The Food Guy
Jayson Lusk Honored with Prestigious Award

Spotlighting a Champion
Rita Sparks Receives DASNR Award

Rural Economic Outlook Conference
Speakers Address Future Trends
We are pleased to share the latest issue of Cowboy Economist with you. Our intent is to highlight key events in the life of the Department of Agricultural Economics over the past several months.

Our faculty members have been recognized at multiple events regionally and nationally. Dr. Jayson Lusk received the highest honor in our profession and in the same year he was selected as President-Elect of our leading professional organization. Many other faculty members were also honored for their outstanding contributions to our profession and service to our partners and clientele.

We spotlight Rita Sparks who was selected to be a Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (DASNR) Champion this past year. You will enjoy reading about Rita and the significant impact she and her late husband, Willard Sparks, have had on OSU.

Our students in our undergraduate and graduate program continue to excel. What a wonderful privilege to interact with these students and watch them grow and progress! The Aggie-X organization is alive and doing well. Our students are leaders in the college and campus-wide. We continue to attract quality graduate students to our program.

The Oklahoma Women in Agriculture and Small Business Conference continues to be a successful effort providing opportunities for enhancing the success of participants. The Rural Economic Outlook Conference welcomed participants from across the state and addressed issues ranging from emerging trends in agriculture to “big data” to an outlook for the U.S. economy. Our own faculty members also provided the always anticipated outlook panel.

Our department is blessed with talented and dedicated support staff. They serve our students, clientele, and the public in a truly caring and professional manner. Check out our story on Kareta Casey and meet other new staff members in this issue.

As the spring 2016 semester opens, we are excited as always to serve our university, our state, and our nation. Last year we had a very successful launch of Dr. Norwood’s MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) called Farm to Fork. The course uses technology (totally on-line) to provide a panoramic view of agriculture and is open for credit (online tuition) or non-credit (free). The course focuses on many topics including livestock care techniques, the industrialization of agriculture, the impact of local food on the local economy, and the role of politics and culture in food. The course was so successful it will be offered again this coming spring semester. Additional information and registration are available online at www.casnr.okstate.edu/farmtofork. The enrollment deadline is January 19, 2016.

Best regards. We hope you enjoy this issue!

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Departmental Scholarships

University Scholarships and other financial assistance have always had a major, positive impact on students in the agricultural economics department. According to Joshua Conaway, a John W. Goodwin scholarship recipient, “This scholarship made a huge difference in my educational endeavors.” Mike Woods, department head, states “Scholarships really make a difference in attracting and retaining the ‘best and the brightest’ students. And,” he says, “we work very hard to be good stewards of any contributions made to the department. Our supporters have a positive effect on the lives of our students and the people of Oklahoma. Their support really makes a significant difference and all gifts count. We appreciate all of their efforts.”

This year, three scholarships in particular deserve mentioning because all of them require a special effort to advance to the next level.

**Dr. John W. Goodwin Endowed Agricultural Economics Scholarship**

One of these scholarships is the Dr. John W. Goodwin Endowed Agricultural Economics Scholarship mentioned above, which was established in 2010. More than $170,000 has been raised for the fund since then with the intention of receiving a Boone Pickens Scholarship Legacy Match to strengthen its impact. To receive that match, donations need to total at least $200,000. Therefore, an additional $24,000 needs to be raised in the coming months to reach that goal. Once matched, the scholarship will generate $30,000 in annual scholarships.

This scholarship is awarded to a full-time student who has completed the Freshman, Sophomore, or Junior year at OSU while majoring in Agricultural Economics or Agribusiness with a GPA of 3.25 or higher. The recipient must have also demonstrated student leadership in campus or Greek activities. Another preference is that the recipient has demonstrated good ethical standards and possesses a strong work ethic. The scholarship funds are also used to recruit an outstanding Freshman.

Dr. John Goodwin was special. He was the sort of professor who knew a student’s name the first week of the semester, and who left an indelible mark on the lives of students and colleagues. Though many years have passed since Dr. Goodwin was in the classroom, he continues to impact ag econ students through the scholarship that bears his name.

Please consider making a contribution to the Goodwin Scholarship before February 29, 2016 to ensure the department and future students receive the full benefit of the match. Help the department continue forever Dr. Goodwin’s lifelong work of enhancing the lives of young students.

**Clem Ward Endowed Scholarship**

Another scholarship is the Clem Ward Endowed Scholarship, established upon his retirement in 2010. More than $17,000 has been raised to date, and this scholarship will be permanently funded when the fund reaches $25,000. Once this amount is achieved, the scholarship will be awarded each year to a graduate student conducting research in the area of livestock economics or exhibiting a strong interest in this area. Since its inception, Clem’s scholarship has been awarded to six different students, four of whom are now actively involved in the area of livestock economics.

Dr. Clement E. (Clem) Ward, Professor Emeritus in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University, is widely regarded as one of the country’s foremost experts on livestock economics. An outstanding teacher as well as the recipient of several research and Extension awards, Clem was part of the team that developed the Fed Cattle Market Simulator (FCMS, or “packer-feeder game”), an innovation that not only educated and was enjoyed by thousands of participants, but also led directly to advances in the field of agricultural marketing. His rich legacy of industry, university, and community service continues to impact the livestock industry as well as the lives of students, colleagues, and others to this day.
Moving Ahead to Next Level

Please consider contributing to Clem’s scholarship, honoring his lasting contributions in the area of livestock economics and showing appreciation for Clem’s impact on the field of livestock economics, his community, and his university.

