Outstanding Seniors Recognized

Every year, top-notch undergraduate seniors are selected for the National Student Recognition Award based on their scholarship, leadership, and involvement. These outstanding students are enrolled in agronomic, crop, soil, or environmental science departments that have chapters affiliated with the Students of Agronomy, Soils, and Environmental Sciences (SASES), the undergraduate program of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA.

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Developing countries are not the only nations struggling with food security. Developed countries, such as the U.S., also grapple with nourishing their communities. Hidden hunger and food deserts are two major examples of the malnutrition that rural and urban communities face.

On 3–6 December 2017, four Virginia Tech students (Sarah Bateman, Abigail England, Madelyn Dynes, and Abigail Han), working with Ozzie Abaye, professor of crop, soil, and environmental sciences at Virginia Tech, participated in the third International Conference on Global Food Security in Cape Town, South Africa. More than 660 individuals from 60 countries, the majority from Africa, attended the meeting. The opening ceremony highlighted three crosscutting initiatives: the use of technology to solve global food and nutrition security, empowerment of youth, and the role of women in agriculture.

At the conference, the students gave a poster presentation on the community service project they conducted through VT Engage (service learning and civic engagement center at Virginia Tech) in 2016. The project focused on the initiatives that address food security issues through reduction of food waste and food diversion in Southwest Virginia. The students worked closely with a variety of organizations with missions that range from redistributing leftover food from campus dining halls and providing free weekly meals to providing a place for families and individuals to plant and harvest their own produce at a small price. Over three months, the students volunteered with these organizations to observe the impact of their missions as well as to assess their methodology.

In addition to their poster presentation at the conference, the students interacted with world-renowned experts involved in solving food security issues, including World Food Prize winner Jan Low, International Potato Center in the USA, and Ken Giller, Wageningen Centre for Agroecology and Systems Analysis in The Netherlands.

After the conference, the students visited the Sustainability Institute near Stellenbosch. The institute was established to provide a space that creates a more equitable society. It is continued next page