

WALSAA EXPRESS

➔ YOUR CALS CONNECTION FOR LIFE

Volume 48 | Issue 1 | April 2020

Supporters of FISC Recognized and Celebrated at 2020 Reunion

By Cory Brown, WALSAA FISC Chair

On Saturday, January 25, alumni of the Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) gathered for the annual reunion and awards banquet. Attendees were entertained by our emcee Larry Olson, a professor in the FISC program. After a wonderful lunch, we were enlightened by a panel of individuals who have expanded their businesses beyond a traditional farm operation. Panel members included: Charlie Crave, owner of Crave Brothers Cheese; Tom Oberhaus, owner of Cozy Nook farm, a 65-cow dairy farm and an agritourism destination; and Kara Olson, owner of Little Farmer Meats, which utilizes direct-to-customer marketing. Paul Dietmann of Compeer Financial moderated the discussion.

WALSAA then presented the Friend of Short Course award to Bob Behnke, a former board member and chair of the FISC committee, for his dedication to the program as an alumnus. The Service to Agriculture award was presented to Bob Meyer for his service to the agriculture community as a long-time farm broadcaster. Lastly, the J.S. Donald Teaching Excellence was awarded to Mark Renz for his enthusiasm in the classroom.

Without the generous support of our sponsors, WALSAA and FISC would be unable to recognize those who make agriculture and FISC better for our community, our alumni, and the students. Our lead sponsor at the Varsity Level was Compeer Financial. Crave Brothers Farm, LLC sponsored at the Badger Level. Red Level sponsors included Pioneer and Wisconsin Corn Growers Association, and, at the White Level, we had AgSource, CentralStar Cooperative, Insight FS, and State Bank of Cross Plains.

It is always exciting to see old friends and meet new faces. We hope you are able to attend next year's gathering!

Read more about FISC award winners on pages 6 and 7.



Bruce Westphal and his wife Marilyn joined several 50-year alumni at the 2020 Farm and Industry Short Course Reunion

New Lifetime Members

Mariana Garza '20
Stephanie Hoff '19
Abigail Martin '18

In Memoriam

Jim Armbruster, BS '63
Robert Bush, BS '50
Mark Grundahl, BS '70, DVM '88

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

2020 Plans



Paul Patterson, WALSAA President

WALSAA members,

I remember many years ago when companies and organizations came out with their "2020 Plans." It used to seem so far away. I wonder how many of these plans have been dusted off and reviewed to see how well they did on their planning?

As a member of your WALSAA board of directors, I can tell you we spend a lot of our time planning. Most of it is for upcoming events like the Outstanding Sophomore Award, FISC Reunion, Farm Tech Days Picnic, and Football Fire-Up, but we also spend a portion of our time planning for the longer term.

What will WALSAA look like in 10 years? How do we attract new members? How is CALS changing with the times? How can we work closer with faculty and industry to help our students and new graduates on their career paths?

We have been entrusted with many great traditions and scholarship funds from the hard-working people who supported WALSAA for more than 48 years. We take this responsibility very seriously. So, what are we doing to answer some of the above questions?

- We continue to build our relationship with CALS to help each other. We can achieve much more by working together for students, scholarships, and to relay real-world information to students and recent graduates.

- We continue to support QuickStart that allows CALS students to graduate with a science degree in three years.
- We have adopted better ways for new graduates to be a member of WALSAA and continue to receive the benefits of the "Aggie Network" by offering monthly payment plans.

All of these initiatives are based on the principle they help WALSAA members stay connected, network and give back. What will WALSAA look like in 10 years? It will look different, but it will certainly be recognizable by today's standards. I believe some things will never change, such as:

- Personal touch with people (friends, co-workers, customers) will remain the most important (and hardest) trait for people to develop.
- Technology will always change the career landscape. Working hard, being willing to learn, networking, and being open to new ideas will be paramount.
- All people feel a need, and get great satisfaction, by giving their time or talent to an organization that helps a community or society in general.

I believe WALSAA, in its own small way, can help fulfill these needs for CALS graduates. This belief will help guide your WALSAA board as we plan for the future. If you have any ideas or suggestions, or are looking to donate your unique gifts and skills to WALSAA, please reach out to me at pspatterson@new.rr.com or call me at 920.662.9468.

