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UC Davis Professor to Travel to Haiti for Agronomy Lab Reconstruction; Seed Quality Lab Will Be First in Haiti

Berkeley, CA. December 4, 2011. Distinguished UC Davis Agriculture Professor Dr. Steve Temple will take a week-long trip in mid-December to work on the reconstruction of two agronomy research and training labs in Haiti.

Dr. Temple is an agronomist and faculty member in UC Davis' department of Plant Sciences whose research currently centers on legume cover crops for soil improvement and the study of edible legume characteristics such as disease resistance, insect resistance, heat tolerance, and drought tolerance. He will work on behalf of the University of California Haiti Initiative (UCHI), to set up projects on the reconstruction of two research and training labs: one on seed quality and the other on plant disease diagnostics.

One of the biggest sustainability issues in Haiti pertains to food. Haiti food production is currently suffering from a lack of resources and skill to meet the needs of food productivity, quality and safety. A large percentage of Haiti's food supply is imported, resulting in expensive food prices. Food production issues have been heightened in the earthquake's aftermath, resulting in a large food-insecure population.

UCHI was made aware of this issue when the State University of Haiti (UEH)'s Vice Chancellor Jean Henry met with UC Davis Dean Neal Van Alfen and the Associate Dean James Hill in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Science, after an international team in 2010 identified "seed saving" as the highest

priority for Haitian food production.

Jessica Jaswal, UCHI Chapter Director at UC Davis, says, “creating Haitian Seed Lab is so important because it will be the first in the country. When Recteur Henry visited UC Davis in Feb 2010, he emphasized how important it is to their agronomy department and Haitians to have their own lab. Not only will this lab improve the quality of production, it will provide revenue, education, and long term sustainability.”

Dr. Temple became involved because of his interest in contributing to alleviating hunger and poverty. He hopes to utilize his background to “contribute to [Haiti’s] effort to become more self- sufficient and secure in their food production.”

Dr. Temple’s plans to reconstruct the Agronomy Labs project are twofold. First, to reconstruct the plant pathology lab to replace damaged equipment , and second, to develop a seed testing lab to test for purity, germination, water content, and sanitary status to invigorate Haiti’s agriculture sector. The seed quality lab would be the first for Haiti.

To do so, he will need determine the current need and identify the resources available, including potential university and private lab equipment that can be donated to the cause. During his week-long trip, Dr. Temple will also meet with administrators, partners, and colleagues, to foster a bilateral partnership between UCHI and UEH, the state university of Haiti.

Dr Temple says, “I expect [this project] will inspire UC students and faculty toward more service- oriented efforts, and hopefully open funding opportunities which will allow for more student exchanges and research in Haiti.”

Ms. Jaswal adds, “I hope the project will help Haiti achieve self-sufficiency and an increase in food safety, production, quality and revenue. Small achievements make the largest long-term impact, so we hope that these small steps will create a portal for larger opportunities in the field of agronomy.”

For questions, additional information, supplementary quotes, and more, contact:

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About UCHI

The University of California Haiti Initiative (UCHI) is a student-led initiative formed in 2010 following the disastrous Haitian earthquake. UCHI features a unique combination of various academic disciplines working across 10 UC campuses in the UC system, with the support of UC faculty and administration, to partner with local Haitian organizations to improve higher education and increase sustainable development.

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