

Cowboy Economist

Oklahoma State University • Department of Agricultural Economics • Fall 2019



DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Ferguson College of Agriculture

letter from

THE INTERIM DEPARTMENT HEAD



Welcome to the fall/winter 2019 issue of the *Cowboy Economist* published by the OSU Department of Agricultural Economics. We strive to keep our readers informed about key events in the life of the department over the past several months including news about students, faculty members, and staff.

In this issue, we highlight a significant Extension programming effort, led by Brian Whitacre, which is part of the department's ongoing effort to reduce the "digital divide" and increase high-speed internet access and use in Oklahoma.

Our students in both our undergraduate and graduate programs continue to excel. We have featured some of the awards and honors they have received. Aggie-X is doing well and has an outstanding group of officers and members. Be sure to read about their recent activities plus those of the Graduate Student Association.

Another article focuses on the one new faculty member and three new staff members that the department welcomed last year. These individuals discuss their histories and job responsibilities.

We hope you enjoy this issue of the *Cowboy Economist*.

Go Pokes!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Raymond Joe Schabert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

about the cover

The mobile hotspot device is an integral part of the Mobile Hotspot Lending Program, an agricultural economics Extension program in rural Oklahoma. These hotspots are being provided to small rural libraries to "check out" to their patrons. The program is part of an effort to increase high-speed internet access and use for rural residents. Photo by Chesley Comstock.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

4	AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS SENIORS OF SIGNIFICANCE
5	AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS TOP 10 FRESHMEN
6	GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP RECEPTION
8	JOINING THE COWBOY FAMILY
10	MOBILE HOTSPOT
14	AGGIE-X UPDATE
15	GSA UPDATE
16	RURAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK CONFERENCE
17	HOMECOMING ROYALTY

INTERIM DEPARTMENT HEAD – Dr. Joe Schatzer
EDITOR AND GRAPHIC DESIGNER – Chesley Comstock
EDITOR AND CONTRIBUTING WRITER – Judy Rudin
EDITING – Anna Whitney

Oklahoma State University, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination and affirmative action. Oklahoma State University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all individuals and does not discriminate based on race, religion, age, sex, color, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, disability, or veteran status with regard to employment, educational programs and activities, and/or admissions. For more information, visit <https://eeo.okstate.edu>. This publication, issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President of the Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources, was printed at no cost to the taxpayers of Oklahoma. This publication is printed and issued by Oklahoma State University as authorized by the Vice President of the Division of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources and has been prepared and distributed at a cost of \$4.50 per copy.

SENIORS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Five students within the Department of Agricultural Economics receive a top senior honor.

Oklahoma State University selects students each year for the prestigious Senior of Significance award. This award is given to students who represent the top one percent of their graduating class in all six OSU undergraduate colleges. These students are recognized for having excelled in scholarship, leadership, and service to campus and community and having brought distinction to OSU.

This year, 41 students were selected, eight of which are Ferguson College of Agriculture

students with five of those in the agricultural economics department.

All of these students are involved in various organizations and come from different backgrounds, but were all able to have great success during their time at OSU.

“We are honored that the Department of Agricultural Economics was well represented,” said Dr. Joe Schatzer, Interim Department Head, “we are proud of our students for achieving this great accomplishment.”



MCKENZIE LEANNE CARVALHO

Maxwell, California | Agribusiness and Agricultural Communications

CHESLEY ANN COMSTOCK

Woodward, Oklahoma | Agribusiness and Agricultural Communications

JACOB RYAN SESTAK

Prague, Oklahoma | Agricultural Economics

TORI ALLAN TRIMBLE

Jenks, Oklahoma | Agribusiness

ALLISON ELIZABETH WILTON

Fort Sumner, New Mexico | Agribusiness

TOP 10 FRESHMEN

Five students within the Department of Agricultural Economics receive top freshmen award.

The OSU Mortar Board Honor Society selected this year's Top 10 freshmen men and women. This is an honor based on scholarship, outstanding leadership, and community service. Students are eligible to apply their sophomore year based on freshman year achievements. The selection process starts with the Top 20 freshmen men and women. The committee consider the students' GPA, scholarships, research projects, involvement and more.

Among the Top 20, seven Department of Agricultural Economics students were

selected. These included the students listed below as well as Logan Carter (agribusiness; Oologah, OK) and Caleb Huston (agribusiness; Cattanooga, OK).

