Greetings, colleagues, alumni, and friends!

As the spring semester of 2008 begins, I am very happy to report that 2007 was another productive and successful year for the Department of Nutritional Sciences.

This is my 6th year at UConn as Department Head of Nutritional Sciences. As I write this report, I feel privileged and honored to serve the Department in this role and most grateful to you, faculty and staff, for your unwavering commitment to excellence in all areas of our tripartite mission; teaching, research and outreach. I also would like to thank our alumni, retired faculty, and friends for your contributions, constructive suggestions, and, most of all, staying connected with us in all of our endeavors. As I reflect on the past 5 years, the remarkable progress we have made thus far would not have been possible without your constant and generous support.

At the outset, I would like to briefly highlight “what has happened” during the past 5 years in our undergraduate program. As you will see below, our undergraduate enrollment has grown steadily since 2002 and has now reached the 180 mark. In the fall of 2008, it is expected to rise to 190. I am thankful to faculty (especially, Dick Clark) for their efforts to make it happen by taking on additional advising and instructional assignments. During the same period, faculty have made significant contributions to the University’s general education by teaching general ed courses with high enrollments such as NUSC 165, which is reflected by the steady increase in the number of student credit hours generated by faculty. With the increasing enrollment, efforts are also being made by faculty to diversify the undergraduate population. For example, the “Science and Technology Reaching Out to A New Generation in Connecticut” program (STRONG-CT; Director, Hedley Freake), funded by NSF, is designed to increase enrollment, retention and graduation of first generation and historically underrepresented student populations in life science disciplines. It is expected this program will help diversify the student body in the Department as well as at UConn.

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Also, our graduate program continues to remain strong and productive. Graduate enrollments have been maintained at a steady level. In 2007, a total of 43 graduate students (18 M.S. and 25 Ph.D.) enrolled in our graduate program and 7 M.S. and 6 Ph.D. students completed their degrees. The continued success of the graduate program is evidenced by the high quality of students, their publications in high-tier journals, national awards and scholarships, and their successful postgraduate careers. In 2007, faculty obtained a total of over $8 million in extramural grants with a record-high annual income totaling over $4.75 million. At the same time, faculty published 39 full-length articles in refereed journals and presented 43 abstracts at national and international conferences, and served on a number of journal editorial boards, professional society committees and leadership positions, and state, regional and federal committees and grant review panels.

As you are aware, another important mission of the Department is to provide quality outreach/extension programs and support a broad range of research-based outreach programs. The Department’s outreach/extension programs are well recognized for their excellent award-winning accomplishments reaching all age groups and underrepresented minority populations in the State and beyond. The programs include the Food Stamp Nutrition Education (FSNE; PI, Ann Ferris), Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (FNEP; Director, Linda Drake), Food Safety Education (PI, Ellen Shanley), and the Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos, funded by NIH (CEHDL; Director, Rafael Pérez-Escamilla). These programs also have made significant contributions to both undergraduate and graduate programs by providing many service-learning and research opportunities.

In the past year, the Department put forth a new initiative to establish a comprehensive multidisciplinary center on functional foods and bioactive food components. This proposed center aims at preventing and reducing the risk of chronic diseases, obesity, and obesity-associated disorders in children and adults through research, education and outreach on functional foods and healthy food habits. To support this initiative, Provost Peter Nicholls has provided a full professor position who will serve as Coordinator of the initiative, and Dean Kerr has allocated two tenure-track assistant professor positions to the Department. I am also happy to mention that the Esperance Family Foundation has provided a generous gift of endowed funds via Dr. Roger Newton and Mrs. Coco Newton. We are grateful to the Newtons for their encouragement and helping us make it a reality. Currently, searches are underway for these 3 positions and one assistant professor in community nutrition. We expect to fill the positions before the beginning of Fall 2008.

Lastly, there have been some changes in our faculty. Steve Davis, assistant professor, resigned in August 2007 to accept a position at Abbott Nutrition in Ohio. Carol Lammi-Keefe retired in August 2006 and moved to Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, as Head of the Division of Human Nutrition & Food, School of Human Ecology. Also, effective July 1, 2007, Ann Ferris moved to the Department of Medicine, Division of Public Health and Population Sciences, UConn Health Center School of Medicine. She serves as Deputy Director of the Center for Public Health and Public Policy at UCHC. We are thankful to both Drs. Lammi-Keefe and Ferris for their many years’ outstanding service and contributions to the Department as faculty and department head.

As the spring semester 2008 is about to begin, I am excited about the prospect of having four new faculty members joining us in the fall and moving forward with the functional foods initiative.

I wish you and your family a happy and productive year!

