

ABE@Illinois

Agricultural & Biological Engineering Alumni Newsletter. Winter 2009

Alums Join Department to “Celebrate ABE@Illinois”

The Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering held its first annual “Celebrate ABE@Illinois” on September 5th and 6th, 2008, where alumni, faculty, students and staff came together for a weekend of food and fun.

Continues on pg 2...

Triple Crown for Illinois’s Agricultural and Biological Engineering Program

The Agricultural and Biological Engineering undergraduate program has been ranked the best in the nation by *U.S. News and World Report*. The 2009 ranking by the prestigious weekly news magazine marks the third consecutive year the program has been recognized as the nation’s best. “America’s Best Colleges” placed Illinois in the top spot, followed by Cornell and Texas A & M.

Continues on pg 3...

Inside:

Alumni Spotlight

Chris Behme 6

John Zubik 3

Club Update

Ag Mech 4

Profile Emeritus

Dick Coddington 4

ABE@Illinois Newsletter

Winter 2009

Editors and Layout

Leanne Lucas, Anne Marie Boone
& Kaustubh D. Bhalerao

Published by the Department of
Agricultural and Biological
Engineering of the College of
Agricultural, Consumer and
Environmental Sciences and the
College of Engineering of the
University of Illinois at Urbana
Champaign.

338 Agricultural Engineering
Science Building
1304 W Pennsylvania Ave
Urbana, IL 61801

Phone: (217) 333 3570
E-mail: abe@illinois.edu

Celebrate **ABE@Illinois**

...Continued

Activities began with a golf outing on Friday. The UI Blue Course was the early-morning setting for more than a dozen ABE golfers. Randy Fonner, an Extension specialist in the Department, coordinated the event. "We had good weather and a lot of fun," said Fonner. "I just hope more people are able to sign up next year." Fonner's team won the event, he added, "without having to use an eraser."

Lunch was available at the annual "Feed Your fACES," sponsored by the Student Advancement Committee and the ACES Alumni Association. ABE alumni joined more than 250 others on the South Quad for a pork burger (or a veggie burger) and time to reminisce.

Dave Smith, Ph.D. '74 AgE, enjoyed speaking with friends and faculty at both the lunch and the ASABE section meeting that followed.

"One of the best decisions I made in my life was to go to Illinois to graduate school," said Smith. "It provided a very strong background for the dynamics analysis projects I did working for John Deere. So I especially enjoyed talking with the emeritus faculty. Those were the people I knew when I was here some 30-plus years ago. They've been great teachers, mentors and friends over the years."

The Central Illinois ASABE section meeting was held that afternoon in the Monsanto Room of the Funk Library. After the meeting, several alumni took advantage of the campus facility tours that were scheduled for the Institute for Genomic Biology, the Micro and Nanotechnology Laboratory, and the Alice Campbell Alumni Center.

The Friday evening banquet was held at the new I Hotel and Conference Center on the corner of St. Mary's Road and First Street. Tom Costello, a

lecturer in the Department of Communication, and assistant managing director of the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District, was the host for the event. About 85 people attended the banquet, including many alumni from out of town, as well as Robert Easter, Dean of the College of ACES.

Saturday morning found about 30 students, alumni and faculty tailgating on the South Quad, where they enjoyed a breakfast of pork chops and

breakfast sausage sandwiches before walking to the stadium to watch the Illini football team beat Eastern Illinois University, 47-21.

"We hope to host Celebrate ABE@Illinois every year," said K.C. Ting, Ph.D. '80 AgE, Department Head. "The weekend was well-attended, and it was a great opportunity for our faculty and students to make new connections with alumni or re-establish ties from years past."

**Look for news about
Celebrate ABE@Illinois 2009
in the next ABE@Illinois Newsletter**

John Zubik Makes His Mark at GKN

John Zubik '83 AgE, is a Director of Engineering for GKN Walterscheid. Walterscheid is part of the offhighway division of the international company, and a world-leading component and system supplier to global agricultural markets.

