2021 CALS Council Senior Awardees

NEW LEADERSHIP WITHIN CALS

On April 1, Steven Harris (left) took over leadership of the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology and the Department of Entomology. He was previously with the University of Manitoba, where he served as professor and head of the Department of Biological Sciences. Stephen J. Dinmore was named chair of the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management effective June 1. He served as interim chair of the department since 2019, when the former chair Sue Bledgett retired.

Ruth MacDonald (center) began as the new associate dean for personnel and finance for the college July 1. MacDonald previously served as professor and chair of the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, a position she held since joining the university in 2004. Lorraine Lanningham-Foster, associate professor, is serving as the interim chair of the department.

Carolyn Lawrence-Dill (right) was named associate dean for research and discovery for the college, effective Aug. 16. She has been a faculty member at Iowa State since 2014 and previously served as professor in the Department of Genetics, Development and Cell Biology and the Department of Agronomy.

IOWA STATE VACCINATES

Several COVID-19 vaccination clinics were held on Iowa State’s campus from Dec. 18, 2020, to May 24, 2021. This included several mass vaccination clinics that took place in State Gym’s basketball courts, with the capacity to vaccinate up to 2,250 people per day. Iowa State employees quickly signed up to fill the 749 nonclinical shifts needed to run the clinics. In total, 12,279 doses were given and 6,794 patients were served at the on-campus clinics. Free COVID-19 vaccination clinics were again offered on campus for students, faculty and staff at the start of the fall 2021 semester. Shelley Taylor, director of CALS Study Abroad (left) and Heidi Ackerman (’13 agronomy, ’16 MS soil science and agricultural and life sciences education) were among the many CALS volunteers supporting vaccination efforts.

FEED MILL PROGRESS

Construction continues on the new Kent Corporation Feed Mill and Grain Science Complex at Iowa State University. Located on 19 acres of university-owned land southwest of the intersection of Highway 30 and State Avenue in Ames, the complex will include a feed mill tower, feed milling and mixing structures, grain storage bins, warehouse and an educational building with classrooms. The facility will enhance Iowa State teaching programs related to feed technology, grain science and animal nutrition. Find a link to a live feed of the construction progress at stories.cals.iastate.edu.

NEW TURKEY TEACHING AND RESEARCH FACILITY BREAKS GROUND

A groundbreaking was held April 8 for Iowa State University’s new Turkey Teaching and Research Facility to be constructed north of the Robert J. Hamilton Poultry Teaching and Research Farm, located south of campus. Commitments of more than $2 million in private donations led by Iowa turkey producers have been received to fund the facility. The facility will provide a living classroom for hands-on learning in modern production practices, flexible space and state-of-the-art equipment for research addressing current challenges facing the turkey industry.

INNOVATION ON DISPLAY

As part of the Innovation Exhibition on the ground level of the new Student Innovation Center on the west side of campus, each college gets to show off a few innovative activities happening among their departments and units. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences’ current display showcases selected work advancing One Health, “from the fate of one tiny butterfly, to the extensive impact made by a prairie placed among the modern landscape, the vitality of all organisms is interconnected.” The exhibit and innovative, collaborative learning spaces on the fourth floor of the building are sponsored by Farm Credit Services of America. Visitors are welcome and the area is open to the public.

TRACKING EARL THE FOX (AND FAMILY)

Move over, white squirrel – there is a new celebrity on campus. Following several sightings of a red fox, dubbed Earl, who calls Iowa State’s campus home, a group of undergraduate students in assistant teaching professor Mike Rentz’s mammalogy class have been mapping out the home range of Earl (and potential family).

So far, more than 180 sightings have been submitted to the class, showing the fox family frequents the north side of Central Campus/Pammel Woods and the area by Jack Trice Stadium.

ACKERMAN (‘13 agronomy, ‘16 MS soil science and agricultural and family)

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REAPING STUDENT SUCCESS IN AG ECONOMICS

Story by Melva Reicks Licht
Images contributed

Load by load, Pete and Dana Wenstrand bolstered their commitment to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences by donating grain at their local Essex, Iowa, elevator. As their investment grew so did their interest in providing a unique pathway for students to advance their education and career through an accelerated master’s degree in agricultural economics. “We often give gifts of grain,” says Pete Wenstrand (’74 agricultural business). “Farming is our career and vocation, therefore, it’s more rewarding to give gifts of grain, rather than writing a check. Plus, it’s a nice tool for tax reasons. We simply scan a QR code at grain delivery and select who we’d like to receive the gift—for us that includes our church, FarmHouse fraternity and Iowa State University.”

Pete and his wife Dana, a College of Human Sciences grad, are members of the ISU Foundation Board of Governors and Forever True Campaign Committee for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. They decided to use their gifts to revitalize a master’s program in agricultural economics. It’s a program Pete says he would have loved to complete at Iowa State, but since it didn’t exist in accelerated form at the time, he pursued a similar program at Purdue University. “It’s really intense and serves students and their future employers well by building a solid skill set,” says Dana. “We didn’t really create something new, rather we found something on an old shelf and brought it back to life.”

In August 2020, the revitalized master’s degree in agricultural economics launched with a cohort of seven students. The program prepares graduates with advanced applied economics training in areas including risk analysis, commodity markets, agricultural finance and agricultural policy. Students take coursework during the fall and spring and complete a dedicated research project during the summer. The summer research is conducted under the supervision of a professor and can match students with an industry, government or academic partner in their chosen field, combining classroom training in economics to address real-world challenges.

The Wenstrands furthered their commitment by supporting the faculty position that directs the accelerated master’s program in agricultural economics at Iowa State. “That’s just the type of lasting impact the Wenstrands were hoping for when they delivered each load of grain,” says Dana. “As philanthropists, we are grateful to utilize these blessings and help serve the future of agriculture and Iowa State University.”

E lided by a group of dedicated and passionate alumni and friends, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences campaign committee celebrated the remarkable success of Forever True, For Iowa State earlier this year. The historic $1.542 billion fundraising campaign, the largest ever for an Iowa State comprehensive campaign, was launched in 2012 by the Iowa State University Foundation. The campaign set out to ensure access to an Iowa State education, advance expertise in key areas addressing global challenges and enhance the university’s impact on the economy and quality of life in Iowa and around the world.

“We rely on committed volunteers and their unique strengths to help raise funds for the College,” says Dana J. Robison, holder of the endowed dean’s chair in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. “This team works tirelessly advocating for the college, championing our cause and supporting our efforts with time, talent and treasure. We are immensely grateful for their support.”

College alumni and friends surpassed the original $200 million goal, reaching a total of more than $209,302 million. Forever True, For Iowa State is making transformative change through the creation of new facilities, improvement of existing programs and the support of faculty, staff and students.

“The investment will support six key areas:

• student and faculty enrichment
• global agriculture
• biosciences
• agricultural business and entrepreneurship
• sustainability
• new innovative facilities for animal agriculture teaching and research

“With careers in Iowa agriculture, we understand the importance of the land-grant mission of Iowa State. So, when we were asked, we were pleased to serve on the CALS Campaign Committee,” says Rich and Nancy Degner. “Campaign goals have focused on enhancing and updating campus facilities and programs, which give students important experiences in their major and support Iowa’s agriculture industry. The Ken Kornoff Feed Mill and Grain Science Complex is only one shining example of additional teaching, research and outreach opportunities made available through the CALS Campaign.”

