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# MIZZOU

## Working Together at Mizzou

**Mizzou faculty present interdisciplinary efforts.**

*Story by Marcus Wilkins*

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**T**he idea of faculty and researchers collaborating across disciplines is nothing new at the University of Missouri. Initiatives such as Mizzou Advantage, Food for the 21st Century and others through the years have combined academic efforts to advance various causes.

During the Q-and-A segment following a panel presentation about interdisciplinary agricultural research at Mizzou, Bill Folk urged MU administrators to take the concept further.



Bill Folk, professor of agricultural biochemistry in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, addresses the agricultural research panel and Chancellor Brady J. Deaton at the BIFAD public meeting in Reynolds Journalism Institute. Photo by Shane Epping.

“International research is even more difficult than

domestic interdisciplinary research,” says Folk, professor of agricultural biochemistry in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR). “Much needs to be done in order to provide incentives for young faculty to participate in international research. There are huge risks and costs involved for young faculty members trying to secure tenure, and doing so with an international component is almost crazy.”

Douglas Randall, professor emeritus of biochemistry and founder of MU’s Interdisciplinary Plant Group (IPG), added that U.S. funding policies are also problematic.

“Legally, so much of the money that comes to U.S researchers cannot cross our borders,” Randall says. “That’s where USAID and BIFAD can have a huge impact finding more innovative ways that [researchers] can do the international component of the research with collaborators overseas.”

Panel members Bob Sharp, director of the IPG; Marc Linit, CAFNR associate dean for research; Willi Meyers, director of international agriculture programs; and Jill Findeis, chair of the MU Division of Applied Sciences, presented examples of collaborative research efforts in their areas.

Handy Williamson, vice provost for international programs, and MU Chancellor Brady J. Deaton also

participated on the panel.

“The [research] is being financed, in many ways, *anyway*” by other countries and private sources, says Deaton. “It’s a question of who is doing it and getting the primary benefit from it. The U.S. position needs to be thoughtfully addressed, and I know that’s a major concern of the board.”

**Topics:** [Agriculture and the Environment](#), [News](#), [Web Exclusives](#)

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