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## Plant Pathologist and Grain Scientist Earn K-State's Highest Honor

Gloria Holcombe  
*Kansas State University*

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# Plant Pathologist and Grain Scientist Earn K-State's Highest Honor



John Leslie speaks to a class during the 11th Fusarium Workshop.

Two innovative College of Agriculture faculty — John Leslie, professor and head of the Department of Plant Pathology, and Xiuzhi “Susan” Sun, professor of grain science and industry — were selected university distinguished professors, a lifetime title and the highest honor K-State bestows on its faculty.

“By promoting teaching, research and creative endeavors, and service, these professors illustrate the caliber of K-State faculty and their commitment to education,” said April Mason, K-State provost and senior vice president.

Leslie has gained international attention for his work on fungal genetics, particularly with members of the genus *Fusarium*. Fungi in this group are widespread geographically. They can be devastating through epidemic plant diseases or the production of mycotoxins that create trade barriers, pollute food supplies, and threaten the health and livelihood of humans and domesticated animals.

He is the driving force behind the annual Fusarium Workshop. View an audio slide story at [www.ksre.ksu.edu/slidesstories](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/slidesstories).

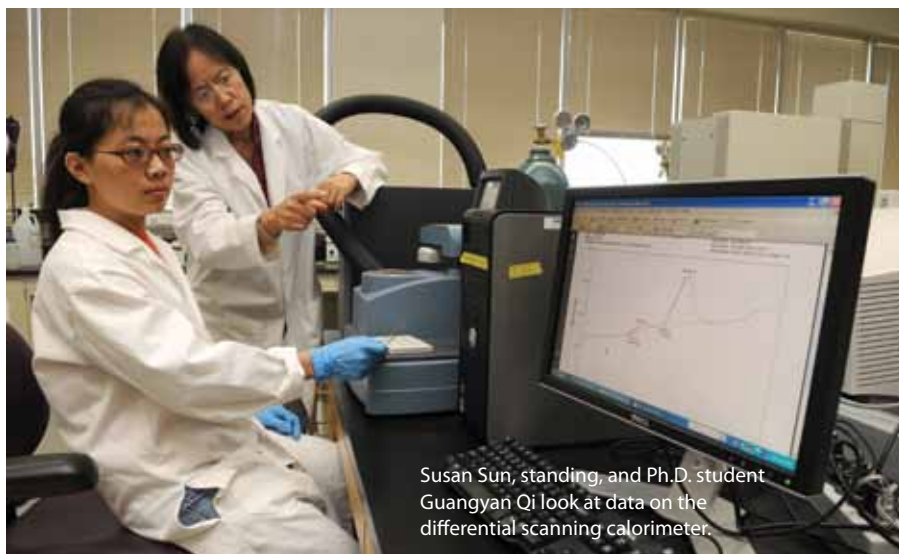
Sun established and leads the Bio Materials and Technology Laboratory and is co-director and founder of the Center for Biobased Polymers by Design. Her expertise focuses on how various plant and grain molecules — such as proteins, lipids, and sugars — can be used to create biobased materials that are safer, more durable, and

environmentally friendly. She has been internationally recognized for her expertise in biobased adhesives and biodegradable plastics, especially soy adhesives.

Although they work in different fields, Leslie and Sun have much in common. Each has authored or contributed to more than 100 journal articles and books. They also have been invited lecturers at numerous international seminars and have secured millions of dollars in grant funding. They also have received various awards and honors from their peers and international organizations.

Leslie’s work has been granted a patent, and Sun has eight patents, the most recent for a peptide-based adhesive that could be used in outer space. Both Sun and Leslie mentor and advise graduate students in their respective departments.

Other university distinguished professors in the college: Barbara Valent and Bikram Gill, plant pathology; Ted Schroeder, agricultural economics; Chuck Rice, agronomy; Jim Marsden, regents distinguished professor of animal sciences.



Susan Sun, standing, and Ph.D. student Guangyan Qi look at data on the differential scanning calorimeter.