The past several months have been busy and productive for SRI. One of our goals is to recruit outstanding students interested in developing the scientific and professional expertise to conduct groundbreaking research in the food and agricultural sciences. With our recent success in obtaining USDA National Needs program funding, we have done just that. We welcomed our first two fellows, and more will be joining us soon.

We also have an excellent team of Ohio State University undergraduates working with SRI to assist in our programming. But wait, that is not all: three SRI faculty affiliates were recognized for their excellent teaching during Autumn Quarter 2007. Read on, and you’ll see what I mean. Congratulations!

SRI continues to focus on public outreach and participated in a number of events focused on food, agriculture, and the environment. A conference focusing on sustainability and strategies for action is planned for the spring of 2008. Stay tuned for more information.

Happy New Year!

Bill Flinn,
SRI Director

SRI Welcomes USDA Sustainable Sciences Fellows

One of SRI’s goals is to recruit outstanding students. Evidence of this commitment is our receipt of a grant from the USDA National Needs program to train four master’s-level students in the sustainable sciences through an interdisciplinary graduate program in rural sociology. Two of the fellows began their graduate program during Autumn Quarter 2007.

Leah Smith, originally from Stow, Ohio, graduated from Denison University in Granville, Ohio, with a bachelor of arts degree in sociology/anthropology. During college and after, she worked on various farms in Ohio and Connecticut. Leah served as an agricultural extension Peace Corps Volunteer in Niger, West Africa, from 2003-2005. Most recently, she worked as program director for the Poughkeepsie Farm Project, in Poughkeepsie, New York. Leah is interested in sustainable food systems and community development.

Danielle Deemer, the other fellow, is from Las Cruces, New Mexico. Danielle earned a bachelor’s degree last May in English and anthropology from New Mexico State University. During her undergraduate program, she worked at the campus organic farm called OASIS, studied sustainable farms in Nicaragua, and wrote two undergraduate theses on rural tourism and community-supported agriculture. These experiences sparked her interest in sustainable food production within a sociological context, and she hopes to conduct research on local and sustainable food systems as part of her master’s program.

The other two fellows are expected to begin their program during 2008. Welcome, Leah and Danielle!

SRI Receives Additional USDA Funding for Training Future Faculty in Sustainable Sciences

Building on our recent success in recruiting and training master’s-level fellows in the sustainable sciences, the Social Responsibility Initiative was awarded additional funding to train two doctoral students in Sustainable Sciences for Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences through the Food and Agricultural Sciences National Needs Graduate Fellowship Grants Program. Professors Linda Lobao, William Flinn, and Robert Birkenholz are the principal investigators for this project. Announcement of the upcoming fellowship opportunity for this Interdisciplinary Ph. D. Program in Rural Sociology (IPPRS) will be made soon.
**SRI Funding Supports Agricultural Risk Analysis Program**

Together, farmers manage most of the land in Ohio and regularly make decisions that affect that shared resource and the food system our society depends upon. The historic link between farmers and Ohio State University has played a major role in helping local producers remain competitive in an increasingly global market.

To remain on the cutting edge, Ohio farmers must address the increasingly complex management environment that technology and globalization have brought to their doorstep, including food safety issues, bio-terrorism, and biological invasions. Recognizing that these complex problems could not be addressed through any one scientific discipline, faculty members from Horticulture and Crop Science, Human Resource and Community Development, and Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics formed the Agricultural Risk Analysis Program (ARAP) in April 2005.

The risk analysis team is multi-disciplinary, with an over-arching goal of reaching producers with both relevant information about biological and environmental risks and the tools to make optimum choices. Risk communication is practiced as a two-way dialogue between farmers and scientists, with both groups equal partners.

Early in the life of the team, SRI provided $19,000 for development activities. These funds, used to obtain training, host educational workshops and seminars, and develop grant applications, have proved to be instrumental in the team’s success. To date, $3.2 million for risk-related research and education has been obtained.

Team members include Dr. Robyn Wilson, assistant professor in the School of Environment and Natural Resources; Dr. Neal Hooker, associate professor, agricultural, environmental, and development economics; Dr. Jeff LeJeune, Food Animal Health Research Program; Dr. Mark Tucker, associate professor of agricultural communications, Purdue University; and Dr. Doug Doohan, associate professor, horticulture and crop science.

**Undergraduate Assistants Contribute to SRI Mission**

Three talented undergraduate students are currently working with SRI and plan to continue working with us during this next year. Stop by and say hello to them.

**Michael Paull** is a junior majoring in journalism, expecting to graduate winter 2009. Michael was recently hired to be the web editor for The Lantern during the 2008 Winter and Spring Quarters. Following graduation, Michael would like to work in the field of journalism, finding ways to use technology to empower citizens to collaborate locally, nationally, and internationally to solve the problems of the future.