**Aggie-X Alumni Scholarship**

The annual Aggie-X Alumni Scholarship was established in 2011 by a group of alumni, all graduating from 2003 to 2005, who were active within the Agricultural Economics Department and in the Aggie-X Club. While in school, the group members received scholarships donated by Agricultural Economics alumni to help them pursue their educational goals. After being out of school for a few years, the group decided to start their own departmental scholarship to help deserving students continue their education and to give back to the department that had enriched their lives.

Recently, four of those alums, Bart Fischer, Paul Goeringer, Derrick Davies, and Jared Boehs, decided to start a push to endow the scholarship and encourage their classmates and any former Aggie-X members to join them. As Goeringer states, “Why now? The small annual scholarship was actually raising more money than we needed so we thought we should capitalize on the generosity of our friends to endow a scholarship that would help us pay back the generosity we received from alumni when we were undergrads in the department. Plus we wanted to give back to students who take part in the same opportunities we had through Aggie-X.”

The scholarship is awarded to a junior or senior with a 3.0 GPA or above who is active in the Aggie-X Club. According to Goeringer, “Many of our recipients have written us great thank you letters telling us that our generosity has allowed them to continue their education and strengthen their commitment to agriculture.”

Please consider a contribution to the Aggie-X Alumni Scholarship. Goeringer encourages potential donors to consider giving back to OSU or the department because it is a good opportunity for them to help “pay it back and help the next generation of future alums from OSU.”

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**Donation Information**

If you would like to make a donation to our departmental scholarship funds, please log onto the ag econ website, http://www.agecon.okstate.edu and click on “Opportunities to Give” in the left-hand column. Click on “scholarship history booklet” to see information about our scholarship opportunities and read about our donors’ motivations.

Then, click on “give now” to link to the OSU Foundation website for instructions on how to support the ag econ department through your contributions.

*And remember, all contributions are tax deductible.*
Jayson Lusk honored with prestigious award

Jayson Lusk, Regents Professor and Willard R. Sparks Endowed Chair, was named a 2015 Agricultural and Applied Economics Association Fellow at the AAEA conference in July.

“AAEA Fellow is the most prestigious honor bestowed on an agricultural economist,” said Mike Woods, Department of Agricultural Economics Head. “Less than one percent of our members receive this title. The AAEA rules say we can nominate one person per 800 members each year for this title.”

The Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics has had three AAEA Fellows; last year Wade Brorsen was named, and earlier Luther Tweeten was named.

“It is a great honor,” Lusk said. “It is extraordinarily gratifying to be picked by your colleagues to receive your profession’s most prestigious honor.”

Profession

“Most of my time is spent on research,” Lusk said. “I write books, journal articles, and give talks around the country and the world. If I had to succinctly sum up my research focus, I would say I am a food and agricultural economist who studies what we eat and why we eat it.”

Since 2000, Lusk has published more than 160 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals on a wide assortment of topics ranging from the economics of animal welfare to consumer preferences for genetically modified food to the impacts of new technologies and policies on livestock and meat markets to analyzing the merits of new survey and experimental approaches eliciting consumer preferences.

Lusk has held the Williard R. Sparks Endowed Chair since 2005. Rita Sparks, wife of the late Willard Sparks, says, “After finally meeting the talented Dr. Jayson Lusk, I can certainly understand why he was chosen for the Sparks Chair of Excellence! He has so much energy, is very learned in his field, and is such a great communicator. I am sure that if Dr. Sparks were still with us today he would agree wholeheartedly with me that this young man was definitely the right fit for our chair. It was such a privilege on my part to have met with him and hear his ideas. What a talented and far reaching young man!”

“Dr. Lusk would not be here if it was not for the Sparks chair,” said Thomas Coon, Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Vice President, Dean and Director. “Positions like this show how donors can have a huge impact on the stature of our college, allowing us to expose our students to leading experts of their fields.”

According to Dr. Lusk, “The Sparks chair has been a critical resource that lets us recruit top-notch graduate students and fund innovative and optical research projects.”

Teaching, Advising, Writing

Lusk teaches three graduate courses each year and advises around five graduate students at a given time.

Besides teaching and advising, Lusk produces a monthly study titled the Food Demand Survey (FooDS). FooDS is a consumer tracking survey that provides monthly insights on consumer awareness of food-related issues and how those could affect demand, with specific emphasis on meat.

He has been listed as one of the most prolific and cited food and agricultural economists of the past decade in a variety of outlets, won numerous research awards, and given numerous lectures for businesses, nonprofits, trade industry organizations, and universities in the US and abroad.

He has served on the editorial councils of seven academic journals including the American Journal of Agricultural Economics, the Journal of Environmental Economics and Management, and Food Policy and consulted for various nonprofits, government agencies, and agribusinesses.

Lusk has also been elected to and served on the executive committees of the three largest U.S. agricultural economics associations, including most recently the Agricultural and Applied Economics
Association for which he currently serves as the president-elect.

He has been author and co-author of several books including an undergraduate textbook on agricultural marketing and price analysis and a book on the economics of farm animal welfare co-authored with agricultural economics professor Bailey Norwood.

His newest book, set for release in March 2016 is titled *Unnaturally Delicious: How Science and Technology are Serving Up Super Foods to Save the World*.

