Cuban agricultural biotechnology researcher visits SIU this week

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CARBONDALE, Ill. – Mario Pablo Estrada Garcia, director of agricultural biotechnology research for the Center for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology in Havana, Cuba, is visiting Southern Illinois University Carbondale this week as part of an innovation and entrepreneurship program.

Estrada will meet with faculty and staff from the university, attend the 51st annual Belleville Field Day at SIU's Belleville Research Center and participate in two events which are open to the public. A luncheon featuring a presentation by Estrada is from noon to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, July 11, in Room 241 at the Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center, 1740 Innovation Drive in Carbondale. There is no cost and everyone is welcome. However, those planning to attend must RSVP by calling 618/453-6754 or emailing innovation@siu.edu.

In addition, a public reception in Estrada's honor will take place from 4 to 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 12, in Studio E, located at the Dunn-Richmond Economic Development Center. Everyone is welcome and no RSVP is required.

The SIU Research Park is hosting Garcia July 10-14 in conjunction with the SIU/U.S. Embassy – Havana Grant Program "Connecting Cuban Entrepreneurs."

The program has established a collaboration involving a team of faculty and business development/entrepreneurship staff from SIU and a group of faculty and staff from the Universidad de Pinar del Rio in Havana.

The goal of the multi-year, multi-faceted program is strengthening Cuba's entrepreneurship/small business development educational programs and support system while providing technical assistance to entrepreneurs and small business owners, according to Kyle Harfst, executive director of economic and regional development. He said other activities will also take place involving the Instituto Cubano de Amistad con los Pueblos (ICAP), the Universidad de la Habana and other entities in Cuba.

Estrada is also the leader of the organization committee for the Biotechnology Havana – Agricultural Biotechnology in the 21st Century conference, scheduled for Dec. 3-6, in Havana. His research interests include soybeans, aquaculture and a variety of agricultural biotechnology topics. While at SIU, he will participate in activities with College of Agricultural Sciences administrators, faculty and staff as well as Research Park and Economic Development staff members. Charles Serrano, president of the Antilles Strategy Group and a member of the grant program team, is accompanying Estrada on his visit to Southern Illinois. Estrada is also visiting the University of Pennsylvania.

"We look forward to continued discussions and strengthening our relationships in innovation and entrepreneurship with our Cuban colleagues," Lynn Andersen Lindberg, director of business innovation and research, said. "This program builds upon the 18-year relationship between SIU and the people of Cuba which began with the late Senator Paul Simon."