With best wishes...

Sung I. Koo, Ph.D.
**Outreach/Extension**

**Food Stamp Nutrition Education** received approval of the Food Stamp Nutrition Education grant for the 2008 fiscal year in September. Ann Ferris is overall Principal Investigator and there are 5 individual projects (Food Stamp Connections, Food Security, Hispanic Family Nutrition Program, 4H Summer and Year-round Nutrition Education and Administration) each with its own Principal Investigator, goals, objectives and program plan.

The **Senior Nutrition Awareness Program (SNAP)**, formerly a joint partnership between UConn and the University of Rhode Island has now been fully incorporated into the UConn FSNE Food Stamp Connections project. SNAP is located in the Norwich Cooperative Extension office. Susan Beeman is PI for this project. Diane Schuler continues to deliver programming in southeastern Connecticut with more than 10 collaborating community agencies.

This past academic year we had 160 students participate in the **Food Stamp Connections Husky Service Learning** programs including Husky Reads, Husky Nutrition and Husky Sport. We are proud of the continued growth of these programs.

For the 4th semester, **UConn Café** was funded by the USDA’s Higher Education Challenge Grant. This service-learning class focuses on the prevention of childhood overweight and builds participating students’ leadership skills and cultural competence.

The **Connecticut NIH EXPORT Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos (CEHDL, www.cehdl.uconn.edu)**, led by Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, held its 2nd annual conference entitled ‘Reducing Cancer Disparities in Connecticut and Beyond’ on May 16th in Storrs. The keynote address ‘Obesity and Cancer: A Health Disparities Perspective’ was delivered by Tim Byers from the University of Colorado School of Medicine. This conference brought together 130 participants from academia, community agencies, health care institutions and government health agencies to discuss issues ranging from cancer genomics and nutrition to community support groups.

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla chaired the FAO-sponsored ‘First Latin American & Caribbean Household Food Security Measurement Conference’, June 8-10, Carmen del Viboral, Antioquia, Colombia. This conference was co-chaired and hosted by Martha Cecilia Alvarez Uribe from the University of Antioquia. Additional conference scientific committee members were Hugo Melgar-Quíñonez (Ohio State), Ana Maria Segall-Corrêa (University of Campinas, Brazil), and Mark Nord (USDA). The main purpose of the conference was to begin a consultative process for the incorporation of The Latin American & Caribbean Household Food Security Scale (Escala Latinoamericana y del Caribe de Seguridad Alimentaria (ELCSA)) in nationally representative surveys in the Region. ELCSA builds heavily upon the national experiences in the USA, Brazil, and Colombia applying experience-based household food security scales as well as from similar but smaller scale projects in Argentina, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Trinidad & Tobago, and Venezuela. ELCSA also benefited from the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) multi-regional study carried out by the Academy for Educational Development USAID FANTA project and partners. The conference keynote speaker was Beatrice Rogers (Tufts) who delivered the talk ‘Measuring and Monitoring of Food Insecurity and...’

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**Alumni News**

**Alex Anderson** (PhD, MPH, 2005) and his wife Mildred welcomed their first child, Dominic Offei, October 27, 2007. Dominic is doing great and getting big. Mildred resumed classes this semester and Alex is keeping busy with his Asst Professor position at UGA teaching an epi course and a public health nutrition course. And he was voted “Outstanding Advisor of the Year” for his department (Dept. of Foods and Nutrition). Alex is going to Australia in February with one of his graduate students to present their research at the ISRHML conference. His graduate student will be receiving one of the ISRHML prestigious travel awards.

**Dr. Angela Bermudez-Millán** (PhD, 2007) has accepted the position of Community Core Coordinator for the Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos. After a long national search, the Hispanic Health Council is delighted to have her aboard in this capacity. Currently a post-doc fellow with CEHDL at UConn and part-time research associate to the Community Core at the HHC, Angela has been involved with the agency for many years as employee, UConn BS, MPH and PhD student, and friend. Her research has been very relevant to the programmatic and policy needs of the Latino community in Hartford and beyond. With her extensive experience in community based research and education, we look forward to the effective role that she will play as community core coordinator, interpreting relevant health disparity information for the community, and capturing community perspective on health disparities for interpretation in the world of research, as well as developing community based research targeted at developing and evaluating community based best-practice solutions to health disparities.

**Karin Conde** has had a very good promotion in her current job at Hoffman La Roche in Nutley, NJ.

**Tsetan Dolkar** (MS, 2005) who came to UCONN with sponsorship from the Tibetan Fund Scholarship Program returned to India soon after her marriage in Texas. She and her husband Tenzin, had a baby boy in April, 2007, Yeshi Serink Dakpa. She is staying with her mom in India and planning on coming back to USA next year. Tsetan misses her friends at UCONN!