**Background**

Lusk grew up in the Texas panhandle in small farming communities. Both his parents were school teachers. He said they were not directly involved in agriculture, but he always worked for farm families. After encouragement from some ag teachers, he participated in FFA dairy foods judging competitions, which led to a scholarship to study Food Technology at Texas Tech University. Lusk worked summers in a food processing plant in Dallas, and after completing his BS, he decided to pursue a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University.

“Dr. Lusk is one of our most highly cited ag economists in our profession,” Woods said. “He is highly sought after for speaking and lecturing on both the national and international levels.”

Some of the many other awards Dr. Lusk has received during his career include the Samuel Roberts Noble Distinguished Fellow, Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs in 2013; the Regents Distinguished Research Award, Oklahoma State University in 2010, and the Sarkeys Distinguished Professor Award, Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Oklahoma State University in 2010.

Additional information about Dr. Lusk can be found at [http://jaysonlusk.com/about/](http://jaysonlusk.com/about/).
Faculty and students of the Oklahoma State University Department of Agricultural Economics attended the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association and Western Agricultural Economics Association meetings in San Francisco, California from July 26 to July 28.

“The department was very well represented at the recent professional meetings for our profession,” said Mike Woods, Department of Agricultural Economics Head.

Jayson Lusk, Regents professor and Willard Sparks Endowed Chair, was named an AAEA Fellow and AAEA President Elect.

“AAEA Fellow is the most prestigious honor bestowed on an agricultural economist, less than one percent of our members receive this title,” Woods said.

Shannon Ferrell, associate professor, received the AAEA Distinguished Extension/Outreach Program Award Individual: Less than Ten Years’ Experience.

Rodney Jones, associate professor and Oklahoma Farm Credit professor, was elected an AAEA committee member and received the Outstanding Choices Article.

Two teams participated in the graduate student case study completion. Jayson Lusk coached the first group; students included Aaron Ates, Clinton Neill, and James Mitchell. Brian Whitacre coached the second group; students included Kelsey Conley, Amy Boline, and Brannon Daniels.

Derrell Peel coached Anna Stehle for the Graduate Student Section Extension Competition.

The undergraduate quiz bowl team included Matt Fletcher, Logan Smith, Vance Sharp, Jordan Langan, and Hollee Koester. Coaches included Derrell Peel, Josh Maples, and Brannon Daniels.

The department also had two invited papers, three selected presentations, two organized symposia, seven track session presenters, four organizers, two moderators, and five posters.

Wade Brorsen, Regents professor and A.J. and Susan Jacques Chair, was named WAEA President Elect.

Shida Henneberry, Regents professor, Humphreys Chair in International Studies, and Director of Master of International Agriculture Program, was named a WAEA Fellow.

Gerald Doeksen, Regents professor, received the WAEA Extension Career Award.

Bailey Norwood, professor, received the WAEA Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award, More Than 10 Years’ Experience.

Eric DeVuyst, professor, and Jody Campiche, past department faculty member, and collaborators from Kansas State University received the Outstanding Extension Program Award.
Faculty members in the department are constantly achieving excellence, as demonstrated by the countless awards and recognition they receive. Below is a list of awards and recognition faculty have recently received through the University and on the local, regional and national levels.

**Individuals:**

**Wade Brorsen**
- WAEA President Elect

**Jayson Lusk**
- AAEA Fellow at the 2015 Annual Meeting
- AAEA President Elect

**Gerald Doeksen**
- WAEA Extension Career Award

**Shannon Ferrell**
- AAEA Distinguished Extension/Outreach Program Award Individual: Less than Ten Years’ Experience

**Rodney Jones**
- AAEA committee member and received the Outstanding Choices Article
- Oklahoma Farm Credit Chair in Agricultural Economics, Agricultural Economics

**Shida Henneberry**
- WAEA Fellow
- President’s Cup for Creative Interdisciplinarity – “Empowering Aspiring Entrepreneurs for Economic Success in Sub-Saharan Africa” – Team Member

**Bailey Norwood**
- WAEA Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching Award, More Than 10 Years’ Experience.
- Outstanding Faculty Member Award from the Four Governing Greek Councils - 2015
- OSU Outreach Faculty Excellence Award 2014-2015

**Derrell Peel**
- Received the 2015 Southern Region Regional Excellence in Extension Award from USDA-NIFA at the APLU Annual Meeting in Indianapolis.

**Teams:**

**Eric DeVuyst and Jody Campiche**
- WAEA Outstanding Extension Program Award

**Oklahoma Quality Beef Network**
- Members
  - Damona Doye
  - Eric DeVuyst
  - Derrell Peel
  - Kellie Raper

Dr. Bailey Norwood (r) with OSU Outreach Faculty Excellence Award, and Dr. Rodney Jones named Oklahoma Farm Credit Chair in Agricultural Economics.
Student Section
Four of the 49 students named by the OSU Alumni Association as OSU Seniors of Significance for 2015-2016 are students in the department of agricultural economics.

The Seniors of Significance include the following ag econ students:

- Shanlyn Heфley, agribusiness, Wellington, KS
- Kyle Hilbert, agribusiness, Depew, OK
- Jimmy Hutson, agribusiness and agricultural communications, Burns Flat, OK
- Alexis Wiebe, agricultural economics, Hooker, OK

The Seniors of Significance Award recognizes students who have excelled in scholarship, leadership and service to campus and community and have brought distinction to OSU.

“The OSU Alumni Association is proud to recognize these seniors for the achievements they’ve made during their time at OSU,” says Chris Batchelder, Alumni Association president. “We look forward to seeing them excel as part of the OSU alumni family after they graduate.”

