

# The Networker



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May/June 2002

## Online food safety master's program debuts this summer

National Food  
Safety and  
Toxicology Center

Director  
Ewen C.D. Todd

Deputy Director  
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NFSTC Members

Ag. Engineering

Animal Health &  
Diag. Lab

Biochemistry

Botany & Plant  
Pathology

Communications

Entomology

Epidemiology

Food Science &  
Human Nutrition

Geological Sciences

Horticulture

Human Medicine

Large Animal  
Clinical Science

Microbiology

Pathobiology &  
Diagnostic  
Investigation

Pediatrics &  
Human Develop.

Pharmacology/  
Toxicology

Sociology

Zoology

“I’ve been waiting all my life for a program like this.” “There’s such a market for this...I can’t wait to get started.” “It’s about time.” These are just a few of the comments that have been made about the National Food Safety and Toxicology Center’s (NFSTC) online Professional Master of Science in Food Safety Program, which will debut this summer.

Food safety is a continuing public health need that will remain a concern as long as we expand and constantly change our agricultural industries, challenge our environmental capacity, and alter the demographics of our human population. The magnitude and severity of food safety problems are documented by the 76 million illnesses, 5,000 deaths, and 325,000 hospitalizations each year in the United States reported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. These illnesses cost the U.S. public approximately \$6.5 billion to \$35 billion each year with no additional estimate made for the public’s uneasiness with its food supply.

In response to these statistics and a marketing research study conducted in October 2000 at Michigan State University, the NFSTC addressed the need to improve the food safety educational process. “Our research shows that there is an obvious void to fill in terms of a master’s degree in the food safety arena,” said NFSTC Director Ewen Todd. “Our program will fill that niche for government, industry and university food safety professionals, such as veterinarians, food producers and processors and others who are asked to assume food safety responsibilities.”

The NFSTC, operating under the umbrella of MSU’s College of Veterinary Medicine, is eminently qualified to address such a broad challenge by calling upon a faculty that represents eight colleges and 18 departments within MSU. The online master’s program will present a truly unique multi-disciplinary and multi-college approach, offering graduates from around the world flexible careers at the interface of research, product development, regulatory affairs, production, marketing, finance and management—without leaving their places of employment or by being confined by time constraints.

“Distance learning opens the world’s portals to food safety education, giving the NFSTC a unique opportunity to train and educate individuals who are responsible for assuring a globally safe food supply,” said Ed Mather, who is the program director for the online Master of Science in Food Safety Program and deputy director for the NFSTC.

The program begins with the summer course VM 810, introduction to food safety and professional development, followed by four core courses: international food law and regulations, public health impact and risk assessment of foodborne diseases, evolution and ecology of foodborne pathogens, and food toxicology. The program will operate through MSU’s existing Virtual University and will enhance the electronic educational system at all levels of the food chain and at all levels of management. Courses will be presented through Web-based instructional modules, varying in length from 10 to 15 weeks.

“We can’t be more pleased about how the program has evolved,” said Pattie McNiel, distance learning program coordinator at the NFSTC. “This is an exciting time for the center and for everyone associated with this program.”

For more information about the NFSTC online Master of Science in Food Safety Program, check out [www.foodsafe.msu.edu/proms](http://www.foodsafe.msu.edu/proms), or contact Pattie McNiel at 517-432-3100.





## The Director's View



**Ewen Todd**

**T**he National Food Safety and Toxicology Center will participate in a distance learning program for the World Bank's Global Development Learning Network (GDLN), which operates one of the largest, most sophisticated and cost effective satellite-driven global communication systems to cross international borders.

GDLN is quickly building a large worldwide network of independently owned and operated Distance Learning Centers (DLCs) that are being utilized by private and public organizations and institutions. DLCs typically consist of a multimedia room with computers with high-speed ISDN or fiber-linked Internet access, along with a videoconference room equipped to receive and deliver learning programs around the globe, all capable of connecting to the GDLN global communication system.

These DLCs are the hubs for teaching and learning, providing

the classroom facilities for holding far-reaching distance education and knowledge-sharing programs.

The two-part food safety global dialogue on organic food safety and international markets, featuring experts from MSU's NFSTC, will be available in Spanish and English. During two-hour videoconferences on June 12 and July 31, ideas will be exchanged and pertinent regional issues identified. In between the videoconferences, a facilitate e-mail list will allow for the further exploration of ideas.

Participants in the dialogue are located in Bolivia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and Peru. They come from government health and agricul-



ture agencies and private sector organizations, including the food industry. They hold positions as microbiological and toxicological researchers, risk assessors and risk managers, food law specialists, sociologists, outreach coordinators and environmentalists.

Participants in this global dialogue event will explore issues impacting the safe production and distribution of organic foods, as well as the social and economic issues related to the industry in developing countries.