These Top 20 students then interviewed for a spot as a Top 10 freshmen man or woman, and the five students listed were selected and recognized at an OSU Football game.

Dr. Shtazer, Interim Department Head, stated, "This is such a high honor, and we look forward to the future accomplishments of these students while at OSU."

JACI LANE DEITRICK

Newcastle, Oklahoma | Agribusiness and Psychology

AMARIE COOPER GRIFFITH

Cushing, Oklahoma | Agribusiness and Agricultural Communications

MARTINE ALEXIS MOLINA

Newcastle, Oklahoma | Agribusiness

LESLIE NICOLE SMITH

Woodward, Oklahoma | Agribusiness

LORA JEAN WRIGHT

Verona, Missouri | Agribusiness

Jaci Deitrick

Amarie Griffith

Alexis Molina

Leslie Smith

Lora Wright



2019 - 2020 GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP AND FELLOWSHIP RECEPTION

Spielman Scholarship

Donors: Jan and Hank Spielman
Kayla Hildebrand, Ph.D. *
Barrett Moore, M.S.
Katlin Ramy, M.S.

Leo and Betty Blakley Graduate Fellowship

Donors: Leo and Betty Blakley, Lyle and Adeana Sallee
Jessica Richard, Ph.D.
Abby ShalekBriski, Ph.D.
Miyeon Son, Ph.D. *

The Leonard F. Miller Distinguished Graduate Fellowship in International Rural Development

Donors: Leonard Miller, Ronald and Carol Huffman, Bruce and
Kristen Miller
Heydi Calderon Ambelis, Ph.D.
Alejandra Mendoza Ruiz, Ph.D. *

Clem Ward Endowed Scholarship

Donors: Clem and Mimi Ward, others
Logan Britton, Ph.D.
JooHun Han, Ph.D.
Barrett Moore, M.S. *

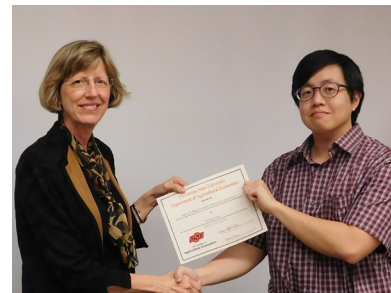
Stoecker Family International Agricultural Economics Fellowship

Donors: Barbara Stoecker
Recipients:
Seokil Lee, Ph.D. *
Mengyu Yin, Ph.D.
Albert Cai, M.S.

Harry P. Mapp Graduate Fellowship (Endowed)

Donors: Damona Doye, Damon and Georgia Doye, others
Recipients:
Logan Britton, Ph.D.
JooHun Han, Ph.D. *
Ty Smith, M.S.
Christopher Jurgensmeyer, M.Ag.

* Indicates the student is in the photograph



GRADUATE PROGRAM

Doctor of Philosophy | Master of Science
Master of Agriculture in Agribusiness



Wade Brorsen, Graduate Coordinator
Anna Whitney, Student Services Specialist
417A Ag Hall • Stillwater, OK
agecgrad@okstate.edu

The Department of Agricultural Economics has a long tradition of being one of the best departments in the U.S. working on the most relevant and applied issues in agricultural and food industries. Students completing degrees have excelled throughout the world in teaching, research, extension, government service, and business. The department has an environment conducive to considerable interaction among students and faculty.



DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Ferguson College of Agriculture

Joining the Cowboy

FAMILY

Four new members are welcomed to the OSU Agricultural Economics Department to join the Cowboy family.

The agricultural economics department welcomed one new faculty member last year: Dr. Courtney Bir, and three new staff members, Carrie Alexander, Emilia Contardi, and Darla Hisey.

“Dr. Bir is an excellent addition to our staff in extension and research farm management,” said Dr. Joe Schtazer, Interim Department Head.

Dr. Courtney Bir

Dr. Bir has joined the department as an assistant professor with a joint extension research appointment. She specializes in farm management and ag finance. She has two bachelor’s degrees from Oklahoma State University, Animal Science (2011) and Agribusiness (2013). She also received her master’s degree in Agricultural Economics from Oklahoma State University (2015). She finished her Ph.D. from Purdue University this past year.