The 49 students represent the top one percent of the Class of 2016 including all six OSU undergraduate colleges. A public reception to recognize the winners and their families was held in November at the ConocoPhillips OSU Alumni Center.
The agricultural economics department had five students selected as OSU’s Mortar Board Top 10 Freshmen Men and Top 10 Freshmen Women. Students are selected based on scholarship, community service, campus involvement, and outstanding leadership during their freshman year.

Students must first submit an application and then the selection process is completed with interviews by the OSU Achafoa Chapter of Mortar Board.

The selected students were formally recognized during a ceremony in October in the Browsing Room of Edmon Low Library, and again later in the day during halftime of the OSU vs. Iowa State football game.

The students from the agricultural economics department are listed below with their enrolled major and hometown.

- Megan DeVuyst, Agribusiness, Stillwater OK
- Luke Worth, Agribusiness/Agricultural Communications, Elk City, OK
- Gatlin Squires, Agribusiness Pre-Law, Kingfisher, OK
- Jake Fanning, Agribusiness Pre-Law, Laverne, OK
- Angel Molina, Agribusiness, Johnson City, KS

Two other students were selected for the Top 20 Freshmen and Top 20 Freshmen Women and were finalists for the Top 10: Jenna Maltbie, Agribusiness/Agricultural Communication, Burlington, OK; and Tyler Grace, Agricultural Economics, Ringling, OK.
The Aggie-X Club hit the ground running this fall with its Back-to-School Bash in September. Veteran club members and faculty reunited after the summer, while new students and students from China Agricultural University were first exposed to the Department’s undergraduate organization for a cookout at Boomer Lake.

The club hosted its annual alumni tailgate outside of Ag Hall in October before our Cowboys beat the Kansas State Wildcats. We were excited to have one of the largest turnouts for this event that the club has had in years. We would like to thank all the alumni that showed their support as well as Bad Brad’s Barbeque for catering the event.

Club members once again had the opportunity to give back to the Stillwater community this November when Aggie-X participated in “Into the Streets,” a University-wide annual community service event.

The Quiz Bowl team is welcoming new members and has resumed practices in preparation for their upcoming competitions in San Antonio, Texas for the Southern Regional Meeting, and Boston, Massachusetts for the National Meeting.

For a second year now, the club is enjoying increased membership numbers and activity levels. We are looking forward to a great year, continuing with a special presentation from Terry Detrick, President of American Farmers and Ranchers, during the club’s December business meeting.

—Matt Fletcher
Aggie-X Club President
New Graduate Students

Below is a list of new agricultural economics graduate students along with the degree they are pursuing and their home country or state.

Summer 2015:
- Jacob Manlove, Ph.D., Oklahoma

Fall 2015:
- Aaron Ates, Ph.D., Texas
- Eryn Bell, M.S., Tennessee
- Susan Brand, M.S., Oklahoma
- Haotian Cheng, M. Ag., China
- Bernadette Chimai, Ph.D., Zambia
- Kelsey Conley, Ph.D., Ohio
- Lance Gagelman, Ph.D., Kansas
- Blayne Horn, M.S., Oklahoma
- Kelyn Jacques, M.S., Oklahoma
- Pedro Machado, Ph.D., Brazil
- Brian Mills, Ph.D., Nebraska
- John Ng’ombe, Ph.D., Zambia
- Bart Niyibizi, Ph.D., Rwanda
- Meagan Rhodes, M.S., Oklahoma

Graduate Student Reception

To welcome new graduate students to OSU, the department hosted the annual welcome reception. Drs. Chung and Woods spoke to the group. Those in attendance were new graduate students, current graduate students, faculty and staff. Cookies and punch were served while attendees spent time meeting, welcoming, and visiting with new students and faculty.

International Dinner

On Sunday, Oct. 8, the agricultural economics Graduate Student Association hosted their 29th Annual International Dinner in Ag Hall. The GSA is proud to represent students from 13 countries and 12 states. The potluck dinner is designed to help students learn about different parts of the world while introducing them to some new types of cuisine. Students and faculty brought traditional dishes from their home state or country. Throughout dinner, a slideshow displayed interesting pictures and facts about each state and country represented. After dinner, GSA’s social chair, Justin Turner, led guests in a game of Jeopardy, which included questions and answers from the previously mentioned slideshow. The evening was full of good food and fellowship.
Scholarship and Fellowship Recipients

Spielman Scholarship (Jan and Hank Spielman and Mrs. Margaret Brown)
Awarded annually to the top two scholars in the M.S. program and the top two scholars in the Ph.D. program

- Jisung Jo  Ph.D.
- Ahmad Ghaith  Ph.D.
- James Mitchell  M.S.
- Ben Tong  M.S.

Leo and Betty Blakley Graduate Fellowship (Dr. and Mrs. Leo Blakley and Dr. Adeana and Mr. Lyle Sallee)
Awarded annually to students with at least one semester of course work completed and who are currently studying or planning a career in dairy marketing or agricultural price analysis

- Samantha Durborow  Ph.D.
- Seon-Woong Kim  Ph.D.
- Clint Neill  Ph.D.

Endowed International Agricultural Economics Fellowship Fund
Awarded annually to student(s) who have demonstrated high academic and leadership abilities and who graduated from a high school in a country outside of the United States

- Harshanee Jayasekera  M.S.
- Karthik Ramaswamy  M.S.

