

# The HQPA Insider

*The official newsletter of the Highly Qualified Personnel Association  
as part of the Advanced Foods and Materials Network*

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## Student Highlights Geneviève Morin

By Chris Marinangeli

Geneviève Morin started as a summer student for Dr. Marc Fortin before he became her MSc supervisor at McGill University MacDonal Campus in the department of Plant Science. She is developing a procedure to assess the difference between conventional and transgenic crops. Using "metabolic fingerprinting", she is comparing the chemical profiles from transgenic and conventional soybean plants.

With new and more complex transgenic plants being developed, the scientific community believes efficient and reliable tools have to be developed in order to assess the difference between novel and conventional crops.

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*McGill Master's student Geneviève Morin*

## 2006-2007 HQPA Council Members

Congratulations to the new members of the HQPA Council leading us into another great year for the HQP!

Chair: Amira Kassis  
Vice-Chair: Scott Allen  
Training Officer: Marleny Saldana  
Training Officer: Karen Durell  
Communication Officer: Kate Roberts

Theme Training and Communications Officers  
Dave MacKenzie

Two theme training and communications officer positions remain vacant. Those interested should contact Amira Kassis at [Amira.kassis@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:Amira.kassis@mail.mcgill.ca).

## Annual Report 2005-2006

In May 2005, AFMNet commissioned the formation of its HQPA, devoted to enhance the marketability and value of its over 150 members, through its many training and communication initiatives. The HQP is a self-regulating body, run by an elected governing council comprised of HQP from all themes, regions, languages and levels of education. In its annual year, the focus dealt with developing its training, communication and awards programs.

Five different workshops were organized focused on raising network awareness and to tackle current trends in food and material research. Our training program began at the 1<sup>st</sup> AFMNet Annual Scientific Meeting in Toronto with "Shaping a Student Network", used to kick-off our own association and provide a framework for other invited NCEs to follow. This was followed by regional workshops: "The Atlantic HQP Summit" (Halifax, Aug. 05); "Functional Foods, Nutraceuticals and Natural Health Products-From Research and Innovation to Regulation and Policy"

(Montréal Oct. 05); "Intellectual Property – Food and Materials Research" (Montréal Nov. 05); and the "Guelph HQP Retreat" (Guelph Mar. 06). Workshops were designed to maximize HQP development and training through presentations, round-table discussions and skills development (presentation skills, grant writing and IP-awareness). All workshops brought in invited speakers and organized social networking events to foster future linkages and friendships. The HQPA also sponsored two interns to help organized "Soft Matters" an innovative seminar series at the University of Guelph focused on soft materials pertinent to AFMNet researchers.

The HQPA developed an online-monthly HQP feature story and the "HQPA Insider", a quarterly newsletter. Both publications highlight achievements of our members, showcases past and upcoming events and provide updates on future initiatives. This complements AFMNet's "Advance" magazine, which targets the research excellence of its on-going projects. In addition, a networking forum was setup on the HQPA

website to encourage collaborations across the country and foster a problem solving environment.

In October 05, the HQPA unveiled their own awards program recognizing excellence of its members based on research and leadership performance rather than on academic performance. Two award programs were developed: the "Marilyn Griffith Memorial Scholarship" and the "AFMNet-HQPA Excellence Awards (Masters and Doctoral level)". Awards are based on nominations from their peers, supervisors and mentors.

Our second year promises to be even more active, with improved programs and new initiatives. HQP represent the foundation on which AFMNet and NCEs are built. Investment and support of HQP development is essential for AFMNet's success.

Sincerely,



Dr. Michael Nickerson  
HQPA Director

## Message from the Chair

As chair of the AFMNet highly qualified personnel association (HQPA), it is my pleasure to welcome researchers and HQP to this fourth issue of our newsletter. The HQPA is devoted to promoting research excellence and transferring skills to HQP through training workshops and other activities aiming for better exposure and extensive networking. The HQP Insider newsletter is part of a broad-based effort to pursue collaborative activities in which we are engaged.

