As another summer draws to a close for the Department of Food Science and Technology, I reflect on the ebb and flow of students and faculty members over the course of the past school year. Leaving the Department were 70 undergraduates who completed their B.S. degree programs. This was a record number of students completing their degrees and included the first cohort of students from the 3+1 Program with Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University in China. Retiring from the faculty ranks was Dr. Steve Taylor. Dr. Taylor served as department head for 17 years and was the founding director of the internationally known Food Allergy Research and Resource Program (FARRP). I anticipate he will remain active with FARRP in a limited capacity, however his schedule will be far more flexible.

A big buzz around campus this past summer has been remembering the first moon walk by Neil Armstrong 50 years ago and the Department’s contribution to the mission. Dr. Burt Maxcy, Dr. Lloyd Bullerman and Dr. Ted Hartung (the Department’s first head) were recognized in several traditional and social media stories for their efforts irradiating the bread consumed by the Apollo 11 astronauts. I invite you to search for “Nebraska Space Bread” on the Web to see some of the stories that still might be out there.

Looking forward, the faculty and staff of the Department recognize their role in helping prepare students to provide safe, healthy and abundant food for the global population. As consumer demand remains strong for convenient and personalized foods, it remains the Department’s challenge to ensure its academic offerings are relevant and rigorous. Preparation of the next generation of food scientists and food technologists is important to you, me and our families. Additionally, it is incumbent upon the Department to facilitate extracurricular learning experiences such as industrial internships and international exchanges.

My colleagues and I remain committed to matching UNL graduates with the abundant opportunities in industry and graduate school. Many thanks for your continuous support. With it, you have helped us maintain a tradition of excellence within our program. Here’s to another successful year!

Best wishes,

Curtis L. Weller, Ph.D., P.E.
Professor and Head, Department of Food Science and Technology
Director, The Food Processing Center
Focus on Faculty

Andreia Bianchini, an associate professor for the Department of Food Science and Technology at the University of Nebraska, has made an impact within her department. She has a B.S. in food engineering and a M.S. in environmental and agricultural microbiology, both from Brazil. Since receiving her Ph.D. in food science and technology from UNL, Andreia has made her mark. From teaching courses and collaborating with other professors, to providing research to the ever-growing food industry, Andreia said she’s lucky to work in such a complex department.

When she was first deciding what she wanted to do for a career, she said she knew she wanted to be in an area that had research associated with it. Food science, she said, gave her the chance to do research in a lab as well as take her skills to the classroom. Her job is split between research, teaching and extension. Her area of research is focused on the evaluation of ingredients, assessment of processes, and the development of strategies to reduce and prevent contamination of final products with mycotoxins and bacterial pathogens. Additionally, Andreia focuses on extension activities, including technical advice and training as well as preparation of guidelines, protocols, standard operating procedures and related technical documents for improvement of safety and quality of food. When she brings her skills to the classroom, Andreia teaches intro-level and advanced students alike.

Dedicated to Research

Richard Goodman

Having been in the food research field for 25 years, Richard Goodman is dedicated to doing the most research he possibly can. With degrees in biology, dairy science and immunology, he’s always finding more to investigate and learn. This passion has taken him around the world, allowed him to make impactful discoveries and given him the opportunity to teach others.

Rick manages the AllergenOnline database, a collection of protein sequences and descriptions of published evidence of allergy and IgE antibody binding from people with clinically defined allergy. The proteins come from allergenic sources including foods, pollen, insect venoms, house dust mites and contact allergens. The proteins are the targets for IgG antibodies that are bound to mast cells and basophils and binding stimulate the release of histamine, which elicits symptoms that range from itchy hives to asthma and anaphylaxis. Allergies are responsible for more than 100,000 hospitalizations per year and up to one hundred or more deaths in the U.S., typically from consumption of a few major allergenic sources or from insect stings. A few proteins in the sources like peanuts, cow’s milk, shrimp and insect venoms are the targets of IgE binding and the cause of severe reactions. Deaths are very rare for those highly sensitive individuals. The AllergenOnline.org database provides a risk-assessment tool for food developers to evaluate the proteins they intend to transfer to new sources, either by genetic engineering or by processes that mix individual proteins into new foods. The team of allergy experts (listed on the website) reviews published scientific studies about individual allergenic proteins and determines whether they should be included, along with references to the studies. The database also includes a celiac disease peptide and protein database. Both databases are free for public use to evaluate possible risks of food allergy of proteins transferred into crops through genetic engineering for potential risks of allergy or celiac disease.