On Wisconsin!

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CALS MESSAGE

UW Dairy Innovation Hub



Kate VandenBosch, CALS Dean and Director

Last issue, I shared our excitement about a new \$8.8 million initiative to fund dairy research at the three University of Wisconsin System agricultural campuses — Madison, Platteville and River Falls. Since then, our world has changed significantly, and, while we must adjust for this time, our excitement about this effort remains high. Remember, the intent of this funding is to foster collaborations that address the most complex challenges facing the state's dairy industry.

More specifically, the work of the Dairy Innovation Hub will focus on being good stewards to land and water resources; enriching human health and nutrition; ensuring animal health and welfare; and growing farm businesses and communities. The influx of new funds will help CALS add as many as 15 new faculty, hire dozens of research trainees over several years, create an Advanced Dairy Management Academy, improve research labs and farms, purchase new equipment, and more.

Now that you're familiar with the vision for the Hub, you might be curious about the people who will make it a reality. So, I'd like to provide you with some personnel updates.

The Hub's leadership committee consists of three deans: Dale Gallenberg, College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences at UW–River Falls; Wayne Weber, College of Business, Industry, Life Sciences and Agriculture at UW–Platteville; and myself. As a whole, the Hub has an advisory council to provide guidance to the leadership committee and its faculty director to ensure investments in university personnel, facilities, research, and training will move the state's industry forward. The council includes representatives from the dairy industry, the state Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, and faculty from each campus, all of whom advocated for this funding from the start.

At the local level, each campus has a steering committee to help guide its respective college's strategic decisions on what projects to pursue. Our members are Victor Cabrera, professor of dairy science; Paul Mitchell, professor of agricultural and applied economics; Denise Ney, professor of nutritional sciences; Scott Rankin, professor and chair of food science; Matt Ruark, professor of soil science;

Troy Runge, professor and chair of biological systems engineering; Kent Weigel, professor and chair of dairy science; Heather White, associate professor of dairy science; and Heidi Zoerb, associate dean for external relations.

Professor White also serves as faculty director for the Hub, and, in this role, she works closely with me and members of our administration. Those of you who know her know her experience and energy make her well-suited to guide UW on how it can best promote innovation in agricultural programs to support the dairy industry.

"I look forward to the talent we will attract to Wisconsin with this collaboration."

Assisting Professor White is CALS alumna, and former WALSA board member, Maria Woldt, who was recently hired as the Hub's program manager. She'll handle budget matters, develop and disseminate communications, and organize and execute events. From her base in the Animal Science Building, she'll coordinate activities between Hub collaborators at all three campuses.

I look forward to the talent we will attract to Wisconsin with this collaboration, the discoveries that will come from it, and the impact both will have on advancing the dairy industry.

You can learn more about the Dairy Innovation Hub at dairyinnovationhub.wisc.edu.

CAMPUS HAPPENINGS

CALS Ambassadors



Mariana Garza, WALSA Student Representative

With the spring semester underway, the CALS Ambassadors were preparing to have a busy semester full of informational sessions, Your UW Days, World Food Prize, and our largest event, Admitted Students Day. However, we are no longer able to host these events due to the increasing prevalence of COVID-19. Although we are deeply saddened for the prospective students who cannot experience our campus, we understand the importance of people staying home to prevent further spread of the virus.

In more positive news, we were able to host some events for our prospective students. We hosted three informational sessions and two Your UW Days. At both events, ambassadors spoke about their experiences as a CALS student, answered questions, and led tours for students to take a better look at the CALS campus. At Your UW Days, students also had the opportunity to speak with advisors at our resource fair to help answer prospective students' questions.

At the beginning of the semester, we had our annual Calling Nights where we reach out to CALS students admitted to UW-Madison. These are good opportunities to advertise the CALS QuickStart program, Admitted Students Day, Your UW Days, and info sessions, as well as address any questions or hesitations the student may have about attending UW-Madison. It is also great to hear about how excited they are to come to UW-Madison in the fall! Over the course of two nights, we spoke to 127 students/parents and left voicemails for over 250 students. The students had great questions for the ambassadors about their major, available opportunities, and some even asked about post-graduation plans. Overall, this is one of our most successful promoting events. The ambassadors love to talk to admitted students, and the students really appreciate it when we reach out to them.

