MEDLEY

- a potpourri of diverse talent

March 2014

USDA-ARS-Midwest Area Diversity and Equal Opportunity Committee members:

Claire Baffaut, Columbia, MO
Kelly Barnett, Ames, IA
Atanu Biswas, Chair, Peoria, IL
Kris Foight, East Lansing, MI
Jane Johnson, Morris, MN
Charles Krause, Wooster, OH
Don Ort, Urbana, IL
Michael Russelle, St. Paul, MN
Rich Shukle, West Lafayette, IN
Jean Weinbrenner, Madison, WI
Sherri Buxton, Peoria, IL, MWA ODEO Technical Advisor
Theresa Ridgeway, our MWA ODEO Program Manager, also sits on the Council in an advisory capacity. Theresa works from Beltsville, Maryland, and has visited some of our locations as time and travel funding have allowed.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Council is to create a diverse workforce and promote a positive work environment where all employees are respected and valued for their contributions.

CREAR: a new program from Northeastern Illinois University to mentor STEM students from under-represented minorities in scientific research

Every summer, I assemble a seasonal crew of student research assistants to help with my field experiments in weed ecology and management at the USDA-ARS Global Change and Photosynthesis Research Unit in Urbana, IL. Usually, this crew is made up entirely of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) undergrads, drawn primarily from crop sciences and plant biology. Summer of 2011 and 2012 were different, and were an enjoyable change for all involved.

In spring of 2011, I was contacted by Dr. Nancy Wrinkle of Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU) to see whether I would be interested in serving as a research mentor during the summer for an NEIU undergraduate STEM (Science Technology Engineering Mathematics) student. NEIU is an ethnically and socioeconomically diverse institution of higher education on the northern edge of Chicago, ranking first in the Midwest in U.S. News and Report's "Best Colleges 2011" for ethnic diversity and students with least amount of debt upon graduation.

Dr. Wrinkle and colleagues in Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, and Mathematics at NEIU founded "CREAR" (Collaboration and Retention through Environmental and Agricultural Research) with the goal of increasing the number of STEM students from NEIU (particularly those from underrepresented minorities) who pursue graduate work or careers in environmental and agricultural sciences, including entering into programs at UIUC College of ACES. This program pays participating students a living stipend, travel funds and an allowance for project necessities with funds from an extramural grant to NEIU from USDA NIFA.

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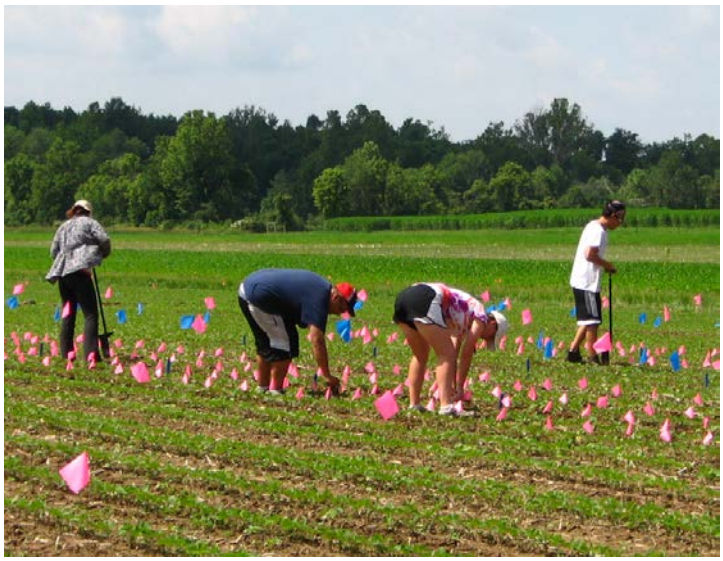


Undergraduate research assistants establishing a common garden weed competition study in Dixon Springs, IL. Ivan Reyes (NEIU) is 2nd from left.