The Goodman lab also tests the serum of allergic volunteers to examine interactions between antibodies and the allergenic proteins. They also perform serum IgE tests with samples from volunteering allergic subjects to test IgE binding to potentially cross-reactive proteins.

‘Dedicated to Research’ continued on back cover.
Introducing New Faculty Members

Dr. Martinez is a food safety specialist working for the Nebraska Manufacturing Extension Partnership (NEMEP) and The Food Processing Center (FPC). His efforts are focused on providing training to growers, food companies, and animal feed manufacturers on the implementation of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rules. Besides training, he provides technical assistance and knowledge to those manufacturers that are struggling on the development of their food safety plans. Dr. Martinez received his bachelor’s degree at Zamorano University (Honduras) and his masters and doctorate degrees from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. He worked as a post-doctoral researcher for The Food Processing Center developing validation studies to determine the effectiveness of food processes on reducing pathogenic bacteria.

Dr. Villa-Rojas’ expertise is in food processing and safety. Her current responsibility is teaching heat and mass transfer, engineering properties of food, food engineering unit operations and fruit and vegetable technology for the 3+1 program. Her current research focuses on the use of multiphysics simulation to model and optimize food processes; she also studies the use of technology to improve food safety with emphasis on low moisture foods. In addition, she is currently working on developing teaching tools to improve engineering education. She received her B.E. in food engineering and M.S. in food science from Universidad de las Americas, Puebla (UDLAP), Mexico, graduating with Magna Cum Laude honors in both occasions. Her Ph.D. in biological systems engineering is from Washington State University. Before joining UNL, she did a postdoc in the School of Engineering and Science at Tecnologico de Monterrey (Mexico). Her work experience includes trainee in R and D for Mondelez, professor at a community college and research assistant for UDLAP. She has received more than 10 academic scholarships, awards and recognitions.

It all started on East Campus in 1917: student employment opportunities, sweet and savory dairy products and a warm welcome to all university visitors. Come celebrate over 100 years of tradition with our signature flavor Scarlet and Cream—available in a dish, cone, sundae or shake. The Dairy Store is proud of the rich history and remarkable memories we’ve made with UNL’s students, faculty and alumni over the years. We are humbled to be a part of such a great community. Come in today and get a scoop of our homemade ice cream, and build on the legacy of your UNL Dairy Store.
Nebraska food allergen program helps companies, health agencies worldwide

When Nebraska’s Steve Taylor founded the Food Allergy Research and Resource Program (FARRP) nearly 25 years ago—with the support of seven companies—he couldn’t have anticipated what came next.

“We started FARRP just as food allergy awareness started to explode among the food industry, consumers and public health agencies” said Taylor, professor emeritus of food science and technology. “We realized that no single food company could afford to develop all the tools and research to meet these needs, but perhaps a consortium of companies, working together, could do it.”

The program’s early research included a method to detect peanut residue. Through an industry partnership with Neogen Corporation, a company that develops solutions for food and animal safety, that method became a product: the first commercially available food allergen test kit.

“We saw an opportunity to combine (FARRP’s) capabilities in antibodies with our chemical conjugations, and put together a good program. It’s been a strong relationship,” said Jim Herbert, founder and chairman of Neogen Corporation, which developed and manufactured the food allergen kits.