Mapp Fellowship Fund (Dr. Harry Mapp, Dr. Damona Doye, Mr. and Mrs. Damon and Georgia Doye)
Awarded annually to student(s) with an interest in production economics, natural resource economics, or agricultural finance.

- Trey Malone  Ph.D.
- Josh Maples  Ph.D.
- Eunchun Park  Ph.D.
- Jacob Manlove  Ph.D.
- Ben Tong  M.S.
Aaron Ates  
M.S., Dr. Lusk, Forecasting Meat Prices Using the Food Demand Survey (FooDS)

Kelsey Conley  
M.S., Dr. Whitacre, Does Broadband Matter for Rural Entrepreneurs or ‘Creative Class’ Employees?

Cortney Cowley  
Ph.D., Dr. Brorsen, Economic and Political Considerations for Anaerobic Digestion Technology Adoption on Animal Feeding Operations

Lance Gagelman  
M.S., Dr. Norwood, The Carbon Footprint of Beef, Grass-finished Beef, Other Meats and Carbon Offsets

Choolwe Haankuku  
Ph.D., Dr. Epplin, Production Economics of Potential Biofuel Feedstocks: Forage Sorghum, Switchgrass, and Industrial Beets

Shannon Mallory  
M.S., Dr. Eric DeVuyst, Influence of Location Characteristics on Sale Prices at Oklahoma Feeder Cattle Auctions

Frederic Ouedraogo  
Ph.D., Dr. Brorsen, Crop Yield Response Models and Fertilizer Applicator’s Efficiency

Jeremy Walker  
M.S., Dr. Adam, Valuing a Proposed Poultry Litter-to-Energy Processing Plant Using Real Options

Courtney Acton  
M.S., Dr. Eric DeVuyst, Economically-Optimal Mature Beef Cow Weight in the U.S. Southern Plains

Monika Ghimire  
Ph.D., Dr. Boyer, Essays on Residential Water Demand and Consumer Preferences for Turfgrass Attributes

Curtis Dick  
M.S., Dr. Epplin, Economics of Managing Hard Red Winter Wheat for Protein Content

Azaz Zaman  
M.S., Dr. Shideler, Climate Variability and Economic Resilience of Oklahoma Counties
Spotlighting a Champion
Rita Sparks Named DASNR Champion

Rita T. Sparks, wife of agricultural economics alumnus Willard Sparks, was recognized recently as a 2015 DASNR Champion at the first ever Honors Night in Stillwater. The purpose of the awards program is to recognize and honor those who are not graduates of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, but who bring distinction to the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources and have demonstrated a continuing interest and commitment in agricultural sciences and natural resources.

Rita and her late husband have invested in a number of OSU and DASNR endeavors, such as establishing the Dr. Willard R. Sparks Agricultural Economics Scholarship, endowing the Willard R. Sparks Endowed Chair in agricultural economics and serving as donors and fundraisers for the division’s Willard Sparks Beef Research Center.

“It’s really a great honor to be able to recognize Rita and Willard for what they’ve done to help send us in so many positive directions,” said Tom Coon, vice president, dean and director of DASNR. “It’s hard to walk around and look at the programs we have in the division without encountering the Sparks name. Rita and her late husband have been extremely generous in supporting a variety of things, from scholarships for students to an endowed chair that actually has helped us to retain one of our eminent agricultural economists.”

Sparks has been a licensed commodity broker since 1980. In 1977, Mrs. Sparks and her late husband formed Sparks Companies, Inc, an agricultural research information and consulting firm that provides risk management tools to agribusiness and farmers. Upon Willard’s passing in 2005, she formed her own investment company, Sparks Enterprises, Inc. She has also held several key accounting positions in the retail business and in the commodities field.

Sparks is involved in a variety of community projects. She currently serves on the board of directors of the Metropolitan BancGroup, the University of Memphis Board of Visitors, and the U of M Board of Trustees. She is president of the Tennessee Sports Hall of Fame (appointed by Governor Phil Bredeson) and an Ambassador of the athletics department of the University of Memphis. She is a past president of the Ronald McDonald House and was instrumental in securing the necessary funds to build the first Ronald McDonald House in Memphis. In addition, Mrs. Sparks has served on the boards of Agricenter International, the Crescent Club, the Foundation for the Library, Memphis Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Lausanne Collegiate School, the Memphis Redbirds Foundation, the Baddour Center, the Memphis Development Foundation, and the Campbell Clinic Board of Trustees.

Sparks exemplifies the power of women’s leadership and philanthropy. In 2010, she received both the University of Memphis Distinguished Friend Award and the Tennessee Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Philanthropy for her support of higher education. She was the Memphis recipient of the 1999 Outstanding Volunteer Fund Raiser from the National Society for Fund Raising Executives and a member of the 1996 Leadership Memphis class.

A native of Senatobia, Mississippi, Mrs. Sparks attended the University of Memphis. She has a son, Jim McFarland who along with his wife, Michelle, have three children. Mrs. Sparks’ hobbies are reading, attending numerous sports events, and vacationing at her home in the Cayman Islands.

According to DASNR, the awards for champions were developed because not only does the division’s reputation and influence depend on the achievements and excellence of its alumni, but also on other leaders who are not alums of the ag college, but contribute to its mission.