Zubik travels extensively in his job and recently returned from a trip to Brazil. "I take an active role in looking at ag machinery and suppliers around the world," said Zubik. "I look at what's going on in European countries and emerging markets such as Brazil and China."

Last year Zubik attended AGRITECHNICA, the leading international show for agricultural technology. "It's the biggest European farm show," said Zubik, "and along with the show, there's a conference on ag engineering with top engineering people from the various ag equipment makers."

Zubik earned his bachelor's in agricultural engineering with a power and machinery specialization. Dr. Carroll Goering, professor emeritus in the department, was Zubik's advisor.

Goering noted, "John was my advisee as well as my student in the AgE 346 class on tractors and engines. He decided to do an undergraduate research project, with me as his advisor, on alternative fuels. He did an excellent job on the research, and it resulted in a refereed publication in a national journal. I'm very proud of John and the success he has achieved since graduation. He's one of the Department's success stories."

"U of I was a very challenging school," Zubik concluded. "I enjoyed the ag engineering program, and the things I learned about power machinery and engineering have proven very useful over the years."

Zubik also earned a master's in business administration from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Today Zubik lives in Homer Glen, Illinois with his wife Sandra and their two children, Matthew and Joshua.

Triple Crown for ABE

...Continued

K.C. Ting, Department Head, gives much of the credit for the ranking to outstanding faculty, staff and students. "We have very high quality people," he said, "and in the last few years, we have hired six new faculty members in areas that are new to us. The undergraduate program, formerly called 'Agricultural Engineering,' is now 'Agricultural and Biological Engineering,' to reflect some of the changes that have taken place," said Ting. "We have also taken steps to increase the number of students," he said. "Recruitment is part of the responsibility of our new student academic program coordinator, and enrollment in both our undergrad programs increased from 186 in 2007 to 210 in 2008."

Other factors that contribute to the overall quality of the department include several successful (and substantial) grants supporting faculty research, and recognition of outstanding faculty (including Ting, Dr. Yuanhui Zhang and Dr. Phil Buriak) by ASABE. "We know what we need to do to keep our program going well," Ting concluded, "and we're doing those things. We don't think of it as 'staying ahead.' We just want to stay great."

"He's one of the Department's success stories."

— Dr. Goering speaking about John Zubik

Coddington Continues His Service to Department and Students

Richard Coddington, Professor Emeritus in Agricultural and Biological Engineering, came to the University of Illinois in 1985, straight from a ten-year career at John Deere in Dubuque, Iowa.

“I worked in the industrial equipment division, and I gained a certain perspective as to engineering practices in industry,” said Coddington. “I wanted to bring that into the classroom, so I started the industry-sponsored design program that all our students are required to take now.”

For the next nine years, Coddington taught AE 336 (today the course is ABE 469), connecting student teams with industry partners to solve real world engineering problems. “I sometimes wondered how they were going to accomplish some of those projects in one semester,” he said with a smile, “but they always came through.”

Coddington said he never gave a final exam. “I felt they benefitted much more by taking their project report to the industry site, and giving an oral



“Dr. C’s fervor towards solving a problem he couldn’t crack right away was definitely an inspiration to me.”

— Curt Zurliene

presentation in the presence of the engineering managers that sponsored their project.”

In 1995, Coddington moved to the College of Engineering as Director of Engineering Career Services. “But I maintained my ties with students in this department,” he said. “I always had a soft spot for the ag engineering majors. They’re just very energetic and enthusiastic.”

When Coddington retired in 2004, he knew he wanted to continue helping students. “I graduated from the U of I with a double degree, one in engineering mechanics, and one in mathematics,” he said. “They have very difficult math classes here, so I decided to tutor students in math.”

He began working with individuals in Calculus 1, but quickly expanded his services to include Calculus 2 and 3, Differential Equations, and more recently, two engineering courses, Statics and Dynamics. Coddington spends time working and discussing problems with the students, handing out past exams that can be used for review, and discussing how to

approach an exam. To reach more students, he developed a website, Math Help, where his notes, sample problems, and exams are easily accessible.

Because his time is limited, Coddington tutors the first six to eight students who contact him (this semester he has nine). He requires them to commit to one hour a week, every week.

