

The Sower

The American Farm School
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High School students Anna Saroglou and Yiannis Bartzogas harvesting vegetables for Thanksgiving dinner from the campus farm.

The Sower

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From the President

Here at the American Farm School, fall is not only a time of harvest, but a period of vigorous activity, high energy, and enthusiasm for the year of academic enterprise ahead. This September, we welcomed to campus newcomers and returning students of all ages in what has been our most successful year to date with regards to enrollment. Perrotis College, whose Class of 2014 marked the largest in the college's history, will this year serve more than 1,000 students. Our High School programs are operating at full capacity, and the Elementary School, whose June inauguration you will

have read about in the previous issue of *The Sower*, has ushered its first eager learners into the second grade, while a new generation of first graders has joined the ranks. Both our preschool and kindergarten programs are fully enrolled.

Greece's economy continues to present challenges. Uncertainty still affects most areas of professional endeavor. As an educational institution we are focusing on areas of activity that best serve our students, as well as the opportunities that arise in times of adversity. We are also urging our students to embrace the values of both the School's American identity and Greek ethos that will enable them to transform the present and forge a successful future. When drive, entrepreneurial thinking and perseverance meet ingenuity and a passion for learning, anything is possible.

In the pages to follow, we would like to share with all of you, the School's friends and supporters, the latest developments from campus. Perrotis College continues to lead collaborative efforts to effect meaningful advances in the food and agricultural sciences, co-organizing two international conferences this fall, one of which is to take place on campus under the auspices of the new Perrotis College Krinos Olive Center. Professor Christos Vasilikiotis elaborates on the future of organic farming in Greece and gives us a glimpse into some of the exciting research he is undertaking with the help of his students in the area of sustainable agriculture. High school alumnus George Sdanis discusses his impressive journey from AFS student to successful dairy entrepreneur alongside his brothers and fellow AFS graduates, Yiannis and Nikos Sdanis. Esteemed colleague and Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs Tasos Apostolides touches on highlights of his 30 years of devoted service to the school, as he moves on to retirement on January 1, 2015. In New York City, friends old and new gathered at the Sixth Annual Benefit Dinner in New York to demonstrate their support for the President's Strategic Initiatives Campaign.

As we near the Thanksgiving holiday, we express our deepest gratitude to all of you who, through your belief in the values of the School and by lending your support to our many programs through the Annual Fund and the President's Strategic Initiatives Campaign, contribute to shaping the future of our institution in a lasting and meaningful way. Thank you again, and best wishes for a Happy Thanksgiving from us all!

Panos Kanellis, Ph.D.
President

American Farm School & Perrotis College

When drive,
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Sixth Annual NYC Dinner Benefits PSI Campaign

Close to 200 loyal supporters and new friends of the AFS joined President Panos Kanellis and Trustees at the School's Sixth Annual New York Dinner at the Princeton Club on October 23 to raise funds for the President's Strategic Initiatives Campaign.

President Kanellis led the evening's program by sharing exciting new developments from campus. Guests then enjoyed renowned archaeologist and New York University professor Joan Breton Connelly's keynote presentation of her groundbreaking reinterpretation of the Parthenon frieze. Her acclaimed new book, *The Parthenon Enigma: A New Understanding of the World's Most Iconic Building and the people who Made It*, was recently described by the New York Times as "that rare thing: the exposition of a truly great idea, and a reminder of what a thrilling subject the past, that foreign country, can be."

Honored during the event was Mr. Athanasios Filippou, CEO of FAGE Dairy Industry S.A., in recognition of the company's success in making Greek yogurt known and loved in the U.S. Presenting the award, AFS Board Chairman Robert W. Uek noted FAGE's "innovative and entrepreneurial spirit, a value we do the utmost to cultivate in our students at the American Farm School and Perrotis College."



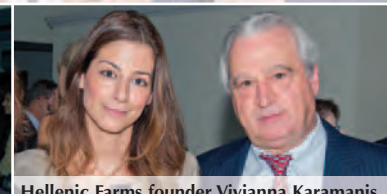
Linda Francis Knights, Katherine Sokoloff, Kathleen McClave, Former President of the Princeton Club Norman McClave, Trustee Susan Stupin, President Kanellis, Third Vice Chairman of the AFS Board Bill Tsacalis, Jim White, and Alidia Clagett



Greek Summer '82 and '83 Alumni: Trustees Frances Manthos and Joel Post, Andrew Witherspoon, Gioia Whittemore Frelinghuysen, John Frelinghuysen and Bill Bennington



Benefit Event Chairman and Trustee Joann Danielides with Nick Danielides, Chrysoula and John Phufas, and Tatiana Milonas



Hellenic Farms founder Vivianna Karamanis with her father Stelios Karamanis. The company donated bottles of its premium olive oil as gifts to guests.