Dr. Bir’s recent work has combined eliciting consumer preferences for agricultural products and traditional production economics to attempt to determine if consumer’s preferences regarding

production processes can be profitably incorporated or adopted by producers. Dr. Bir looks forward to expanding her work to meet the needs of Oklahoma producers. She expressed her joy in returning back to OSU and said, “My husband, an OSU alumni as well, and I are happy to be back and cheering on the Pokes!”

Carrie Alexander

Carrie Alexander joined the Agricultural Economics Department on November 11, 2019 as the Senior Administrative Support Assistant. She coordinates meetings between undergraduate students and faculty advisors as well as with all undergraduate prospective students. Carrie is responsible for processing travel, P-Card purchases, and assisting with copying and scanning needs for the agricultural economics faculty. Carrie also helps with compiling assessment data for undergraduate and graduate programs for the Assessment Coordinator.

When she is not working, Carrie enjoys spending time with her family. They’ve lived in Morrison for the past 13 years. Carrie has two boys, Matthew and Cody, who are active in

the Morrison FFA. She and her husband celebrated their 21st wedding anniversary in October. In fact, it was her husband Mike who told her about the position within the department. He had learned about it while repairing a piece of equipment for one of his customers and encouraged Carrie to apply.

Emilia Contardi

Emilia Contardi is the Administrative Assistant for the Agricultural Economics Department Head. She assists in the administration of the departmental office with multiple responsibilities. Some of her responsibilities include: supervising office staff, handling routine departmental matters, overseeing the general office budget, maintaining the department calendar; maintaining records, assisting in preparation of formal and informal reports, and serving as major point of contact with individuals, organizations, agencies, and units both on and off campus that interact with the department. She also assists the department head in planning/ coordinating special projects and meetings.

In addition, she serves as lead for human resources functions,

which includes a comprehensive understanding of the university, DASNR and departmental policies, procedures and guidelines.

Emilia's OSU roots run deep as she was born and raised in Stillwater and both of her parents retired from OSU. She has worked on Oklahoma State's campus for the last 17 years.

Darla Hisey

Darla Hisey joined the County Training Program staff as a Local Government Specialist in August 2019. Darla will work with all county officers and their employees and conduct outreach activities throughout Oklahoma. She will develop government educational materials and manuals, plan and deliver training classes and presentations, provide technical assistance, and serve as a liaison to a county officer group.

Prior to joining the County Training Program in Agricultural Economics Extension, Darla worked for the Center for Local Government Technology (CLGT). At CLGT, she was a Local Government Specialist in the County Training Program for four years before it moved to Agricultural Economics Extension. Then she worked on special projects for CLGT, CLGT outreach programs and local government agencies. She also served CLGT as an administrative manager and worked in the Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP).

Darla began her career in county government after she graduated from Oklahoma State University. She worked in the Garfield County Clerk's Office in land records, purchasing,



Dr. Courtney Bir is among the new employees within the department. As an OSU alumni, she is happy to be back at her alma mater. Photo by Todd Johnson.

accounts payable, payroll, and then served as the County Clerk for seven years.

Darla is excited to be with the County Training Program and looks forward to working with the county officers and their employees. Based upon

their requests, she has developed an inventory tracking and disposal class and is currently working on an online course for purchase card training.

MOBILE HOTSPOT

Helping to bridge the digital divide in rural Oklahoma.



Individuals who live in an area where Internet access is readily available may tend to take it for granted. However, in many rural areas without reliable Internet connections, residents are increasingly at risk of facing significant disadvantages from not having access to the services others take for granted.

This situation has become known as the “digital divide,” the differences in broadband (or high-speed Internet) access, and use, across various segments of society. The “digital divide” exists across location (rural versus urban); monetary (low-income versus high income);

and age (younger versus older) characteristics.

In an effort to address one aspect of the “digital divide” in Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University’s Cooperative Extension Service (a state agency administered by the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources [DASNR]) partnered with four small rural libraries to develop a pilot mobile hotspot lending program during 2017-2018. Through this pilot program, between four and seven hotspots were provided to the Elgin Community Library, the Reiger Memorial Library in Haskell, the Thomas-Wilhite Memorial Library in Perkins,

and the Seminole Public Library, where patrons could “check out the Internet” to their own homes.