Juggling Science and Family with the help of ARS

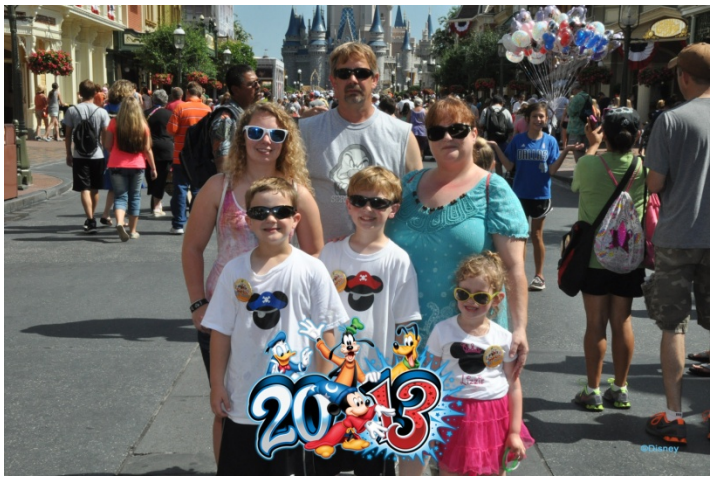
The "Leaky Pipeline" is the term used to describe how the proportion of women in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields decreases from initial interest through each level of higher education and ultimately to career choice. While the number of women entering into bioscience degrees at all education levels has increased substantially over the last decade, women hold only a quarter of all full-time, full-faculty professorships.[1] However, in the USDA, almost 43% of all scientists are women.[2] The West Lafayette Unit is a great example of the diversity in the ARS. Of the fifty-one permanent federal employees, 55% are women.

The majority of these women balance both career and family lives by using the support and flexibility available with federal research positions that are not inherently available in Academia. The flexible 6am-6pm duty hours allow for lunch breaks in school cafeterias, classroom birthday parties, and unscheduled trips to daycare or the doctor's office. Jan Overton (Administrative Officer) uses flex time to visit her 100 year-old mother in the nursing home while credit time has enabled Sue Cambron (Category III Scientist) to make frequent trips to Riley Children's Hospital in Indianapolis as her daughter undergoes treatment for a kidney transplant.

Flexible work arrangements that include teleworking, alternative work hours, choice of leave options, the leave-donor program, and part time employment have benefited not only the employees, but also the research at West Lafayette. Dr. Karen Hudson, Research Scientist in Crop Production and Pest Control, gave birth to twins in late 2012. At the later stages of a difficult pregnancy, she used teleworking to write two publications for peer-reviewed journals as well as her five-year project plan. Dr. Hudson credits this ability to work from home to being able to carry her twins to 39 weeks. "The administrative and technical support we have in the ARS makes it very supportive for women or anyone that needs to go on leave," she said.

"I knew that the lab would still keep functioning when I was on maternity leave." Unlike academic research facilities that rely on grants, students, and temporary staff, an organized and prepared ARS research scientist can rely on the West Lafayette administration and well-trained technicians to continue the day-to-day research to meet project plan goals even in her or his absence.

In 2009, Dr. Brandi Schemerhorn, a research entomologist in Crop Production and Pest Control, spent months in and out of hospitals while her toddler was suffering from a life-threatening infection. "When Lizzie was ill, I never had to worry about not having a job to come back to, even though I spent two months away from work and then was part time for a while during her recovery. I never felt like my job was in jeopardy, and I could focus on my daughter. It is an unspoken rule in Academia that you cannot have a career in science and be a mother. It is a struggle, even in the ARS, but I never had anyone in the ARS say that I was failing as a scientist because I put my family first during that time."



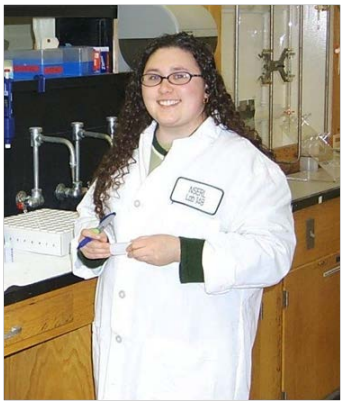
Recently, Dr. Brandi Schemerhorn enjoyed a trip to Walt Disney World with her husband and four children.

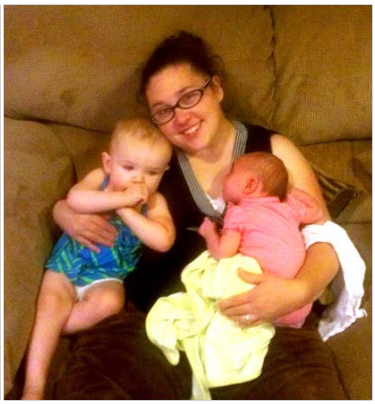
The women of the West Lafayette Unit serve as mentors and role models for the community. Dr. Diane Stott, the first female scientist to join the Unit, introduced local Girl Scout troops to soil science. Other members are active in the Purdue University Women in Science organization. Every year, Dr. Schemerhorn speaks at area middle and high schools to encourage young women to pursue their interests in STEM careers. "It is important for young girls to know that they don't have to choose between being a scientist and being a mother. I use my experience to say that you can have both and do it well."