It also updates AFMnet members with the latest advances in fields that are rapidly expanding. On behalf of the HQPA, I encourage you to communicate your ideas, achievements and feedback to the members of our network.

Amira Kassis  
PhD Candidate  
HQPA Chair



## Mike Nickerson... Movin' on

By Jessica Miller

As I spoke with Mike this afternoon (February 15), it was obvious that he was in a flurry of preparation for his upcoming move to Saskatoon at the end of February. After living in Nova Scotia his entire life, Mike will be venturing west to take up a position in the Department of Applied Microbiology and Food Science at the University of Saskatchewan. There, he will serve as the Saskatchewan Research Chair in Protein Quality and Utilization. Mike seems excited about the move and exploring parts of the country he has never seen. He is already planning the purchase of his first piece of equipment: an office



heater to survive the cold prairie winters.

Mike will be missed at his current position in the Department of Food Science at Dalhousie University. For the past two years, he has been a post-doctorate fellow, working on the Advanced Hydrogels, Films and Coatings Project as well as serving as Director of the Highly Qualified Personnel Association (HQPA).

"The advanced training opportunities gained within the network and the HQPA have provided me with the foundation to pursue my own research visions and career opportunities."

In Saskatoon, Mike will be setting up his own lab and beginning his research. With this move, Mike will no longer be the HQPA director but prizes the opportunities for development he was exposed to in the position.

"The best part about being involved in the HQPA was the amazing training programs available and being able to meet new students and researchers at all different levels."



Mike will continue to be involved with AFMNet however, as a Network Researcher.

There are several AFMNet groups currently established at the University of Saskatchewan and Mike has plans to collaborate with them on several of the ongoing AFMNet projects. So despite the change of location and position within the network, researchers and students alike can expect to see Mike at the various upcoming AFMNet activities.

## Student Highlights Geneviève Morin (Continued)

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Geneviève believes that her work could lead to the detection of unintended effects in genetically modified plants. When she first began her project, she admits that developing the laboratory procedures necessary for completing her analysis was a challenge.

However, using AFMNet funding, she has been able to purchase new equipment and obtain the appropriate training to further her research progress.

When not analyzing plants via HPLC, Geneviève is an avid kickboxer; not only keeping her in shape but also relieving the stress "sometimes associated with research!"



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## 2005-2006 Award Winner

Congratulations to Dave MacKenzie for receiving the Marilyn Griffith Memorial Scholarship for 2005-2006. Dave's application stood out because of his strong leadership and self-initiated networking among both researchers and HQP within the network. Pitbull, as his friends call him, was instrumental in organizing the first ever HQPA workshop in Halifax. He is an essential part of the Pink Empire, leading kiddies into the seedy underworld of computer modeling. This year, he is advancing on to graduate studies and is taking a more active role in HQP development within AFMNet as a member of this upcoming year's governing council. Dave is an integral part of our next training initiatives, and a model HQP for others to follow. Even though pitbulls are banned in some provinces, we are glad to have this watch dog on staff!



## Reminders

Do you have something to say to AFMNet's HQP? Want to write a story about your friends in the network?

Submissions to the newsletter are always welcome. Send your stories to Kate Roberts, HQPA Communications Officer (right) at [kate@afmnet.ca](mailto:kate@afmnet.ca)

AFMNet's annual conference is coming up!  
April 30<sup>th</sup> – May 2<sup>nd</sup>  
The Westin Calgary  
Calgary, Alberta

For more information visit AFMNet's website:  
[www.afmnet.ca](http://www.afmnet.ca)

## Did you know...

- 🕒 In 1947, Marilyn Monroe was crowned the first Queen of the Artichokes.
- 🕒 The banana plant is a giant herb.
- 🕒 The Egyptians believed that the god of agriculture, Osiris, taught humans how to make beer.
- 🕒 If all the blueberries grown in North America in one year were spread out in a single layer, they would cover a four-lane highway that stretched from New York to Chicago.
- 🕒 The world eating competition for cow brains is held by Takeru Kobayashi, 17.7 pounds in 15 minutes.

\* Accuracy of these facts has not been verified.