The kits are now widely used to help companies detect undeclared traces of food allergens—including peanut, milk, egg, almond, hazelnut, coconut, soybean, sesame and shrimp—in food processing facilities.

“We generated the entire market category for allergen test kits,” Taylor said. “With the test kits, scientific expertise and testing facilities, FARRP became the go-to place for industry.”

Today, FARRP is an industry consortium with an international reputation for its food allergen research expertise and outreach. One hundred food processing companies support the program and help fund its operations, including 25 staff members and several graduate students.

In return, these companies have access to the latest food allergen information, including FARRP’s food allergy literature database and staff consultations. Companies also submit food and ingredient samples, as well as equipment swabs, for quantitative analysis and receive confidential results about the presence of potential allergens.

Using commercial test kits, FARRP processes 50,000 samples annually at its facilities on Nebraska Innovation Campus. Many of the test kits FARRP uses are still produced by Neogen Corporation—the result of a 22-year university partnership. NUtech Ventures, the university’s technology commercialization affiliate, continues to work with Neogen to license the university’s food science research.

Neogen is also among FARRP’s member companies, which all have a seat on its board of directors. They gather twice a year to learn about the program’s latest research and share common interests related to food allergens. According to Taylor, it’s a collaborative space, because everyone is working toward the same goal: preventing consumer illness.

Company interactions help shape FARRP’s applied research program, which often involves undergraduate and graduate students working on solutions directly related to industry. Faculty and doctoral students conduct independent research; topics include developing the next generation of allergen test methodology, exploring safe doses of allergenic foods and assessing how allergens are digested and absorbed.

“We get really positive feedback from our company members,” Taylor said. “With an industry-funded consortium, the most important thing to do is to sit and listen, because you’ll learn the research gaps. Someone will ask a question that you can’t answer.”

FARRP also prioritizes outreach to companies, consumer groups and government agencies. They regularly host training for the food manufacturing industry in the United States. They’ve also developed relationships with policymakers and public health agencies around the world. A partnership with Canada’s national public health department has resulted in an international conference, the Workshop on Food Allergen Methodologies, and is now in its 17th year.

The program’s positive reputation and connections have resulted in unique opportunities for students, Taylor said. Former students are employed at a prominent think tank in the Netherlands, a research university in Germany, the Food and Drug Administration in Washington, D.C., and a startup company spun out of Stanford University.

“I’m really proud of FARRP’s impact,” Taylor said. “The food industry is doing a much better job in allergen control and labeling. There’s still more work to be done, but we’ve made a difference.”
Dr. Jayne Stratton has a Ph.D. in food science from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL), and currently serves as a research associate professor and manager of The Food Processing Center’s Laboratory Services. She has been a faculty member in the Department of Food Science since 2009. As a food microbiologist, Jayne specializes in pathogen reduction strategies—particularly in the area of cereal grain safety and high pressure processing. She also offers process review of acidified foods for manufacturers of these types of products. Additionally, Jayne routinely participates in the scientific community through publications, presentations and forums with peers in food safety microbiology.

The Food Processing Center Laboratory Services provides rapid and accurate microbiological testing for the food industry. Routine analysis consists of testing for pathogens such as E. coli O157:H7, Salmonella, and Listeria. Tests for quality indicators include aerobic plate count, coliforms, lactic acid bacteria counts, and yeast and mold counts. The Service Lab also conducts specialized research projects for food companies such as validation studies to ensure compliance with regulations and shelf life studies to determine the stability of products over time. In addition to testing services, educational programs are offered to improve the knowledge of the workforce working in quality assurance laboratories in the food industry. One such training opportunity is the Food Microbiology Short Course, which is offered every spring and includes hands-on training in the laboratory.