[1] National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. 2013. *Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 2013*. Special Report NSF 13-304. Arlington, VA. http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/wmpd/

[2] Burrelli J.S. and J.C. Falkenheim. 2011. Diversity in the Federal Science and Engineering Workforce. Info Brief Science Resources Statistics. NSF 11-303. http://www.nsf.gov/statistics/infbrief/nsf11303/nsf11303.pdf/

Finding that balance can make the family stronger by sharing the load between both spouses and give one a new outlook on life. Amber Crumley is a lab technician and a





mother to two beautiful daughters. “The sense of accomplishment I got when I recently returned from maternity leave made me appreciate my work a lot more. I would get lost in my work if I did it constantly, and the break helped me focus.” While balancing work and home lives may seem more like chasing balls than juggling them, the women of the West Lafayette Unit prove that it is well worth the effort.

For more information on Work Life and Wellness programs that are available to all USDA employees, visit http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/worklife/index.htm for additional resources on the use of credit and flex time as well as teleworking, leave time, and the leave donor program.

Alisha Johnson, Biological Science Lab Technician, Crop Production and Pest Control Research, West Lafayette, IN
Photos from Amber Crumley and Brandi Schemerhorn

Unconscious Bias: Think you know about thinking? Think again.

One Monday I asked my friend about how was his weekend. He replied that he could not believe what he learned from his weekend experience. It happened that while handing out cookies and soliciting donations for disabled kids at a local super store, he noticed that some folks who appeared to be financially well off, (those who wore expensive clothes and drove luxury cars) sometimes were not so generous and charitable. On the other hand, some folks with long hair, torn clothing, crooked teeth, and disheveled appearance were surprisingly generous. The lesson he learned was that one shouldn't be biased, for or against, because of a person’s outward appearance or behavior. That is, it is wise not to stereotype the persons we encounter in everyday life.

Unconscious bias (continued)

Even though bias usually has a negative connotation, in reality we all have biases or preferences. For example, when we meet somebody, our brains take certain information about how they look, how they dress, how they sound and we make assumptions about them. We tend to have positive bias towards people who are similar to ourselves or who are familiar and negative bias towards people who are different. These “filters” enable us to quickly navigate everyday life and have been labeled by psychologists as involving selective attention, selective perception, and selective retention. Thus, the whole idea of seeking diversity works against the way our brains work.

Some of our biases we are aware of, and some of course, operate unconsciously. Use of assumptions or biases without awareness involves unconscious or implicit biases. When we see a person who looks a certain way, or is dressed a certain way or has a certain accent, it triggers the use of rules for understanding and behavior which may guide our decision making and subsequent relationship with that person. And if our decision making is guided by unconscious reactions, unknowingly the decision may go in a direction we did not intend.

These unintended decisions will affect the decisions we make about people, the way we work with them and in so doing, impact the culture and performance of the entire organization. And not so positively at times. As a result, we all need to identify our unconscious biases so that we do not make unconscious, bias-driven decisions about people. Think you may on occasion use these hidden filters? With just a little reflection, you too, might be surprised! The following two and half minute YouTube video the speaker explains unconscious bias:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N4xQcLEedL0

And, psychologists at Harvard, the University of Virginia and the University of Washington have created “Project Implicit” in an effort to develop Hidden Bias Tests called Implicit Association Tests, or IATs, in the academic world −to measure unconscious bias. One can test his/her unconscious bias by visiting the Implicit Association Test (IAT), as shown below.
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html

In sum, diversity is a highly valued component of organizational success. As individuals we can contribute to greater appreciation of diversity by identifying our own hidden biases. Doing so is a first step to enhancing the real value of diversity in advancing the organization’s goals.

