

OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

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OU biology research helps protect world's food supply

For the past several years, Zijuan Liu, Ph.D. and doctoral student Joseph McDermott, from Oakland University's Department of Biological Sciences, have been working on groundbreaking research that promises to stave off a major threat to the world's food supply. They are collaborating with a team of scientists from China, Germany and the United States to discover how arsenic accumulates in plant seeds.

Arsenic is a toxin and carcinogen that is pervasive in food and water, endangering the health of tens of millions of people worldwide. While the process of how arsenic is taken into roots and shoots of plants is fairly well understood, little is known about how arsenic gets into seeds.

Understanding how arsenic is accumulated in seeds – such as rice grain – is of critical importance to global health. Rice is a staple food for more than half the world's population. In China, for example, about 60 percent of daily dietary arsenic comes from rice consumption, as reported in the journal "Metallomics." In the U.S., the average person consumes about 25 pounds of rice per year, according the U.S. Rice Producers Association.

Fortunately, Dr. Liu and the research team are making strides in finding out how arsenic builds

up in plant seeds. As reported in the journal "Nature Plants," the researchers discovered that the plant "A. thaliana" uses transport systems for inositol, a type of sugar, to load arsenite, the toxic form of arsenic, into seeds.

According to Dr. Liu, this is the first identification of transporters responsible for arsenic accumulation in seeds. The discovery could lead to far-reaching breakthroughs in protecting the world's food supply, she says.

"If this same pathway of how arsenic accumulates also exists in rice, it will lead to the generation of new rice cultivators with less arsenic in the grain, a major advance toward minimizing the global health risks posed by arsenic in rice, and possibly in the near future, in other food sources," Dr. Liu said.

As the research team continues to make progress, Dr. Liu is proud of her collaboration with McDermott, who was an undergraduate student when the work began.

"I put a lot of faith in undergraduate student research," Dr. Liu said. "This result indicates our school has run a successful program to attract students who are interested in research."

CEO Magazine recognizes Oakland University's MBA, Executive MBA programs

CEO Magazine's 2016 MBA rankings name Oakland University's MBA and Executive MBA programs among the best for students. Oakland is one of just two Michigan universities to appear on the North America MBA list and the only one in Michigan on the Global EMBA list.

"We are proud the MBA and Executive MBA programs have received this stellar recognition from CEO Magazine," said Michael A. Mazzeo, dean, Oakland University's School of Business Administration. "The performance indicators CEO Magazine focuses on provide real insight and value to current and prospective MBA and Executive MBA students. The CEO Magazine ranking complements the recognition the Oakland business school has received from The Princeton Review and U.S. News & World Report."

The CEO Magazine MBA Rankings are designed with students in mind. They examine the nuts and bolts of an MBA: the learning environment, class sizes, tuition fees, faculty, delivery methods, international diversity, gender make-up and more. The objective is to identify schools that combine exceptional quality with great ROI.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Bridge the Gap program provides free physical therapy for stroke survivors

Throughout this month, Oakland University is hosting Bridge the Gap, a program that provides stroke survivors with free physical therapy treatment.

Bridge the Gap is a hands-on, educational experience where graduate students in the Physical Therapy Program at Oakland University provide supervised physical therapy for participants who have suffered a neurological injury in the past, primarily stroke.

Over the course of a few weeks, the students have an opportunity to practice the various neurological evaluation and intervention techniques taught in their classes with people who have true impairments and functional limitations rather than just practicing on their classmates. Many of the participants have limited coverage for continued physical therapy out in the community so this program provides them a way to continue to make improvements while aiding in the development of the students' skills and confidence. Bridge the Gap is a unique learning opportunity with long lasting benefits for everyone involved.

Oakland University has been running the Bridge the Gap program since 2005.

OU launches first-ever Honors Inclusion Conference

This week, the Oakland University Honors College kicked off the inaugural Honors Inclusion Conference. The three-day event, which is being held in Oak View Hall, is geared toward university

faculty, admissions officers, academic advisers, honors program staff, graduate students, high school teachers and others interested in enhancing inclusivity in honors education nationwide.

The conference also marks the launch of the National Society for Minorities in Honors (NSFMIH), an organization dedicated to promoting equity and diversity in honors education.

OU Honors College Dean Graeme Harper spearheaded the conference, which he sees as a key opportunity for attendees to discuss and network among peers to support diversity and inclusion in honors education.

"Diversity involves everyone," Dr. Harper said. "Honors education has to be about supporting anyone who seeks to pursue educational excellence, and we need to develop better ways of doing that, of understanding how to overcome obstacles to doing that, and of developing educational partnerships and collaborations that assist us in doing that."

The conference features speakers from around the country, as well as OU faculty and students. OU Honors College member Christina Root is participating in a student panel titled, "Honors, Diversity and Inclusion."

"One of the topics we'll be talking about is how to increase diversity in the Honors College here at OU," the social work major said.

Root, who serves as president of OU's International Allies Organization and works in the International Students and Scholars Office on campus, added she is interested in helping raise the

number of international students in OU's Honors College.