The CALS Campaign Committee inspired other donors to join the 95,758 Iowa State alumni and friends who participated in the university-wide campaign. These efforts advanced a range of programs with personal significance and global impact.

“Iowa State University has always and continues to have a big piece of our hearts,” say Chuck and Chris Cornelius. “Our passion is the CALS Study Abroad program. We support faculty development and enhancement of study abroad programs. Our sons benefited greatly from study abroad, and we see our involvement as a way to give back to Iowa State.”

Because of the generosity of thousands of donors and friends, the impact of the Forever True campaign will have a ripple effect over the next few decades: enabling thousands of students to become successful graduates with meaningful careers, moving forward innovative solutions to today’s greatest challenges and bringing our Iowa State ingenuity and know-how to improve the lives of countless people around the world.”

CONNECT, ENGAGE, SHARE

Students interested in pursuing a master’s of science in agricultural economics should reach out to Hongli Feng at mfg@iastate.edu, and those interested in offering support to our college and its students can contact Alyssa Ehrich at aehrich@foundation.iastate.edu.

IN MEMORIAM

Owen Newlin (’71 agronomy, ’53 MS crop production)*
• Dana Robes (’67 dairy science)
• Roger Underwood (’80 agricultural business)*

* Also serving on the university-wide Forever True campaign cabinet

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Campaign Committee is pleased to announce that the achievements of our donors made a significant impact on the institution. By giving generously, our donors helped to build a strong foundation that will continue to support and grow our programs. Because of the generosity of our donors, we are able to provide students with the resources they need to succeed. Thank you for your support!”

Members of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences campaign committee:

• Daniel J. Robison, endowed dean’s chair, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
• Gregg Behrens (’74 agricultural business)
• Lloyd Bettis (’70 agricultural journalism)
• Chris (’83 agricultural journalism) and Chuck Cornelius (’83 agronomy)
• Nancy (’72 food science) and Rich Degner (’72 agricultural and life sciences education, ’71 MS agriculture and life sciences education)
• Clara and Jim Frevert (’60 farm operation)
• Howard (’72 MS, ’74 PhD veterinary microbiology and preventative medicine) and Nancy Hill (’74 MS environmental sciences)
• Owen Newlin (’71 agronomy, ’53 MS crop production)*
• Dana Robes (’67 dairy science)
• Roger Underwood (’80 agricultural business)*

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In keeping with our commitment to community service, the ISU Foundation is proud to announce the recipients of the Knoll Community Service Awards, the CALS Henry A. Wallace Award, and the CALS Alumni Recognition Award.

The ISU Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization and is tax-exempt. All contributions are tax-deductible. The ISU Foundation is a registered agent of the ISU Foundation, Inc., a registered charitable organization. Contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent allowed by law.
Hunter Crawford was enthralled with listening to his police scanner on his family’s farm in Clarinda, Iowa. He’d received it when he was eight years old from a family friend who was a paramedic.

The senior in agricultural business was drawn to volunteer at Clarinda Regional Health Center at age 16. By 18, he’d earned his EMT certification by taking coursework and passing the exam given by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians. That was the same year he was high school class president, FFA chapter president and head drum major of the marching band.

Fast forward to Crawford’s freshman year at Iowa State. He was soon deeply involved with classes and took on multiple responsibilities in student organizations. In addition to serving on CALS Student Council, being a CALS Ambassador, student member of the ISU Alumni Association board and an executive team member of his Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, he worked 16 to 20 hours a week as an EMT at Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames. This robust schedule continued until his junior year.

Then COVID-19 hit in March 2020. Iowa State closed its doors, as did his fraternity. Because of the virus, Crawford was suddenly working 60 to 80 hours a week at the hospital, doing temperature screenings and working with the ambulance service for COVID patients. Mary Greeley implemented strict protocols and training and provided personal protective equipment. Unfortunately, he contracted the virus in early June. Fortunately, he had no symptoms.

“For the first month or two, I was pretty worried. We transported some very sick patients,” says Crawford. “After my quarantine, I felt safer since I’d already gone through it and wasn’t too worried about getting it again or spreading it to anyone else.”

Crawford’s internship that summer with Corteva went ahead as planned. After a virtual orientation, he traveled extensively around Iowa with his crop protection team, running training events for farmers, growers and sales representatives.

By fall, Crawford was ready to get back to class. He was comfortable with the virtual format and found the flexibility of online learning an advantage that allowed him to fit in more hours at the hospital.

He worked with his fraternity’s executive team to create and implement a COVID-19 mitigation strategy for the 95 members. In the house, testing requirements, quarantine and contact tracing procedures and temperature scans before lunch and dinner helped keep members healthy throughout the school year.

Crawford’s advisor, Christian Boessen, says, “Hunter has been a pleasure to work with as an advisee. A great student and leader, level headed, mature, and wise beyond his years.”

Crawford’s marathon of service and activities continues this fall. In addition to his existing commitments, he’s also studying for his paramedic license at Des Moines Area Community College. The 12-month course began in August, which means he’s a full-time student at DMACC and Iowa State simultaneously.

After graduation, Crawford hopes to work for Corteva and is committed to continuing his service as a first responder.

“There’s a major demand for good medical providers within rural communities,” Crawford says. “I love living in rural Iowa and no matter where I go or what job I’m in, there’ll always be a need for volunteers and part-time paramedics and EMTs. Being there for someone in need is the most rewarding part of the job.”

Hunter Crawford had his EMT hours at Mary Greeley Hospital in Ames soar to 60-80 per week during the COVID-19 pandemic. The senior in agricultural business also serves on CALS Student Council, the executive team of Alpha Gamma Rho and as a CALS Ambassador.
Growing up in Senegal, Africa, Malcolm St. Cyr witnessed first-hand how food supplies were limited in his country due to farmers’ lack of access to equipment, supplies and transportation to markets. While Senegal’s soils are fertile and a wide variety of crops are grown, current climate challenges dictate the use of an agronomical perspective, based on organic amendments and rotating crops, to protect soils and conserve moisture.

This focus on soils is what led St. Cyr to Iowa State University. In a round-about way, via a family friend, Naomi Budelier, who serves as treasurer of the Maple Hall Council, St. Cyr was selected as the first recipient of the Cynthia Cambardella Scholarship, named in honor of Cambardella, a former soil scientist at USDA-ARS and in the Department of Agronomy who died in September 2020.

Criteria for the scholarship includes selecting an undergraduate agronomy student who has an interest in soil quality and organic farming. Kathleen Delate, professor of horticulture and agronomy, says St. Cyr was the scholarship committee’s top choice for the award. “Malcolm embodied the kind of student Cindy would champion — she was always assisting students with research ideas and career plans, especially underrepresented students in agriculture,” says Delate, who serves as the Cambardella Scholarship chair. “We are so grateful to her colleagues across the U.S. for supporting this scholarship to perpetuate her legacy in soil health.”

Following graduation, St. Cyr intends to pursue graduate studies, where he can dive deeper into developing “culturally sensitive, sustainable solutions and better ways of farming.” “I may be able to offer solutions to some problems of most concern to me and the sub-Saharan region of Africa,” St. Cyr says.

He looks forward to spending time in Senegal in the future, working on sustainable/organic projects — one of which just may turn out to be his Ph.D. dissertation.
From a young age, Stefany Naranjo knew she wanted to play an active part in the fight against hunger.