Atanu Biswas, Research Chemist, Plant Polymer Research Unit, NCAUR, Peoria, IL

Interview with Dr. Caird E. Rexroad, Jr., Associate Administrator

Late last November, Dr. Rexroad generously agreed to be interviewed for this issue of MWA MEDLEY. An animal scientist by training, he was a bench scientist with ARS for 23 years, and as RL for the Gene Evaluation and Mapping Laboratory at Beltsville for the last 5 of those years. He then moved into administrative leadership as Associate Deputy Administrator for Animal Production, Product Value and Safety on the National Program Staff for 5 years before assuming his current position.

Michael Russelle, Research Soil Scientist, St. Paul, MN

What led you to choose a career path in leadership? How did you develop yourself professionally toward this goal?

I've always been interested in leadership and I think it comes out of working with livestock, where I had an opportunity to be a leader and to have some impact. I felt I had ideas and some vision, which is important to leadership.

Leadership depends on two key qualities: vision for what you want to accomplish, and the ability to work with people. The second one is a little harder to determine sometimes. It helps to be in a position of leadership for that vision come to fruition.

Mentors recognized what I could do and couldn't do, and gave me opportunities. One of the most important things to me was the Mid-Level Management Training Program in ARS, which I volunteered for. I found that to be very helpful in terms of understanding myself, my motivations, what I wanted to do, and what I was capable of. We offer the same thing in a different format now.

The decision to go into administrative management from science came about at a point in my career when I made some decisions about what I was going to do in life. A position was open on the National Program Staff; I felt the time was right and I applied.

What advice would you give to early- and mid-career employees who are interested in leadership?

The most important thing is to find someone to work with, who can coach you as a mentor. In ARS we are interested in making sure people have good mentors and opportunities to develop leadership skills. These opportunities do not have to involve really big tasks — for example, I got a chance to lead a field day at Beltsville once and even though it was not directly related to leading science, I enjoyed it and learned some things.

If you want to lead, you really have to have a broader vision of the world than where you are now. That's a given. Leadership is about understanding the world and how it acts, how you need to relate to it, how your Agency needs to relate to it.

Our employees need to let it be known early on that they are interested in advancing in leadership. Once you have identified for yourself that it's what you want to do, you can't be bashful about it — you have to find the opportunities and take them.

For those employees who aren't interested in a traditional leadership career ladder, what should they know about their roles in supporting Agency mission and goals?

It's the scientists and technicians who are most directly involved in doing what this Agency is about, and you do not need to be a leader to make important contributions. You need to understand yourself, what your motivations are, what's going to satisfy you in life, and then you've got to work toward those goals. Know yourself and do your job the best you can — those are the keys.

We've all had mentors of one sort or another. How have your mentors helped you on your career path. What important lesson did you get from a mentor?

It's not up to a mentor necessarily to provide an opportunity to do something new, but many do. A good mentor can help you understand what you can do, and maybe what you want to do, and to help you find other people that can help you do it.

One of the important lessons was what felt like a hard statement at the time. One time, Floyd Horn looked at me and said, "You've got to make up your mind about what you want to do." His message was a good one: you can't be going in two directions at once.

What advice to you have for those who mentor others?

I have been doing a good deal of mentoring lately, so I've been trying to follow my own recommendations. Most people that come to me want to know what it's like to be in an administrative job. I try to help them understand the context of what they are seeking, what the jobs might be like, what they would do in them, and what kind of questions they would be answering on a routine basis. I try to help them get insight into their own motivations.

I also try to provide or identify opportunities for them. I try to interest them in the broader scope of the questions they need to be answering. A lot of times, I try to have them work outside of ARS to see what some of the rest of the world is like.

Your entire career has been in ARS. How has your experience in these working environments informed you about the need for an active diversity and equal opportunity mission within the Agency?

That's right, I've been with the Agency since 1974. ARS is what I grew up with and what I love. It's like family. I knew that I wanted to do research when I finished school and ARS was a great opportunity, with freedom to pursue a lot of things. We're motivated to solve problems, to change the way agriculture is done. It's been a great place to work, and it's many of the people I've worked with that have made it so.

I think that just experiencing people is the thing that most often convinces a person that everybody should get the same kind of opportunity. As you work with people, you see what they're capable of, how differences of appearance and so on really don't affect the ability to get the job done. Diversity brings a lot of different ideas of what the job means and how it should get done.

How do you think our research units can improve their outreach effectiveness?