Learn more about OU's Honors College at Oakland.edu/hc.

OU's Ali Woerner named top winner of the County Executive's Elite 40 under 40 class

Following a public vote, Oakland University's own Ali Woerner has been named the overall winner of the 2016 Oakland County Executive's Elite 40 under 40 class. The class spotlights outstanding professionals under the age of 40 who live or work in Oakland County and have made a positive difference in their field and community.

Woerner, an assistant professor of dance, beat out two other finalists and was announced as this year's winner at County Executive L. Brooks Patterson's State of the County address on Feb. 10. As the top winner of this year's class, Woerner will be invited to attend Oakland County events and meet with County Executive L. Brooks Patterson and other leaders.

Woerner, 38, has taught at Oakland for the past six years and is co-founder and co-director of the highly innovative, nonprofit, professional modern dance company, Take Root.

OU alumna Jeannette (Smither) Brown was also among the three finalists in this year's 40 Under 40 class, which featured 11 individuals with ties to the university. She is co-founder and chief operations officer of Dutton Farm, a Rochester-based nonprofit that serves individuals with mental, physical and emotional impairments in Oakland County.

STATE AND NATIONAL HEADLINES

Tennessee lawmaker tries to recruit out-of-state college students

Tennessee universities could soon be seeing more out-of-state students. As it is drafted right now, a bill sponsored by State Senator Todd Gardenhire would allow students from any state bordering Tennessee to receive in-state tuition. Eight states border Tennessee, including Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Missouri.

NewsChannel9.com
March 13, 2016

What Do Americans Think About Access to Education?

Americans continue to see expanding access to education as the best strategy for widening opportunity in the modern economy, but remain conflicted as to whether to extend that commitment to dramatically widening the pathway to higher education, the Atlantic Media/Pearson Opportunity Poll has found.

The survey found that big majorities of Americans, across racial, partisan, and generational lines, support expanding access to pre-school for more young children. And when asked what would do “the most to improve the economy in your local community” a plurality of those polled picked increasing spending on both K-12 and post-secondary education over alternatives including cutting taxes or reducing foreign imports and restricting immigration.

But adults split much more closely—and fissured along more familiar political lines—over proposals to provide free, public

higher education and to reduce the mounting burden of student debt.

The Atlantic
March 9, 2015

Higher education next on NY lawmakers' agenda

Higher education spending is next on the agenda for New York lawmakers as they continue work on the 2016-17 state budget.

State University of New York Chancellor Nancy Zimpher is scheduled to testify Monday before the state legislature's finance committees in Albany.

Also planning to speak are SUNY Potsdam President Kristin Esterberg, Monroe County Community College President Anne Kress, and University at Albany President Robert Jones.

Governor Andrew Cuomo's budget proposal includes extending legislation that let's SUNY and City of New York public campuses raise tuition by up to \$300 annually if they show they've tried to reduce spending.

Associated Press
February 8, 2016

University offers free housing for 'Hartford Promise' scholars

City students dreaming of college have another incentive to do well in school: the prospect of free on-campus housing from the University of Saint Joseph.

The private West Hartford college is the latest institution of higher education to partner with the Hartford Promise, announcing Monday that it would give four years of undergraduate housing to Promise scholars who enroll there.

The housing scholarship, which covers the cost of a double room valued at \$6,250 next academic year, is in addition to the \$5,000 annually that certain Hartford students would get through the Hartford Promise, a scholarship program that starts with this year's high school seniors in the class of 2016.

Tribune Star
February 12, 2016

Federal Reserve economists say recent college grads are doing better than many believe –

The recent college graduate working in Starbucks is the nightmare of many parents and also of college admissions officers, who feel that stories about that stereotype discourage many prospective students. Two economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York on Monday released a summary of their recent research that finds the stereotype to be false and the economic difficulties of recent college graduates to be overstated. The headline of the summary: "Working as a barista after college is not as common as you might think."

Inside Higher Ed
January 12, 2016

WI: Assembly adopts bills aimed at college affordability, but costs remain issue in Senate

This week, a package of bills championed by Gov. Walker related to college affordability passed the state's Assembly. The bills include lifting the cap on the student loan interest that can be deducted from state income taxes, increasing funding for need-based grants to technical college



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State and National Headlines *CONTINUED*

students, creating emergency grants, increasing the number of internship programs, and mandating that institutions provide students with financial literacy information about their student loans. Some lawmakers have indicated that the scope of the proposals may be reduced in order to cut the price tag—currently estimated at about \$10 million—to about \$2 million. A Senate committee is scheduled to hold a hearing on the bills next week.

Wisconsin State Journal
February 17, 2016

Budget committee OKs higher education increase

Even without a \$10 million tuition lock program, colleges and universities will see a \$20.8 million, 8 percent increase in state support in fiscal 2017.

The joint budget committee began its final week of budget-setting Monday by approving a \$556 million higher education budget. That includes \$279.5 million in general fund support, up from \$258.8 million this year.

Imtribune
March 8, 2016