Her internship included creating and maintaining community gardens and helping churches feed the hungry. She was also involved in a long-term National Park Service project to restore shoreline plants impacted by hurricanes. Along with helping propagate mandrakes and other hardy native species that help shelter the island’s human and wildlife inhabitants, she created lessons plans to teach island youth about the plants and their benefits.

She first became aware of serious problems with food insecurity when she was in high school in Belmont, Iowa. She started a community food drive, then she had the chance to attend the Iowa Youth Institute and later served as a group leader for the World Food Prize. These experiences “laid the foundation for my career going forward,” says Naranjo.

Ultimately, she sees herself working in underserved communities through urban agriculture, addressing issues such as food deserts. Naranjo was recently selected to receive an Agricultural Communications Leadership Scholarship at Iowa State, which made it possible for her to accept the internship on St. John’s Island. The scholarship, established by Sorrell Brown, the first woman field agronomist hired by Iowa State University Extension, provides funding so students can “choose an internship based on the quality of the experience, not the size of the paycheck.”

“This scholarship was created for outstanding, service-oriented students like Naranjo,” says Howard Tyler, assistant dean for student services in the college of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

“It has been a true joy to watch Stefany develop during her time at Iowa State,” Tyler says. “She entered our college as a first-generation transfer student in Fall 2019, and despite the pandemic, she thrived and continued to excel academically. Stefany has overcome every obstacle life has thrown at her, and is always an amazing positive person.”

Naranjo loved her time on the island and the chance to directly impact people’s lives. “Being there made me even more appreciative of how well things work in the United States and our easy access to basic necessities,” she says. “I’m so grateful for the Sorrell Brown scholarship and other donors and ISU faculty and staff who support students in so many ways. I wouldn’t be here without them.”

Stefany Naranjo’s internship with the EARTH program in the U.S. Virgin Islands included working in community gardens to help feed the hungry and restoring shoreline plants in a national park impacted by hurricanes.

Don Sakaguchi leads two programs at Iowa State that maintain a consistent enrollment of about 900 total undergraduates. The Mottl Professor of genetics, development and cell biology, and widely respected neurobiologist, was named director of the biology and genetics undergraduate programs in 2020.

“Biology and genetics students pursue extremely diverse career paths including continuing their education via medical and veterinary schools,” says Sakaguchi. The interdepartmental majors are jointly administered through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Andy Zehr, director of marketing and new student programs for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, says the diverse career pathways reflect the entirety of the college’s name.

“As a graduate student, a love of the ocean was ignited when he worked at Stanford’s Hopkins Marine Station researching a marine snail with a unique “brain.” He joined the faculty at Iowa State in 1991 after earning a bachelor’s and doctorate at the State University of New York and doing post-doctoral work at the University of California, San Diego. His highly interdisciplinary research explores the potential of using adult stem cells to develop strategies for brain and tissue rescue and repair. “Dr. Sakaguchi is an outstanding neurobiologist who has had considerable impact on his field,” says Jeanne Serb, director of the Office of Biotechnology and associate professor in ecology, evolution and organismal biology.

“As Sakaguchi reflects on his different roles as a teacher and mentor he offers this advice to students: “It’s important to be proactive and seek out opportunities. Be open to new experiences, including studying abroad. This is not just to succeed as a student, but also to make your time in college memorable and rewarding.”

Don Sakaguchi leads the genetics and biology undergraduate programs at Iowa State. Both provide professional experiences through research and internships equipping graduates for diverse career pathways — many in human health fields.
“He made a tremendous difference in making the college a more welcoming and inclusive place... His impact will be part of the college forever.”

INNOVATIVE TEACHER AND RESEARCHER

His career began as a pre-med major at the University of California-Riverside where he says he quickly learned he was more excited by how plants worked than how people worked. He switched colleges (to Humboldt State University) and majored in forestry. He went on to earn a master’s and doctorate in forest economics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

He came to Iowa State for his first faculty job in the Department of Forestry in 1978. That early phase of his career brings fond memories, including helping re-imagine forestry camp – a six-week summer experience conducted at locations around the country.

“It was a great tradition,” Colletti says, “but forestry enrollments were declining. The camp requirement was an impediment for some, especially students who needed to work to pay for college. We revamped the camp into a three-week experience integrated with five new fall courses. This maintained the benefits of comadery and experiential field learning and works better for many students.”

He’s also proud to have served as advisor and co-advisor to the Forestry Club for 25 years. When he started, the group purchased Christmas trees from out-of-state for its big annual sale. He found a location where the club could grow and manage its own trees, turning the fundraiser into a richer entrepreneurial experience. He went on to receive the club’s annual award for most beloved instructor many times over.

“Joe’s commitment to the success of several generations of students has been incredible,” says Iowa State President Wendy Wintersteen (’88 PhD entomology), who has worked closely with Colletti throughout his career. “He cares deeply about students in and out of the classroom. He made a tremendous difference in making the college a more welcoming and inclusive place for all students. His impact will be part of the college forever.”

Colletti also made his mark as a researcher with a long list of scholarly publications in forestry education, agroforestry and natural resources. His most well-known contribution has been to originate concepts for riparian buffer systems with fellow faculty member Richard Schultz (’65 forestry, ’68 MS and ’70 PhD forest biology), a University Professor of natural resource ecology and management. In the early 1990s, they assembled an interdisciplinary team whose work, with landowners along Bear Creek in Hamilton County, Iowa, sparked a national conservation initiative that continues today.

As Senior Associate Dean
Joe Colletti retired this past summer, the caring educator and interdisciplinary team-builder reflected on a career in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences built by making the most of every opportunity.
COLLABORATIVE ADMINISTRATOR

Early on, Colletti was assigned to lead a re-accreditation review process for the foreology major and to co-chair a committee tasked with shifting from a quarter to a semester system. Those were just a hint of the administrative tasks ahead, such as chairing the college and university curriculum committees. In 2003, he was a member of the committee tasked with merging the forestry and animal ecology departments into a new Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management, and he served as its interim department chair. When someone else was offered the chair, Colletti was disappointed. “But another door opened,” he says, “and I stepped through.”

That door was an invitation to assist Wincentent, who had taken an interim role as the college’s endowed dean’s chair and wanted to tap Colletti’s expertise, especially in budget forecasting. A Year later, her position became official and Colletti was named senior associate dean, with responsibilities to oversee budgets, research and personnel for the college and the Iowa Agriculture and Home Economics Experiment Station.

His successes reflect many milestones in the life of the college, among them helping lead creation of an assistant dean for diversity position to coordinate and expand diversity, equity and inclusion programming for faculty, staff and students. He also shepherded development of Iowa State’s Bioeconomy Institute, which is still the only bioeconomy research faculty of its kind nationwide.

Colletti, along with Distinguished Professor Robert Brown and five other Iowa State colleagues, facilitated the creation of Iowa State’s Bioeconomy Institute and research focus on the bioeconomy.

“It’s been so impressive to see Joe’s ability to bring together and lift up faculty leaders to boldly collaborate on mission-critical issues. This has led to enormous research successes,” President Winteminmt says.