“I’m not putting out fires here,” Coddington is quick to emphasize. “I don’t take students who have gone half-way through the semester and find themselves in trouble. That’s just putting out fires, and I don’t think that’s effective.”

He said, “All the students in the Department are good students, but the level of competition is significantly higher than what they are accustomed to. The pace of information is much faster, and the exams are much harder. The students who come to me are either ones that recognize they are going to struggle, or the exceptional students who want to make sure they get the most out of the class.”

Elizabeth Brooks, a senior in engineering, and a former student of Coddington's said, "So many of the math classes are cumulative. If you miss one concept, you're in trouble. Dr. Coddington helped me stay on top of things and not get behind in class."

Curt Zurliene, another senior and former student, said the principles he learned from Coddington went beyond math.

"He taught me that preparation is essential for any success," said Zurliene, "and I learned that from how he approached our tutoring sessions. In order to get the most out of them, I had to keep him posted on what I was learning, what I was struggling with and what I needed to know most.

"I also learned not to quit when I faced a challenging problem," Zurliene continued. "I had the bad habit of only partially completing hard problems. I had to realize that engineering is all about solving hard problems. Dr. C's fervor

towards solving a problem he couldn't crack right away was definitely an inspiration to me."

Coddington, in turn, gives his students a great deal of credit. "I don't think they appreciate how much they help me," he said. "I can't look at every problem and immediately write down the answer. Often times, I really have to think about it. So it keeps my mind active, helping me, while I hope I help them."

Zurliene best summed up the feelings of many of the students Coddington has tutored.

"The fact that a professor emeritus would take time out of his schedule to sit down and tutor a nameless freshman, at no cost, showed me just how much he and all the professors in the ABE Department care about their students."

Ag Mech Club Holds Annual Lawnmower Winterization

The Illini Ag Mech Club held their annual fundraiser, the Lawnmower Winterization, on November 7 and 8, 2008. Over the course of two days, approximately 25 students participated, as well as six faculty members.

"We worked on 57 mowers and snow blowers," said Randy Fonner, advisor to the student club, "and we netted \$1,400."

Some of the members of the student chapter of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers were involved in the activity as well.

"The Ag Mech Club and the student chapter of ASABE now collaborate with each other and sometimes share a speaker," said Anne Marie Boone student academic program coordinator for ABE. "This year they decided that the ASABE members would help with the lawnmower winterization, and in the spring, the Ag Mech members will help ASABE with their summarization program."

The club uses the money they raise in part to give financial support to members who wish to attend the National Farm Equipment Machinery Show. This year's show will be held at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville, Kentucky, February 11-14, 2009.

Fonner said the show is the largest indoor equipment show in the country, and an opportunity for students to seek out internships or future employment.

Continued on pg 7...

Emeriti Coffee
Are you going to be in Champaign-Urbana on a Tuesday? Stop by the weekly ABE Emeriti Coffee at the Perkins Restaurant on University Avenue in Urbana. It starts at 9 AM, but show up at 8:50 if you want a seat!

Christopher Behme Travels the Globe for Accenture

Christopher Behme '94 AgM, is a senior executive and partner with Accenture, a global information technology and business strategy management company.

“I work specifically with energy and utility clients,” said Behme, “to help make them more efficient and profitable. I work with the Fortune 500 clients, to come up with strategies that take advantage of changing regulations or changing economic conditions.”

Behme is based in Houston, Texas, but he travels extensively with his job, spending much of his time between Florida, Louisiana and Texas, with frequent trips to Illinois, Washington and global client sites.

Behme looks back on his time at the U of I with great fondness. “This department helped prepare me for the professional work place,” he noted. “Dr. Roscoe Pershing was the Head of the Department when I began, and between him and Dr. [Phil] Buriak, every single one of us felt like we had a family there.” According to Behme, the ability to connect with the faculty and the strong camaraderie between faculty and students made the Department unique.

“It’s a fantastic Department and that’s a story we need to share.”
— Chris Behme

“From the introductory classes to the student clubs, everything was designed to reach a variety of students,” said Behme. “Whether they were individuals who were going to go back to their hometown to be involved in production agriculture, or individuals going into industry, everyone felt like they had a home at ABE.”