The original library hotspot lending programs were initiated in Chicago and New York in 2014 and 2015. There patrons check out a mobile hotspot, a portable, hand-held device, which connects to a cellular network similar to a smartphone. The hotspot then sends out a wireless signal that can connect to up to 10 devices (such as laptops, tablets, and smartphones) at once.

Brian Whitacre, agricultural economics professor and OSU Cooperative Extension



Image of an Internet mobile hotspot device provided by Dr. Brian Whitacre.

economist, is the programs' principal investigator and continues to work to expand these initial cooperative partnerships with other select public libraries.

According to Whitacre, "The hotspot can be used inside a home, taken to restaurants, community centers and the like, and even go on a road trip. As long as the cellular network provider used by the hotspot has service in that area, the devices will provide fast Internet access."

In 2018, four additional Oklahoma libraries, the Grove Public Library, the Guthrie Public Library, the Okemah Public Library, and the Sayre Public Library, teamed up with OSU Cooperative Extension Service to provide hotspot devices to their patrons.

Later in 2018, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Oklahoma provided a \$3,000.00 grant to fund four devices each for the Atoka County Library, the Davis Public Library, and the Love County Library in Marietta to further enhance Internet access in those rural areas.

In June of 2019, AARP Oklahoma provided an additional \$5,000.00 grant to fund 22 Internet mobile hotspots among the Nora Sparks Warren Memorial Library in Pauls Valley, the Blackwell Public Library, the Hulbert Community Library, and the Inola Public Library as part of Extension's rural broadband outreach program. The grant also funded data services for three hotspot devices previously made available through the program in the Okemah Public Library.

AARP State Director Sean Voskuhl states, "Access to the Internet has become increasingly important. We hope to empower Oklahomans to be able to access digital services such as healthcare, entertainment, and job and education resources, while also being able to be more socially connected and personally fulfilled."

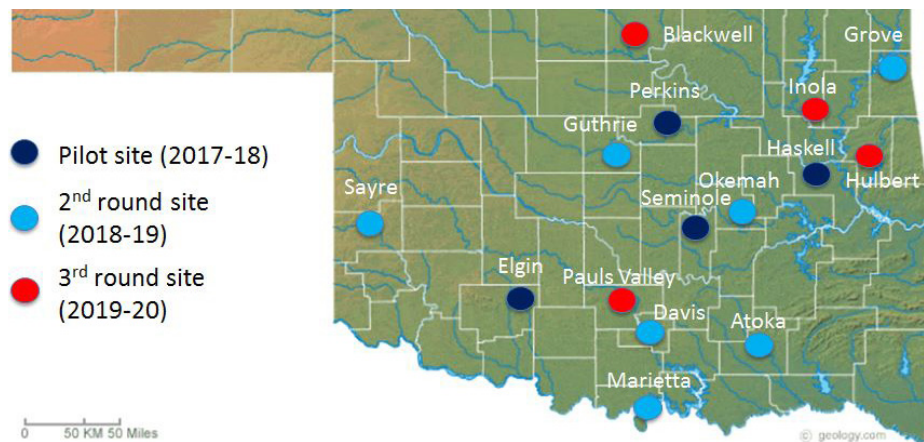
Whitacre says AARP's help in bringing broadband capabilities to these seven communities is greatly appreciated, as well as being an example of benefits gained through cooperative partnerships between the university and public and private

organizations.

The Extension hotspot program has now been rolled out to 15 Oklahoma libraries allowing patrons in those areas to take advantage of Internet services. While the OSU program pays for the devices and associated data plans during a library's first year, the libraries are responsible for keeping the program running afterwards. Thirteen of the 15 have been able to continue the program on their own funding after the initial one year trial period. Oklahoma is now a national leader in the number of rural libraries participating in these types of programs.

Whitacre adds that, "Users are making favorable comments about the mobile hotspots, saying that they made it easier for parents to help their children with homework, allowed people to search for and apply for jobs, assisted in the planning of community events, and kept people in touch with family members residing within or outside their hometowns. These benefits are consistent with Extension's mission of improving quality of life in rural communities."

Teressa Labbe, head librarian at the Okemah Public Library states, "Many Okfuskee County residents do not have wifi, and we have only six public computers at the library, so we saw the OSU program as a great opportunity to provide needed digital services. Our hope is that it assists people with job training, job searches, students doing web-based homework, and just social connections in general, promoting a greater sense of community."



