

Agronomy head named

A PROFESSOR of agronomy and a corn breeder, Kendall Lamkey is the new chairman of the Department of Agronomy at Iowa State University. For the past year, he headed the department on an interim basis. His appointment is for three years. He will continue as director of the Raymond F. Baker Center for Plant Breeding. He holds the Pioneer Distinguished Chair in Maize Breeding at ISU.

Lamkey earned a doctorate in plant breeding and cytogenetics at Ames

Key Points

- Kendall Lamkey was named chairman of the agronomy department at ISU.
- A corn breeder by trade, he is dedicated to improving undergraduate education.
- ISU needs to be prepared for opportunities of the bioeconomy, he says.

in 1985. He earned a master's degree in plant breeding and genetics and a bachelor's degree in agronomy from the

University of Illinois. His research focuses on the application of quantitative genetics to plant breeding problems in corn. He conducts an inbred line development program and several recurrent selection programs to provide hands-on training for graduate students.

Joining a long list of leaders who've headed the department over the years, Lamkey is its 13th chairman. The department educates about 350 undergraduate and graduate students annually and has about 50 faculty and 100 staff members.

He said it

"It is both humbling and challenging to serve a department with a legacy such as ours."

**Kendall Lamkey,
ISU Agronomy**



"My top priority remains undergraduate education," he says. "It is the heart and soul of what we do as a university and as a department."

The department is in the process of a major revision of its undergraduate curriculum. "That will prepare both the students and the department for the great future agriculture has to offer," says Lamkey. "We are looking to educate future leaders and will make professionalism and leadership an integral part of the new curriculum."

Department focus

"We have about 140 undergraduate students majoring in agronomy at ISU, and we graduate an average of about 30 per year," he says. "That's a number I would like to double." Of the nearly 200 graduate students enrolled in agronomy at ISU, about half attend classes on campus and the other half are in ISU's distance learning program to earn an advanced agronomy degree.

An agronomy degree offers expanding career opportunities today. "Agronomy is the sustainable production of food, feed, fiber and fuel. You can apply the science of agronomy to help meet the needs of everyday life," he says.

Lamkey understands the opportunities presented by the bioenergy boom in Iowa and elsewhere. "I grew up on a farm in Illinois, and now is the most exciting time I've ever seen in agriculture," he says. "There are so many questions to be answered regarding energy, environment and crop production to help feed and fuel the world. The opportunities are tremendous for agriculture. The solutions we come up with will depend on leadership at all levels."

School planning new soil institute

THIS past fall, the ISU Agronomy Department hosted the 2006 World Food Prize winners for a day at Ames. The three laureates, all distinguished soil scientists from Brazil, discussed their work in helping develop Brazil's soybean production, which has helped make that country a powerhouse in today's world market.

"We took the opportunity of their visit to our campus to announce our intention to establish and develop a soil science institute at ISU," explains Kendall Lamkey, head of ISU's agronomy department. "The purpose of the institute is to enhance research and education in soils and to emphasize the importance Iowa's soils play in crop production, animal agriculture, human health and water quality."

Everyone recognizes the importance of Iowa soils, but few are aware that there is little support to conduct soils research, he says. "Our goal is to generate the political support both within and outside Iowa to have a national Soil Science Institute at ISU."

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