Indeed, he has done much of the heavy lifting for a number of multi-million-dollar, transdisciplinary research projects, including the $20 million Sustainable Com post project, a new National Science Foundation Midwest Big Data Hub and the $10 million Consortium for Cultivating Human and Naturally reGenerative Environments (C-CANGE) project, a multidisciplinary partnership advancing new renewable-based agricultural value chains. He also helped assemble a group of staff known as the CARES (College of Agriculture and Life Sciences) Faculty Excellence Support) team, whose mission is to provide pre-award support to faculty for their research.

LIFELONG LEARNER

Through it all, Colletti thinks of himself as a “learning leader,” for which he credits the influence of his father, a long-time teacher and school principal.

Following his retirement, which was effective June 30, he and his wife Sharon (who retired from the Center for Crop Utilization Research at Iowa State in 2017), look forward to spending time with children and grandchildren in Iowa. They learn to identify plants and animals, go on hikes and it provided insight into what a research career would entail. "This really shows you what working in the field is like so you can see if that is actually what you want to do for a living," Houseman says. "For most of my friends, these classes got them even more excited about finding a research job."

Just as Schelitz did in Kenya, students in Montana Camp classes get to experience an ecosystem that is very different than the one found in Iowa. They learn to identify plants and animals, go on hikes to explore the wilderness, conduct research related to animal behavior and so much more.

Zoe Houseman (’21 animal ecology) took three classes at the Camp during her time at Iowa State. She said she feels she learned more about wildlife and field ecology than she would have in a lecture course and it provided insight into what a research career would entail.

"This really shows you what working in the field is like so you can see if that is actually what you want to do for a living," Houseman says. “For most of my friends, these classes got them even more excited about finding a research job."
Despite these circumstances, the year was unforgettable. As a CALS Ambassador, sophomore Megan Decker, vice president of ISU Student Government, shared personal stories and experiences. In return, our mentors helped us learn how to adapt our mentorship to best serve them in their own unique situations.

Julia Campbell, senior in agricultural business, president of ISU Student Government, served as a mentor to help students find solutions to the complex issues we face. It is important to recognize that the college community of diverse, thinkers and innovators who belong to members of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

I was able to immerse myself in this place to develop and enhance the environments in which we live, study and work. We each have a responsibility to further develop these talents to best serve those around us, and there is no better place to immerse ourselves in this growth than Iowa State University. Our world-class faculty, staff, industry representatives and an incredible alumni network present students with opportunities to truly prepare themselves to meet their own needs and the needs of others.

There is strength in our reliance on one another as we seek to find solutions to the complex issues we face. It is important to recognize the class of 2021 community of diverse, thinkers and innovators who belong to members of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. We owe it to ourselves and to our global community to take advantage of the growth opportunities presented to us through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In doing so, we are better equipped to create a better world for everyone who grows in us. In this way, we strive to embody these core values through our service as Student Government and Life Sciences Week, service is engrained in the CALS student experience.

For 10 years, the student-organized effort Students Helping Our Peers (SHOP) food pantry has helped to ensure students’ access to healthy food. Caroline Stokes, senior in microbiology and genetics, and vice president of SHOP, says, “None of this would have been possible if not for our amazing partners on campus and in the community.”

The new location is so much bigger. It’s also close to a major CyRide stop and near student housing. It’s also close to a major CyRide stop and near student housing. It is important to recognize that the college community of diverse, thinkers and innovators who belong to members of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

In February 2011, a food pantry on campus, especially one run entirely by students, was a fresh idea. A group of transfer students who were passionate about food and helping their peers made the dream a reality. For current leaders of the Students Helping Our Peers (SHOP) food pantry on campus, ensuring fellow students have access to food remains priority number one.

It is really important to us to continue the founding principle of anonymity so that we don’t make our peers uncomfortable. College students sometimes have a hard time seeking help and we don’t want any barriers, especially with our fellow students,” says Belinda Heckman, senior in global resource systems and dietetics, who serves as president of SHOP.

“Keeping students in leadership roles for the food pantry was really important as we began to support their efforts and help them grow to serve all students in need,” says Lisa Nolting, dietitian with Student Health and Wellness.

Whether it’s addressing immense challenges in our global community such as food insecurity through service-learning in the ISU-Uganda program, or serving our fellow students pork-chops-on-a-stick on central campus as part of College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Week, service is engrained in the CALS student experience.

The location in Beyer was provided by Recreation Services. The new space has allowed students to expand food offerings to better serve their clients. “It was really exciting to get refrigerators and a freezer to be able to offer nutritious things like fresh produce, dairy and meat to users of SHOP,” Heckman says. SHOP served an average of 35 students per week during spring 2021. Over the same period, a total of more than 6,800 pounds of food was provided by SHOP for more than any other semester. Food is donated to SHOP by members of the campus community or purchased with monetary donations.

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One Heart, based just north of Ames, Iowa, offers equine-assisted therapeutic activities for children and adults with disabilities. Gaudrup, a junior in animal science, is a student in Animal Science 415, Equine Systems Management. The capstone course teaches students how to develop financial and production goals by featuring a variety of speakers from the equine industry. Students gain hands-on experience and extra credit by volunteering for One Heart Equestrian Therapy, Inc.

“Working with participants at One Heart has given me a new perspective on a horse’s purpose,” says Carla Wasmund, senior in animal science. “So many of us see them as an athlete or pet, whereas One Heart uses them as a tool for therapy.”

Instructor Jill Paxton, assistant teaching professor in animal science, says this class helps provide a real-world experience to seniors preparing to transition into the workforce.

“The class invites 15 different guest speakers from a wide range of businesses, who volunteer to speak to our students about their life experiences. The students further develop practical experience and character as they visit and volunteer at businesses and nonprofits, such as One Heart,” says Paxton. “Some of the 415 students who were also on the Iowa State Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (ISHSA) western equestrian team, enjoyed their volunteer time at One Heart so much they recruited other members of the team to come out to One Heart and work with them.”

**GAINING CONFIDENCE, SKILLS**

Nita Lagar, founder of One Heart Equestrian Therapy, launched the nonprofit based on a dream and a need that she personally understood as the mother of a special needs child. “One of the most inspiring things about One Heart is the support we’ve received from local community groups,” Lagar says. “We run almost entirely on donations and with volunteer workers. The Iowa State student volunteers bring a lot of energy to our programs and facility.”

One Heart provides a wide variety of therapeutic riding services such as developmental riding classes for children and adults with physical or intellectual disabilities, driving classes for those who cannot ride, and horsemanship classes with mini horses for individuals unable to ride.

Lagar says equestrian therapy has been shown to increase participants’ mobility, confidence and self-esteem, which benefits other areas of their lives. One Heart is a member center of the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship (PATH) International and is currently home to eight horses and five miniature horses. One Heart celebrates their 20th anniversary this year.

In addition to learning unique techniques for handling therapeutic horses while providing essential support for One Heart, students help lead horses and serve as side-walkers during therapy sessions to help participants follow directions. They also assess with facility care, clean tack and manage volunteer schedules. Many of the student volunteers are also members of the Iowa State Equestrian Club – Western Team. The club recently took on a special service project at One Heart to assess recently donated, potential therapy horses.

“Working with One Heart has provided us with a completely different perspective for working with horses and has challenged us to change how we handle and train them,” says Wasmund, who also serves as secretary of the ISU Equestrian Club. “The first night we worked with (horses) Dilly and Dude we realized we all had to adjust our usual riding style to a different type of riding for One Heart’s therapy horses.”