First of all, it's important that we try. Some of our locations are doing a great job at that already. One of the big issues is that most people don't get excited by agriculture; they might get excited about plants, but not agriculture. So we need to start working with people as early as possible show them how they can use their interest in science, that agriculture's a great place to put science to use. At Beltsville, scientists visit schools to help students learn about our work from an early age.

People are so disconnected from their food supply and agriculture. They don't see the challenges we deal with, the amount of service we do for the world. A lot of young people want to be environmentalists, but don't understand that a major way we impact the environment, positively and negatively, is by the way we practice agriculture. That's where we have the greatest opportunity to take care of the environment.

Because their decisions often are made earlier in life than we expect, we need to make sure that agricultural research is on their menu of good things to do, things that are possible for them. What I tell students is that rocket science is simple. Agricultural sciences — which integrate biology, microbiology, behavioral sciences, and so forth — are hard. It's more satisfying to solve hard problems that will make a difference in people's lives.

What do you see as the most challenging aspects of an increasingly diverse US scientific community?

Diversity does pose some challenges, and we'd be remiss if we don't step up to them. The opportunities of having a diverse work force are so great that the challenges become smaller. If at all possible, we in ARS need work to avoid problems that may arise from a diverse workforce, and must work with the parties to solve any issues that develop. I don't foresee any insurmountable problems in this.

You can see from the Cultural Transformation effort in the Department that we're doing more training over the past few years than ever before. We should make sure that the environment in the work place is right, that we consider diversity when selecting leaders, and there's fairness in the work place — that everyone has opportunities.

What advice can you offer to ARS employees at all levels to help them meet those challenges?

Diversity offers a rich source of approaches, intelligence, and ideas. Each of us needs to have an open mind. Focus on why we're here, on getting the job done, and diversity will not be a problem.

Serving the Amish Community

The Amish culture originated in Europe during the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century and they came to America for religious freedom. They settled initially in Pennsylvania, then Ohio, and are now located in 30 states. The largest concentration of Amish in the world is in three counties located near to the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center (OARDC), Wooster, Ohio, where the USDA-ARS-Application Technology Research Unit (ATRU) is co-located. The ATRU has an excellent geographical opportunity to interact with our Amish neighbors.

Just a few years ago, most Amish derived their livelihoods from traditional farming such as livestock, forage, and grain production. They are now involved in other businesses, such as construction, carpentry, furniture production, tourism, and specialty crop production. Amish nursery and greenhouse operations are still family farms, producing specialty crops, flowers, landscape plants, vegetables.

Amish have a strong work ethic and guard their heritage against influences that could impact their "plain life." They are allowed to use modern technology if it is utilitarian. That stated, Amish specialty crop growers still depend on information and interactions provided by modern science to remain competitive and improve profitability, as do other segments of the "Green Industry." Amish use solar-powered computers, but do not connect to the internet. The Amish seek horticultural advice from the cooperative Extension service educators and ARS scientists.

Communication could be major challenge and impediment, since Amish don't normally use telephones or the mass media. They also speak Pennsylvania Dutch or "diets," a German dialect, with other Amish, translating what we say. Patience helps. The fact that they lack formal, horticultural training does not impede communication, as they are eager to learn and have mutual concerns about water quality and sustainability issues. Requested personal visits to their Amish nurseries, greenhouses, and farms are sometimes necessary to delve into a specific problem. We inform them about our research and possible solutions, and also transmit information about their problems to our Extension colleagues for solutions. For example, we have diagnosed bagworms on arborvitae, root diseases on bedding plants, and abiotic symptoms on Norway spruce seedlings and other plants.

Amish also enjoy visiting trade shows like the Ohio State University Nursery Short Course and Trade Show or the OFA Greenhouse Short Course and Trade Shows in Columbus, Ohio. They appear to look forward to interactions with us at the ATRU trade show booths, where we demonstrate research results on a wide range of topics from plant nutrition to insect management.

As ARS strives to serve all of American Agriculture, we continue to answer questions from Amish neighbors as well as other growers when specific problems arise, relying on Ohio State University Extension for cooperation.

Charles Krause, Research Plant Pathologist, ATRU, Wooster, OH

ARS promotes and creates a culturally diverse workforce that embraces the values and needs of all individuals. Employees are protected from discrimination and harassment based on the following EEO-related factors: race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and political beliefs.

Two forms of harassment that may be encountered are workplace harassment and sexual harassment. **Workplace harassment** is offensive and inappropriate verbal or physical conduct that belittles or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group which creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. **Sexual harassment** is any unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's work performance or creates an offensive work environment.