**Christine Greene** was highlighted in the Winter 2007/2008 Edition of Hartford Hospital’s ROUNDS magazine for her work with Hartford Hospital’s new ”Healthy Weight and Wellness Center”.

**Lauren Haldeman** (PhD, 2001) is expecting her third child the beginning of February. Her 2 daughters, Annelise and Amelia are keeping her very busy. She did get her tenure packet completed and in and her husband Tony received his PhD in December and is teaching at Elon University in the Sport and Leisure Management Department.

**John Hayes** (PhD, 2007) is a NIAAA T32 postdoctoral fellow at the Brown University Center for Alcohol and Addictions Studies in Providence RI. He is learning about behavioral genetics and neuropsychology so he can expand his work on food and beverage liking as a predictor of intake to explore interactions between liking and reward.

**Shannon Haynes** (BS, 1999) and her husband Aron, welcomed their 1st child, August 18, 2007 Maya Emilie D’Aquila is doing well and Shannon continues to edit the CEHDL newsletter.

**Gloria Otoo** returned to Ghana after completing her PhD in December, 2007. Right now she is settling in and applying for a position as a Lecturer to the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at the University of Ghana.

**Stefania Paciello** (MS, 2003) as Quality Assurance Manager for Celebration Foods (Carvel) is in the process of working on the opening of a new facility in New Britain, CT. The opening date is scheduled for February 18th and she is coordinating the process to make sure that all is in compliance with the many different food safety regulations before the doors can even open. There will be an estimated 300 new employees at that operation. Stefania also has gotten the approval to open an in house lab for analytical and microbiological testing.

**Tripurasundari Ramjiganesh** has moved to NC and started her new job as Senior Associate Project Manager, Interactive Technologies, ICON, Clinical Research.
Grants

Richard Bruno
• United States Department of Agriculture USDA-NRI, Evaluation of the bioactivity of green tea in an animal model of hepatic oxidative stress, 01/01/2008 – 12/31/2009, $458,868
• Donaghue Nutrition Research Competition, UConn Health Center, Metabolism and bioavailability of dietary soy isoflavones in postmenopausal women, 07/01/2007 – 06/30/2008, $16,500
• International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI) Research Foundation, Hyperglycemia-mediated alterations in vascular endothelium function and redox sensitive parameters, 07/01/2007 – 06/30/2009, $59,880

Ann Ferris
• USDA/CTDSS Food Stamp Nutrition Education grant from 10/1/07 to 9/30/08 totaling $1,664,205.
  o Food Stamp Connections: Ann Ferris, PI, Susan Beeman and Michelle Pierce, Co-PI's $650,138
  o Food Stamp Administration: Susan Beeman, PI, $170,835
  o 4H Summer and Year-round Nutrition Education, Umekia Taylor, PI, $78,062
  o Hispanic Health Council: Rafael Perez-Escamilla, PI, $656,564
  o Food Security, Linda Drake, PI, $ 108,608
• Evaluating Changes to the Local Food Environment. Pending: Ethel Donaghue Foundation; $240,000/2 yrs
• Effectiveness of an IBM-Based Intervention for Reducing Sweetened Beverage Consumption in Preschool Children. USDA/CSREES; $999,127/3 yrs

Hedley Freake
• The role of the zinc transporter, LIV-1, in the endocrine responsiveness of breast cancer cells. 1/1/08-12/31/08. University of Connecticut Research Foundation. $21,350.

Nancy Rodriguez

Honors, Awards & National Panels

Richard Bruno

Koo, S.I.

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla
• NIH-global health programs, NIH-health disparities centers of excellence, Institute of Medicine/National Academy of Sciences Committee-Weight Gain Guidelines during Pregnancy.
• National Academies Institute of Medicine (IOM)/National Research Council (NRC) committee. Re-examining the current IOM Pregnancy Weight Gain Guidelines (Committee member).
• 2007 C. Peter Magrath/ W K Kellogg Engagement Award-North East Region. National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (NASULGC).