Tom Coon says that Rita and the two other Champion recipients, “have been great supporters of our programs, each in ways that leverage their experience and resources to the benefit of DASNR. It is an honor to be able to recognize their contributions and to show our appreciation for their support to our joint missions of research, teaching and Extension.”
Kareta Casey, Senior Administrative Support Assistant in the agricultural economics department, loves to travel. And, what is her favorite place to visit out of the thousands of miles she has traveled and all of the places that she has seen….Disneyland, of course! “I’m just a child at heart,” she says.

As a child, Kareta grew up in Payne County, where she has deep family roots. She is one of five children, and she attended school in Perkins. She now lives in the country near Stillwater. Kareta also attended OSU, where she received a bachelor’s degree in Social Science, and a master’s degree in history. “My dream was to work in the Smithsonian,” she stated when asked why she chose history. Kareta also completed one year’s work on an MBA.

After school, she married a sub-contractor. She then spent ten years traveling with him wherever his job took him, mostly across the southern states. After that, Kareta settled in Stillwater and started work at OSU. She worked for Sue Williams, in what was the FCD in home economics, and then spent time working for Tom Haan in Water Resources. She joined the agricultural economics staff in 2008.

At her desk on the fifth floor, Kareta has multiple and varied responsibilities. She oversees the department’s P Card activities, and handles the OK Corral duties, which includes purchasing and accounts payable. Another part of her job is event planner and conference coordinator. Kareta works on the Women in Agriculture Conference, the Rural Outlook Conference, and the Farm Transitions Workshops.

She also assists faculty members Damona Doye, Shannon Ferrell, Larry Sanders, Wade Brorsen, Phil Kenkel, and Jayson Lusk.

In particular, she helps Dr. Doye with the Master Cattleman Program. Dr. Doye, shown above with Kareta, comments, “Kareta contributes to a wide range of activities that support individual faculty and the department. I appreciate both the variety of tasks and volume of work that she does on our behalf. She continues to learn new skills while being helpful in teaching, research, and Extension efforts. From the beginning, she has sought out workshops to increase her understanding of tools that would help her better do her job. I very much appreciate her “can do” attitude, willingness to pitch in on tasks from small to large, and the wealth of experience that helps keep me on track!”

According to Wade Brorsen, “I appreciate Kareta’s
“Bostons,” Buster, Bree, and Gidget, two of them adopted from a shelter.

Another special interest for Kareta is photography. She got started while attending OSU as an undergraduate. She prefers to work in black and white, and once had her own darkroom, where she processed film and printed her own photos. Some of her favorite subjects to photograph are animals and old buildings.

Kareta still finds time to travel. “I love seeing new sites,” she says. Her plans for future travel adventures include a train ride across Canada and a trip to Europe.

Dedication and conscientiousness toward accomplishing what needs to be done.” In other words Dr. Brorsen says, “You can count on Kareta to git ’er done.”

Dr. Sanders comments, “Kareta Casey is one of the stars among our department’s excellent staff. Kareta has been an able senior administrative support assistant for years. As staffing numbers dwindled, Kareta willingly accepted additional duties and cross training. She excels in her regular duties assisting several faculty members with high demands. Additionally, she has become the “go-to” staffer in the department for all matters related to travel. There is no doubt that her oversight has saved taxpayer and grant dollars, as well as minimizing mis-steps of faculty members who may not know the travel expenditure rules.”

Kareta and three of her siblings still live in central Oklahoma: her sister in Oklahoma City; a brother in Cushing, and one in Stillwater. “I have a great rapport with my niece and nephew,” she states. “I go to his basketball games and her pom squad performances.”

Kareta also has her own “kids” at home, her three “New Department Staff Members

Brent Ladd
Brent Ladd joined the department in March 2015. He works as an Assistant Extension Specialist in Agricultural Finance for Dr. Damona Doye and Dr. Rodney Jones. He grew up in Morrison. He completed his BS in Finance from OSU in 2005 and a masters in international studies in 2014. He has served in the Peace Corps as a volunteer, teaching English as a foreign language in Bangladesh and Azerbaijan. In his job, he has been updating curriculum and fact sheets and developing Facebook posts, a new agricultural finance newsletter, and online surveys. He enjoys working with all of the friendly people in agricultural economics.

Jamie Maxwell
Jamie, the department’s grant contact and an Accountant II, was raised in Mounds, OK. She has an associates and bachelor’s degree in accounting and a bachelor’s degree in Animal Science, Business Emphasis, and a minor in Agricultural Economics from OSU. Early in her career, she focused primarily on 4-H Youth Development. She returned to OSU as an Accountant II for Animal Science in 2013 and had begun working on a M.S. in Accounting and Financial Analysis at the Broken Arrow campus of Northeastern State University. She will complete her master’s soon. At home she has a daughter, and she says, “any time spent with her is the best part of my day.”

Kelly Schalk
Kelly Schalk is a recent spring graduate of Oklahoma State University, originally from Skiatook, a small town north of Tulsa. She graduated in May with a degree in agribusiness and now works as a Senior Administrative Support Assistant in the department.

What she enjoys most about her job is that she has the opportunity to work with such an excellent group of staff and faculty members. “They’re very approachable and helpful because they care about the success and future of their students, and that’s what makes this department so great.”

Tiers Wisely
Tiers Wisely grew up southeast of Stillwater and attended school in Perkins and at (then) Indian Meridian Vo-Tech. She lives in Morrison, and has a daughter Ashley. Tiers returned to OSU in September as the new Senior Administrative Support Assistant for the department. She enjoys all the AGECON faculty and staff and says she is blessed to be working here again and that it felt like she was “coming home”.

