

Wardlow returns to the classroom

By Meghan Anderson

Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology Department Head George Wardlow has returned to teaching after serving as the interim director of the School of Human Environmental Sciences.

Wardlow served as the interim director for more than two years.

“When I picked up the HES responsibilities, administration asked me to not teach any classes,” Wardlow said. “So during that two-year period I didn’t teach.”

Wardlow said in the last ten years, when there has been a department head opening, the Division of Agriculture and the dean of the college have appointed another department head to serve as the interim.

“When that set of responsibilities was over, I was able to get back into teaching,” Wardlow said. “So I picked up surveying and I may pick up another class to make sure our instructors are not overloaded.”

Surveying was Wardlow’s class before his absence, and he taught it for many years. The class is six block hours a week, but Wardlow said the students spend more than half that time out in the field.

“[Surveying] is an extremely fun class to teach,” Wardlow said.

His favorite courses are undergraduate classes with a lot of lab time because you get to work one-on-one with



Wardlow answers a student’s question in his surveying lab at the Abernathy Lab.

students or in small groups. His other favorite class is engines, or small power units.

“It’s really fun helping students figure techniques out,” he said.

Wardlow has also taught a handful of graduate courses. He even created the graduate statistics course.

Wardlow graduated from the University of Missouri in 1977 and taught high school for five years before going to graduate school to receive a Ph.D. at The Ohio State University. He began teaching at the University of Minnesota in 1984. He spent eight years on faculty there and was an associate professor with tenure.

Wardlow began teaching at the U of A in 1992. He was appointed as AECT department head in 2007.

AECT welcomes new graduate assistants

By Dentin Schwartz

The Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology Department in the University of Arkansas Bumpers College welcomed a new group of graduate assistants this fall.

During their assistantships, the graduate students will work alongside professors in each of their respective areas of study.

The eight current graduate students in the department are classified into three different categories: teaching assistants, research assistants and general graduate assistants.

AECT Graduate Program Coordinator Donna Graham said the department showcases a diverse group of assistants, all with different backgrounds and skill sets.

“Our Department has a philosophy of self-achievement and self-promotion,” said Graham. “We do a good job of helping students to step out of their comfort zone and to try new things.”

Graduate assistants are selected based on their skill set and performance in undergraduate programs.

The current assistants are given the opportunity to serve in many capacities pertaining to their area of study.

Graduate assistant Sable Sellick, who created an online plant science laboratory, is currently teaching a University Perspectives class for freshmen AECT students.

Emily Hawkins and Andi Carlton are currently working on a grant-funded project for Assistant Professor Jill Rucker.

Fawn Kurtzo is focusing on communications. She also coordinates the video boards and other communications projects for the college dean’s office.

Maggie Jo Hansen assists with international and study abroad affairs for the Bumpers College International Programs Office.

Kyle Hunter acts as a teaching assistant for Professor Jefferson Miller in communications classes such as Communicating Agriculture to the Public and Ag

Reporting and Feature Writing.

Andrew Bolton and Kristina Bautista both assist with technology. Bolton helps set up laboratories and classes in the ASTM program. Bautista assists with the AECT Department’s computer classes such as Graphic Design.



New Graduate SPOTLIGHT

Hanan Southard

Hometown: Rolla, Missouri

Undergraduate: University of Arkansas

Ag Econ, May 2015

Why did you decide to pursue a master’s degree with AECT?

I chose to get a master’s at the U of A because I knew the department would be willing, open and supportive for everything I wanted to do with my education and career.

What are your research interests?

I am interested in seeing how farmers communicate, what channels they use practically and what they might adopt in the future. I’d also like to know how they prefer to receive information about the industry.

What are your career goals after you graduate?

I’d really like to have a career oriented around producer education to figure out ways to adapt to market demands. My career would ideally help farmers know how to be sustainable long-term.

AECT REPS organize events throughout the semester for high school students to become familiar with our program. If you are interested in setting up a tour or have an event you want one of our REPS to attend, contact us today!

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Donna Graham awarded Citation of Distinguished Alumni

By Alex McLeod

The Arkansas Alumni Association recognized Donna L. Graham at its 71st annual Alumni Awards Celebration this fall.

The Citation of Distinguished Alumni Award was awarded to Graham, who is a professor in the Department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology.

According to a U of A news release, this award is given to recognize exceptional professional and personal achievement and extraordinary distinction in their field.

Graham has worked for the U of A on campus and through the Extension Service for a total of 45 years.

Through the years, Graham has won several awards for teaching and advising.

“It’s a big package of things the Arkansas Alumni Association are looking for when they select recipients,” said Graham.

When she came to campus, Graham said she became involved in campus government. She served as chair of campus council, faculty senate twice, and was president of the American Association for Agricultural Education.

Her peers nominated her as a result of the leadership roles she has exhibited in her career, Graham said.



Graham was awarded Citation of Distinguished Alumni to recognize her exemplary professional and personal achievement on Oct. 30.

