



Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering

Department Head Update - June 2013

Paul Heinemann, Head of the Department

Greetings from the Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering!

At the suggestion of our Industrial and Professional Advisory Committee (IPAC), I am beginning a periodical update of happenings in the department. For details on latest activities and events, please see our website: abe.psu.edu

This past year has been challenging for the department, yet encouraging. The College of Agricultural Sciences restructured in 2012 and we are still working through the process. Although we were hit with difficult budget cuts in 2011, the funding situation appears to be at least stable now. In many ways, the department is looking forward to the next couple of years as we bring in the new!

New Faculty

We had four new faculty join the department from the former School of Forest Resources -- Nicole Brown, John Janowiak, Paul Smith, and Judd Michael (who has a joint appointment with the Ecosystems Science and Management Department). These folks bring new dimensions to our department in the area of bioproducts development, management, and logistics. You can see more information on them in our faculty directory on the web site.

We are very pleased that a new Natural Resource Engineering faculty member will be joining us effective July 1. Dr. Heather Gall received her Ph.D. in Civil Engineering from Purdue University, and will be studying fate and transport of emerging contaminants in the hydrologic cycle.

New Staff

We had two new staff join the department: Colleen Bloom replaced Doreen Diehl as the student records staff assistant following Doreen's retirement in 2012, and Jamie Liner is our new financial assistant (a position that has been vacant for quite some time).

New Programs

Dr. Ali Demirci and Dr. Dan Ciolkosz helped lead the development of the online Master of Professional Studies in Renewable Energy and Sustainable Systems (iMPS-RESS), which will begin enrolling students for this Fall. This is a multi-department, multi-college effort.

With the addition of the Wood Products faculty, the opportunity to develop new curricula was created. The Wood Products major has suffered from low enrollments for many years, and was going to be eliminated. Our faculty compared the Ag Systems Management major and the Wood Products major, and found that there was much common ground – an integration of technology, business, and science.

Through this synergy, the BioRenewable Systems major was developed. The BRS major will retain the key elements of the prior programs through the establishment of two options: Ag Systems Management and Bio-products. We also have a proposal in review by Penn State's Graduate Council to create a new graduate program, also called BioRenewable Systems. This resident graduate program (M.S. and Ph.D.) will be separate from the Agricultural and Biological Engineering graduate program, and will focus on technology, business, and management.

We hope to see many of our alums at the ASABE annual international meeting in Kansas City, MO, and the ABE tailgate next Fall!

Look for the next department head's update, as well as our website and Facebook page, for other news!



Department Contact Information

Department of Agricultural & Biological Engineering
249 Agricultural Engineering Bldg.
University Park, PA 16802
814-865-7792