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Cornell University's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station Formalizes Academic Agreement with Hobart and William Smith Colleges

By Nate Abbott

Geneva, NY: As Cornell's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) celebrates its 125th anniversary, it is entering into an academic agreement with Hobart and William Smith Colleges (HWS), a liberal arts college also located in Geneva, N.Y., that will allow HWS students to work and studies with NYSAES scientists during the summer or pursue independent studies at the Station during the school year. The mutually beneficial arrangement formalizes an already existing relationship that has allowed HWS students to gain valuable exposure to applied research while making important contributions to Experiment Station projects.

"We have had a long and very productive informal relationship with HWS faculty and students," said NYSAES director Tom Burr. "Interactions with Hobart and William Smith greatly enhance the quality of education and research at the Station and add an important community dimension. Formalizing this agreement is truly a positive development in the history of our relationship."

That relationship led to the first student placement 20 years ago when Tom Glover, professor of biology at HWS, approached NYSAES entomologists Charles Linn and Wendell Roelofs, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of Insect Biochemistry, about a summer job for one of his students in their laboratory. Following the success of that exchange, Glover gradually sent more students to work at the Experiment Station, identifying students and programs that would fit well with each other.

"This is due largely to Tom Glover's efforts, and he deserves a great deal of the credit," said Linn. "In fact, he has helped other Hobart and William Smith professors arrange for their students to do research at the Station."

"We have had a really good working relationship, and the faculty at the Experiment Station have done a fantastic job mentoring these kids and really investing them in their research," Glover said. "The students come back with their eyes open to real-world science, as opposed to classroom science."

As granting organizations like the National Science Foundation seek research projects that feature education as one of their stated goals, this agreement will benefit NYSAES scientists and formalize the understanding that HWS undergraduates will continue to participate in NYSAES research projects.

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William Smith student Jenn Davidson spent the summers of '05 and '06 working in Dr. Chris Smart's lab, and did a winter project with her in 2006.

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