The laboratory utilizes rapid screening methods such as bioMérieux VIDAS assays for food borne pathogens, including E. coli O157:H7, Listeria, and Salmonella. Also available is advanced DNA-based detection provided by our DuPontTM BAX® Q7 System, which utilizes polymerase chain reaction (PCR) to detect pathogens in ingredients, end products, and environmental samples. Specialized testing, such as rapid Salmonella serotyping (Check & Trace) and non-O157 STEC E. coli screening, is also available for large sample sets. From routine analysis to specialized research projects, The Food Processing Center can provide rapid and accurate microbiological testing so users can make appropriate decisions regarding the safety of their food products.
Congratulations to the Graduates

Spring 2019

Bachelor of Science
Kelsey Bignell
Xin Cao
Xinyu Chang
Qiayi Chen
Qiyue Chen
Yiyi Cheng
Shaoxuan Ding
Elizabeth Drey
Leo Ernst
Zupei Guo
Fan He
Yining He
Xiaoyun Huang
Kun Huang
Xiaochen Jia
Tang Li
Xiangyu Liu
Pujie Liu
Sujun Liu
Yutong Liu
Xuyang Ma
Xingfa Ma
Zhuowen Ma
Yutong Mao
Chen Meng
Chenhuo Meng
Xiangqi Meng
Rebecca Moore
Shane Nguyen
Shuhan Pu
Zijin Qin
Bingxu Ren
Qingqi Ren
Emmalea Rice
Jing Shang
Jing Shao
Nevada Smith
Bohan Sun
Haoyu Tian
Shuyu Wang
Yijie Wang
Zihan Wang
Ruihan Wang
Kaylee Weakly
Zijie Wei
Xin Wen
Luke Will
Xinan Wu
Yanan Xu
Qianying Xu
Yifei Yang
Siyu Yao
Wenxin Yi
Yifan Yin
Mengdi Yin
Yafan Yu
Chengliang Zhang
Zuoyi Zhang
Jie Zhang
Qingrui Zhu

Master of Science
Amy Garrison
Liyang Xie

Summer 2019

Bachelor of Science
Phillip Burke

Master of Science
Ali AlQaraghuli

Ph.D.
Ece Buluti

Awards and Recognition

Faculty

DR. ANDREW BENSON
Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology

DR. OZAN CIFTCI
Junior Faculty Recognition for Excellence in Research Award

DR. AMANDA RAMER-TAIT
John H. Silliker Distinguished Lecture

DR. MARK WILKINS
Named Nebraska Corn Checkoff Presidential Chair
Where are they now?

As a kid, Tessa Porter dreamed of being a food inventor. With her imagination and her interest in experimenting, Tessa wanted to create snacks people would be able to find in grocery stores. Tessa remembers walking through the center and seeing all of the recent inventions. She knew, from her first visit, that was exactly what she wanted to do.

When she stepped foot onto the University of Nebraska’s campus in 2005, she thought she’d enroll in culinary arts. However, after learning about the work of The Food Processing Center, she had a change of heart. From the moment she walked through the doors of UNL’s Food Processing Center, she knew it was the perfect place to start her journey. Her desire to create, invent and explore food began in The Food Processing Center. As a student, Tessa worked as a student food scientist. There, she learned about product development and was given the confidence to take her skills to various food development companies, like The Hershey Company and Beatrice Bakery Company. These companies gave her a playground to explore how candy is made.

Now, Tessa is the director of R&D at Ferrara Candy Company in Chicago, Illinois. Tessa’s responsibilities include working with scientists on candy products from conception to commercialization. While she gets to surround herself with new types of candy and flavors, her favorite part is the challenge of the unknown and building a team of young scientists who share her same passion of food creation. Her experience at UNL’s Food Processing Center helped her build a strong foundation. The quality of education The Food Processing Center has given her is invaluable and has made her a standout in her field. As the center continues to grow, Tessa is excited to see a new generation of young scientists make an impact in the field.

Food Innovation Center Rental Space

A few empty spaces for start-ups or established businesses are available for leasing on the fourth floor of the Food Innovation Center. The spaces have potential to hold a small pilot plant, a wet chemistry lab or offices. Any build-out costs would fall on the renter.