Not all workplace harassment is EEO-related. Those cases not based on EEO-related factors can be addressed through the Administrative Grievance process for your location or the Cooperative Resolution Program.

Filing an EEO Complaint

It is important that you report harassment and discrimination to your immediate supervisor as soon as possible but within 45 days of an alleged occurrence. If the immediate supervisor is the harasser then you should notify the next higher level supervisor.

If harassment or discrimination persists, or you have not received a timely response after reporting the conduct to your supervisor, contact ODEO for immediate assistance and guidance at:

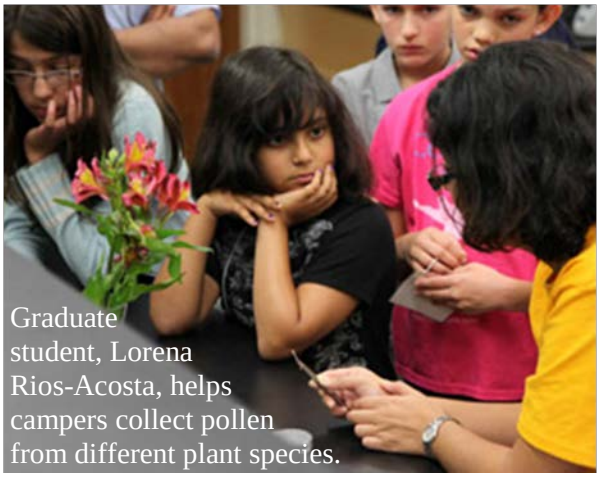
Local: 202-720-3410 Fax: 202-690-0109
Toll free: 800-340-4289 Fax: 202-690-0094
TDD: 202-720-3303

MWA ODEO Program Manager:
Theresa Ridgeway, 301-504-1174
ARS ODEO Staff: Dr. Don McLellan, Director
1400 Independence Ave. SW, Room 3913 South Building, Washington DC 20250-9911
Phone: 202 720-6161 Toll Free: 800 340-4289
TDD: 202 720-3303 Fax: 202 690-0109
Website: www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/

Cooperative Resolution Branch:
Jan Lewis: 301 504-1450
Jeff Schmitt: 301 504-1352
Recruitment Branch: 301 504-1480

Pollen Power!

Twenty-seven middle school girls gained real-life science skills last summer at a week-long science camp hosted at the Institute for Genomic Biology (IGB) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The camp was conceived, organized and led by USDA ARS Scientist, Dr. Lisa Ainsworth, from the Global Change and Photosynthesis Research Unit in Urbana, IL.



Graduate student, Lorena Rios-Acosta, helps campers collect pollen from different plant species.

Junior high school is a period when many students, in particular girls, lose interest in science, which continues through high school, university, and life. The camp was for this reason focused on Junior High School girls to maximize the potential to engage them in science and capture their interest at an important time. Campers met with female science faculty members on campus and were paired with female graduate student counselors, many from Dr. Ainsworth's and other Urbana ARS research groups. This innovative feature of the camp allowed the girls to meet female scientists at all stages of professional development as potential role models. The camp offered a forum and an environment for campers to discover that science can be exciting and that they really can succeed in a research environment.

The camp focused on pollen, and campers learned how pollen serves as a time capsule for relaying information about past climate, and how future climate change might impact pollen, pollinators, and the food, fiber, and fuel from pollinated crops that serve humanity. Campers also used high-tech microscopes to see pollen grains and watch pollen germination in real time. The girls toured state-of-the-art ARS and UIUC research labs and facilities, made fiber-optic flowers, and used green-screen technology to create their own climate forecasts and back-casts. Bioimaging was an important focus of the camp because the technology creates an engaging opportunity to teach quantitative and computer skills, along with in context concepts in physics and biology.

Last year, 2013, was the first year of the camp (http://pollensummercamp.illinois.edu/pollen-power-home), which with financial support to campers from NSF and leadership and staffing support from ARS, will continue for four more years. Seven campers from the Don Moyer Boys and Girls Club (http://www.dmbgc-cu.org/) attended the camp this year and in 2014 and future years, up to 40 Junior High School girls will be able to attend Pollen Power, so spread the word!

