

New Faces at Olathe



New faculty at K-State Olathe include (L-R) Sara Gragg, assistant professor of food science; Londa Nwadike, food safety specialist; and Eleni Pliakoni, assistant professor of urban food production and postharvest handling.

by Kristi Northcutt

Kansas State University Olathe isn't just providing graduate education *in* the Kansas City metro area, they have designed degrees *for* the metro area. In the middle of the thriving animal health corridor, which stretches from Manhattan to Columbia, Mo., K-State Olathe is positioned to have a dramatic impact on the area, especially in the areas of animal health and food safety — the initial focus areas of the campus.

Eight graduate program options are available — adult and continuing education (four options), food science, horticulture, agribusiness, and veterinary biomedical sciences — and more programs are on the way.

The master's degree in food science encompasses the spectrum of food science, including food processing, product development, sensory analysis, food safety, and security in the food chain. Sara Gragg serves as a full-time assistant professor of food science.

"Education and research in food science have long been areas of excellence at K-State," said Ken Odde, head of the Department of Animal Sciences and Industry. "We are pleased to be able to add faculty and offer graduate education in food science at K-State Olathe."

The Master of Agribusiness combines an MBA and master's degree in agricultural economics designed for working professionals. Each course is tailored to the animal health industry and offers a global animal health industry elective to further customize the curriculum.

"The goal of the program is to take people who work in the industry and allow them to learn business and management skills from instructors who understand the animal health and vet medicine industry," said Allen Featherstone, professor of agricultural economics and director of the MAB program.

The master's degree in horticulture focuses on how the urban food system impacts economic development and provides a source of nutritious food grown locally/regionally. The specialization places an emphasis on sustainable agriculture, food systems project management, and safe food production in an urban environment. Eleni Pliakoni is on board as the assistant professor of urban food production and postharvest handling.

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Paving the way in collaborative and interdisciplinary efforts, K-State Research and Extension has partnered with the University of Missouri on a joint position for a food safety specialist, housed at K-State Olathe. Londa Nwadike serves as a state specialist for training field staff throughout Kansas and Missouri and helps design and develop research-based educational programs, materials, and curricula for food processing, preservation, and safety.

The K-State Olathe campus opened in April 2011 and has welcomed more than 30,000 visitors for professional development and workforce training and more than 8,000 K-12 students and teachers.

The facility houses eight faculty members, visiting faculty from the Manhattan campus, 18 staff members, and industry partners.

For more information, visit olathe.k-state.edu.