

Thoughts from DOCE

The Joint 2015 Project Directors' Conference for [Alaska, Hawaii](#) and the [insular areas](#) programs was held at NIFA headquarters in Washington, DC, June 22–24. Four project directors from the conference are the "guest columnists" in this issue. You will read about the importance of the insular area institutions, located in the Pacific and in Latin America. You will hear about how Alaskan and Hawaiian institutions make real impacts, too. NIFA's three targeted programs strengthen the capacity of these schools to carry out teaching, research, and/or extension programs in the food and agricultural sciences. If you any have comments on how NIFA can help enhance the capacity of these institutions, let the [division director](#) know.

ANNH Program: Nurturing Seeds, Scientists, and Farmers in Hawaii

Global competition has taken a bite out of the traditional sugar and pineapple industries in Hawaii. Over the course of my career I've watched 13 sugar plantations shrink to just one. However, Hawaii has an asset it can never lose, its year-round growing season. On the mainland, winter limits how many germplasm crosses can be achieved; but not in Hawaii. Agribusiness companies such as Monsanto and Pioneer use this climate to breed different corn and soybean varieties. This new industry, focused on genetics, has created a need to train more students in agricultural research.

Charles Kinoshita**Associate Dean****The University of Hawaii at Mānoa**

There's another reason why agricultural education is important to Hawaii. At any given time, Hawaii has only a one- to two-week food supply (85 percent of our food is imported). Any natural or man-made disaster that disrupts shipping could have disastrous consequences for our citizens. To improve our food security we need to increase the number of Hawaii entrepreneurs entering agricultural fields. NIFA's Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions Education Competitive Grants Program (ANNH) has helped us to create our Agribusiness Incubator Program (AIP). AIP trains local farmers to be more successful. It is also a center where we can provide hands-on training to talented students seeking agriculture-related careers. Without the ANNH, there would be no AIP.

RIIA Program: A History in Progress

This year marks the 11th anniversary of the Resident Instruction and Distance Education grant programs. I've relied on this funding from my early career as an associate dean to my present position as a full faculty member.

Gladys M. Gonzalez-Martinez**Professor of Agricultural Economics
University of Puerto Rico**

Before the Resident Instruction for Insular Areas (RIIA) program was launched, we had funding for research and extension, but not for education. I remember how hard Dean Jeff Barcenas (at the University of Guam) and Jose Quinones (at the University of Puerto Rico) worked to make this grant a reality. Jeff headed an effort to create the *CariPac* Consortium, which is a group that represents all the insular area schools. Today, I'm the *CariPac* director; Angel L. González is co-director and also a professor at the University of Puerto Rico.

I have 300 incoming freshmen for our agricultural program this year. It is not entirely because of my RIIA funding, but the grant was a big factor. Our enrollment continues to climb even as enrollment rates for agricultural degrees drops nationally. About 20 percent of our students want to pursue graduate degrees. Others go into the workforce and many join USDA agencies such as the National Resource Conservation Service or the Agricultural Research Service.

This year, eight of our students presented their research at the 2015 Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences annual conference and one of them took second place in the oral presentations competition. We also have a program with a local high school to encourage students with interest and talent in math and science to participate in agricultural science laboratory experiences with our faculty.

DEG: Building Links to Learning



Many people don't realize that the American Samoa has the most expensive Internet in all of the United States, including its territories. The Distance Education Grants for Institutions of Higher Education in Insular Areas (DEG) allowed us to provide 10 computers for our agricultural science majors so they can take distance education classes and conduct research. The broadband infrastructure for these computers alone costs around \$2,000 a month. Cost aside, another challenge is our isolation. When we order equipment and supplies to train students in laboratory skills, we have to pay high freight costs. We also must wait significantly longer to receive our supplies than faculty at mainland schools. We are one of only two institutions offering post-secondary education (as a two-year school) in the American Samoa. Through RIIA we have provided scholarships to 10 students so they can continue their studies at the University of Hawaii at Hilo or Mānoa. Students have to maintain a strong grade point average and stay in touch with our college so we know that they are successful in their bachelor's degree program. I also know these grants will be available for me as an instructor when I'm ready to pursue my doctorate.

Pauline McFall
Instructional Coordinator
American Samoa Community College

ANNH: Making Education Relevant and Empowering in Alaska



The tribal communities we serve help to transfer knowledge and teach the next generation on how to accomplish hunting, fishing, and gathering food in a sustainable manner—we call it subsistence science. Unfortunately, public land managers are mostly from outside the community and don't fully understand how regulations interfere with this tradition and impinge on tribes' food access. We created programs that empower rural Alaskans, regardless of their age and federally-recognized tribal affiliation, to demonstrate the science behind their practices so they can influence policy effectively. And the science we're doing has an impact! Tom Marsik, who is part of our consortium at our Bristol Bay Campus, was recognized as having designed and built the most energy efficient house in the world (according to the World Record Academy). This has important implications for every resident in Alaska where gasoline costs can reach as high as \$9 per gallon. Each of our campuses is working on practical concerns like this, whether they provide certificates, associate, bachelor, or graduate degrees.

Pete Pinney
Executive Dean
University of Alaska Fairbanks

DOCE Program Fast Facts

- The National Agriculture in the Classroom (AITC) Organization, Kentucky AITC, and NIFA hosted an "Ag in the Classroom" Teachers' Conference for 400 educators, June 16–20, at The Galt House Hotel in Louisville, Kent. During the conference six teachers received the 2015 Excellence in Teaching about Agriculture Award. This year's recipients are: Christine Danger, Leslie Preston Meredith, Darlene Petranick, Rachel Parker Morris, M.K. Preston, and Théo Anderson.
- NIFA on June 23 helped USDA's Office of Tribal Relations hold an in-depth session on building scientific capacity for six 1994 land-grant institutions (Federally Recognized Tribal Colleges). Participants met with six AFRI program leaders and the discussion led to better understanding between 1994 schools and AFRI program staff.