Lisa Ainsworth, Research Molecular Biologist, and Don Ort, Location Coordinator and Research Leader, Global Change and Photosynthesis Research, Urbana, IL *Photos by Kathryn Coulter, Institute for Genomic Biology, Univ. of Illinois*

Campers and counselors at Pollen Power 2013

Reasonable Accommodation at a Glance

Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires Federal agencies to provide reasonable accommodations for qualified employees and job applicants with disabilities, unless to do so would cause significant difficulty, expense, or disruption to the organization. Similarly, the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) of 2008, which covers the private sector, state and local governments, was later implemented to further expand the coverage of disability to more individuals and as a result prevent more discrimination. Both the Rehabilitation Act and the ADAAA are the same in terms of reasonable accommodation requirements and prohibitions on discrimination.

What is a reasonable accommodation?

A reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or the way things are usually done that provides equal employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Furthermore, reasonable accommodation permits a qualified applicant or employee to: participate in the job application process, perform the essential functions of a job, or enjoy the benefits and privileges of equal employment provided to other employees.

What Constitutes a disability?

The ADA defines a disability in three ways: *A physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of an individual; a record of such an impairment, or being regarded as having such an impairment.*

Who is a qualified individual with a disability?

A qualified individual with a disability is one who can satisfy the requisite skill, experience, education and other job-related requirements and perform the essential functions of a position with or without reasonable accommodation.

Frequently Asked Questions:

When should an individual with a disability request a reasonable accommodation?

An individual with a disability may request a reasonable accommodation at any time during the application process or during the period of employment.

How must an individual request a reasonable accommodation?

When an individual decides to request an accommodation, the individual or his/her representative must let the employer know that an adjustment or change at work is needed for a reason related to a medical condition. As soon as an individual believes there is a need for an accommodation is often the best time to request one. An individual does not have to use any specific words or mention the term reasonable accommodation. The initial request may be done verbally or in writing. Employees may use the REE-172 "Request for Reasonable Accommodation" form, which is located on e-forms, to initiate the request.

May an employer ask for medical documentation when the individual requests reasonable accommodation? *Yes.*

When the disability and/or the need for an accommodation is not visible, the employer may ask the individual for medical documentation about the disability and functional limitations.

What must an employer do after receiving a request for reasonable accommodation?

The employer and the individual with the disability should engage in an informal process to clarify what the individual needs and identify the appropriate reasonable accommodation.

Is an employer required to provide the reasonable accommodation that the individual wants? *No.*

The employer may choose among reasonable accommodations as long as the chosen accommodation is effective.

How quickly must an employer respond to a request for reasonable accommodation?

An employer should respond expeditiously to a request for reasonable accommodation. Policy and Procedures 122.2 provides the timelines for addressing reasonable accommodation requests.

May an employer require an individual with a disability to accept a reasonable accommodation that the individual does not want? *No.*

An employer may not require a qualified individual with a disability to accept an accommodation. However, if an employee needs a reasonable accommodation to perform an essential function or to eliminate a direct threat, and refuses to accept an effective accommodation, the employee may not be qualified to remain on the job.

May an employer tell other employees that an individual is receiving a reasonable accommodation when employees ask questions about a coworker with a disability? *No.*

An employer may not disclose that an employee is receiving a reasonable accommodation because this usually amounts to a disclosure that the individual has a disability. The ADA specifically prohibits the disclosure of medical information except in certain limited situations, which do not include disclosure to coworkers.

May an employer apply the same quantitative and qualitative requirement for performance of essential functions to an employee with a disability that it applies to employees without disabilities? *Yes.*

An employee with a disability must meet the same production standards, whether quantitative or qualitative, as a non-disabled employee in the same job. Removing an essential function or lowering or changing a production standard because an employee cannot meet it due to a disability is not considered a reasonable accommodation. Changing supervisors is also not a form of reasonable accommodation.

May an employer discipline an employee with a disability for violating a conduct standard? *Yes.*

If an employee's disability does not cause the misconduct, an employer may hold the individual to the same conduct standards that it applies to all other employees.

Examples of Reasonable Accommodations

Most accommodations are surprisingly easy and low-cost and well worth the investment. Types of accommodations often provided include:

- *Providing or modifying equipment such as a Telecommunications Device for the Deaf*
- *Teleworking*
- *Adjusting a work schedule; part-time or modified work schedule*
- *Job restructuring or reassignment to a vacant position*
- *Adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials or materials*
- *Reassignment or retraining other employees to do marginal tasks*
- *Making the workplace readily accessible and usable by people with disabilities*
- *Sign language interpreters*

However, an employer does not have to provide as reasonable accommodations personal use items needed in accomplishing daily activities both on and off the job. Therefore, an employer is not required to provide an employee with a wheelchair, eyeglasses, hearing aids or similar devices if they are also needed off the job.