The two, two-hour dialogue videoconferences will center on critical questions such as: Are organic foods safe? Can we realistically compare risks from organically produced foods and traditionally produced counterparts? Are the economic impacts of national and international food safety laws or regulations a hindrance to further development of the industry? What constitutes "acceptable for sale" organic food in different countries (international certification)? Primary issues are pathogen survival in manure as a vehicle of transmission and the use of pesticides, both natural and synthetic. How do people in different countries perceive the value of the organic food industry?

After the first dialogue, case studies and further discussion will be shared over the Web. Information gathered during the Web dialogue will be used to build the focus of the second dialogue event.

By harnessing the latest technology tools, GDLN members are linked via high-speed communication technologies. They are part of a worldwide exchange of learning activities through courses, seminars and discussions on key development issues. Using interactive video, electronic classrooms, satellite communications and Internet facilities to help break down the digital divide, the network allows people to share their know-how and experience, regardless of time zones, distance or national boundaries.





## NFSTC faculty and staff hit the road

**F**aculty and staff from the NFSTC have a busy summer and fall ahead of them. Several national and international conferences will take them to such places as Anaheim; Nashville; San Diego; Hannover, Germany; and Tallinn, Estonia.

“One of the key issues identified from our strategic planning process

was to enhance the visibility of the center and more actively engage our stakeholders,” said NFSTC Director Ewen Todd, “and we intend to address this important issue to the fullest extent possible within our budgetary constraints.”

The conferences at which NFSTC will participate include the Institute

Food Technologists, the International Association of Food Protection, the American Veterinary Medical Association, the Food Safety Educators, the World Buiatrics Congress and a workshop on Ecosystem Health.



## Michigan Food Safety Task Force is applauded

**T**he Michigan Food Safety Task Force is a multidisciplinary team comprised of representatives from local and state government, industry and academia, which includes the NFSTC. Since its inception, more than 10 years ago, food safety workshops and seminars have been held across Michigan to educate consumers in beneficial food safety practices. A variety of educational processes, such as displays, interactive games, and videos have been successfully used.

For exceptional performance in leveraging resources to improve the food safety knowledge of Michigan consumers and the media that serves them, the

Michigan Food Safety Task force was awarded the Commissioner’s Special Citation.



The task force has a rich record of providing a variety of educational programming on food safety for consumers and the media. Some of the most significant are publishings such as the preparation of background media reference packets on foodborne pathogens and food safety techniques to use in the home, which were sent to food reporters across the state, and a quarterly food safety newsletter for the media and county MSU Extension home economists to use in writing food safety articles for consumers. They also prepared food safety information to be included in Kroger advertising flyers that were a part of two major metropolitan daily newspapers distributed to 500,000 homes.

Children benefited from the efforts of the Michigan Food Safety Task Force after it developed (with a CFSAN-FSI grant) an educational food safety curriculum of three lessons targeting pre-school children for use in Head Start programs.

At the Michigan State Fair, the task force provided food safety materials for distribution to thousands of consumers, along with providing safe food handling posters to vendors at the fair for display in their booths. Other food safety displays that they had developed have been loaned out to community organizations and MSU Extension offices across the state.

Working with Local Access Cable, the task force developed a 30-minute food safety program on safe food preparation. Among its many accomplishments, a partnership with a second food safety task force in central Michigan was established to leverage local resources to produce food safety programming targeting senior citizens.

Because of this high level of performance, the Michigan Department of Agriculture awarded the task force a \$5,000/year grant for the next three years.

## NFSTC welcomes Dr. Vincent Young

**V**incent Young, Ph.D., M.D., joined the NFSTC in September 2001. His doctorate is in microbiology and immunology.

“The broad goal of my research at MSU and the NFSTC is to understand how infection with bacteria leads to acute and chronic gastrointestinal illness,” said Young.



His research is focused on the pathogenesis of microaerobic, spiral bacterial belonging to the genera Campylobacter and Helicobacter.

“A major portion of my research program focuses on the development and refinement of animal model systems, primarily murine, of infection with Helicobacter and Campylobacter.”

## Silvio De Flora speaks at MSU

**S**ilvio De Flora, Ph.D., M.D., director of the School of medicine at the Department of Health Science from the University of Genoa, Italy, discussed his research on molecular epidemiology and chemoprevention

of cancer and other chronic diseases on May 13. De Flora’s research has led him to an integrative view of chronic diseases that share common mechanisms and risk factors.



The seminar was sponsored by the Food, Nutrition and Chronic Disease Fund, the Chronic Disease Initiative and the NFSTC. The purpose of the visiting lectureship is to bring speakers of international stature to the Michigan State University campus to present the most recent thinking on the relationship between food, nutrition and chronic disease.

MSU is an affirmative-action, equal-opportunity institution.

For more information about the NFSTC or this newsletter, contact Patricia Stewart, Director of Communication and Education Services, at phone: 517-432-3100; fax: 517-432-2310; or e-mail: [stewartp@cvm.msu.edu](mailto:stewartp@cvm.msu.edu).

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