

UA Distinguished Outreach Award

Tim Dennehy

By Joanne Littlefield

Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s Arizona cotton growers suffered reduced harvests caused by infestations of whitefly, Lygus bug and pink bollworm. They turned to scientists at the University of Arizona and other institutions for help. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences entomologist Tim Dennehy led a team of researchers credited with helping to save the Arizona cotton industry. For his role, he received the 2005 UA Distinguished Outreach Award.

“He was very instrumental in identifying pest problems and directed us to other pest control strategies,” says Rick Lavis, executive vice president for the Arizona Cotton Growers Association.

Established in 2003 by President Peter Likins, the annual award—sponsored by the UA executive vice president and provost—recognizes “outstanding faculty whose scholarship-based outreach to the state, nation and the world has demonstrated sustained excellence in the university’s outreach mission.” The award recognizes distinguished University outreach for the common good of the state and the nation and is the highest honor awarded in this category at the University of Arizona. The recipient’s work must show evidence of an innovative outreach program within his/her discipline. Short- and long-term impacts and creative delivery methods are essential.

Nominators noted Dennehy’s accomplishments in bringing discoveries from cutting-edge research into the field where growers could use them.

“I have worked, in various capacities, with the cotton industry and the University of Arizona College of Agriculture for more than thirty years,” says Larry Antilla, director of the Arizona Cotton Research and Protection Council. “During that time, in my opinion, Dr. Dennehy has done more to provide vital technological support and guidance through research than any other individual.”

“He can justifiably claim a major role in reducing the number of annual insecticide applications in Arizona cotton from over five when he came to less than two at present,” says Robert Nichols, director of agricultural research for Cotton Incorporated.

Dennehy is perhaps best known for proactive, innovative programs for implementing genetically engineered crop plants and for reducing problems associated with pest resistance to insecticides. He established the UA Extension Arthropod Resistance Management Laboratory (EARML), the first facility of its type in the world. This facility has provided the infrastructure for outreach and research that helped to solve a crisis with whiteflies in Arizona and has helped to maintain the efficacy of Bt (transgenic) cotton against pink bollworm.



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Land-Grant Outreach

“Central to the University of Arizona’s unique land-grant responsibility, outreach is a form of education that transcends the classroom and laboratory to bring knowledge to people outside of the University. Outreach is a manifestation of the University’s teaching, scientific and scholarly research, creative activities and community service. It involves the generation, delivery, application and preservation of knowledge for the well-being of its external constituents.”

- *University of Arizona’s 2000 Self-Study Report to the North Central Association*

Dennehy’s scholarship activities include authorship of more than 170 scientific publications, including more than 100 since he arrived at UA in 1993. In addition to dozens of high impact extension publications, he has published many papers in prestigious scientific journals, including *Nature* and the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

He has garnered millions of dollars to support his outreach programs from diverse sources, including the USDA, EPA, industry, and commodity groups. For example, he led a team project supported by a USDA grant for \$740,000 on “Sustainability of Bt Cotton in the Southwest.” This project integrated problem-solving research and outreach, encompassing Arizona, California, and New Mexico.

Since arriving at UA, Dennehy has received numerous awards recognizing his sustained application of scholarship to achieve outstanding outreach, including the Arizona Agriculture 100 Council Faculty Member of the Year Award (1997), Arizona Farm Bureau Environmental Award (1998), Arizona Cotton Growers Association Industry Appreciation Award (1998), Cornell University’s Griswold Lectureship (2001), and CALS Cooperative Extension Faculty of the Year Award (2002).

His efforts in building teams that include scientists, growers, regulators, and industry are viewed as a model for extension. He has been invited as a speaker and consultant throughout the world, including Australia, South America, Europe, and Asia.

Ian Denholm, (head of the Plant and Invertebrate Ecology Division, Integrated Approach to Crop Research, Rothamsted, England), wrote “The levels of coordination and cooperation achieved by Tim and his colleagues in Arizona represent one of the most exciting accomplishments with cotton pest management in any part of the world.” ☐