“It is always an honor to receive an award, because being recognized by your peers is probably the highest honor you could have, so I think that it says a lot about the comradery in this department that we support one another,” said Graham. “We try to play up each other’s strengths and not tear down any particular weakness that any individual may have.”

Throughout her career, she took pride in students’ growth from the time they started college until they graduated, said Graham.

“Seeing the development of students that may have been timid and not very prepared for college and seeing those individuals become successful brings me the greatest satisfaction of all,” said Graham.

Student Recognitions



Harris (center) with U.S. secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and his wife Christie.

Sam Harris, an agricultural business and agricultural communications major at the U of A, was presented the Elaine Szymoniak Award as the top Borlaug-Raun International Intern at the World Food Prize Laurate Award Ceremony on Oct. 15.

Harris was named winner after completing an internship in India through the World Food Prize Foundation, submitting a research

paper and making an oral presentation on his project.

Criteria included thoroughness and impact in promoting education, health, economic development, equality and justice.

Morgan Marley, an agricultural communications student at the U of A, was named an All American for senior college livestock judging on Nov. 17.

Before attending the U of A, Marley completed an Associate’s degree from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College. She competed on NEO’s livestock judging team and was named an Junior College All American in 2014.

The criteria for senior college is based on six categories: livestock judging performance, GPA, statement of career goals and community, industry and university involvement. Eleven individuals were named All Americans in 2015.



Marley is a member of ACT, Block and Bridle, Collegiate Farm Bureau and AECT REPS.

Leslie Edgar promoted to Assistant Dean

By Morgan Marley

University of Arkansas Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology Associate Professor Leslie Edgar was recently promoted to assistant dean of the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, and she continues to impact AECT students.

Edgar saw an opportunity in the promotion that will allow her to make an even bigger difference for AECT students' educational experiences.

"My number one passion has always been working with students," said Edgar. "I'm the type of person that if I see something that I don't like, then I need to do something about it; you can't gripe about a situation if you're not willing to do something about it."

Her experience working directly with students pushed her to look for ways that would reduce or eliminate barriers for them, said Edgar. Her new duties with the Bumpers College Honors Program and continued



Leslie Edgar started her new position as assistant dean in August 2015.

efforts in the International Programs Office inspire her to find ways to connect with students at a more intense level of education.

"It was a hard decision for me to leave (teaching)," said

Edgar. "But I did keep my research appointment within our department. So, 25 percent of my appointment is still within the department and focused on research."

Even though Edgar is no longer teaching classes, she is available to students, specifically graduate students.

"In this position, I have three graduate students that I have the opportunity to mentor," said Edgar. "One is focused on general communications, one on honors and

one on international programs. So I still get the opportunity to not only do research that adds value to our department, but also mentor three students who are earning master's degrees in our department."

Another opportunity Edgar has is working with faculty across the college. An international programs committee and an honors program committee, which are comprised of one faculty member from each of the Bumpers College departments, guide these programs. Because of her experience working with faculty, she is able to connect students with faculty members to create a new learning experiences.

Edgar said, "With my relationship with Bumpers College faculty, I have been able to connect students to faculty mentors for either research or international interests. This has been a benefit for our students, and I am looking forward to continuing to work with both faculty and students in these endeavors."

Mark you calendars! Important Dates:

National ACT Professional Development Conference - Stillwater, OK - Jan. 14-16, 2016

Spring 2016 semester starts - Jan. 19

SAAS Conference - San Antonio, TX - Feb. 5-9, 2016

Wild Hog FFA CDE Contests - Feb. 27

State FFA CDE Contests - April 14-15

John Rolloff, gone but not forgotten

Dr. John Rolloff, Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Education at the University of Arkansas, passed away August 28. He led a very interesting life and was passionate about ensuring that high school agriculture teachers were educated to have an appreciation for the arts, history and the broader culture.

Rolloff received his Ph.D. from The Ohio State University and began teaching ag ed and extension at the U of A in 1966. He served at UNESCO in Paris, France for a year helping to organize a world conference on agriculture held in Copenhagen, Denmark. He retired in April 1997, Professor Emeritus, from the U of A.

AECT faculty roles in U of A Teaching Academy

By Loren Gragg

Several faculty members in the Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology Department are serving in important campus leadership roles and are members of the University of Arkansas Teaching Academy.

The Teaching Academy was established in 1988 by Dan Ferritor, who was the Chancellor of the U of A at the time. The Academy's mission is to advocate and represent teaching interests and to promote and stimulate an environment of teaching and learning. It even encourages recognition and rewards for exceptional teaching.

Two of the AECT department's professors hold leadership roles in the Teaching Academy. Don Johnson is president of the Teaching Academy and Donna Graham is currently the secretary/treasurer. Both are exemplary faculty members in Bumpers College.

Johnson said the Teaching Academy is an honorary group that faculty members are elected into because of their outstanding teaching and interaction with students.

"Our goals are to recognize and promote excellence in teaching. Every year, we initiate up to six new fellows to membership in the academy and we present the Dr. John and Lois Imhoff Award for outstanding teaching and student mentorship," Johnson said.

Before the latest induction ceremony, six faculty members from the AECT department are members of the Teaching Academy.

