

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BIOTECH CENTER

September 2008

Faculty Activities and Accomplishments

Dean Robert Goodman announced September 2nd that Professor Lily Young has agreed to become the first dean of international programs and research for the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, effective this month. Dr. Young will start by surveying and organizing into a comprehensive structure all of the international programs that are currently in place at the school. Second, she plans to enhance and expand the variety of study abroad programs that are offered to SEBS students. In particular, she is interested in finding programs that cater to the unique needs of SEBS students, who have traditionally been underserved by programs aimed at students of the humanities. Dr. Young also hopes to establish and promote more “2+2” programs that would bring students from other countries to our school to complete their studies. Finally, she will work with faculty to develop new international relationships and collaborations that support and build upon the SEBS mission.

Conferences, Seminars, and Other Events

A workshop focused on sugarcane as a feedstock for bioethanol will take place on October 8th at the Douglass Campus Student Center. The objective of this workshop is to identify specific areas of sugarcane cultivation and processing that can be addressed by synergistic collaborations between the participants from U.S. as well as Brazilian institutions. Investigators from Rutgers University, the University of São Paulo of Brazil, and sugarcane researchers from Texas, Louisiana and Florida will present their research at the one-day meeting, which is open to the public. The workshop is designed to help drive the development of sugarcane and related grass species and feedstocks to improve biomass production and facilitate their processing into sustainable and renewable fuel for the 21st Century. The workshop is made possible through financial support by the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, the Biotechnology Center for Agriculture and the Environment, the Rutgers Energy Institute, the Waksman Institute of Microbiology, and the Turfgrass Center of Rutgers University. It is organized as part of the International Cluster for Sugarcane Engineering that was established by Rutgers University in 2007. Please contact Eric Lam (lam@aesop.rutgers.edu) by September 25th if you are interested in attending since seating is limited.

Ilya Raskin delivered an invited lecture at the Agricultural Biotechnology Conference in Cork, Ireland, August 24-27. The topic of his presentation was botanical therapeutics.

Nilgun Tumer, Assistant Research Professor Xiao-Ping Li, and Graduate Assistant Jia-Chi Chiou and attended the Cold Spring Harbor meetings on Translational Regulation Sept 3-7, 2008. They presented their work on interaction of ricin with ribosomes and the effect of Er targeted toxins on ER stress.

Eric Lam and Michael Lawton attended the 1st Cellulosic Bioethanol Symposium of the BioEn Program, organized by the agency FAPESP in the state of São Paulo, Brazil. The symposium took place September 9-10 in the city of São Paulo. Dr. Lam presented the work of his team on cellulosic ethanol engineering with the seminar title of "Making a more fermentable plant via

genetic engineering: a progress report." Dr. Lawton spoke on "Using *Physcomitrella* genome as a model to learn about cell wall disassembly in plants." Dr. Lam also visited the biotech company Allelyx, based in Campinas, São Paulo state, that is attempting to engineer sugarcane using molecular genetic tools. These activities seek to continue the Rutgers collaboration with Brazilian colleagues at the University of São Paulo, as well as to initiate a dialogue for possible ties with the biotech industry in Brazil.