Above is a map showcasing the various sites which have received Internet mobile hotspots. The different colors represent when the library received their device. Photo provided by Dr. Brian Whitacre.

Surveys of patrons at participating libraries indicate OSU's rural broadband outreach program is overwhelmingly popular, with more than an overall ranking of 9.5 out of 10. A number of respondents even called the mobile hotspots "a blessing."

Jonathan Edwards, branch manager of the Davis Public Library, says "It seems as though everyone wants to use the mobile hotspots, so much so that it's December, and we still have a waiting list a month into the program. The devices are not sitting in the library, but are checked out and being used continuously."

Patrons enjoying the hotspots can purchase one of their own, something Whitacre encourages. Whitacre says, "Our research has shown that more households adopting broadband is associated with better economic outcomes for their communities."

Randy Taylor, OSU Cooperative Extension assistant director, says the program is one way that DASNR is helping the university meet its state and federally mandated land-grant mission. "Extension has a long history of working to improve the quality of life for Oklahomans, rural and urban, and this program reflects our continuing commitment as technologies and lifestyles change." Extension has been helping Oklahomans since its establishment in 1914.

The OSU Department of Agricultural Economics has a long history of working in the field of rural broadband, including research and extension programs. Several of Whitacre's

research articles have found that broadband adoption is highly correlated with economic growth in rural areas – counter to federal programs that focus mostly on rural broadband availability. These findings are making their way into the policy discussion, with current proposals seeking to encourage adoption.

A previous Extension program in this area brought hands-on workshops to rural communities, helping small business owners take advantage of the Internet. Over the period 2008 – 2015, the agricultural economics department held more than 130 workshops on topics like building a small business website, accepting payments online, or search engine optimization. The rural library hotspot program is the latest effort attempting to address this important topic.

Whitacre notes that the program is looking to expand

in 2020, and that AARP has expressed an interest in again helping to fund additional sites. Whitacre is actively seeking out rural libraries where the program would be beneficial. Anyone who knows of a location where this program would be a good fit is encouraged to contact Whitacre. Also, anyone interested in additional information about either the library mobile hotspot program or potential ways to enhance Internet access to rural Oklahomans may contact Whitacre by email at brian.whitacre@okstate.edu or by phone at 405-744-9825.

Readers can access the program's website at <http://agecon.okstate.edu/hotspot/>. They can also access the following reference, which provides more background into the initial four pilot sites and provides detailed results of the patron surveys: <https://www.joe.org/joe/2019april/a2.php>.



In 2018, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Oklahoma provided a \$3,000.00 grant to fund 12 Internet mobile hotspots. In June of 2019, AARP Oklahoma provided an additional \$5,000.00 grant to fund 22 more devices. Photo provided by Dr. Brian Whitacre.

AGGIE-X UPDATE

As the fall semester comes to an end, we reflect on many memories that were made with alumni, members, and friends. The executive team welcomed faculty as well as new and old members to the annual Back-to-School Bash. The event took place at Boomer Lake in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Attendees enjoyed great food prepared by Dr. Riley, a cornhole tournament organized by the executive team, and great fellowship between faculty and students from the department.

In September, the club welcomed alumni, students, and faculty to the annual Agricultural Economics Tailgate that took place before the game against Kansas State University. This event was different from years past as the club partnered with the Oklahoma Collegiate Cattlemen & Cattlewomen. We also invited members from the respective K-State clubs to attend the event. This was our chance to show our hospitality to the K-State Agricultural Economics Club just as they did for us during our trip to Manhattan, Kansas last spring.

With the approach of America's Greatest Homecoming, members participated in many events. The events included the sign competition, chili cook-off, harvest carnival, and window painting in Ag Hall. During the weeks leading up to homecoming, members spent a lot of time together creating friendships and strengthening bonds.

Leading up to the holidays, CASNR clubs decorated trees that were placed throughout Ag Hall. This event brought our members together to make ornaments and decorate the tree as a family. We all enjoyed a fun time with each other, reflecting on the important things in life.

As the semester came to an end, the executive team organized a holiday party for members to reward their hard work over the past few months. The members went to Frontier Lanes Bowling Alley in Stillwater, Oklahoma. They enjoyed bowling, food, and fellowship during the party.