Continued on page 8, Honors, Awards, ...
Graduate Students Completed


Rachel (Glennon) Drake - Parental perceptions of beverages: understanding factors influencing beverage choices for children”, May 2007

Christine E. Dugan - “Green tea extract in the prevention of obesity-triggered hepatic steatosis”, December 2007

Lora (Suzie) Goodell - “Effectiveness of an IBM-Based Intervention for Reducing Sweetened Beverage Consumption in Preschool Children”, May 2007


Karen Konopelski - “Effects of negative energy balance on substrate utilization and the respiratory exchange ratio during an endurance exercise in endurance trained men and women”, December 2007


Gisella Mutungi - “Potential of eggs in enhancing the cardioprotective effects of carbohydrate restricted diets in weight loss interventions”, December 6, 2007

Gloria Otoo - “Impact of HIV on the onset of lactation among Ghanaian women”, December 2007

Vanessa Sawyer - Black, overweight, preadolescent girls from inner-city, low-resource families desire a smaller body size to improve peer interactions and physical abilities”, May 2007


Mawunyo Timpo - “Exclusive breastfeeding policies and outcomes in Ghana”, May 2007

Moises Torres-Gonzalez - “Carbohydrate restriction and dietary cholesterol distinctly affect hepatic cholesterol and lipoprotein metabolism in guinea pigs”, June 14, 2007

New Graduate Students

Major Advisor: Richard Bruno
Min-yu Chung................................................ PhD
Dana DiNatale............................................... MS
Manuel Matos............................................... PhD

Major Advisor: Richard Clark
Molika Chea.................................................. MS

Major Advisor: Maria Luz Fernandez
Ryan DeOgburn............................................. MS
Jennifer Jones............................................... PhD

Major Advisor: Hedley Freake
Bruce Grattan............................................... MS
Anthony Palermo.......................................... MS

Major Advisor: Rafael Pérez-Escamilla
Grace Kollannoor.......................................... MS
Milton Stokes............................................... PhD
Katherine Wetzel.......................................... MS

Major Advisor: Nancy Rodriguez
Cheryl Dziura-Duke..................................... MS
Louis Jones................................................ MS
Jennifer Rogers.......................................... MS

Alumni News (cont.)

Suheeta Roy after having a son has returned to the work force. She is currently a Research Associate, University of California in San Francisco.

Mawunyo Olivia Timpo (MS, 2007) returned to Ghana and was soon married. Mawunyo worked supervising data collection for a while. She is now working with Prof Ana Larrey at the University of Ghana at Legon with the Enhancing Child Nutrition through Animal Source Food Management (ENAM) project. As a Principal Research Assistant with this project she is researching the affects of poverty on household food security and child nutrition in Ghana in the Ag Extension Department.

Marcela Vergara-Jimenez is currently department Head in the department of Nutrition at the University of Sinaloa in Mexico.

Tosca Zern had a little girl on December 6.
New Faces at NUSC

Amber Hromi-Fiedler
After receiving her Ph.D. in May 2007, Amber Hromi-Fiedler joined the Connecticut Center of Excellence for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos as the Research Core Assistant Director. She is working with the CEHDL team to fulfill the aims of the Research Core through various activities such as grant proposal and manuscript development as well as planning the annual CEHDL seminar series and conference.

Linda Juber
Linda joined the FSNE Administrative team in March 2007 as a Financial Assistant II. She had a bachelor’s degree from the University of Kansas in Business Administration. Linda maintains and monitors the fiscal records and accounts for the Community Nutrition programs.

Khara Leon
Khara Leon, BA, is a Program Assistant with the Center for Eliminating Health Disparities among Latinos, working with Rafael Perez-Escamilla and Lisa Phillips in all aspects of administering the Center's activities.

Susan Rosa
Sue joined the FSNE staff in March 2007 as a Program Assistant for the Husky Nutrition program. She was previously with UConn with Environmental Engineering & the Department of Public Policy. Sue coordinates student activities associated with the Husky Service-learning programs.

Mei Ling Siu-Caldera
Dr. Siu-Caldera joined us as assistant professor in residence in the fall 2007. She teaches general education courses in nutritional sciences, NUSC 160, 165 and 166. She received her Ph.D. in 1993 from our department, and worked as research associate from Brown University Medical School until 2000. For the past 7 years, she also taught nutrition classes as adjunct faculty at the UConn regional campuses, Avery Point and Hartford.

Outreach/Extension (cont.)

its Relationship with Social Policies: International Perspective.' The conference also included presentations from ASN members Odilia Bermúdez (Tufts), Hugo Melgar-Quiñonez, Mark Nord, and Rafael Pérez-Escamilla, as well as graduate students Michelle Hackett (Ohio State) and Wendy González (Cornell and University of South Carolina). The conference drew 72 participants representing 11 Latin American countries, Italy and the USA, 3 international agencies, 7 universities and 22 government agencies. Countries commitments and participants' evaluations showed that the conference was a big success. Plans are already under way for a Regional follow-up conference in 2008. For conference proceedings and more information on the ELCSA project please contact rafael.perez-escamilla@uconn.edu.

