ENDOWMENT PURPOSE
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.

RESEARCH
The Will W. Lester Endowment supports work in my research group aimed at the improvement of fruit quality. We are using System Biology approaches to improve pre- and post-harvesting practices, with emphasis in traits associated with fruit maturation and ripening.

TEACHING
This academic year, I’m teaching
- PLS 100AL-Undergraduate Plant Science Core, Crop Physiology Laboratory course
- BIT 161B-Plant Biotechnology (Lectures and Laboratory)
- PBI 200C-Plant Biology Graduate Core Course

The following are students participating in my lab:
- Ho-Youn Kim (Ph.D. candidate) - Fruit quality
- Macarena Farcuh (Ph.D. candidate) - Fruit Postharvest processes
- Shiqi Zhang (Ph.D. student) - storage and retrieval of ions in plants
- Kamolchanok Umnajktikorn (Ph.D. student) - Drought tolerance in crop plants
- Cecilia Oneto (Ph.D. candidate) - Drought tolerant maize
- Viviana Maria Martins (Ph.D. graduate) - Copper impact in grapevines
- Tyler McCubin (M.Sc. student) - pH homeostasis and plant root growth

The Will W. Lester Endowment fully supports Mr. Kim’s and Ms. Farcuh’s graduate
work. In addition, the W.W. Lester Endowment makes possible the participation of the graduate students in one annual scientific meeting each.

OUTREACH
In addition to my activities in the Department of Plant Sciences, the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the University of California, Davis, my research group hosts a number of high school students (Davis High School) that participate in the UC Young Scholars Program and UC undergraduate students from the GREAT Program. The Endowment contributes to these efforts supporting consumables needed for the students' work. Also, we keep constant contact (through field trips and meetings) with different California Commodity Boards, farmers and Agriculture and Biotechnology industries.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES
The funds of the Will W. Lester Endowment will be used in the coming year mainly to continue supporting the graduate students working on fruit quality traits and pre- and post-harvest processes.

SPECIAL ENDOWMENT USE
The Endowment made possible the full metabolic characterization of a new variety of plums with enhanced quality and reduced fruit softening.

THANKS
The Lester Endowed Chair plays a fundamental role in my research program since it allows research that is associated with the direct needs of California agriculture. Although the scarcity of water resources and the need to improve crop nutritional values have been identified as fundamental needs of California farmers, the availability of funds to support this research is limited. Thanks to the Endowment, we can support the work of graduate students in these key areas of research. We sincerely appreciate the donor's efforts in making this much needed research possible.