CALS Student Association



Brooke Trustem, WALSA Student Representative

Greetings from home! Due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic and campus being shut down, it is with a heavy heart I report all events previously planned by student organizations for the spring semester have been cancelled. This is a tough pill to swallow for many campus organizations that spent months planning events for their members and the campus community. This has been difficult for many students, especially seniors who will miss many "lasts" of their senior year.

On a more positive note, students at UW-Madison are known for being able to handle the stress that comes with tough situations! While this year did not end the way we had hoped, it means next year's student organizations will come back stronger than ever, and with even brighter ideas!

Classes at home mean more opportunities to grow and strive to keep moving forward. Organizations are finding new ways to collaborate during this time, often by using video chat resources, keeping the end of the semester as normal as possible. Watch for exciting updates on social media as new leaders are elected to serve and inspire new ideas and chapters for students!

As UW-Madison alumni, I challenge you to reach out and lend a helping hand in support during this difficult time. You never know what a small word of encouragement can do for a fellow Badger.

STUDENT UPDATE

Farm and Industry Short Course



Jenna Breitenfeldt, WALSA Student Representative

What a wonderful spring semester we had! Many FISC students attended the Wisconsin Agribusiness Classic in January at the Alliant Energy Center, toured the Kwik Trip headquarters in La Crosse, Wisconsin, and completed the Dairy Artificial Insemination Clinic. This spring we had several exciting programming events, such as bowling, a pool party, a tour of the Crave Brothers Farm, the WALSA etiquette dinner, and a heifer showmanship competition. The CALS Ambassadors helped with more preview days and created "The Little Badger" yearbook. We have a great crew of Ambassadors who will represent FISC next year.

Unfortunately, FISC was unable to partake in the Kalahari or our graduation ceremony, but we still made the best of it. The Thursday before we packed up our things and left, we had a mock graduation ceremony during the annual pancake dinner. This was not the ending we had in mind for the end of the year, but that's the great thing about FISC – we are farmers and we know how to make the best of less-than-ideal situations! I want to thank everyone for the wonderful year we had and all the memories, laughs, tears, and friendships we made. I hope all the first-year students come back for a second year, and I wish all the second-year students the best of luck! We should all strive to be the positive change we want to see in agriculture.

IN MEMORIAM

James H. Armbruster

James H. Armbruster, 81, died peacefully on January 14, 2020, at the age of 81 following a recent diagnosis and brave battle with cancer.

Jim was born on April 10, 1938, to Andrew and Lydia (Seifert) Armbruster in Mequon, Wisconsin. After his father's death in 1950, the family grew the farm into a registered dairy operation and began Armbruster Brother's Farms. Jim credits his brother, Edgar, for his success and the family's survival.

Upon graduation in 1963 from the UW-Madison, Jim worked for mentee Lyle Spencer in Eagle, Wisconsin, selecting premium dairy cattle for Red Brae's registered Brown Swiss herd. Jim married Mary Lee Zimmerman of Burlington, Wisconsin, in 1970. Jim was a dedicated and prominent cow man. He judged major dairy cattle shows throughout the U.S., Latin America and Europe. A beloved fixture of World Dairy Expo, he was the first recipient of the A.C. "Whitie" Thompson Award, recognizing exemplary showmanship and leadership.

Jim's lifelong career in Agriculture was highlighted by his service to his alma mater. As dairy herdsman for UW-Madison, Jim was a recognized and awarded coach, teacher, and mentor. He had an impact on scores of students during his tenure and beyond.

After retiring, Jim farmed, raised and assembled dairy heifers for sale and export. He enjoyed travelling to visit his children, cheering on Wisconsin sports, spending time with his dear friend Patricia Rohloff and her family, and taking adventures of all kinds. Friends and family will remember his charisma, humor, and generosity.

Jim is survived by his daughter, Heidi; his sons, Troy (Jessica) and Chad (Ellen); and his grandson, Walter. He leaves behind his brother, Edgar (Phyllis); nephews, Steve, David, and Eric; and nieces, Jill (Chuck Jenkins), Lea Ann (Jeff) Bleck (children, Elise and Brady), and Beth (David) Storms (children Calli and Wyatt). He was preceded in death by his brother, Andrew.

