

## David Liang

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When I first came to work at the USDA, if someone had asked me exactly what the USDA was, I would have answered that it was the sticker that said my hotdogs were safe to eat. Over the last 3 summers of my work here, I came to realize just how much more important the USDA is. The USDA, "is the United States Federal Executive Department responsible for developing and executing U.S. Federal Government policy on farming, agriculture, and food. It aims to meet the needs of farmers and ranchers, promote agricultural trade and production, work to assure food safety, protect natural resources, foster rural communities and end hunger in the United States and abroad." (wikipedia) However, the USDA, especially the branch in Stoneville, MS has come to mean much more to me.

My name is David Liang and I am a recent graduate of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science and am going on to enroll in The University of Pennsylvania in the fall of 2011. I began to work at the USDA in Stoneville two summers ago under the direction of Dr. Clint Allen and have continued to do so. Under Dr. Allen's tutelage, I have worked with Lou Andrews, Corey Douglas, Dana May, and Shelby Reister in the pursuit of better pest management of the crops soybean, corn, and cotton. As an extremely fertile area of Mississippi, not to mention the world, the Mississippi delta remains an area of extreme importance to the USDA. Therefore, for successful growth, productive means of pest management must be developed and with resistant strains of insects as well as weeds becoming more prevalent as well as a growing global population, it is now more important than ever to maintain successful growth strategies.

My primary duties as an employee of the USDA are to go into various farms across Mississippi to sample for different insect pests, record their numbers, and capture some and return to the USDA with those in tow. There, at the USDA, I have raised plant bugs, brown and green stink bugs, and loopers. I have washed vials and run tests in those vials on different instars of plant bugs. In addition, I have washed plant bugs, dissected them for their stomachs, centrifuged their stomachs and looked under a microscope for pollen therein. Overall, I have tried my best to be an asset to Clint Allen in his quest for greater knowledge and control over insect pest populations and dynamics.

I have learned many things in my stay at the USDA. From learning all of the different insect pests of crops to their effects on them as well as the threshold levels for the plants to learning about different farming techniques and soil types my knowledge of farming and agriculture has increased indefinitely. I have learned what the proper time to pick corn is, that cotton is in fact a tree, and from Lou Andrews, I have been drilled into learning many different types of farm machinery.

My summers at the USDA have been some of the greatest times in my life. Working under the wise supervision of Dr. Clint Allen, I have had my agricultural horizons broadened and my understanding of what it is the USDA actually does magnify one thousand fold. With newfound respect for farmers as well as the

government, I am eager to use my newly gained knowledge for the betterment of America and the world.