Tiers’ hobbies include her great love of travel and scuba diving. Her favorite destination is Cozumel, Mexico.
Over 150 People attended the Rural Economic Outlook Conference held on Oct. 30 in Stillwater, Oklahoma, at the ConocoPhillips OSU Alumni Center. Keynote speaker Lowell Catlett told the audience that it is the “best time ever, ever, ever to be in agriculture and in rural America” as he offered positive and upbeat predictions on “Six Trends You Can’t Afford to Miss.”

Catlett, retired Regents’s Professor/Dean and Chef Administrative Officer at New Mexico State University’s College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences, discussed the following:

1. Emerging technologies and how they will affect our quality of life
2. Largest transfer of intergenerational wealth in history
3. Transparency and a seamless world
4. Singularity - predicting in 2029 artificial intelligence will exceed human intelligence
5. Graphine - a revolution in 3-D printing, medicine, and more
6. Growth of people’s need for family and rich and deep social connections

Matt Waits, CEO of SST Software, spoke next about “Big Data and the Role of Technology.” He called “data science” the next agricultural revolution. He predicts that by 2050, we will need to feed 9 billion people. To do that, he says, we will need to double our current crop output.

The Big Data process uses soil sampling; remote sensing; scouting, including data collection; pictures and reports with mobile devices; and GPS Yield Monitors. The results can help with seed recommendations, profit mapping, and field problem areas.

Waits said that discussions are currently ongoing regarding the most effective ways to accomplish the goals of Big Data, the concerns of privacy, record keeping, and the use of data collected.

Agricultural Economics Associate Professor Brian Whitacre presented a rural development research update covering broadband adoption, electronic medical records, E-commerce, solid waste management, stronger communities, and other topics.

Professor Notie Lansford then gave an update on the County Officers Training Program, an Extension program. He discussed its creation, structure, purpose, and programs. The program provides training and technical assistance to counties in Oklahoma.

After lunch, a second outlook, the “U.S. and Oklahoma Economic Outlook,” was provided by Robert Dauffenbach, Director of the Center for Economic and Management Research at the University of Oklahoma.

Dauffenbach discussed the status of the U.S. economy and its recovery. He gave a history of the nation’s economic picture over the last 15 years. Finally, he addressed the status of the Oklahoma economy, including the crude oil situation and its effects on employment and other areas.

Jeff Moen, Director of Business Development at the Noble Foundation, talked about “Soil: Earth’s Most Valuable Asset.” He covered historic practices, such as over production, drought, and dust storms; evolving approaches, including technology, soil testing, and breeding practices; and soil renaissance that has occurred. He then offered some guiding principles for better soil health.

The final program featured an outlook panel from the agricultural economics department. Rodney Jones, Farm Credit Chair; and Damona Doye, Rainbolt Chair of Agricultural Finance addressed the agricultural finance outlook.

Grain Markets were presented by Kim Anderson, OSU Agricultural Economics Professor Emeritus, and Derrell Peel, OSU Agricultural Economics Charles Breedlove Professor covered Livestock Markets.

Presentations from the conference are available at http://agecon.okstate.edu/extension/ruralconference.asp
The statewide Women in Agriculture and Small Business conference was held August 6th and 7th at the Moore Norman Technology Center in Oklahoma City. Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture, Jim Reese, welcomed attendees to the conference.

The conference featured two keynote speakers. The first was Marji Guyler-Alaniz, founder and president of the “FarmHer” project, which showcases women in agriculture. She spoke to the group about how media can be used to showcase a woman’s own farm and her farm family.

Guyler-Alaniz is a lifetime Iowan and a lover of photography. That love, combined with graphic journalism and photography degrees, an 11-year career in corporate agriculture, and an MBA from Drake University, led her to launch “FarmHer” in the spring of 2013. Through this project, her goal is to update the image of agriculture by infusing photographs of women in agriculture into farm imagery. She calls “FarmHer” agriculture, updated.

Launched as a photography project in 2013 to show the female side of farming through images, the project has grown into a community of women in agriculture. “FarmHer” is a place where women in agriculture can shine.

The second speaker was Carrie Mess of the popular “Adventures of Dairy Carrie” blog. She is a Wisconsin dairy farmer and a farm “agvocate” meaning an advocate for agriculture, particularly through social media.

Mess works with her husband and in-laws on a 100 cow dairy farm in southern Wisconsin. Her blog, “The Adventures of Dairy Carrie,” has gained readership through her thoughtful, science-based, investigative approach to farm and dairy advocacy. She does not shy away from the tough issues that those in the agricultural industry often encounter. Her blog features topics ranging from herd health to frequently asked agricultural questions, debunking myths, and
sharing her favorite recipes. While many of her posts are upbeat and light-hearted, she tackles hard topics and is a strong “agvocate” for farmers everywhere. Mess’ presentation focused on farmers and those in the industry speaking up for agriculture and not shying away from transparency.

To address individual interests and concerns, 20 concurrent sessions were offered at the conference from three tracks: agriculture, alternative enterprises, and business and finance.

Participants also had the opportunity to attend one of two post-conference training sessions: managing farm transitions or education regarding the “Made in Oklahoma” program. The farm transitions workshop was led by Dr. Rodney Jones and Dr. Shannon Ferrell from the OSU Department of Agricultural Economics. The “Made in Oklahoma” Program workshop was presented by Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food, and Forestry’s Market Development Coordinator, Julie Sears. Both post-conference training sessions were well attended.

