From the Center Director

Last year was a great one for the WFREC, and I’m looking forward to continued progress in 2017 with respect to our research, teaching, and extension programs. Faculty hires and infrastructure improvements we’ve made at the Jay Research Facility will help us grow those programs.

Three new faculty were hired in 2016. Matt Deitch, our new watershed scientist (70% research, 30% teaching), has been on board now for about six months and is making good progress. Silvana Moraes started last month as our row crop entomologist (70% research, 30% teaching), and is working hard on getting set up in the position. In that regard, Dr. Moraes will soon be hiring a technician for her program, and we invite qualified individuals to apply. Ajay Sharma will replace Kimberly Bohn in May 2017 as our applied forest ecologist (60% teaching, 40% research), and we look forward to his arrival. These new hires increase our faculty numbers from six to eight, and I anticipate increased research and teaching productivity at the WFREC owing to their efforts.

In addition to these new faculty, we are looking to hire a Regional Specialized Extension Agent (RSA) to lead our crop variety testing program. Applications for the RSA position close on 15 January, and we hope that qualified individuals will apply. The job description and application instructions can be found at: http://explore.jobs.ufl.edu/cw/en-us/job/498805/regional-specialized-extension-agent-ii-iii-or-iv-agronomic-and-horticultural-crop.

Completed, near-completed, and on the docket for 2017 infrastructure projects will help our faculty create their research, teaching, and extension products. These Jay Research Facility infrastructure projects include the deer exclusion fence (completed); the 10,000-bushel grain storage bin (completed); administrative building restroom renovation (near-complete); entomology laboratory construction (near-complete); safety sprinkler installation in the graduate student dormitory (on the docket for 2017); and, a new parking area adjacent to the administration building (on the docket for 2017). I look forward to the utility these projects will provide.

On the teaching front, we added four new students this spring to bring our total

(Continued on page 2)
enrollment to 44. Our new student recruiter, Mark Long, projects an increase in fall 2017 student enrollment, with 18 prospective students finalizing prerequisite requirements or completion of their AA degrees. Going beyond fall 2017, more than 50 students in the panhandle of Florida are considering the WFREC for their university transfer.

The future of our teaching program looks bright, and we are contemplating offering students a crop science type specialization of the Plant Science degree. We will begin a systematic study of the need for a crop science type specialization at the WFREC with CALS Associate Dean Al Wysocki in 2017.

Great things are happening at the WFREC, and the future looks bright. I wish our producers a good winter season of planning and repair, our students a successful spring semester, and everyone at the WFREC a productive winter season.

Go Gators!

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Peer-reviewed Publications:


(Continued on page 3)
EDIS publication SS-AGR-408. University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.

Grants:

$17,750, Florida Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Quantification of nitrogen credits following peanut. 2016-17.


$142,000, Florida Dept. of Environmental Protection. Optimization of Predictive Soil Testing Methods.

$81,000, National Peanut Board. Examination of the impact of peanut maturity on emergence, vigor, and subsequent life history traits. 1/1/2016 – 12/31/2016.

Conference presentations (* indicates graduate student):


Publications:

Dr. Ramon Leon

Congratulations Students!

Plant Science student, Steven Wagner, was awarded $1,600 from the Andres Scholarship and $400 from the in-house Turf scholarship fund.
Agronomy student, Arun Jani, won 5th place in PhD poster competition in the Soil Fertility & Plant Nutrition division at the 2016 American Society of Agronomy meetings in Phoenix, AZ. Poster title: Macronutrient uptake and partitioning by modern, diverse sesame (*Sesamum indicum* L.) cultivars in the southeastern USA (pictured below).

Arun works under Dr. Mike Mulvaney.