"In this department the members of the Teaching Academy are Cassandra Cox, Jefferson Miller, Donna Graham, Leslie Edgar, George Wardlow and me," Johnson said. "I'm guessing that at some point in time, most of the rest will be (members) also."

Don Edgar, associate professor in the AECT department, was inducted into the Teaching Academy Dec. 7, after working at the U of A for seven years.

Edgar received his Ph.D. from Texas A&M University in 2007 and joined the U of A in 2008. He teaches 11 different courses, earning consistently high student evaluations, and is praised by students for his ability to make material interesting and meaningful. Edgar was also recently named a Teacher Fellow by the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture, received the Gamma Sigma Delta Outstanding Teaching Award in the Bumpers College, and was recognized as the Outstanding Early Career Award winner by the American Association for Agricultural Education.

Shoulders creates alumni trading cards

Assistant Professor Kate Shoulders has created alumni trading cards to give to high school students to help them learn about the types of careers they would be prepared for upon earning a degree in the AECT department.

As high school students prepare to graduate and start a college career, it can be intimidating to choose a degree when they do not know the job opportunities that it prepares them for after graduation.

To help give students an idea of what kind of jobs they can get with an Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology bachelor's degree, Assistant Professor Kate Shoulders created 25 alumni trading cards highlighting U of A AECT alumni and the careers they have now.

"It's hard for students to think about what they can do with our degree," Shoulders said. "I hope as

I send the trading cards out I can follow-up with suggestions for how students can interact with them. For example, have the students find three cards that display careers they are interested in."

Each card has the alum's name, high school FFA chapter, major, career, salary range, where he or she lives now and a quote about what the AECT department has done for them. On the other side of the card are statistics about the department's faculty and students.

Shoulders said she would like to make new cards every year featuring new graduates from the department as a way to help them celebrate their achievements and give high school students more opportunities to learn about how the AECT department is a great fit for a wide variety of students.



Two examples of the front of the trading cards show alumni who have successful careers after graduating from the AECT department.

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New face in AECT

The AECT department welcomed a new administration specialist this fall.

Rhonda Harton, who previously worked for U of A Monticello as an administration specialist, accepted the opening in the AECT department.

Harton said the move to Fayetteville provided new opportunities for her 15-year-old daughter.

“My husband and I thought it would broaden her outlook because there are so many different avenues here for her to choose from,” Harton said.

Harton worked in social and behavior science in the dean’s office at the U of A Monticello. She is originally from Warren, Arkansas.

She said the hardest transition was moving away from family and the small town where everyone knew each other.

“The move was easy for us, and we really like living here,” Harton said. “It’s just been an adjustment leaving our family.”

She said she likes that the department has a family atmosphere.

“I enjoy the student involvement in our department and missed that when I was in the dean’s office at U of A Monticello,” Harton said. “I admire the dedication and drive the department has and look forward to building relationships with those around me.”

Unlike many of the faculty, staff and students in the department, Harton does not have any ties to agriculture.

“Not unless you want to count my great-grandparents,” she said with a laugh.

As for the future, she plans to continue her education starting in spring 2016.



Harton started working for the AECT department in the 2015 fall semester.

Department head musings from Dr. Wardlow

My wife and I have 3 grown sons. We frequently talk about how each is *unique*, yet *successful*.

There are several ways to earn a degree related to agricultural education in Arkansas, and each can lead to success. In Arkansas, most prospective agriculture teachers, as well as students seeking careers in agricultural communications or agricultural systems technology management, will choose an agricultural education degree. But among the programs available at Arkansas institutions, how is the U of A’s program *unique*, and what makes it so *successful* compared to other programs across the state?

We are the only Land-Grant “category one” research university in the state. Texas A&M, the University of Florida, Oklahoma State University and Iowa State University are our peers. Our AECT department is one of 11 specialized agriculture departments at the university. Agricultural education is our specialty.

Our faculty get to focus their expertise in either teacher education, communications, or agricultural technologies and are nationally recognized leaders in their profession. But even with their nationally recognized status, our professors maintain close advising relationships with their students, and our department maintains a family-like culture.

Our agricultural education teacher preparation program places new agriculture teachers in schools across the state and nation every year, and our ag education faculty have earned national reputations for quality instruction and research. Also, ours is the only agricultural education department in Arkansas with an integrated agricultural communications program, rated by national faculty last year as one of the top five programs in the nation. Additionally, ours is the only department in Arkansas with a stand-alone agricultural systems technology management program, one of the best such programs nationally.

Our Master of Science program, which draws graduate students from those other “category one” universities, can be completed full-time, with paid assistantships available, but it can also be completed 100% on-line as an option for working professionals. We share graduate agricultural education courses with nine other major universities to provide the best online graduate courses available.

As a result of all these characteristics, the U of A AECT program ranks among the top programs at those “category one” universities nationwide. That makes our program, our students, and our graduates *unique* and *successful*, not only among all the other options in Arkansas, but also among all the other options across the nation.

**Do you have an idea for
Ag Wire?
Let us know!**

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