Additional Resources Related to Reasonable Accommodations

To further increase your awareness of reasonable accommodation and assistive technology, we invite you to visit the following websites:

- *REE Reasonable Accommodation Policies and Procedures (P&P 122.2 v.2) (http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/PDf/122-2-V.2.PDF)*
- *USDA Target Center (http://www.dm.usda.gov/oo/target/index.html)*
- *EEOC Enforcement Guidance – Reasonable Accommodation and Undue Hardship under the Americans with Disabilities Act (http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation.html)*
- *EEOC Enforcement Guidance – The Americans with Disability Act: Applying Performance and Conduct Standards to Employees with Disabilities (http://www.eeoc.gov.facts/performance-conduct.html)*
- *EEOC FACTSHEET – Work At Home/Telework as a Reasonable Accommodation (www.eeoc.gov/facts/telework.html)*
- *Job Accommodation Network (JAN) (jan@askjan.org)*

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CREAR (continued from page 1)

The chance to mentor a minority science student and add an extra member to my research team who had his own research support caught my attention. Upon hearing that my program was largely field-oriented, Dr. Wrinkle said she had an excellent match: Ivan Reyes, an undergraduate biology major who had recently had a good experience in a field ecology class. He would work with my group from May 15-July 22 for 35 hours per week. We shook on it via email, and I started preparing materials to give Ivan some background in my area of research when he arrived.

Ivan joined my group a week before UIUC undergraduates on the team were available. This turned out to be excellent timing. Ivan and I worked closely every day of that week, with him reading and summarizing journal articles in weed ecology and management in the morning, followed by a joint discussion of the article. In the afternoons, we began to set up the field plots, and worked on weed identification and basic field plot research skills, such as plot set up, planter calibration, and experimental design.

Once the other students arrived, Ivan turned out to be a natural leader. His extra week of advance preparation made it possible for him to organize the other students at the new tasks. Ivan's maturity (he was 28 at the time of the internship) and con-genial manner made it easy for the rest of the group to work with him. Two of the UIUC students were also from Chicago, and there was much sharing of urban lore amongst them.

The summer research projects had sites at Urbana as well as remote locations at Dixon Springs and Dekalb, Illinois. Both Ivan and Chi San Leong, also from Chicago, had never been so deep into the Illinois countryside, and were fascinated with the cultural and geographic differences they observed. I tried as much as possible to use the long car rides as opportunities to learn about each other as well as the science behind the projects.

When Ivan's research experience came to an end in late July, the rest of the group was sorry to see him go, and gave him a send-off ice cream party. Ivan said that the experience had changed his understanding of science and the research process, and that he was strongly considering graduate school. As for me, the experience expanded my perception of what a motivated student from an economically challenged background could bring to the research process: dedication, attention to detail, leadership, and warm collegiality.

Postscript: In spring 2012, I was again invited to be a CREAR research mentor, and gladly accepted. This time the student, Dan Arrecis, was returning to school after a successful career as a Chicago real estate agent. I admit I wondered whether he would have the stamina and motivation to maintain a good attitude during the hot, long field days. My worries were misplaced—Dan's positive energy and motivation were infectious, and he immediately took on leadership responsibilities within the field team, as Ivan had. Dan became enthralled with the science behind the experiments, and began reading the background literature more deeply. By the end of the summer, he and I were talking about the possibility of his joining my group as a graduate student, once he finished his B.S. at NEIU in spring 2013. As of this writing, his plans are to apply to the UIUC Crop Sciences department this fall to begin work with me in the spring 2014 semester. Many thanks to the CREAR program for the opportunity to work with these fine students!

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About the Header: The header artwork features varieties of edible beans provided to us by MWA stakeholder Northarvest Bean Growers Association, Frazee, MN. Atanu Biswas, Research Chemist, NCAUR, Peoria, IL, conceptualized the idea of using bean photo, caption, and the name Medley. Frederick C. Felker, Plant Physiologist at NCAUR, took the bean photo.

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