Lagar says she has a great relationship with many Iowa State student groups such as Black and Blue, the Horse Interest Group, Rodeo Club, Pre-Vet Club and the equestrian teams, but she also serves as One Heart’s therapy horses.”

**BUILDING A BUSINESS**

In addition to service learning opportunities, Equine Systems Management prepares students for running a successful business in the equine industry. Paxton requires students to complete a 40-page business plan tailored to their specific interest.

“Animal Science 415 helped me define what would make my business unique,” says Paige Gilster, who also serves as treasurer of the Equestrian Therapy, Inc. “The class invited 15 different guest speakers from a wide range of businesses, who volunteer to speak to our students about their life experiences. The students further develop practical experience and character as they visit and volunteer at businesses and nonprofits, such as One Heart.”

Paxton says the goal of the course is to provide a well-rounded foundation for students through practical experience, a solid business plan and a service mentality. “This course is unique in that it builds on the business side of the industry while much of their undergraduate experience in animal science provided hands-on opportunities with animals and research,” Paxton says. “Each student is allowed to work individually or in a group to create a business plan of their choice that is detailed enough to submit to a lender or future partner. Every year, I hear from students who successfully used their business plans!”
Learning to collect data to determine animal population numbers in certain locations. More than 75 students have taken part in the programs since it began. While on the island of St. John, Iowa State students assist with community engagement projects to increase their knowledge base and benefit the local area. These projects include establishing school and community gardens to supply fruits and vegetables for feeding programs, helping teachers create educational signs to be hung near educational signs to be hung near the campground,” Schieltz says. “The students get the experience of working with a real client and producing a product for them (as they likely will in future jobs), while helping the Forest Service improve their visitor experience at the campground,” Schultz says.

**SERVICE LEARNING THROUGH LANDSCAPE DESIGN**

Students who enroll in Horticulture 481: Advanced Garden Composition take all they have learned thus far in other horticulture classes and combine it into two to three residential landscape design projects, gaining valuable hands-on experience along the way. Lisa Nunamaker, associate teaching professor in horticulture, says students typically work with two or three Ames community members interested in improving their yards’ landscapes. Students conduct a site analysis of each client’s yard, then put together preliminary and final designs to present.

During the fall 2020 semester, with COVID-19 precautions in place, Nunamaker instead had the class work with Jeff Iles, professor and chair of horticulture, to create a design for the Horticulture Hall courtyard on Iowa State’s campus. Students in the fall 2021 class will do the same.

Nunamaker says through this service-learning project, students learn to use plants in an ecological way and how to see a design process through, from start to finish.

“We want them to walk away with the knowledge of how to work with a client, then incorporate the client’s wishes into the final design, while also bring innovative and ecologically sensitive to the site,” she says.

Members of Iowa State’s Landscape Club may take the fall semester’s design one step further and install portions of it in the courtyard. This would be the first time a project from the class has been converted from a drawing on paper to reality.

“When students are able to work with real clients and a real site, it gives them a new perspective,” Nunamaker says. “Landscape design has many pieces to manage, from research to planting design to construction details, then the final task of putting it all together in a neat and orderly way so they can communicate it to the client. Working through a project like this allows them to become familiar with this entire process and starts to build their confidence.”

“University students need to have a chance to learn about resource systems in other cultures and locations,” says Gail Nonnecke, Mottl Professor and Global Professor in Global Resource Systems. “It’s rewarding to see their personal growth and transformation as they contribute to development projects that can help to solve complex problems of our world.”

**FRENCH CONSERVATION EDUCATION CAMP**

The Red and Connie French Conservation Education Camp, also known as the Montana Camp, was established through a donation by Red (’10 honorary degree) and Connie French to Iowa State in 2015. Located in the Fish Creek valley approximately 50 miles west of Missoula, Montana, the facility is operated by the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management as a space for students to gain hands-on field education in forestry, fisheries and wildlife.

All courses offered at the camp, in either the summer or fall, involve a service-learning component, says Jennifer Schultz, assistant teaching professor and director of the Montana Camp. These include assisting Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks with animal surveys to determine population numbers and monitoring and treating invasive weeds. The students also assist the United States Forest Service (USFS) with trail maintenance – clearing water bars, re-leveling trails and clearing brush – all while learning about summer job opportunities and careers in the forest service.

A new course offered this fall 2021 semester is Conservation Education Camp: Watershed Restoration. Students in the fall 2021 class will work with the Department of Watershed Conservation at the Fish Creek Research Center to plan and implement a project that will improve the health of the Fish Creek watershed. Students will gain hands-on experience with restoration techniques and learn about the science behind these practices.

**EDUCATION CAMP**

The Rod and Connie French Conservation Education Camp, also known as the Montana Camp, was established through a donation by Rod (’10 honorary degree) and Connie French to Iowa State in 2015. Located in the Fish Creek valley approximately 50 miles west of Missoula, Montana, the facility is operated by the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management as a space for students to gain hands-on field education in forestry, fisheries and wildlife.

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Tina and Amos Troester know the value of producing quality, premium beef. They’ve seen steady growth in their cattle company since they began selling to family and friends six years ago.

But when COVID-19 came in the spring of 2020, they saw demand spike in ways that were totally new.

For the Troesters, who own T-A Cattle Co. and T-A Family Premium Meats in Garnavillo, Iowa, COVID was both a challenge and an opportunity.

The opportunity was with the demand for local meats. Large-scale packing plants were closing due to illness, grocery stores were limiting how much customers could purchase and consumers turned to local farmers to meet their needs.

The challenge, especially for young farmers like the Troesters, was adapting to the rapid change in demand. They saw a significant increase in the amount of meat customers were willing to purchase, causing their business to nearly double in 2020 and continue to steadily grow into 2021.

They quickly needed more storage, better delivery equipment and a better understanding of their customers and their business model in general.

Toward the end of 2020, the Troesters reached out to Iowa State University Extension and Outreach for help. They had previously been working with a different partner, but were not making the progress they needed.

NEW DIRECTION
That all changed when they spoke to Brian Tapp, enterprise development program coordinator with ISU Extension and Outreach’s Farm, Food and Enterprise Development program.

“When the Troesters first called me, they were looking for help with a feasibility study and a grant application,” says Tapp. “As we continued to talk, we took on the role of analyzing and benchmarking their business plan to determine how they could increase sales and grow their business.”

Under normal circumstances, it takes about 12-16 weeks for Tapp’s team to complete a feasibility study. But because COVID brought a sense of urgency, the study was completed in about six weeks.

“Brian was a lifesaver,” says Tina Troester. “He called back and said ‘we can absolutely help you now.’ He was very helpful with both the business plan and the feasibility study!”

With Tapp’s help, the Troesters were able to add a pole barn and a walk-in freezer capable of holding meat cuts of about 10 steers. They also added a new meat truck to help with frozen deliveries.

BROAD OUTREACH
The Troesters were among hundreds who turned to Tapp for help during COVID. Tapp and his team reached people across the state and beyond via 50 podcasts focused on business assistance, business recovery and reopening.

Known as the “Back to Business Iowa Podcasts,” these featured segments were produced in partnership with Farm, Food and Enterprise Development and the Community and Economic Development programs of ISU Extension and Outreach, along with the Iowa Small Business Development Centers.