Several wet lab spaces, collectively known as the Biotech Connector, are already built out on the fourth floor. The Biotech Connector provides incubation and acceleration services to bioscience start-ups and high-growth biotech and research-based businesses. Specifically, the facility offers wet-lab space and utilities to develop commercial proof-of-concept prototypes and is managed by Invest Nebraska.

Limited space remains available on the fourth floor to those interested in creating a partnership with the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. For more information on leasing options at the Food Innovation Center, visit https://innovate.unl.edu/food-innovation-center.
Providing the opportunity for employees to learn new skills and update their knowledge is critical for any company to remain viable in the marketplace. The Food Processing Center provides companies with a variety of unique educational and training opportunities so your company can continue to be successful. Each program is designed specifically for the food manufacturing industry. Information is presented by industry and academic faculty experts. For complete information on each event visit fpc.unl.edu.

In addition to the upcoming events listed below, The Food Processing Center can work with your company to customize learning experiences for your employees. Many workshops can also be presented on-site at your location. To discuss this option, please contact Event Manager Jill Gifford at jgifford1@unl.edu or 402-472-2819.

**HPP Workshop**
October 8, 2019

**FSPCA for Human Food**
October 21-22, 2019
May 12-13, 2020

**Food Microbiology Workshop**
March 24-26, 2020

**Better Process Control School for Acidified Foods**
September 17-19, 2019
September 22-24, 2020

**FSPCA for Animal Food**
May 19-20, 2020

**Environmental Monitoring Workshop**
June 2-3, 2020

**Food Processing Management Certificate Online Program**
Ongoing

**Recipe to Reality Seminars**
October 12, 2019
January 25, 2020
March 28, 2020
June 6, 2020
August 22, 2020
October 24, 2020
Introducing Graduate Student Vera Cao

When Wanyling Cao (Vera) came to America from China, she was interested in advancing her knowledge on food processing and technology. Before coming to America to pursue her education, Vera had never left home. “It was a very difficult decision, but gave me better opportunities to do what I want on food allergy research,” Vera said. From day one, Vera was intrigued by the new challenges she’d be exposed to at UNL’s Department of Food Science and Technology.

Vera, a fourth year Ph.D. student, received her masters degree from the Illinois Institute of Technology. There, she began her research on gluten detection by using various methods. Now at UNL’s Department of Food Science and Technology, Vera is continuing her research. However, her research program hasn’t been clean of difficulties. It took her almost a year to start up her Ph.D. project. Since gluten is such a complex protein, she said she chose to take her time to figure out what exactly she wanted to focus on—doing background research and analysis of gluten, including educating herself on celiac disease and mass spectrometry. Doing this extensive research, as well as adjusting to a new city, made the first year of the program difficult. However, Vera said she is proud of what she has accomplished and the community of people she’s met to help her through it.

Once Vera is finished with her program, she said her project can be used in several ways. One way it can be used is within the brewing industry. Often times, Vera said, gluten still lingers within gluten free beer. During the brewing process, her research can be used to determine whether gluten is completely detracted from gluten free beers.

Her research, she said, wouldn’t be what it is without the help of her professors within the department. Specifically, her advisors Dr. Melanie Downs and Dr. Joseph Baumert helped ensure Vera was working to her fullest potential. “When I first started my research at Nebraska, I started out slow during the beginning stages. They encouraged me, helped me with any challenges and guided me through this new project,” Vera said.

One of the most exciting parts of her program is seeing how far she has come in her research. Throughout her research, she said there have been numerous steps she’s had to follow and new things she’s had to learn along the way. While there have been times it’s been frustrating, she said it’s allowed her to grow as a student and has made her excited for what’s to come in her future.
Introducing Undergraduate Student Vanessa Whitmore

For Vanessa Whitmore, food science changed her life. From day one at Nebraska’s Food Innovation Center, she said she immediately felt at home. She was initially drawn to the opportunities, as well as the different paths she could take, within the program. Vanessa said the Food Innovation Center is filled with supportive students and staff that have challenged her and have made her feel like she’s a part of something special.