Professor Joan Breton Connelly



The AFS Board of Trustees, with President Kanellis (far left) and Vice President for Institutional Advancement Joann Ryding (far right)



Five academically gifted students entering the High School were given special merit awards this year through the establishment of the President's Scholarships. This first-time initiative, organized by the School's Enrollment Office, is intended to attract outstanding, highly motivated students with an interest in the life sciences, who will thrive in the School's unique environment. Candidates meeting the initial criteria were selected based on the results of an exam administered by the School, an interview with the Scholarship Committee, and consideration of the student's junior high school GPA, extracurricular activities, community service and more. Special gifts funded this initiative, including those from members of the School's Board of Trustees.

Piraeus Bank Supports High School Scholarship Program

This year's July 2nd High School commencement ceremony marked another momentous occasion, not only for the graduating seniors and their families, but for the School at large. While bidding farewell to a truly gifted class, AFS welcomed a new friend and enthusiastic supporter to the AFS family. Dr. Michalis Sallas, Chairman of the Board of Piraeus Bank – one of Greece's leading financial institutions with a pre-eminent role in agricultural banking – was one of the evening's honored guests, along with keynote speaker, AFS graduate and Trustee Pantelis Panteliadis. Dr. Sallas graciously delivered the ceremony's opening remarks, expressing deep admiration for the School's work and extending congratulations to the graduating class. "From this moment forward, the School has found a new friend and ardent champion" he told the audience, before pledging Piraeus Bank's support for full scholarships to five first-year students for the three years of their enrollment. Later in the evening, Dr. Sallas presented the traditional prize calf to the Technical High School's highest ranking student, Vasilis Konstas.

VP of Academic and Student Affairs Bids Farewell

After more than 30 years at the American Farm School, Mr. Tasos Apostolides is retiring from his position as Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs. While we cannot begin to recount his many accomplishments and valued contributions as a charismatic educator in this limited space, we hope through this interview to trace his journey of service to the institution.

Tell us about your professional trajectory – from your first steps as a teacher, to your current role as Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs.

Strangely enough, I was offered a teaching position in mathematics in the Greek public school system (then the ultimate professional aspiration for most educators) on the same day I received an offer from the American Farm School. Realizing the public sector mentality was not a match for my temperament, I chose AFS. The School, with its holistic and experiential approach to education, its then-nascent Vocational and Technical High School programs, and its students from rural backgrounds who had consciously chosen to follow this academic path, attracted me and it seemed the right fit. Over the years, the School provided me with a wealth of experiences and the kinds of exciting professional challenges that captivated me. Aside from teaching, I initiated the extracurricular student clubs with the help of my colleagues, organized school events, and directed theater productions and commencement ceremonies. The Directors showed great confidence in my work and entrusted me with increasing responsibilities, ranging from curriculum development to new student recruitment. More recently, I worked on the creation of the School's educational programs aimed at younger learners: the Preschool, Kindergarten and Elementary School, all with a focus on environmental education.

How was your work affected by the School's American history and identity?

There was an undeniable charm to the institution. Bruce Lansdale, President during my first years at the School, had a unique ability in this regard and managed to achieve a seamless melding of American mentality and Greek tradition. I always appreciated the level of organization, innovation and speed of execution that Americans display. I learned and adopted these qualities and, along the way, I gained a great deal from the experience and know-how of subsequent Presidents and the Board of Trustees.

How do you see the School evolving over the next few years?

I believe the School is a dynamic and constantly evolving entity that grasps the needs of the population and adjusts its educational programs accordingly. This ability to adapt to the times and remain relevant — not only academically, but also with regards to products and services — is vital. The School has managed to do this effectively, while staying true to its mission.

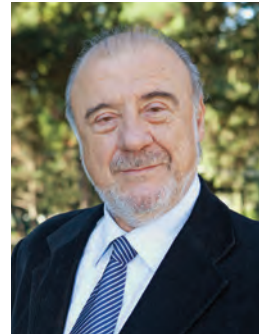
Tell us about your work as an artist – you are a critically acclaimed author, particularly known in the world of comics. Your adaptation of Aristophanes' comedies and Aesop's Fables, for example, introduced generations of new readers to the spirit of these ancient texts. How did this come about?

