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Wendell Roelofs receives Outstanding Faculty Award

By Joe Ogradnick

Geneva, N.Y.: Wendell L. Roelofs, the Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of Insect Biochemistry in Cornell University's Department of Entomology at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y., was honored recently with the Outstanding Faculty Award of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) Alumni Association. The award, which recognizes outstanding contributions to the college in teaching, research, extension, or administration, was presented during the CALS Outstanding Alumni Awards Banquet held on Cornell's Ithaca campus.

"I rate Wendell as one of the founders of the field of chemical ecology, and as a researcher of exceptional quality," commented Thomas Eisner, the Jacob Gould Schurman Professor Emeritus of Chemical Ecology at Cornell, in his letter supporting the Roelofs nomination. "He has done breakthrough work, and he has a knack for tackling problems of applied implications. Many of his findings have in fact had practical spin-offs."

Roelofs has been instrumental in establishing Cornell as a leader in the field of chemical ecology. Over the past four decades, he and his students and laboratory colleagues have identified and synthesized pheromones from more than 100 insect pests, enabling the development of many effective strategies for integrated pest management. In the course of this work, Roelofs has also made important contributions to strengthening the linkages between fundamental science, applied research, and extension in his department, which he chaired from 1992 to 2007, and which is now recognized as preeminent in its field.

"Wendell has done a stellar job in leading the entomology department at Geneva," wrote Jan Nyrop, CALS senior associate dean and former chair of the Department of Entomology in Ithaca, in nominating Roelofs. "During his tenure, the department has become a vibrant and successful unit, with several new faculty and a clear sense of mission and purpose."

Charles Linn, a senior research associate in Geneva's entomology department and a member of Roelofs's research group, wrote, "Wendell brings to the workplace a passion for his research, a unique ability to promote the best qualities in his team, and a personal level of integrity and honesty second to none. His elite status as a world-renowned scientist is balanced by a humility and trust that bring out the very best in those of us who have had the privilege of working with him."

Many of the nearly 400 papers Roelofs has authored, or co-authored with the numerous talented technicians, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and visiting scientists who have passed through his laboratory, have been published in such journals as *Science*, *Nature*, and *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. He has been honored with the Wolf Prize for International Agriculture, the National Medal of Science, the Alexander von Humboldt Award, the American Chemical Society's Spencer Award, and the USDA Distinguished Service Award, among many others, plus five honorary doctorates. Wendell is a member of a several professional societies. Among these is membership in the National Academy of Sciences, recognition few scientists achieve.

"This award is a wonderful tribute to the opportunities afforded me on the Geneva campus to conduct basic research on insects with direct impacts to grower needs," Roelofs said in accepting the award. "It was a bold step by Cornell University administrations at Geneva and Ithaca in the mid-1960s to add a chemist to the Geneva entomology faculty, and it became a wonderful niche for my entire professional career. My colleagues at Cornell and around the world opened my eyes to the beautiful world of insects and to the exciting challenges in decoding their chemical communication systems."

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