

TEXAS A&M PLANT BREEDING Bulletin

February 2011

The Plant Breeding Bulletin is devoted this month to our **Summer Plant Breeding Internship** that is designed to introduce undergraduate students to the discipline of plant breeding, especially those students who believe that they



have a interest in the discipline. The Plant Breeding Summer Internship is a collaborative effort among the plant breeding faculty in the departments of Soil & Crop Sciences and Horticultural Sciences. Students who are interested in participating in the internship identify and prioritize five plant breeding programs across the two departments and my office then works with those programs to identify three that will accept the student for approximately one month each during the summer. This program is open to Texas A&M students and to students at other colleges and universities. Some of the students whom we have had over the past couple of summers are highlighted below.

Maria Ypina was a community college student who heard about this program through Staci Frerich, our undergraduate recruiter. Maria rotated through the programs of Bill Rooney (sorghum), David Byrne (peaches/roses), and Wayne Smith (cotton) in 2009. Although we were not successful in attracting Maria into a plant breeding tract, we did solidify her desire to transfer to

Texas A&M and today she is majoring in Bio and Environmental Sciences in the Department of Plant Pathology and Microbiology.

In 2010, Heather Watson and Ben Meritt participated in the Plant Breeding Summer Internship program. Heather continues in our Department with plans to further her education through graduate studies but at last visit was not firm on her area of study. Heather rotated through Steve King (watermelon), Kevin Crosby (peppers), and Wayne Smith (cotton). Heather was impressed with Dr. King's watermelon breeding program and continued to work in his program during the Fall Semester of 2010. She was an integral part of my harvest efforts at Weslaco in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and working in cotton at 110 F probably made watermelon breeding pretty inviting. Heather noted, "I believe that this internship will help me decide my future academic direction and well as help me choose a rewarding and satisfying career."

Ben Meritt rotated through the sorghum program of Bill Rooney, the rice program of Rodante Tabien at the Beaumont Research and Extension Center, and Dave Byrne's peach and rose program at College Station. Ben has begun his graduate studies in cotton breeding and is co-chaired by Richard Percy (USDA/ARS) and Wayne Smith.

For 2011, so far we have two outstanding students lined up for the program. Mitchell Schumann will rotate through the programs of Rodante Tabien (rice), Ray Smith (forage legumes) at the Overton Research and Extension Center, and another program to be determined. Jae Ebeling will work with Jackie Rudd (wheat) at the Amarillo Research and Extension Center, Jane Dever (cotton) at the Lubbock Research and Extension Center, and Russ Jessup (perennial grasses) at College Station.

Ben Meritt's (2010 intern) Dad wrote a note of thanks for this program and gave me permission to share some of it with you. "My wife Teresa and I cannot tell you how much we appreciate what you do in your leadership for students like our son. ... we believe that the sky is the limit for his future in plant breeding. It's exciting to see and hear about the cutting edge science that is going into our agriculture of the future. .. Ben loves what he is learning and for the opportunity he was given this summer with the breeding internship that A&M offered (multiple crops). The program was exactly what Ben wanted to do."

Anyone interested in this program should visit with me at cwsmith@tamu.edu, 979-845-3450, or 217 Heep to learn more about the opportunity. I believe that the interns so far have found the program helpful as they decide their future professional direction. The plant breeding faculty has been supportive of the program and provides invaluable guidance for these potential plant breeders of tomorrow.

Other News

Reminder: The 2011 NAPB annual meeting will be held at College Station, Texas on the campus of Texas A&M University in 23 – 25 May 2011. Reminders and additional information on the 2011 meeting will be noted in future Plant Breeding Bulletins.

Please direct comments concerning this bulletin to Wayne Smith, cwsmith@tamu.edu or 979.845.3450.