The Will W. Lester Endowed Chair in Pomology was established in 1986 by the late Will Lester. Mr. Lester received his undergraduate degree in horticulture from UC Davis in 1940, and after his service in World War II, became an orchardist. He was an active contributor to the University Cooperative Extension Service and later served as director of the UC Davis Alumni Association and trustee of the Cal Aggie Foundation. He created the endowment to support the field of pomology, with the expectation that the chair holder will not only conduct exemplary research in the area, but will teach undergraduate and graduate courses and otherwise contribute to the scholarly activity of the department.

The Will W. Lester Endowment has been instrumental in supporting the work of graduate students in their work towards the understanding of cellular and molecular determinants of fruit quality. Our work focuses on traits that are associated with fruit maturing and ripening. We are emphasizing the biochemical determinants of fruit climacteric behavior and the development of improved pre- and post-harvesting practices.

I am involved in teaching PLS100AL (Undergraduate Plant Science Core, Laboratory of Crop Physiology); BIT161B (Undergraduate Plant Biotechnology Course - Lectures and Laboratory); PLB200C (Graduate Plant Biology Core Course).

The W. W. Lester Endowment contributed to support high school students (Davis High School), undergraduate students (UC Davis GREAT Program) and visiting students (UC Young Scholars Program) and many undergraduate interns. These students participate and train in the new Modern Techniques that are applied to identify and characterize fruit metabolites and proteins. In addition to our activities in the Dept. of Plant Sciences and the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, we also work with the UC Young Scholars Program and many undergraduate interns. These students participate and train in the new Modern Techniques that are applied to identify and characterize fruit metabolites and proteins.
Environmental Sciences, UCD, we keep constant contact (field trips, meetings) with different California Commodity Boards, farmers and California Biotechnology Industries.

**STUDENTS**

The Will W. Lester Endowment is supporting the work of two graduate students (Ms. Macarena Farcuh and Mrs. Shiqi Zhang). These students are focusing their work on Climacteric versus non-climacteric behavior of fruits (Farcuh) and on the regulation of cellular acidity (Zhang). Both students are also Teaching Assistants in the undergraduate courses PLS100AL (Farcuh) and BIT161B (Zhang).

Other students that were supported by the W.W.Lester Endowment are Ho-Youn Kim (PhD, graduated in 2015) and Tyler McCubbin (M.Sc. graduated in 2015).

The Endowment also made possible the participation of the graduate students in one annual scientific meeting each.

**PROJECTS SUPPORTED**

The Will W. Lester Endowment has been fundamental in allowing the adoption by our group of new cutting-edge technologies that facilitate the application of a Systems Biology approach to the development of new cultivars with improved fruit quality traits.

**THANKS**

I wish to express my gratitude to the late Will Lester, his family and to the Will W. Lester Endowment. The Endowment makes it possible to support the work of graduate and undergraduate students in areas that are critical for California’s agriculture: The improvement of crop nutritional values and the increase of the water-use-efficiency of our crops. The support provided by the generosity of the Lester family makes this research possible.