The podcasts helped restaurants, grocery stores and small business owners make key decisions in a time that was both stressful and urgent.

By offering financial insight and research, the group was able to help entrepreneurs understand their financial viability — not only during COVID, but also before and after.

“COVID definitely transitioned us to different levels of service than we had been providing and with the need for a much quicker turnaround,” Tapp says.

RESILIENT, MARKET-READY
Andrew Schechinger, a junior at Iowa State University and an owner of FiberFactor Feeds, turned to Tapp in September of 2020, for help completing a feasibility study for his family’s business, which makes pelleted livestock feed for cattle, horses, sheep and goats.

Formerly known as Iowa Agricultural Bio Fibers, the company lost its feed mill to a fire in April 2020 and is seeking $6 million in financing to build a new plant and expand its product line.

“Brian and his team were great at learning about our industry and our business model, our product and our process,” says Schechinger, who is majoring in entrepreneurship at Iowa State.

Coupled with the disruptions of the pandemic and an increase in corn prices, they were able to keep their costs down and provide an alternative source of animal nutrition for the livestock industry.

“Farm, Food and Enterprise Development did a fantastic job of going through hundreds of documents and compiling all of our research and development and work into a feasibility study,” Schechinger says. “They laid out the important points to show how we have been successful and can be successful in the future.”

Tapp and others who Tapp has helped say their businesses are more resilient and market-ready than before. Tina Troester said she’s hopeful some of the relationships made with customers and business partners will continue long after the virus fades.

She met people she likely wouldn’t have met otherwise, and customers got a taste for local foods and the farmer-to-consumer connection.

“The people get to know farmers a little more and ask questions,” Tina Troester says. “I am very optimistic and excited about our own customers and the number of people who have been drawn out to the countryside and to the farm. We hope the trend will continue well into the future.”
Gaining Youth the chance to learn about livestock and take animals to the fair is the goal behind a project started a decade ago in Monona County.

Known today as “The Breakfast Club,” the project allows youth to keep pigs and broilers at Iowa State University’s Western Research and Demonstration Farm near Castana, Iowa. The pigs are owned by the university, but youth get the full experience of taking care of them and showing them at the fair.

“Our program is very stringent, with high expectations for the youth,” says Melissa Beermann, director for ISU Extension and Outreach in Monona County. “There is a schedule of what they must do every year and it includes signing up for chore rotations and attending educational events.”

Youth sort and weigh pigs, feed and water animals, monitor animal welfare, practice showmanship skills and work as a team with employees of the research farm, county 4-H superintendents and extension.

Participants are expected to exhibit up to three pigs at the Monona County Fair in July and follow herdsmanship guidelines, the 4-H Code of Ethics and participate in fundraising for the project.

The exhibitors pay $30 each to take pigs, which goes toward the expenses incurred by the research farm. The brokers are paid for through donations — parents and the public can buy a broker for $20, and for each purchase, a second broker is donated to a local food bank.

Last year, 56 whole processed chickens were donated to the Osunla Food4U nonprofit.

“It’s a pretty unique project,” says Chris Bond, who manages the research farm. “For those who have been in the farming industry, it’s rewarding to see children and parents who are removed from agriculture, become reacquainted.”

Organizers received a grant from ISU Extension and Outreach Agriculture and Natural Resources in 2020 aimed at improving diversity. Through a two-year, $10,000 grant, a partnership was formed with Science Bound – Iowa State’s pre-college through college program that empowers Iowa students of color to pursue degrees and careers in STEM (agriculture, science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and education.

Four Science Bound Scholars participated last summer and nine are participating this year.

Joselyn Ramos, a junior at Denison High School and a Science Bound Scholar, says participating in the pig project last year helped her complete the required summer enrichment hours, while exposing her to something totally new.

“I was able to find my passion by showing pigs,” she says. “I never would have imagined myself doing this, but it really opened my eyes to what’s available.”

Ramos lives in town and credits the pig project for introducing her to careers in agriculture and the possibility of studying agriculture at Iowa State. She was one of four Science Bound members who showed pigs in 2020 and was awarded “newcomer of the year” for her efforts.

Organizers expect a record number of hogs will be taken to the fair in this program, about 115 total, and about 60 broilers.

ISU Alumni Association Awards

Alumni Service Award, Don Beitz, Distinguished Professor, Iowa State University, Department of Animal Science

Outstanding Young Alumni Award, Dustin Loy (’05 animal science, ’09 DVM veterinary medicine, ’11 PhD veterinary microbiology), Associate Professor of Veterinary Microbiology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Awards

Henry A. Wallace Award, Deland Myers (’81 MS food technology, ’84 PhD), Professor Emeritus, College of Agriculture and Human Sciences, Prairie View A&M University

Outstanding Young Professional Award, Kevin Ross (’03 ag studies, ’21 MBA), Farmer, Chair, National Corn Growers Association

George Washington Carver Distinguished Service Award, Rachel Chikwamba (’92 PhD genetics), Group Executive: Chemicals, Agriculture, Food and Health, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research

Floyd Andre Award, Cornelius B. Conover (left) (’79 animal science) and Dwight K. Conover (’74 ag business), Co-Founders, Northwest Financial Corporation

Thamodaran Presents Hertz Lecture


Bullard Earns Top Honors For Environmental Justice

Robert Bullard (’76 PhD sociology), distinguished professor of urban planning and environmental policy and former dean of the Barbara Jordan–Mickey Leland School of Public Policy at Texas Southern University, honored with the 2020 Champions of Earth Lifetime Achievement Award from the United Nations. The award is the UN’s highest environmental honor. In 2021 he was appointed to the inaugural White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council.

Kardel Raises Presidential Turkeys Now Housed At Iowa State

Ron Kardel (’74 farm operation) farmer near Walcott, Iowa, and the immediate past chairman of the National Turkey Federation raised the 2020 official Thanksgiving Turkeys. The turkeys were pardoned at the White House, in November 2020, a continuation of a 73-year tradition. The turkeys, Corn and Cob, will live out the remainder of their lives at the Iowa State Department of Animal Science Teaching Farms.
Throughout her notable career as a journalist and media executive, Betsy Freese, executive editor for Successful Farming and Meredith Agrimedia, has learned the only constant in her industry is change.

During her 37-year tenure with Meredith, Freese (’84 agricultural journalism) helped transform the Successful Farming brand from a beloved magazine to one of the top multimedia resources in the farming and ranching industries.

Freese also was the founding editor of Living the Country Life, growing the brand from a quarterly publication to a multi-faceted media presence including national radio, television and social media.

Adaptability became one of her hallmarks.

“Although my ISU degree focused on magazine journalism, I have also hosted a TV show and a radio program and managed a website,” Freese says. “Always tell students to be flexible. Never lock yourself into one skill area or form of communication. You never know what technology is coming down the road. Be ready for whatever challenge is thrown your way. If you are a good communicator, you can communicate in any form.”

One constant throughout the past 27 years has been her role as publisher for the Pork Powerhouse rankings, an exclusive, annual report of the top pork producers in the U.S. and Canada. In 2017, she was honored as Pork magazine’s Top Women in Media Industry Leadership award. In 2019, her work with the Pork Powerhouse rankings won her Porko’s top award for a single article.

“Betsy’s legacy as a journalist will be etched among the pantheon of top ag journalists,” says Dave Kurns, the editorial content director of Meredith Agrimedia and executive editor for Successful Farming.