In addition to winning 3rd place for his poster at the 2016 American Society of Agronomy meetings in Phoenix, AZ., Joel Reyes-Cabrera obtained his PhD in Agronomy. He will start a post-doctorate position under the supervision of Dr. John Erickson in the Agronomy Department at UF. He will conduct research on plant physiology and water use to enhance ecosystem services of crops dedicated to bioenergy production. Additionally, he aims to identify changes in the root architecture of elephantgrass grown in sandy soils with different
nutrient sources. He expects to provide valuable information to increase nutrient use efficiency and biomass productivity that could be used by farmers to reduce fertilizer application.

Washington Bravo obtained his Master of Science degree in Agronomy.

Left to Right: Ben Sperry, Logan Martin, Washington Bravo

Christopher Ryan obtained his Master of Science degree in Environmental Horticulture. He plans to pursue a PhD in an ecology-related field, and is awaiting the results of graduate school applications submitted. In the meantime, he hopes to gain more work experience related to the green-industry and to travel. He would like to visit South America for the first time and improve his Spanish.

In addition, Environmental Horticulture graduate student, Gabriel Campbell, will be spending most of this year at the WFREC working on obtaining his PhD. He will continue his work developing propagation systems and planting techniques for native milkweeds (Asclepias spp.) and beach dune plants. In collaboration with Dr. Debbie Miller and Dr. Mack Thetford, he is helping to develop a Florida panhandle beach dune restoration guide for residents and land managers. Gabriel also helps Dr. Mack Thetford with teaching responsibilities.
New Employees Join the WFREC

Silvana V. Paula-Moraes has training and experience in research, teaching and extension in insect ecology, and integrated pest management (IPM) in tropical and temperate areas. She also has experience working in quarantine and plant protection related to invasive species. During her PhD, she conducted field studies in Nebraska, addressing the growing problem of the western bean cutworm in the Corn Belt. After completing her PhD, she worked as a researcher in Brazil providing fundamental advances in knowledge of ecology, and behavior and development of the management tools for lepidopteran pests in corn, soybean and cotton.

Her research interests involve identifying emergent research demands in the agroecosystem and establishing a research-based IPM program. The broad objective is to provide long-term pest management strategies. Her teaching interests are to provide students a foundation in entomology and IPM, and putting in effort to bring a real-world experience in agroecosystem management for their professional lives.

Mark Long is the Academic Coordinator for the University of Florida WFREC. Mark has an extensive background in post-secondary education with more than 16 years of experience in sales, marketing, and management. A major portion of this experience is in college and career coaching.

He is a 26 year veteran of the United States Navy and following his Navy career, he continued as a college coach with Waldorf University in Iowa and most recently as a Recruitment and Outreach Repre-

(Continued on page 8)
sentative of Pensacola State College. Outside of work Mark has worked with several organizations, including serving as a Cub Master for the Boy Scouts of America, volunteering at the Pensacola Little Theatre and most recently serving as an executive board member of the Pensacola School of Liberal Arts.

Hi,

My name is Porcha Phillips. I am the new OPS hire for Dr. Micheal Mulvaney’s Cropping Systems team. I work in the WFREC lab as the assistant for Moo Brown.

Everyone here has been very kind to me, and I am looking forward to being apart of the UF team, and hope to be able to further my education.

Other new hires:

Ian Stone, Adjunct Professor, Silviculture Spring term only; Andrew Williams, Adjunct Professor, Soils Lab; and Traci Goodhart, Graduate Assistant

WFREC’s Dr. Mack Thetford was presented with the Sidney B. Meadows’ highest honor given to a member, the Award of Merit. This award recognizes Mack’s outstanding contributions to the plant propagation and nursery industries in the Southern Region of North America. Congratulations Mack!
Upcoming Events

February 14.............. Florida Turfgrass Association Turf Seminar at the Guy Thompson Community Center

March 30.................. Master Gardener Training at the WFREC Jay

April 7-9.................. Spring Festival of Flowers at the UF/PSC Milton Campus

June 21..................... Gulf Coast Turfgrass Expo & Field Day at the WFREC Jay