The goal of the conference is to provide agricultural producers and small business owners access to top-notch specialists and information to help them manage their business risks through effective, market-based, risk management solutions. This year’s conference experienced a record turnout with over 220 attendees. According to Damona Doye, agricultural economics professor and a conference coordinator, “This annual conference is a wonderful opportunity for women in agriculture to enjoy learning while networking with other interesting and accomplished women. Participants are inspired and motivated to make changes in their businesses and lives. Each year offers new and different topics and possibilities for new friendships and connections.”

The two-day event was sponsored by the Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service (OCES), USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA), and numerous other sponsors including agricultural lenders, organizations, and small businesses.

The 2016 conference is scheduled for August 4th and 5th.

For more information visit, www.okwomeninagandsmallbusiness.com and like the Facebook page, www.facebook.com/OKWomenInAg.
Farm to Fork: A Panoramic View of Agriculture is an online journey connecting agricultural science and your food. Go on a virtual tour of a dairy, swine, and beef farm. Study how farm practices impact the environment. Learn how modern livestock techniques impact the well-being of farm animals. Visit the DNA analysis labs that help keep food safe. Tour the soil test laboratories helping farmers apply the optimal amount of fertilizer. Visit a century-old experiment linking fertilizers to crop yields. Think critically about the impact of local food on the local economy.

Do all of this and more in one online course to gain a panoramic view of agriculture — from the farm, to the fork.
# Media List

## Social Media

**Department**
- Facebook | [www.facebook.com/OSUAgEcon](http://www.facebook.com/OSUAgEcon)
- Twitter | [@OSUAgEcon](https://twitter.com/OSUAgEcon)
- Google+ | gplus.to/OSUAgEcon
- Instagram | [www.instagram.com/osuagecon](https://www.instagram.com/osuagecon)
- YouTube | [www.youtube.com/user/OkStateAgEcon](http://www.youtube.com/user/OkStateAgEcon)
- Issuu | [www.issuu.com/osuagecon](http://www.issuu.com/osuagecon)
- LinkedIn | Group Name: Oklahoma State University - Department of Agricultural Economics
- Flickr | [www.flickr.com/photos/97726583@N02/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/97726583@N02/)

**Department-Related**
- Food Demand Survey | [twitter.com/OKState_FooDS](https://twitter.com/OKState_FooDS)
- Oklahoma Women in Agriculture & Small Business | Facebook | [www.facebook.com/OKWomenInAg](http://www.facebook.com/OKWomenInAg)
- Oklahoma Women in Agriculture & Small Business | Twitter | [www.twitter.com/OKWomenInAg](https://www.twitter.com/OKWomenInAg)
- OSU Farm Management | [www.facebook.com/OSUFarmManagement](https://www.facebook.com/OSUFarmManagement)
- Composting in Oklahoma | [www.facebook.com/compostok](https://www.facebook.com/compostok)
- Sustainable Living through Effective Solid Waste Management | [www.facebook.com/OkstateSolidWasteManagement](https://www.facebook.com/OkstateSolidWasteManagement)

**Department-Related Blogs**
- Anderson | Market Analysis | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/anderson/archives_details.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/anderson/archives_details.asp)
- Kenkel | Cooperative Thoughts | [www.okagcoop.org/blog](http://www.okagcoop.org/blog)
- Lusk | [www.jaysonlusk.com](http://www.jaysonlusk.com)
- Norwood | [www.fbaileynorwood.com](http://www.fbaileynorwood.com)
- Shideler | Oklahoma Extension Development Resources | [www.okextdevres.blogspot.com](http://www.okextdevres.blogspot.com)

## Websites

**Department**
- Department Website | [www.agecon.okstate.edu](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu)

**Department-Related**
- All Extension Websites | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/extension/](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/extension/)
- National Center for Rural Health Works | [www.ruralhealthworks.org/newsletters/](http://www.ruralhealthworks.org/newsletters/)

## News, Publications & Emails

**Department**
- Cowboy Economist | Bi-annual Magazine | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/documents.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/documents.asp)

**Department-Related**
- Building Up Business | Newsletter | [www.oces.okstate.edu/payne/rural-development/newsletters](http://www.oces.okstate.edu/payne/rural-development/newsletters)
- Community First | Biannual Newsletter | [www.oces.okstate.edu/payne/rural-development/newsletters](http://www.oces.okstate.edu/payne/rural-development/newsletters)
- Cow Calf Corner Newsletter | Weekly newsletter | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/livestock/cowcorner.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/livestock/cowcorner.asp)
- Fact Sheets & Current Reports | [pods.dasnr.okstate.edu](http://pods.dasnr.okstate.edu)
- Food Demand Survey (FooDS) | Monthly report | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/agecon_research.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/agecon_research.asp)
- IFMAPS | Annual Newsletter | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/ifmaps/newsletter.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/ifmaps/newsletter.asp)
- Master Cattleman | Quarterly Newsletter | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/cattleman/newsletter.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/cattleman/newsletter.asp)
- National Center for Rural Health Works | Biannual Newsletter | [ruralhealthworks.org/newsletters/](http://www.ruralhealthworks.org/newsletters/)
- Quick Tips | Quarterly Newsletter | [www.agecon.okstate.edu/quicken/newsletter.asp](http://www.agecon.okstate.edu/quicken/newsletter.asp)

**Department-Related Broadcasts**
- Anderson | Weekly Market Monitor | [www.sunup.okstate.edu/category/mm](http://www.sunup.okstate.edu/category/mm)
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