“One constant throughout the past 27 years has been her role as publisher for the Pork Powerhouse rankings, an exclusive, annual report of the top pork producers in the U.S. and Canada. In 2017, she was honored as Pork magazine’s Top Women in Media Industry Leadership award. In 2019, her work with the Pork Powerhouse rankings won her Porko’s top award for a single article.”

Her professional achievements have netted her national accolades and the respect of her peers as evidenced by her earning the President’s Award from both the American Agricultural Editors’ Association and the North American Agricultural Journalists Association and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Agricultural Editors’ Association.

In 2020, Freese was awarded the Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Henry A. Wallace Award. The Wallace Award is presented in recognition of notable professional achievements, nationally or internationally, that bring distinction to the individual, college and university.

“The Henry A. Wallace Award is so meaningful to me because Henry Wallace was an agricultural journalist. He spent his life helping farmers by providing useful information, and that’s something I’ve always tried to do as well,” says Freese.

Freese’s path to Iowa began in Maryland, where her family raised pigs and ran a pick-your-own strawberry operation. Her interest in swine production led her to Iowa State where she met and married her husband, Robert (’83 animal science, ’97 DVM).

While a student, Freese met animal science professor Max Rothschild, whose research on swine genetics revolutionized the U.S. pork industry. Rothschild is a retired Charles F. Curtiss Distinguished Professor.

“I wrote up an interview with Dr. Rothschild about swine genetics and sent it to Successful Farming my senior year. And as they say, ‘that’s all she wrote,’” says Freese.

That article, and an impressive portfolio from her time interning with the Delmarva Farmer newspaper in Easton, Maryland, earned her full-time employment with Meredith during the school year,” she says.

“That has been especially fulfilling. I am proud to have helped these fine young men and women launch their careers in journalism.”

“Betsy has been a supervisor in our apprentice program, working with students at both Iowa State University and Drake University for nine months during the past summer. Freese continues to mentor future journalists and invests in her community through service on the Board of Trustees for the Des Moines Metro Opera.”

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An agricultural communications pioneer, Betsy Freese was awarded the 2020 Iowa State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Henry A. Wallace Award for her distinguished achievements as executive editor for Meredith Agrimedia and Successful Farming.
Fostering Futures in STEM

Growing up in the Washington, D.C. area, Simone Soso’s parents, a medical doctor and a speech pathologist, continually encouraged her interest in science and math. As an undergraduate at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Soso (B.S. in environmental science) received funding from the NSF Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation program (LSAMP).

“I grew up in an environment where Black people excelled in STEM areas,” Soso says. “My undergraduate experience was the first time I met so many people who were first generation college students. In doing my research, I saw the need for programs like LSAMP and discovered I wanted to help others like me gain access to STEM fields.”

As a program manager and research associate for the Quality Education for Minorities Network, Soso mentors students at colleges and universities, historically Hispanic serving institutions and Tribal colleges and universities to provide education and resources for students and faculty in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM).

She earned her master’s in animal health science from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University (A&T), and was encouraged by fellow A&T alum, Derrick Coble (13 PhD graduates), to continue her education at Iowa State.

“Derrick told me Iowa State was among the top, and would be an excellent choice for a PhD in an agricultural field,” Soso says.

Graduating with honors educations and previous internships at the Smithsonian National Zoological Park led her to study with Jack Knowl at Iowa State. Reuell, professor in agricultural and biosystems engineering, was researching how chemical and odor components of lion and tiger marking fluids play a role in animal behavior.

“Simone’s superb research resulted in three publications in highly-ranked journals,” Reuell says.

“She made the best of her multidisciplinary project at the nexus of animal science, chemistry and engineering. During her studies, she trained in ichthyology and worked with world-renowned experts in mammalian phenomenons. Her work is often cited by scientists working with animal scents, animal behavior and wildlife conservation.”

At Iowa State Soso served on the board of the Beck Graduate Student Association, co-founded the Environmental Science Graduate Association and served as the STEM program coordinator for the College of Agriculture and Life Science’s George Washington Carver Summer Research Internship program.

“Simone was phenomenal to work with – she has an energy, light and passion for helping young people understand the intersection between research, policy and career opportunities,” says Theresa Cooper, assistant professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

“She was also an outstanding mentor to students in Minority in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences. It’s great to see her continuing her work in this area.”

Soso encourages students to promote, build and nurture an inclusive community.

“Seek beyond your comfort areas to attend trainings and meet people who are different than you,” Soso says. “Iowa State has student organizations and resources for all areas of interest. Seek opportunities to connect with people – I guarantee there’s a community and a place for you at Iowa State.”

Simone Soso strives to help minority students and faculty find success in STEM fields.

Continuing a Custom Processing Tradition

Payson Kerns and Baili (Kerns) Mauzer both grew up around their family’s eastern Iowa business, Edgewood Locker. This local, custom meat locker and processor in Edgewood was founded by their grandparents in 1966. The brother and sister duo continues to operate the family business as third generation owners, a responsibility shared with two of their cousins.

This past year has emphasized the importance of local meat processors due to the supply challenges brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The meat industry is crazy right now with huge demand and the local farm-to-table movement, Soso says.

“Our customers looked to us to continue to put meat in their freezers when everything else in the world was shutting down,” Baili adds.

Neither Payson (17 animal science) nor Baili (12 culinary science) intended on coming back to work at the locker when they left for college. However, Baili knew she wanted to be involved in the agriculture or food industry which made Iowa State a perfect fit.

While attending Iowa State, Baili realized how much she missed the environment of the meat business and got a job working at the Iowa State University Meats Laboratory. She gained even more hands-on experience through her internship at Tyson Foods in their research and development area. After graduating in 2012 with a degree in culinary science and a minor in meat science, she traveled to India and worked with world-renowned experts in the nexus of animal science, chemistry and engineering. During her studies, she trained in ichthyology and worked with world-renowned experts in mammalian phenomenons. Her work is often cited by scientists working with animal scents, animal behavior and wildlife conservation.”

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“The people I met in the meat lab! became valuable resources when I graduated and entered my career,” Baili says.

Payson’s college career started out a little differently than Baili’s. He began at a local community college, but decided to head to Iowa State for more opportunities. Like his sister, Payson decided to work at the Meats Lab, assisting with harvesting, packaging, sanitation and more.

“I enjoyed getting to know Payson as his advisor and instructor,” says Steven Lonergan, Morrill Professor in animal science. “He came to Iowa State with a good work ethic and an enthusiasm to learn about agriculture and especially the meat industry. His enthusiasm and hard work are a powerful combination. He is a friendly person and always has a smile (and perhaps a joke) for those around him.”

Following Payson’s graduation from Iowa State in 2017, he and Baili made the decision to buy into the family business in 2017. Their cousins Katie Anderson and Luke Kerns have also come on board to further strengthen the future of the family business.

Expansion on the Horizon

The core business of Edgewood Locker is custom processing of beef, pork and venison. They also complete further processing of 90 different meat products for their wholesale and retail sector.

Their grandparents began the company with only one full-time and one part-time employee. Edgewood Locker now employs 39 people on a full-time basis and an additional 60 for part-time and seasonal help. “I know Payson and Baili will continue the strong tradition of quality and success at Edgewood Locker,” Lonergan says.