Now, as a senior, she makes it a priority that other students in the program have the same welcoming experience. During the upcoming school year, Vanessa will serve as the president of the Food Science Club. She is looking forward to serving as a leader and mentor for younger students. Throughout her time in the program, Vanessa has also worked as an intern for the USDA-ARS. She’s been working in a research lab that focuses on antibiotic resistance and how that resistance may be transferred through agriculture and food. While in this lab, Vanessa had the opportunity to work on some samples from many companies. Working in the lab setting has made her a better student.

Since being in the food science field, Vanessa has learned about the many paths that can be taken. After her graduation in May 2020, Vanessa hopes to take her skills to law school. Her goal, she said, is to practice law related to public health within food manufacturing companies. The confidence she has gained throughout her time at the Food Innovation Center has made her feel capable to take the next step in her food science career. As the Food Innovation Center continues to grow, Vanessa said she can’t wait to see other students succeed and make their mark in the department.

Partnership with Kewpie Corporation

A collaboration between the Nebraska Department of Economic Development and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln is helping to strengthen the state’s ties to a major international trading partner. In May 2019, Terry Howell, the executive director of The Food Processing Center, along with other delegates of the university and the economic development team, journeyed to Japan. The week-long trip featured a visit to the Kewpie headquarters and meetings with government officials and industry representatives within the city of Kobe. Additionally, the delegates were able to visit other universities in the area to talk about future partnerships and projects.

For the past two years, The Food Processing Center has been establishing a partnership with Kewpie Corporation, a Japanese food manufacturing company. The trip, Terry said, gave him and the delegates a chance to strengthen that relationship and figure out how the two can grow together. While Kewpie already has a manufacturing plant in Nebraska, one of the goals of this partnership is for the company to continue to build and increase their manufacturing presence in the state. Delegates from Kewpie often visit Nebraska’s Food Processing Center to meet with members of the program. The relationship with Kewpie, Terry said, remains bright. As the center continues to make trips to Japan, Terry said there’s always more room to learn from other manufacturing plants, partners and food processing centers. The relationships forged from these trips makes members of Nebraska’s Food Processing Field excited for the future.
Though the database holds vital information, the database is underfunded. Maintaining new information, publishing and communicating with international allergy experts is essential to stay current as the number of allergens, allergenic sources and celiac-inducing proteins continues to grow. However, with the help of database developers, publishers and reviewers, the database is continuing to shed light on important issues within the food science field. His efforts have taken him beyond the research setting, including both the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology and the European Academy of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. In fall 2018, Rick traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark, to meet with other researchers and representatives of biotech companies and the European Food Safety Authority for discussions on bioinformatics for allergy and for celiac disease. He also attended the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Meeting. Rick also chairs the WHO/IUIS Allergen Nomenclature Subcommittee that provides shorthand names for allergenic proteins such as the major allergen, Ara h 2 for the 2S albumin of peanut.

There’s still a lot to discover within food allergy and celiac disease to help protect allergic consumers, including the evaluation of risks. Richard plans to continue working to maintain the database for some years and helping communicate appropriate food safety evaluation around the world, in Nebraska and in the classroom.

FOLLOW THE FOOD PROCESSING CENTER ON SOCIAL MEDIA

You can follow the activities, updates, and news from the Food Processing Center on your favorite social media channels. We are found on LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook.

LinkedIn will be our primary channel to communicate events, news and opportunities with food industry professionals and partner organizations. We will also distribute updates on Twitter and Facebook.

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WINTER 2019

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and Technology, and Director
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CURTIS WELLER

LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK!

We’d love to hear from you! For any feedback or story contributions you’d like to see in future issues, email us at FOODSCI@UNL.EDU.

IN OUR GRIT, OUR GLORY.