We are all looking forward to the spring semester and spending time with each other. The Ag Econ Banquet will take place on April 18, 2020 in the Wes Watkins Center. We will also be taking a club sponsored trip at the end of the semester.

Thank you all for your continued support of the club and the department.

Go Pokes!



Sara Yates
2019 – 2020 Aggie-X President



Pictured above from left to right: Dr. John Michael Riley (Advisor), Emma Hayhurst (Secretary/Reporter), Bret Barnard (Educational VP), Sara Yates (President), Russell Spurlock (Administrative VP), Konlee Dulaney (Treasurer), and Dr. Amy Hagerman (Co-Advisor). Photo provided by Sara Yates.

GRADUATE STUDENT ASSOCIATION UPDATE

Fall 2019 found graduate students in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University being immersed in research and educational opportunities. While we enjoy getting to work in a collegial and productive department, we often have the chance to leave the fourth and fifth floors of Agricultural Hall to experience Stillwater.

The main objective of the Agricultural Economics Graduate Student Association is to enhance the graduate student

experience at OSU through social and professional activities. This year's officer team includes Chellie Hogan from Alabama, Whoi Choi from South Korea, Barrett Moore from Louisiana, Kayla Hildebrand from California, Tori Marshall from Tennessee, and Katie Welch from Arkansas. Brian Whitacre advises the GSA in addition to his other duties as professor and extension economist.

To jumpstart the semester, GSA hosted its annual welcome social at Eskimo Joe's where we enjoyed its famous cheese fries and the company of faculty members and fellow students. We have plans to bring speakers from across campus to share their insights about extension, research, and international experiences.

The 2019 Agricultural and Applied Economics Association Annual Meeting was held in Atlanta, Georgia, toward the end of July. Seven of our students shared their research through either a selected presentation or poster or moderated a track session.

Tori Marshall and Katie Welch have been selected from a national pool to be Farm Foundation Agricultural Scholars. This inaugural program entails them visiting Washington, D.C., and Kansas City, Missouri, to meet with agribusiness leaders, policymakers, and producers as well as having experiences to learn more about production agriculture, agribusiness, and government.

This fall, there are 40 graduate students in the department, 21 of those pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy

and 19 pursuing either a Master of Science or a Master of Agriculture. Our students hail from 10 different states and 6 countries.

We look forward to the feats our students will reach in the months to come as they work on their research projects and attend professional meetings, disseminating their findings and networking with other economists across the country. Thank you for your continued support of the department and graduate programs.

Go Pokes!



Logan Britton
2019-2020 GSA President

GSA Officers

PRESIDENT:

Logan Britton

VICE PRESIDENT:

Chellie Hogan

SECRETARY:

Whoi Cho

TREASURER:

Barrett Moore

SOCIAL COORDINATOR:

Kayla Hildebrand

GPSGA COORDINATORS:

Tori Marshall &

Katie Welch

ADVISOR:

Brian Whitacre

RURAL ECONOMIC OUTLOOK CONFERENCE

The 2019 Agricultural Economics Rural Outlook Conference, held in October at Oklahoma State University (OSU), featured presentations on the current state and the future of rural economy and on implications regarding migration and labor markets. The 115 attendees, including agricultural producers and suppliers and individuals from education and banking and other financial areas, also heard information about the rural economic outlook for Oklahoma and agricultural policy highlights.

Keynote speaker Dr. Sarah Low, Associate Professor of Regional Economics and the Fred V. Heinkel Chair in Agriculture at the University of Missouri, discussed the state of rural economy, future rural economic development, and agricultural policy implications.

According to Dr. Low, rural economies nationally are more diverse than ever, with much more agriculture and energy industries. She noted that the growth in Oklahoma's economy since 2001 has been above U.S. growth. Oklahoma's wage and salary employment growth has been just below the U.S. figures. Both Oklahoma and Missouri have employment growth stronger than neighboring states. She also noted that nationally, rural population loss is lessening.

Dr. Low emphasized entrepreneurship, which she says she believes is a strong rural community sustainability tool. Manufacturing, according to Dr. Low, is more important to rural economy than to urban economy. She said that while entrepreneurship is declining nationally, entrepreneurships of small, independent rural manufacturers were the most resilient in recent years.