Edgewood Locker recently held a groundbreaking ceremony for a 19,000 square foot addition to the facility. Once complete, the extra space will double the size of the current facility and enable the relocation of the sausage production and processing area. It also will create more space for custom processing work, add more room for employees and modernize equipment and food safety processes.

The Kerns family is very committed to the success of the community where they live, work and raise their families. Baili is a member of the Experience Edgewood community marketing committee, Payson serves on the volunteer fire department and they all help grill for the concession stand at local athletic events. They also partner with the local school to give tours, educate students about the meat industry and help provide educational opportunities such as caucuses shows and workshops for 4-H youth in Clayton and Delaware counties.

“Even with our expansion on the horizon, we remain loyal to the core business of custom processing that our grandparents started,” Baili says.

From left, Payson Kerns, Miranda Kerns, Baili (Kerns) Mauzer and Brad Mauzer continue to offer custom processing the Kerns family business. Edgewood Locker, has become known for since it was founded in 1966.
“I’m elated to see a country care about really important social justice issues, and it’s incredible to live in the place where that revolution started...”

Kody Olson (’18 global resource systems, agriculture and society), policy advisor for the Minnesota Council on Disability, has been working with the Minnesota State Emergency Operations Center throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Active in student government during his time at Iowa State, he worked to make sure that Minnesotans with disabilities were represented and had the resources, including testing and vaccines, that they needed to stay safe.

Olson has stepped back from his director position in the Governor’s Office to focus on furthering his education in earning a master’s in public policy and public health at the University of Minnesota. He continues to support the Minnesota disability community as a disability policy advisor to the State Emergency Operations Center.

In addition to providing direct support to Minnesotans, he has played a vital role in developing legislation to support the unique needs of those with disabilities, such as a bill that would permit personal care assistants to provide transportation for COVID-19 testing, treatment and vaccination.

Reflecting on his work, Olson spoke with Minnesota Public Radio earlier this year, explaining how people with disabilities often disproportionately suffer from the effects of a pandemic.

“Between supporting the state’s emergency management response, getting calls from members of the disability community whose support services were impeded and feeling concern for my neighbors and community during the unrest, this year has been filled with defining moments for me both personally and for my community,” Olson says.

As he considers the experiences of the past year, he looks forward with hope that better understanding will lead to systemic change.

“I’m elated to see a country care about really important social justice issues, and it’s incredible to live in the place where that revolution started,” Olson says. “I live in a historically Black community, and it’s been amazing to see our neighbors come together to listen and learn from each other. As a white man I’ve done a lot of reflecting on my role in racism and how we can move forward together.”

Kody Olson has stepped up in numerous ways to support the Minnesota disability community throughout COVID-19 and beyond as a disability policy advisor.

“Kody has done incredible work to ensure our state works for all Minnesotans, including the disability community,” says Governor Tim Walz. “Throughout the pandemic, he worked to make sure that Minnesotans with disabilities were represented and had the resources, including testing and vaccines, that they needed to stay safe.”

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THE CALS ADVANTAGE

CALS STUDENT TEAMS LEAD NATIONALLY

The Iowa State Crops Team placed first overall in the four-year division of a contest hosted by the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. Rachel Casey, senior in agronomy, placed third overall as an individual.

Two members of the Iowa State University Livestock Judging Team, Alison Buethel (’21 animal science, international agriculture) and Maddie Fugate (’21 agricultural business), were named All-Americans at the National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest in November 2020. The team also earned reserve champion honors at the Fall Upgrade Contest in October 2020. Austin Garner (’21 animal science) was named third high individual overall at the National Barrow Show.

The Professional Agricultural Student (PAS) Club brought home several top awards from national and state conferences:

**National PAS Results**
- Equine (first place team) – Ashley Lohmann, junior in animal science, first place individual; Shayla Seils, senior in agricultural and life sciences education, second place individual
- Turf (first place team) – Rosie Roberts, first place individual
- Crops (first place team) – Rosie Roberts, senior in agronomy, first place individual
- Overall Livestock (second place team) – Jenna Steffen, junior in agricultural and life sciences education, third place individual
- Ten club members participated in individual events, with three top finishers

**State PAS Results**
- Equine (first place team) – Ashley Lohmann, first place individual
- Turf (first place team) – Rosie Roberts, first place individual
- Overall Livestock (first place team) – Jenna Steffen, first place individual
- Crops (third place team)
- Twelve club members participated in individual events, with seven named champions

Jenna Steffen, junior in agricultural and life sciences education, was named one of the new Professional Agricultural Student (PAS) National Vice Presidents.

Paiton McDonald, junior in agricultural biochemistry, was named a 2021 Goldwater Scholar.

Jacob Boyd Johnson, graduate student in toxicology, earned a Fulbright U.S. Student Program award.

Warren Rouse, graduate student in biochemistry, biophysics and molecular biology, was selected to receive a Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral individual National Research Service Award from the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health.

Shelby Westhoff, sophomore in agricultural studies, was named one of the Land O’Lakes 2021 Emerging Leaders for Food and Security.

Nolan Monaghan, junior in horticulture and global resource systems, was named a Udall Scholar.

**BLOCK AND BRIDLE 100TH CONVENTION**

Iowa State University’s Block and Bridle Club organized and hosted the 100th National Block and Bridle Convention April 8-10, in Ames. The convention included tours of livestock operations, wineries and distilleries throughout Iowa, breakout sessions with speakers who discussed various agricultural topics and social activities. COVID-19 guidelines, such as social distancing and requiring face masks to be worn, were followed throughout the convention. A total of 129 students from 19 clubs/universities attended the event in-person. Students could also attend the event virtually – the first time this option was offered – though virtual attendance numbers were not tracked.

**NATIONAL HONORS**
- Jenna Steffen, junior in agricultural and life sciences education, was named one of the new Professional Agricultural Student (PAS) National Vice Presidents.
- Paiton McDonald, junior in agricultural biochemistry, was named a 2021 Goldwater Scholar.
- Jacob Boyd Johnson, graduate student in toxicology, earned a Fulbright U.S. Student Program award.
- Warren Rouse, graduate student in biochemistry, biophysics and molecular biology, was selected to receive a Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral individual National Research Service Award from the National Cancer Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health.
- Shelby Westhoff, sophomore in agricultural studies, was named one of the Land O’Lakes 2021 Emerging Leaders for Food and Security.
- Nolan Monaghan, junior in horticulture and global resource systems, was named a Udall Scholar.

**GET MONTHLY UPDATES ABOUT NEWS FROM CAMPUS, CLASS NOTES AND INVITES TO UPCOMING CALS EVENTS BY SUBSCRIBING TO THE STORIES ONLINE E-NEWSLETTER. EMAIL STORIES@IASTATE.EDU TO SUBSCRIBE.**

**LOOKING TO HIRE THE BEST? TAKE PART IN THE CALS CAREER DAY, HELD EACH FALL SEMESTER. CONTACT MIKE GAUL, 515-294-4725, MIKEGAUL@IASTATE.EDU, TO RECEIVE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION OR TO SIGN UP TO ATTEND A FUTURE EVENT.**
Each adventure at Iowa State is unique.

We would love to show you the people and places that will help you build your CALS Advantage.

Visit campus this fall semester to sit in on a class, meet current students, connect with an advisor and tour our world-class facilities. Schedule now to secure the best dates for fall.

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