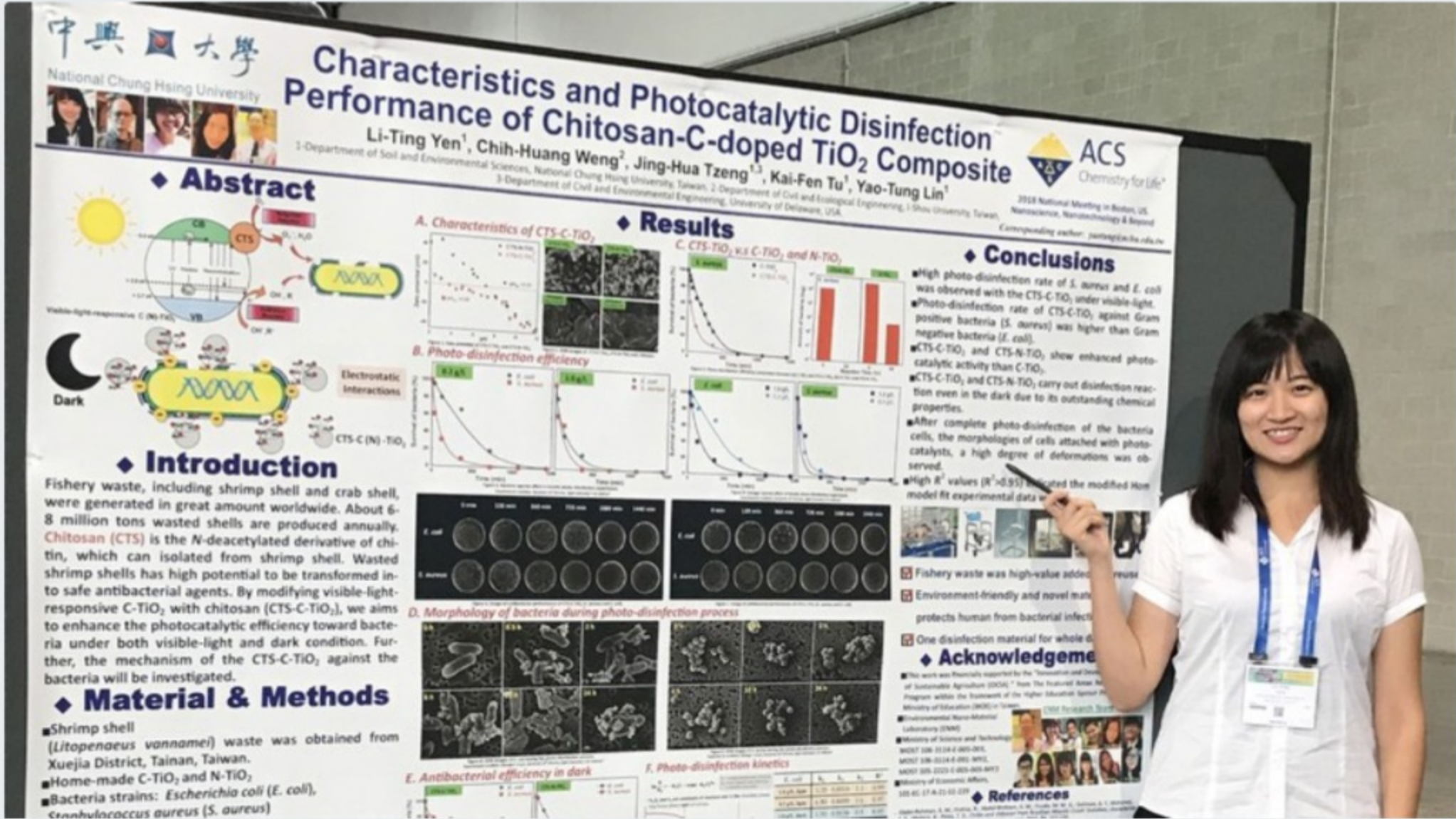


Land & Environment

USU Welcomes First Dual-Degree Doctoral Student from Taiwan

By [Madison Leak](#) | November 02, 2020



Li-Ting (Mila) Yen is the first student simultaneously working toward dual doctoral degrees from USU and National Chung Hsing University. She studies soils and environmental sciences.

Utah State University’s [Department of Plants, Soils and Climate](#) welcomed its first dual-degree graduate student from Taiwan, part of ongoing collaborations between USU’s College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences and several universities in Taiwan.

Li-Ting “Mila” Yen is studying soil and environmental sciences, and her research addresses the application of environmentally friendly mulch made from modified agricultural and fishery wastes and the impacts on the soil environment.

“I am quite excited to live here,” Yen said. “The people and the weather here is really nice, and USU’s ag research is top of their class.”

Yen earned her bachelor’s degree in soil and environmental sciences in 2017 from National Chung Hsing University (NCHU) in Taichung City, Taiwan. She is currently working on her Ph.D. in USU and NCHU’s dual degree agreement in the International Partnership in Agriculture, Climate and Environment (iPACE). When Yen graduates, she will have doctoral degrees from both USU and NCHU.

“Mila was selected for this program after a rigorous application process,” said Simon Wang, climate dynamics professor and a co-founder of iPACE. “She has been a great help from the start of this program, and she really never gives up.”

iPACE originated with the efforts of USU alumnus, Don J. Wang, who partnered with professor Wang in 2014 to establish connections between USU and universities in Taiwan, including NCHU. In March of 2019, USU Extension Vice President and Dean of the College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences Ken White and NCHU President Xue Fusheng signed an agreement that paved the way for more faculty and student exchanges and for students to obtain dual doctoral degrees.

Today, iPACE offers several program collaborations between USU CAAS and NCHU’s College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, including opportunities for students to study international agribusiness and a study abroad opportunity hosted in Taiwan during the summer for students interested in production agriculture, international trade and economics, and climate and plant sciences.

Moving from Taiwan to the United States amidst a global pandemic is no small feat, and Yen handled it with ease.

“Mila hit the ground running,” said USU Associate Professor Astrid Jacobsen, who coordinates graduate studies in the PSC Department. “She attended lab meetings and completed her lab safety training remotely from the University Inn. It’s exciting to have a graduate student with such a strong academic background and analytical skills join our research group and department.”

Jacobsen, a soils scientist, is also Yen’s mentor and dissertation advisor. Professor Scott Jones, director of iPACE and an environmental soil physics researcher was impressed by Yen’s abilities and dedication to her work and goals.

“It was amazing that Mila successfully negotiated paperwork, interviews, and travel arrangements involved in getting her visa in a timely manner under the circumstances of the pandemic,” Jones said. “Mila’s arrival in time for the start of the fall semester is a result of her courage, perseverance and determination. We anticipate more great things from Mila going forward.”

View a video compilation of scenes from the 2019 summer study abroad experience at NCHU that brought USU students together with students from other universities to explore agricultural production and research is at [tinyurl.com/2019TaiwanStudyAbroad](#).



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WRITER

Madison Leak
College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences
✉ madison.leak@usu.edu

CONTACT

Scott Jones
Professor
Department of Plant, Soils and Climate
✉ scott.jones@usu.edu

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