I always enjoyed writing cartoons and vignettes – at school and at university, and later for newspapers and magazines. I've always loved making people laugh. Going from this to creating my own comics was not a big leap, all things considered. Though I was self-taught, I have been fortunate in the success of my 44 books to date: 12 have been translated into English, 2 into French, 2 into German and 3 into Turkish. They have received many international awards and the Greek editions have sold over a million copies. I have to say, though, that I have always been prouder of my students and my role as an educator than of my literary success. I view both my students and my books as my children.

What are your plans for retirement?

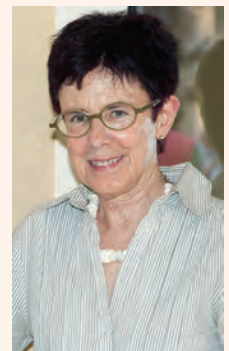
I want to write three more books in comic form, each about a philosopher: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Each will elaborate on his life and works in a simple and accessible way, as the books will be primarily directed towards a young audience. I will likely be more involved in a family project we have started, an "image studio" that includes a bookstore as well as a photo and film editing lab. And I'm sure there will be other projects on the horizon...we shall see!

This text was adapted from the Greek interview featured in the Fall Sporeas



USAID/ASHA representatives recently visited the School's Educational Dairy for an update on the project to strengthen the cheese-making program. The agency's recent grant supports the purchase and installation of state-of-the-art milk storage and cheese production equipment. This important capital investment will enable the School to produce additional hard cheese varieties with the aim of expanding the hands-on training and applied research opportunities offered to students. The improvements will maximize energy efficiency, while reducing liquid waste resulting from milk processing. Pictured above (L to R), Farm Director Dr. Athanasios Giamoustaris, Buildings and Grounds Director Andonis Petras, and ASHA/USAID representatives Maggie Moore and Joel McMillan. Between them is Ioanna Koutsounanou, Public Affairs Specialist of the American Consulate General.

Communications Manager Randall Warner recently retired after 27 years of devoted service. During her long career at the School, Randy tirelessly applied her skills, creativity and professional experience to maintain the consistently high standards she set for the School's communications programs. Her deep knowledge and boundless enthusiasm for the institution inspired countless visitors, friends and supporters, while her sincerity and work ethic fostered camaraderie and collaboration among her colleagues. The extended School community joins us in thanking Randy for her important contributions, and in wishing her all the best as she embarks on the next chapter.



Q & A with Professor Christos Vasilikiotis



Dr. Christos Vasilikiotis, Assistant Professor of Environmental Systems Management at Perrotis College, earned his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, and has teaching experience at institutions as varied as Berkeley, Stanford University, the Mediterranean Agricultural Institute in Chania, and the Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki. After spending a short time with Dr. Vasilikiotis, it becomes clear that he acts on his belief that the educational process is an exchange between faculty and students and that what unfolds is a process of mutual discovery.

The College is lucky to count you among its faculty, thanks to the recent gift made by Mrs. Aliki Perrotis to help promote excellence in teaching and research. What courses are you teaching this year, and in which Perrotis College programs are you involved?

I am teaching three courses — *Introduction to AgroEnvironmental Systems* (1st year students), *Plant Physiology* (2nd year students) and *Ecological Agriculture & Xeriscape* (3rd year students). I also supervise a number of student dissertation projects from our 3rd year B.Sc. candidates, an entirely different, but certainly rewarding experience. In addition, I am involved in the College's Center for Agricultural Innovation and Entrepreneurship in the capacity of consultant in matters of agro-ecological design and organic management of agricultural enterprises.

At last spring's Food, Taste and Society Conference organized by Perrotis College, you presented a study which drew considerable attention. Could you please tell us a little bit about this work?

In Sustainable Agriculture, the main objective is the efficient re-use of natural resources. One of the most valuable soil enhancers we have at our disposal is manure. Unfortunately, it can also be a source of pollution if applied to the soil untreated, which is common practice. One of the ways this is dealt with is via alternative composting techniques, one of which is vermicomposting. We use earthworms to decompose waste as their castings yield very high quality fertilizer, containing high ratios of soil enhancing elements. But this is not novel. Our innovation has been to add olive paste to the animal manure in the vermicompost. Olive paste, a by-product of olive oil production, is highly toxic for plants if it remains untreated – a process which can be costly and time consuming. In a country like Greece where olive processing occurs in high volume, the repercussions for soil and plant quality cannot be overlooked. Vermicomposting presents a simple and low-cost alternative to olive-oil presses for a viable system of waste reduction. Many students took part in this project and various aspects of the research featured in these students' senior dissertations.

