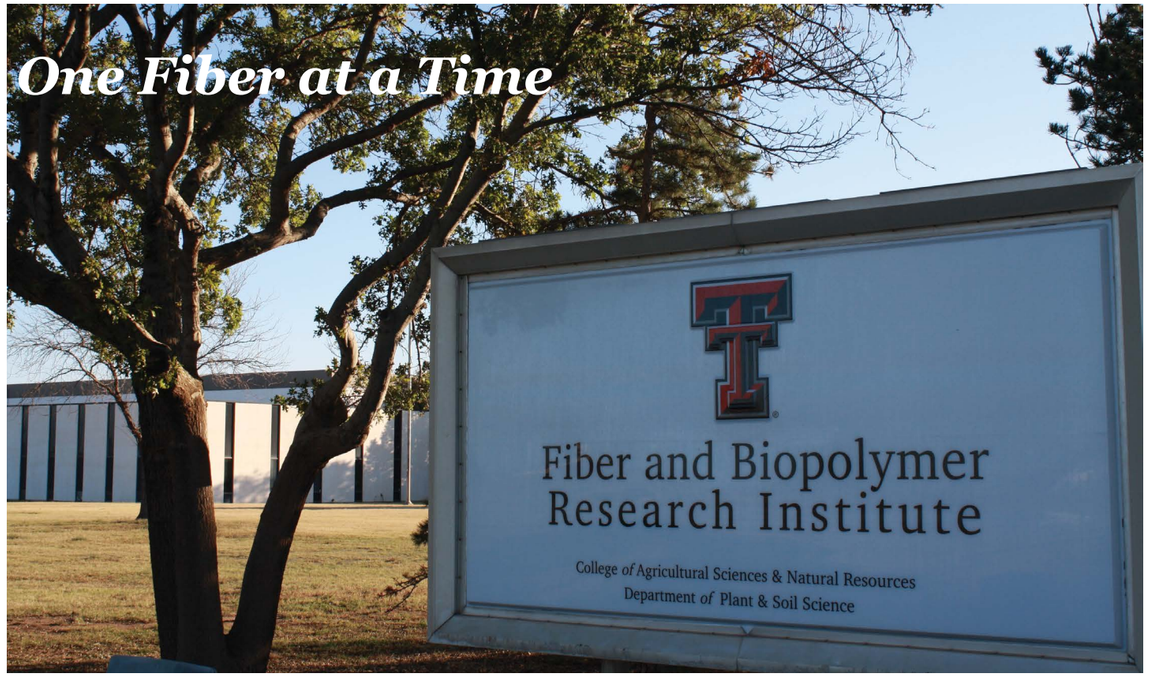
One Fiber at a Time



The summer of 2008 was an action-packed time for Texas Tech University's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. An estimated 10,000 agricultural students graced the university as the 80th-annual Texas FFA Convention took place in Texas Tech's own United Spirit Arena. This, however, was not the biggest event to unfold for the university or CASNR.

On June 27, 2008 it was announced that the department of Plant and Soil Sciences was merging with the International Textile Center to create the Fiber and Biopolymer Research Institute. This merger marked the beginning of research that would change the world in years to come.

The Fiber and Biopolymer Research Institute (FBRI) is what some believe to be the leading research facility for natural fibers and textile manufacturing.

Christi Chadwell, the communication and recruiting coordinator for the FBRI said, "The FBRI's main goal is to create new products and further research." She added, "The FBRI does a lot of private industry research and work, as well as some of their own that they create and implement."

The research being done by the FBRI is evident in our everyday lives. Without the FBRI we may not have many of the advanced materials we do today.

"The FBRI is doing a lot of research with wrinkle resistant fabrics, stain resistant fabrics, and waterproof fabrics," Chadwell said. "That's where a lot of the chemical research comes in; in creating some of those new fabrics we all see every day on the shelf."

"The FBRI has also worked with the Under Armor Company to create some of their Dri Fit products," she said.

The FBRI is currently working on projects numerous other projects as well.

Brendan Kelly, a Ph.D. student and research assistant for the FBRI said, "I'm working on fiber quality. It's a big issue for high plains cotton."

According to the Plains Cotton Growers' website, in 2010 the 41 counties serviced by the PCG produced 5,351,000 bales of cotton. It is the FBRI's goal to make sure that the numbers of bales are continuously rising on a yearly basis.

Kelly said, "One thing we are always interested in is improving the fiber quality of west Texas cotton, and therefore bringing in more money for the farmers."

Cotton is not the only fiber the FBRI works with, but with cotton being the primary crop in the area it is important to spread the knowledge gained through the FBRI to the farmers and consumers.

Chadwell said, "The FBRI partners with Lubbock Cotton Exchange to host and put on a two week long intensive course, The Texas International Cotton School." She said, "The event brings in individuals from all across the country and teaches them about the cotton industry and FBRI's specific contribution to fibers and biopolymers."

Chadwell, like Kelly, continued stressing the importance of educating the public about the research and strides being made by the FBRI.

"There's a large effort from the FBRI to bring in tours and educate the public on certain things that they may not know about," she said, "specifically cotton fibers and other crop fibers."

Overall, the FBRI is conducting research that has proven to be very beneficial to many companies and groups. Most importantly however, the FBRI is working diligently to educate the public in many different fiber and biopolymer related areas.

I guess it could be said the FBRI is working to better the world one fiber at a time.

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