Behme came back to the campus in September for Celebrate ABE@Illinois, and he said the camaraderie still exists. “That weekend was a great collection of retired professors, current professors, students and industry representatives,” he said. “I sat at a table with a couple of students; one was a senior just starting to look for employment, and the other was a new freshman trying to get a grasp of all the college has to offer,” he said. “The dynamics were fantastic because Dr. Buriak was telling stories about the Department and his experience, and I could give them my perspective of the industry experience.”

Behme also served on the ABE advisory committee for two terms, an opportunity he enjoyed, in part because he was able to witness the smooth transition of a change in leadership. “Everyone greatly respected Dr. Bode,” said Behme. “When he retired and Dr. Ting came in, you saw the differences in ideas and the ‘flare’ of the different leaders, and everyone stayed just as

involved under the exciting new leadership as they were under the previous leadership.”

Behme earned a master’s in technical systems management from Texas A & M in 1996. He and his wife Kelly have been married a little more than two years, and they both enjoy traveling. Behme actually proposed to his wife on the Great Wall of China. “John Tuntland (‘99 AgE), another ABE alumni presently working in China for Caterpillar, actually blocked the entrance to the remote tower for me, to make sure no one else would come up while I was proposing,” Behme confessed with a laugh.

Other pastimes that Behme and his wife enjoy include a variety of sports – skiing, baseball, running, golf – and cooking together. “We also try to spend as much time as we can back home,” Behme noted. “My family still has the farm in Carlinville, Illinois, so we have a house there, and we try to be as involved as possible.”

Behme concluded with words of praise for his former department. “We’ve got such a rich history in ABE,” he said. “Our professors have always been recognized at ASABE, our student clubs are some of the best in the country, and now we have these #1 rankings over the last few years. It’s a fantastic Department, and that’s a story we need to share, especially with prospective students.”

Lawnmower Winterization

...Continued

Several club members also participated in the fall field trip to Prairie State Technology Center, located in Champaign, Illinois. The center educates agriculturalists on the value of information management and the foundational applications needed to glean that value. Two alumni of the Technical Systems Management program, Patrick Sanders '01 and Britney Salmon '06, are employed at Prairie State.



Angela Green, a professor in ABE, was one of two faculty members who accompanied the students on the trip. "Prairie State extended

us a warm welcome and offered an up-close experience with their training services and equipment," she said. "It was valuable to see applications for GPS technology and to visit with one of our TSM alums. I also appreciated the opportunity to spend some time with a few of our brightest and best students," she noted.

The Ag Mech Club has approximately 35 student members and they meet eight times during the school year. The election of new officers was held on December 10, 2008 and Ryan Maschhoff is the new president.

Mark Your Calendars!
Engineering Open House and ExplorACES
March 13th and 14th 2009



Return this form to update your information and/or donate to ABE or visit <http://abe.illinois.edu/ageAlumni>

Dept. of Agricultural and Biological Engineering
 1304 W. Pennsylvania Ave. Urbana, IL 61801

- I want to invest in the Dept. of Ag & Biol Engineering Annual Fund at the University of Illinois. Here's my gift to support this fund (#775179)
 - \$500 \$400 \$300
 - \$200 \$100 Other: \$____
- My check for \$_____ is enclosed. (Make check payable to **UIF - Department of ABE**)
- Please charge my gift of \$_____ to the following credit card:
 - VISA Mastercard
 - Discover Novus American Express

Name (Please print) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Job Title / Position _____

Company _____

Address _____

Please send us your news and updates for inclusion in a future ABE@Illinois newsletter

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____



Who? What? When? Where?



We found this photograph in an archive file in the Department. Do you know what event it was taken at? Can you identify the people? (We recognize Dr. and Mrs. Loren Bode.) Let us know what you see in a letter or e-mail to abc@illinois.edu.



Agricultural and Biological Engineering
338 Agricultural Engineering Sciences Building
1304 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Urbana, IL 61801