The family thanks the caregivers at UW Health, UW Hospital and Agrace Hospice for their compassionate care. In lieu of flowers, charitable donations can be made to the organization of your choice in Jim's name.



FISC REUNION AWARDS

Renz, Meyer and Behnke Recognized for FISC Contributions



2020 J.S. Donald Short Course Teaching Award

Pictured left to right: FISC Director Jennifer Blazek, Dr. Mark Renz, and CALS Dean and Director Kate VandenBosch

The J.S. Donald Short Course Teaching Award was established in 1976 by Delma Woodburn in honor of her father, John Donald, a FISC instructor, political figure and farmer. This year, the Short Course Teaching Award goes to Dr. Mark Renz, an agronomy faculty member and an extension weed specialist. Renz has been teaching in the FISC program for 12 years and is a favorite among students. He co-teaches two FISC courses - Identification and Management of Agronomic Pests, and Safe and Effective Use of Pesticides – and has been cited by both students and other faculty for his ability to teach and transform complex science-based information in a clear and understandable manner, as well as apply it in a practical and real-world setting.

Congratulations, Dr. Renz.

Bob Meyer was recognized with the 2020 FISC Service to Agriculture Award for all he has done for agriculture over the years. Meyer grew up on a dairy farm just outside Loyal, Wisconsin. He served as a Wisconsin State FFA Officer from 1972 to 1973, and years of competitive public speaking prompted Meyer to pursue a career in radio with Goetz Farm Radio Network, now Brownfield. In 2016, he left radio to become an ag loan officer for Citizens State Bank of Loyal, where he now operates out of the Marshfield branch. Meyer has been “the voice” of the Wisconsin State FFA Convention for 25 years and holds Honorary Chapter, State, and American FFA Degrees. He has also served on the selection committee for Alice in Dairyland and the Wisconsin Fairest of the Fair. He has emceed three Alice in Dairyland Finals and served on the executive committee when Clark County hosted the Alice in Dairyland Finals. He was a member of the executive committee for the 2018 Wisconsin Farm Technology Days in Wood County and the 2005 show in Clark County.

Congratulations, Bob.



2020 FISC Service to Agriculture Award

Pictured left to right: CALS Dean and Director Kate VandenBosch, Bob Meyer and his wife Coni, FISC Director Jennifer Blazek, and WALSAA President Paul Patterson

We are honored to present the 2020 Friend of FISC Award to Bob Behnke for his contributions to FISC and WALSAA. Behnke is a dairy farmer from Brooklyn, Wisconsin, at Bur-Wal Holsteins. The Behnkes have received numerous awards, such as being recognized by the Holstein Association USA as a Herd of Excellence and being a world record milk production leader. A graduate of FISC in 1990, Behnke served on the WALSAA Board of Directors from 2014 to 2019. He also served on several WALSAA committees, including chair of the FISC committee.

Congratulations, Bob.



2020 Friend of Short Course Award
 Pictured left to right: CALS Dean and Director
 Kate VandenBosch, Bob Behnke, FISC Director Jennifer Blazek,
 and WALSAA President Paul Patterson

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Badgers and CALS Remain Resilient in the Wake of COVID-19

The University of Wisconsin-Madison, including the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS), is adapting to new ways to do business in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Events have been canceled, classes have transitioned to remote learning and research activities have been altered to maximize remote work. All CALS facilities, including research stations, are closed to visitors and nonessential employees.

Badgers are resilient and are adapting to these changes, and CALS experts are weighing in on everything from social distancing to the impact on the farming community. Stay connected by reading more on the CALS website ecals.cals.wisc.edu/tag/covid19.

You can also find the latest updates about COVID-19 related to UW-Madison at covid19.wisc.edu.

You can find a list of canceled or postponed CALS events at go.wisc.edu/calscancellations

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 11 ♦ WALSAA Fan Deck Event,
Wisconsin Woodchucks, Wausau

Sept. 19 ♦ 45th WALSAA Football Fire-Up
Wisconsin vs. Appalachian State

The WALSAA board will be closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic situation, and we are in regular contact with event planners/vendors. We will communicate any event changes through our website, newsletter, email and social media channels.