Dr. Low stated that rural Oklahoma is more than mining and agriculture. The state also includes recreation and manufacturing with economic development and agritourism opportunities. She maintains that Oklahoma should capitalize on its regional strengths such as food manufacturing and agritourism.

Dayton Lambert, OSU Agricultural Economics Professor and Willard R. Sparks, chair in Agribusiness Studies, presented an update on research in the agricultural economics department. He spoke on the variety of research in the department, including graduate students' research. Topics included cropland data and land use, 2019 spring flood disruption effects, and the outlook for rural-metro Oklahoma jobs and industry.

Amy Hagerman, OSU Agricultural Economics Assistant Professor, reviewed

2019 agricultural policy developments in 2019 and gave a policy outlook for 2020 in farm policy, rural development, disaster recovery, marked access, and livestock policy.

After lunch, keynote speaker Dr. Pia Orrenius, Vice President and Senior Economist with the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, presented implications for growth in rural America regarding migration and labor markets.

She said that a slow recovery from the recession is directly related to weak workforce growth. While this weak growth has regional impacts, the less populated and rural areas are far more affected.

Dr. Orrenius stressed that international migration plays an increasing role in GDP growth. The availability of both high and low-skilled workers is important. GDP growth shows current expansion has been unusually weak and labor force growth has been exceptionally slow.

Conditions that have caused this slow growth include labor force and working-age population growth rates that have been declining over time, a U.S. labor force participation rate that has been in decline since 2000, and an overall population growth that has slowed. The employment growth is projected to fall to .5% over

the next decade. Reasons for this fall are aging, declining fertility, and technology and trade.

Dr. Orrenius emphasized that aggregate economic growth grows when there is labor force growth and productivity growth. Productivity growth has also slowed in the post-recession period. Population growth is sluggish in small and medium-sized metro areas, and negative in rural counties.

Dr. Orrenius believes that small and rural counties need international migration to grow. She maintains that as Baby Boomers leave the workforce, all growth in the next two decades will be from immigrants and their children. Immigrants are

needed to add to high-skill labor and for filling the low-skill void. She said that most new jobs and fast growing jobs are low and mid skilled jobs.

She also believes that immigration reform is needed, that common sense policies can be adopted such as increasing legal immigration and raising the share of employment-based immigration, prioritizing skills, allowing sponsors, and considering temporary worker programs for low skilled immigration.

Closing out the conference, the agricultural economics department's "Rapid Fire Outlook Panel" presented facts, figures, and projections on

various topics. Rodney Jones, OSU Agricultural Economics Farm Credit Chair, discussed "Ag Finance Topics." Kim Anderson, OSU Agricultural Economics Professor Emeritus and extension economist, presented "Crop Bits and Pieces." Derrell Peel, OSU Agricultural Economics Charles Breedlove Professor, talked about "Livestock Markets."

To view a video of the conference or to access the PowerPoint slide presentations, go to <http://agecon.okstate.edu/extension/ruralconference.asp>.

Also, mark your calendars for the 2020 Rural Economic Outlook Conference to be held on October 14 at OSU.

OSU HOMECOMING EXECUTIVE TEAM & ROYALTY

Five Agricultural Economics students served on the OSU Homecoming Executive Team, and one student was honored as a royalty member.

America's Greatest Homecoming is a title Oklahoma State University takes great pride in. Each year a team of students is selected to ensure the celebration goes smoothly.

Members of the department take pride in the fact that five students majoring in agribusiness or agricultural economics were

among the nine students selected for the OSU Homecoming Executive Team for 2019. Zach Guy (University Spirit), Kade Killough (Athletic Pride), Ryli Powell (Campus Life), Clarissa Ratzlaff (Harvest Carnival) and Tori Trimble (Public Outreach) all served this past year.

Further honors go to Morgan

Thomas, another agricultural economics student, who was part of the homecoming royalty as a Homecoming King Candidate.

Some of these students have been selected to serve again on the 2020 homecoming team. Continue to the next page to hear from these students.

Zach
Guy



Why do you think Oklahoma State has been named "America's Greatest Homecoming?"

I believe that Oklahoma State's Homecoming is named "America's Greatest Homecoming Celebration" for one primary reason, because it is. With almost 100 years of experience, we have been able to make it the biggest and the best. With getting to the size we have, we have been able to make it so much more than just about OSU. Our celebration is able to bring 100,000 people into Stillwater, which includes families, residents, and most importantly the alumni. We provide an opportunity for different generations to connect over one simple thing, and that is the shared bond of homecoming. The ability for that bond is what makes ours the best.