What are your research plans for the coming year?

One of my main areas of focus this year will be to take the vermicomposting project to the next level by testing the effectiveness of the fertilizer containing olive paste against other vermicompost. As hands-on research is a cornerstone of the academic experience at Perrotis College, this will be another great opportunity to involve students in the process, and for them to build on the work their peers helped complete in the previous year.



Professor Vasilikiotis displays the worms used in the vermicompost experiment.

Please discuss the prospects for organic farming in Greece, especially given the current context (changing economy, tastes, habits, export opportunities, etc)?

Ah, this is a loaded question! First it is important to understand that the focus in recent years has been on how to achieve and promote sustainable agricultural systems and practices. The question, in essence, is one of opportunity costs – how can we achieve maximum production while inflicting the least harm on the environment?

Organic farming is one of the best solutions to this problem, because it has built-in checks and balances. Policy is starting to acknowledge these environmental concerns and we are slowly witnessing changes in the EU subsidy system, for instance, wherein subsidies are being awarded on the basis of sustainability indicators – this will certainly push many Greek farmers to look into organic options.



Professor Vasilikiotis harvesting echinacea with Perrotis College students Ioannis Kakakis (far left) and Stamatis Konstantinos.

What many fail to realize is how well-suited Greece actually is to organic farming in the first place. One of the main hurdles to tackle is weed management as the use of herbicides is forbidden. Organic weed management is usually manual and requires a great deal more time and labor than is conventional. On large farms this can be very costly. In this sense, Greece is ideally set up for organic farming, as cultivation has traditionally occurred on a smaller scale, and the landscape is parcelled in small plots. On another level, organic farming depends on the biodiversity of the land, which allows for a better balance of the ecosystem while also protecting against the spreading of pests. Again, because of the setup of the Greek agricultural system, this is already a common occurrence in most production units.

In sum, the Greek landscape has the necessary ingredients to thrive in this area. The most important hurdle to overcome in this transition will be to learn to function as part of a collective effort. Understanding how to work together towards mutually beneficial outcomes will help establish a precedent of effective collaboration and will allow for better, more sustainable results — not only in agriculture, but in other areas of activity as well.

Graduates Lead Entrepreneurship in Dairy Sector



George Sdanis' enthusiasm is nothing short of contagious, and it is undoubtedly this quality which helped propel him to success in his entrepreneurial endeavors. A graduate of the High School Class of '96, George is the eldest of three brothers (Yiannis, Class of '98 and Nikos, Class of '99), from the village of Verdikoussa, Larissa. Together, the Sdanis brothers have taken leadership of the family farm and have managed

to turn it into a successful business and a model enterprise in the Greek dairy sector.

After considerable re-configuration, the new Sdanis farm facilities house 350 head of cattle, with the milking cows producing an impressive 10 tons of milk per day. Collaboration is smooth, George notes, because of a clear separation of duties. George is CEO; Yiannis is a veterinarian and oversees livestock health and milk production, and Nikos, he says laughingly, "does everything else." All three brothers were the valedictorians of their respective classes, and each was awarded the School's traditional top prize of a dairy calf at graduation.

Always the forward-thinker, Sdanis has not limited his professional pursuits to his own family's production unit. He is one of the founding members of the THESgala-PIES cooperative – an initiative born in 2010 of the economic crisis. The group sought cost-efficient ways to eliminate the distributors and get fresh milk

directly to the consumers at well below market prices. Sdanis was part of the group that developed the concept of the innovative milk dispensaries (much like ATM units) that give Larissa buyers a choice of packaging for the milk that reaches the tanks of the vending machines just a few hours after being pasteurized.

Today, Sdanis serves as the Vice President of the co-op, currently counting 102 members representing 52 farms, and making 130 tons of milk available to the consumer market daily. This number accounts for 10% of Greece's total milk production.

Looking to the future, George says he would like to expand his current projects, always with an eye towards the Greek market, stressing that there is still a great deal of untapped potential.



George Sdanis welcomes the Board of Trustees to Verdikoussa following a visit to the Sdanis family farm.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Thanksgiving Day is a revered tradition at the American Farm School. It is a celebration that resonates at the School – as an expression of gratitude for a plentiful harvest from the farm; appreciation for the School's extended family of friends and supporters, and the joy of sharing the holiday meal, featuring the prized American Farm School turkeys, with the wider community. As an American holiday, Thanksgiving is also an opportunity to remind our students of the School's origins, and the strong bonds between the U.S. and Greece.

