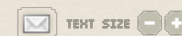
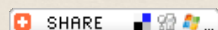


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## Horticulture Course Highlights Fruits, Vegetables, and Good Health

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Writer: Laici Wedel, 979-845-2886, [lwedel@neo.tamu.edu](mailto:lwedel@neo.tamu.edu)



"Eat your vegetables."

"Clean your plate."

"At least try the spinach."

"Don't feed your peas to the dog!"

"Here comes the airplane."

"Mmm, applesauce!"

As with children, many adults fight the battle for a healthy diet. Perhaps learning why fruits and vegetables are vital for good health will make these foods go down a little easier.

That's the reasoning behind a new course from the Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center (VFIC) and the Department of Horticultural Sciences in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University. Horticulture 489-506, "[Sciences of Food for Health](#)," will teach students why produce is good for health, and show them how to educate consumers.

### An Opportunity to Learn

Dr. Bhimu Patil, Director of the Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center and Professor in the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M, understands the importance of this effort.

Under Patil's leadership, Texas A&M has joined with Iowa State University and Ohio State University to offer the new intercollegiate course this semester. The first of its kind in the nation, the undergraduate course takes a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding how fruits and vegetables affect human health, and is taught by 24 researchers from across the nation.

Areas of expertise are grouped into four categories: chemistry and biochemistry, health and disease, pre- and post-harvest factors, and science education and policy. Students will learn about biosynthesis, structure-function relationships, bioactive compounds, and the pre- and post-harvest factors that affect these compounds.

Students will gain basic knowledge of "foods for health," from the nutrient content of fruits and vegetables to the governmental policies that regulate them. An important focus of the instruction will use evidence-based justification to show the role fruits and vegetables play in the prevention of cancer and cardiovascular disease.



Through conventional and distance education technology, students with backgrounds in horticulture, food science, nutrition, biochemistry, and chemistry will learn how to educate consumers about the science behind a healthy diet.

"The class is about understanding the science behind eating vegetables," Patil said. "Without education, research isn't useful."

### **An Opportunity to Experience**

Ten students from Texas A&M will join five students from Iowa State and five students from Ohio State for a traveling "train-the-trainer" program at the three participating universities. These students will be chosen through criteria such as class participation and discussion contributions. Travel expenses for these students will be funded through a U.S. Department of Agriculture Challenge Grant and sponsored by Texas A&M.

In December, the chosen students will begin their training at Texas A&M, Iowa State, and finally at Ohio State. Program participants will spend three days at each location, learning about topics discussed during class and gaining experience in research methods and teaching strategies.

With the knowledge gained through the course and exchange program, these students will assist high school teachers develop teaching modules.

### **An Opportunity to Collaborate**

Jointly hosted by the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M, the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition at Iowa State and the Department of Food Science and Technology at Ohio State, the course is multi-disciplinary and cross-institutional.

In 2007, faculty associated with the Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center, Texas A&M, and the two other land grant universities held a workshop to discuss the course. The curriculum reflects their collective effort and ideas.

The class is offered simultaneously using the Trans Texas Video Network, with the video conferencing originating at Texas A&M.

Faculty participating in course instruction represent Texas A&M, Harvard School of Public Health, Iowa State, Ohio State, Cornell University, Purdue University, the University of Arkansas, and the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada.

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### **About the college:**

With an enrollment of almost 6,700 students in 14 academic departments, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Texas A&M University offers more than 80 undergraduate and graduate degrees and has a faculty of nearly 400 members, including two Nobel laureates. Research programs include food sustainability and safety, human and animal health, genetics, renewable natural resources and bioenergy. Mark Hussey is Vice Chancellor and Dean.

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Texas A&M University - College of Agriculture & Life Sciences  
109 Kleberg Bldg. • 2402 TAMU • College Station, TX 77843-2402 • Phone (979) 845-3712 • Email: [aglifesciences@tamu.edu](mailto:aglifesciences@tamu.edu)

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