Kade
Killough



What was your favorite part of OSU Homecoming 2019?

Some of my favorite memories from the last year as the Athletic Pride Executive were the late nights my team spent together in the Alumni Association Center working on our respective committee roles, but also telling stories and enjoying fellowship. Homecoming is a tremendous event, being able to play a key role in the success and production for OSU has been an honor. So far, my favorite part of Homecoming was the event I was tasked to run, "Basketball Bonanza." It was an amazing experience seeing the fruits of my committee's and team's labor played into action through an electric basketball tournament for both Greek and independent students on campus.

The reason I enjoy this event so much is primarily due to the the experience. It is such a fun event where students are funneling in-and-out constantly cheering on their teams at extreme measures, all decked out in themed outfits. The environment is unmatched. Each score or defensive stop triggers the crowds to react like it is the last three seconds in the national championship game. There are many aspects of homecoming we will remember and rightfully so, but Basketball Bonanza will always bring a smile to my face and an unforgettable experience I one day will brag to my children about.

Ryli
Powell



What impact does homecoming have on OSU/Ferguson College of Agriculture?

When I think of Oklahoma State University's annual Homecoming, a few things come to mind, a sense of tradition, comradery, and celebration. OSU's homecoming is an extremely rare event that I am proud to have been a part of for the past three years. This event is unique in its nature to bring such a vast majority of individuals together all for a common cause, in celebration of past, present, and future cowboys. OSU's Homecoming is a great platform for all students to get involved in. Having been engaged in homecoming as well as the Ferguson College of Agriculture, one of the most impactful things that stuck out to me, about both of them is their sense of family. To me that "family aspect" can be exhibited in many ways. The most significant is that no matter the event, competition or not, when the work is done, and our hats are hung, we are all still there for the same purpose, to better our university.

Clarissa Ratzlaff



What are you looking forward to next year?

Homecoming 2020 is going to be the experience of a lifetime. Not only is it the centennial of “America’s Greatest Homecoming” but I have the incredible honor of serving as the Executive Director for the celebration. Words will never adequately describe the experiences, relationships, and opportunities that serving within Homecoming has given me, and I’m beside myself with excitement for this journey. Celebrating 100 years of something that brings people together like nothing I’ve ever seen is arguably one of the experiences that will impact my life forever. I love homecoming because it’s about so much more than the competition or the student experience, but above all, it’s about bringing cowboys together. I always describe homecoming as an event that perfectly embodies our beloved university: bringing cowboys past, present, and future together to celebrate this special place that we all share a fierce love for. I truly believe Stillwater is a college town like none other and homecoming is the greatest tradition we have. I am honored and humbled to serve the university that has given me so much on the Homecoming Executive team, and I cannot wait to play such an up-close role in Homecoming 2020.

Tori Trimble



What was the most challenging aspect during Homecoming?

The most challenging aspect during the Homecoming season for me was just to constantly remind myself to enjoy each and every moment. Serving as the Public Outreach Executive, I spent a lot of my time in preparation for my event and planning the tiniest details, as did every other executive. We started preparing in January for a one week event in October. Caleb Eyster, our Executive Director, who served on the team the previous year kept reminding us that it is going to go by quickly and to try and embrace every moment. The week of Homecoming goes by in a blink of an eye, and it was very challenging for me to step back from the fast pace and planning of the event and trust that I had done all the preparation necessary and just enjoy each moment. It is definitely the best organization I was ever a part of my whole college career.

Morgan Thomas



What was it like being selected as a part of OSU Homecoming Royalty?

To be selected for the homecoming royalty court was truly something I never could have imagined. The selection process is very intense and contains multiple rounds. During this process, I began to notice the people around me are some of the most rewarded undergraduate students at Oklahoma State. I felt lucky to just be in the room with such an incredible group of people. After being selected, we were given so many awesome opportunities to interact with the students and alumni that make OSU so special. America’s greatest homecoming is unmatched, and the experience of being on the royalty court was unforgettable.

Cowboy Economist
Oklahoma State University
Department of Agricultural
Economics
308 Agricultural Hall
Stillwater, OK 74078-6026