The School marks Thanksgiving Day in a variety of ways. Younger students celebrate with reenactments of the first Thanksgiving. High School and Perrotis College students assist in the preparation of traditional turkey dinners for fellow students and staff. An evening benefit dinner is held each year to thank the School's major supporters. Pictured here are Mrs. Aliko Perrotis and Trustee Seth Frank as Mrs. Perrotis was honored last Thanksgiving for her long-time generous support of Perrotis College. President Panos Kanellis is shown enacting a more recent tradition on the same occasion: pardoning an American Farm School turkey so that it may live out its days on a graduate's farm.

Students and staff take this occasion to thank all of the School's donors and friends for their ongoing interest and support, and join in wishing the readers of the *Sower* a very Happy Thanksgiving!



Elementary School students grow the staples of a traditional Thanksgiving dinner.



Perrotis College Scientific Conferences

INNOVATIVE OLIVE PRODUCTION SYSTEMS

The Perrotis College Krinos Olive Center is set to host the upcoming international conference on *Innovative Olive Production Systems Adapted for Mechanical Harvesting: Holistic Approaches for Sustainable Management*. Chaired by Olive Center Director and Perrotis College Professor Athanasios Gertsis, the conference covers a wide range of topics, from sustainable management of primary olive production units (table olives and olive oil), to olive quality, chemistry, and the benefits associated with various uses of olive-processing by-products. Program participants will benefit from presentations by seven prominent olive experts from Spain, Italy, Croatia and Greece, and assist in live demonstrations of mechanical harvesting techniques, cold press olive oil extraction, olive processing, and sensory testing. Visits to local olive processing plants will also be arranged. The conference coincides with the presentation of the Perrotis College Krinos Olive Center, recently established to meet the education and research needs of the olive production and processing sectors in Greece.



in the Food Industry, Sustainable Agroecosystem Management, Precision Agriculture, Food Science and Technology, and more. One of the conference goals was to foster collaboration and promote meaningful dialogue on topics covering the breadth of the fork to farm chain. The initiative was met with such a positive response that it was unanimously agreed to organize a bi-annual conference series of a similar nature. A standing committee comprising representatives from Greek and European universities was established toward this end.



GLOBAL TRENDS IN THE AGRO-FOOD SECTOR

In early September, Perrotis College co-organized the International Conference on Global Trends in the Agro-Food Sector in collaboration with Cardiff Metropolitan University and the Technological Educational Institute of the Peloponnese. The conference took place in Kalamata, southwestern Greece, and was generously supported by the Maniatakeion Foundation. The event brought together academics and industry professionals from a variety of disciplines, including Marketing, Management, Entrepreneurship



Perrotis College Krinos Olive Center

Thanks to a generous recent gift by the Moschlaiddis Foundation of New York, a campus facility is being repurposed and renovated to meet the educational and demonstration goals of the Perrotis College Krinos Olive Center. Now nearing completion, the 140 sq. meter building has two sections: the larger indoor area will be used for demonstration and training; the smaller semi-open section will provide space for hands-on activities, storage and more. A seminar/demonstration area will accommodate up to 35 students and feature a smart board, screen, and digital projector. Demonstration and educational equipment will include an olive press and bottling unit. Laboratory benches and work tables will facilitate applied research and collaborative projects. Applied research will be aimed at accumulating knowledge and expertise on the olive tree and its products, to be disseminated to regional olive producers and processors.



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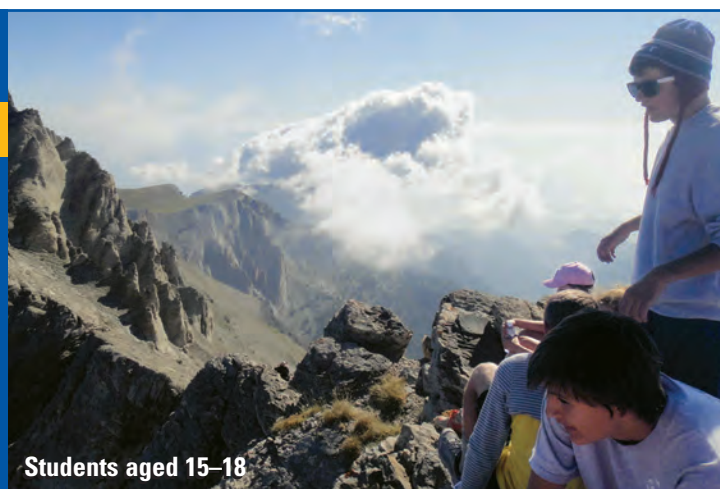
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