**Emily Ellis** is a senior studying geography and sociology. Expecting to graduate spring 2008, Emily is considering going to graduate school to study geography or public planning. She wants to continue to work with urban gardening after graduation; she is also applying for positions with Teach for America and AmeriCorp.

**Peter Lou** is a senior majoring in economics and international studies. Peter will graduate in the fall of 2008. He was recently awarded a fellowship with the Columbus Foundation Citizen-Scholar Program for having a good academic standing and completing 300 hours of community work in Columbus. Peter is still considering his options after graduation, but is considering working for a business or an organization that focuses on urban renewal.

**Lobao Selected as AAAS Fellow**

Linda Lobao, professor of rural sociology in the Department of Human and Community Resource Development and SRI affiliate, has been selected as a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world’s largest scientific organization. Fellows are recognized for advancing science applications deemed by their peers as scientifically or socially distinguished. Lobao is recognized for her research on spatial inequality utilizing a sociological perspective. Her contributions to the field of rural sociology through this research have profoundly influenced the direction of the discipline.
SRI Affiliates Recognized for Outstanding Teaching and Advising

Three SRI-affiliated faculty members were recently recognized for their outstanding teaching and advising.

**Linda Lobao**, professor of rural sociology, was awarded the Price Advising Award. Dr. Lobao is recognized for her outstanding service to her advisees and for her dedication in preparing graduate student fellowship applications. The sponsoring endowment was established by the late William H. “Bill” Price who established the award in memory of his father and aunt. He and his family’s interests focused on the improvement of counseling, teaching, and the learning environment. Each year the award acknowledges one faculty member per department.

**Tom Koontz**, associate professor in the School of Environment and Natural Resources, was awarded the Rodney F. Plimpton Outstanding Young Teacher Award. The Plimpton Award recognizes faculty members who show excellence and commitment to teaching. No more than two faculty members below the rank of professor can win the award.

**Bill Flinn**, professor in rural sociology, was awarded the Pomerene Teaching Award. Dr. Flinn uses humor and story telling to help describe practical illustrations of the social concepts and theories taught in his Rural Sociology 105 course. The award recognizes one faculty member per department each year.

Congratulations to each awardee for their pursuit of excellence in teaching and advising.

The Beanfield Culminates in Conversation President Gee Pays a Visit

The Wexner Center for the Arts Public Programs, OSU’s College of the Arts Living Culture Initiative, the Institute for Collaborative Research and Public Humanities, and the Social Responsibility Initiative hosted a conversation between Lewis Hyde and Michael Mercil on November 13, 2007. Lewis Hyde, of Kenyon College, a writer and author of several books on art, place, and community, joined Michael Mercil, associate professor of art at Ohio State in a public conversation on the growing (and knowing) of beans at the Wexner Center. A bean supper followed with a number of OSU students, faculty, and staff participating.

The Beanfield is a project envisioned and led by Mercil and overlooks the Oval on the central campus at Ohio State. It is an educational and ecological work recalling the agricultural roots of OSU’s land-grant mission.

Farm Foundation Selects SRI Affiliate as Fellow

Neal Hooker, associate professor of agricultural, environmental, and development economics and SRI affiliate, was recently named as a fellow with the Farm Foundation based in Oak Brook, Illinois. Hooker will work with the Farm Foundation on one of six priority areas. The Farm Foundation’s Fellows Program began in 2006 to enhance the Foundation’s professional expertise in agricultural economics and the rural social sciences, strengthen priority area programs, and cultivate more robust networks within the agricultural community.
SRI Participates in Community Events

SRI participated in a number of events during fall 2007. SRI and the Ohio State University Extension Direct Marketing Team partnered on a booth at the OSU Wellness Fair and shared with the OSU community SRI-developed materials on local food and farming. SRI also had a display at the Farm Science Review’s Small Farm Center. The Farm Science Review is an annual agricultural and environmental demonstration/show held near London, Ohio, featuring demonstration plots, machinery, and information on conservation practices, farm safety, health, and other topics.

SRI, in partnership with Local Matters, a charitable, educational, and networking organization working to create a vibrant, sustainable, and regional food system, participated in the Students for a Sustainable Campus event at Mirror Lake on the Ohio State campus. SRI staff and Local Matters founders handed out samples of fresh, locally grown and prepared, squash soup in 100 percent compostable containers and visited with Ohio State students, faculty, and staff on programs associated with both organizations.

SRI Affiliate’s Recently Published Book Wins Award

The Sociology of Spatial Inequality, a book published in May 2007 and edited by Linda Lobao, SRI affiliate, and Gregory Hooks and Ann Tickamyer, is included in the Outstanding Academic Titles list published annually by Choice, the Current Reviews for Academic Libraries. This prestigious list reflects the best in scholarly titles reviewed by Choice and brings with it the extraordinary recognition of the academic library community. The list is quite selective, containing approximately 10 percent of some 7,000 works reviewed in Choice each year.

SRI Outreach and Engagement

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