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla traveled to Camp Camperrin, Haiti, July 14-20, 2007 to work with his Haitian graduate student Michael Dessalines on household food security issues and on the potential contribution of Orange Fleshed Sweet Potato to the vitamin A intake of women and children in South Haiti. This formative research work is being done as a full partnership between UConn, The International Center of Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Cali, Colombia (Helena Pachón), and The Organization for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (ORE) in Camp Camperrin (Mousson Finnigan).

Rafael Pérez-Escamilla delivered the workshop ‘Household Food Insecurity, Human Rights and Human Development in Latin America’ as part of the 2007 Yale University Council on Latin American & Iberian Studies Summer Institute, July 12, New Haven, Connecticut.

Linda Drake, EFNEP Director, has recently been appointed by CT Governor M. Jodi Rell to serve on the state WIC Advisory Council as a nutrition educator.

Continued on page 8, Outreach / Extension
**Honors, Awards & National Panels (cont.)**

**Rafael Pérez-Escamilla (cont.)**

**Nancy Rodriguez**

**Ellen Shanley**

**Recent Publications**

**Book Chapters**
- **Fernandez ML & McNamara DJ.** The Effects of eggs on plasma lipoproteins in healthy populations in "Eggs and Health" 2007;(in press).

**Manuscripts**
- Mutungi G, Torres-Gonzalez M, McGrane MM, Volek JS, **Fernandez ML.** Carbohydrate restriction and dietary cholesterol modulate the expression of HMG-CoA reductase and the LDL receptor in mononuclear cells from adult men. Lipids Health Dis 2007 (in press).

**Outreach/Extension (cont.)**

**STRONG-CT** (Science and Technology, Reaching Out to New Generations in Connecticut) funded by the National Science Foundation, has entered its third year of operation. This grant targets first generation to college and historically underrepresented students, encouraging completion of undergraduate degrees in the life sciences. It is based within Nutritional Sciences at UConn, led by Project Director Hedley Freake and Program Coordinator, Cheryl Brown. The program currently includes about 80 students, half at the University of Connecticut with the remainder at our three partner institutions (Manchester, Quinebaug Valley and Three Rivers Community Colleges). Five STRONG-CT students are currently pursuing Nutritional Sciences degrees, three of which came here via the community colleges. This transition was codified this year with the signing of a Guaranteed Admissions Agreement between the Connecticut Community Colleges and the University of Connecticut, assuring admission of students graduating with an associate’s degree (GPA≥3.0) to many UConn degree programs, including those of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. This year, NSF committed a fifth year of support to STRONG-CT, bringing the total award close to two million dollars.
Peer Reviewed Articles

• AW Taylor, RS Bruno, MG Traber. Women and smokers have elevated urinary F2-isoprostane metabolites; Determinations using a novel extraction and LC-MS methodology. Free Radic Biol Med, submitted


• Waters D, Clark RM, Greene CM, Contois JH, Fernandez ML. Change in plasma lutein after egg consumption is positively associated with cholesterol and lipoprotein size but diminished with obesity in postmenopausal women. J. Nutr. 2007;137:973-978.


• Aggarwal D, Soliman G, Freake HC, Dutta A, Fernandez ML. Validation of Using Gene Expression In Mononuclear Cells As A Marker For Hepatic Cholesterol Metabolism. Lipids Health Dis. 2006;5:22.


Continued on page 11, Recent Publications
Recent Publications (cont.)


• Chung HR, Hong MJ, Pérez Escamilla R, OH SY. Estimated iron intakes from simulated fortification to selected grain products in the Korea food supply. Korean J Community Nutrition 2006;11:808-813


Invited Reviews


Presentations

• RS Bruno, DA Dinatale, CE Dugan, JA Smyth, SI Koo. (2007). Obesity-triggered hepatic steatosis and injury in spontaneously obese mice are attenuated by green tea extract. 4th International Diet and Optimum Health Conference; Portland, OR (oral presentation).
• Shrestha, S., Ehlers, S.J., Lee, J-Y., Fernandez, M-L., and Koo, S.I. Dietary green tea extract (GT) lowers the plasma and hepatic triglyceride (TG) with an increase in plasma HDL-cholesterol (HDL-C) and decreases in SREBP1c mRNA and its responsive genes in fructose-fed ovariectomized (OX) rats. FASEB J. #542.6, 2007.
• Nancy Rodriguez
  • “Health benefits of whey protein” - SCAN Symposium, Austin, TX, April 15, 2007.
  • “Energy balance and protein utilization in endurance athletes: extending research to practice” Mainelli Seminar Series, University of Rhode Island, April 5th, 2007, Kingston, RI
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For more information, visit the NUSC website:
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