

**Leadership Summit to Effect Change in Teaching and Learning in Agriculture,  
Environmental and Life Sciences**  
**Written by Dr. Spiro Stefanou**

The National Academies of Science, Board on Agriculture and Natural Resources convened a two-day summit October 3-5 of academic program administrators, educators and employers to explore how universities can more successfully attract, retain, and prepare a diverse student population for careers at the intersections of agriculture, environmental and life sciences. The summit, entitled “A Leadership Summit to Effect Change in Teaching and Learning” focused on what works, and examined teaching innovations that are successful at better equipping graduates with knowledge and skills appropriate for multiple career paths in the food and fiber system. The summit website is located at: <http://dels.nas.edu/banr/summit/>. The Council on Food, Agricultural and Resource Economics (C-FARE) provided a team consisting of Gail Cramer (Louisiana State University and Member of the C-FARE Board) and Spiro Stefanou (Penn State University and Member of the AAEA Executive Board).

The goal of this national meeting was to provide momentum for educational leaders inside and outside of colleges of agriculture and related sciences to foster improvements to undergraduate education and faculty preparation. These improvements include: better programs to recruit, retain, and graduate a population of students more reflective of the diversity of our society; the employment of new teaching/learning strategies for the development of subject area competencies; the cultivation of pedagogy as a rigorous academic pursuit among faculty; and the deployment of new learning experiences to assist students in the application of knowledge and the development of those skills beyond the set of disciplinary ones that are important to succeed in the increasingly global marketplace.

There was considerable focus on advancing the effort to ensure that the preparation of new graduates is consistent with the demands and reality of the food and fiber system and its related fields in the 21st century. The Summit was a hands-on, participatory meeting accommodating approximately 300 participants, who met primarily in groups of working sessions focused on developing solutions and strategies to improve undergraduate education. A follow-up report will be prepared by a National Academies committee that will identify opportunities and mechanisms to effect change in undergraduate and programs that enable those programs to produce a flexible, well-prepared workforce.