The UConn Creamery has been an integral part of the Animal Science Department since 1953. As the winner of countless “Best of” awards, the demand for the famous UConn ice cream is ever increasing. Meanwhile, throughout the United States, consumer interest in local foods including specialty and artisan cheeses continues to drive the explosive growth of small scale, diversified, and value-added dairy production.

In response to growing demand, Dr. Dennis D’Amico joined UConn’s Departments of Animal Science this fall as an Assistant Professor. Dr. D’Amico, a food microbiologist who specializes in dairy foods, will utilize the creamery as both a research and teaching unit. “There are unique challenges and opportunities for value added dairy production that the Department of Animal Science is poised to address,” Dr. D’Amico begins. “While there are a lot of people interested in learning the art and science of cheese-making as a general interest, hobby or career, there are very few credible places they can learn how to do that. My goal is to strengthen and enhance value-added dairy production through my appointment with UConn Extension. I want to encourage sustainability of rural working landscapes in the northeast and elsewhere.”

Dr. D’Amico’s research focus is on improving the safety and quality of artisan cheese. For more than a decade he has worked extensively with students and producers alike through his position at the University of Vermont, where he worked on product development, process control, environmental monitoring, and the development and implementation of food safety management systems. His first class offering at UConn, Animal Food Products: Dairy Technology will be offered in the spring semester of 2015.
As a founding member of the Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese, Dr. D’Amico also makes cheese, and will use his skills and experience on the production floor to re-introduce the UConn Creamery as a cheese production facility enhancing the teaching, research, and outreach missions of the University, and increasing opportunities for education across the board.

“One of the best opportunities in my new position is the access to the milk produced at UConn’s Kellogg Dairy Center (KDC) to make our cheese,” D’Amico mentions. “Executive Program Director Mary Margaret Cole and the KDC staff were recently awarded Top Quality Milk Honors from AgriMark and were also selected as the 2013 Gold Winner in the National Dairy Quality Awards Program for the National Mastitis Council. Great cheese starts with great milk and we have the best. Our cheese is a great way to accentuate and showcase this quality.”

“The UConn Creamery flagship cheese will be our traditional cheddar that will be aged and offered as mild, medium, sharp and extra sharp. "Since cheddar needs time to develop flavor,” Dr. D’Amico states, “we will kick things off with two fresh cheeses, an old favorite produced at the creamery in years past called juustoleipa and a new versatile cheese in the style of queso blanco.” Both have received rave reviews.

In 2014, in addition to cheese-making operations, Dr. D’Amico will be focusing on the U.S. Dairy Food Safety Initiative with the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy developing and delivering a harmonized artisan cheese safety training program for regulators, inspectors, cheese makers, and retailers as part of his appointment with UConn Extension. This training, entitled "Food Safety and Hygiene in Artisan Cheese Making" is available throughout the country and has already drawn more than 400 attendees. The class will be offered at UConn in spring 2014. Dr. D’Amico is also planning 3-day cheese and ice cream making short courses in the future at the UConn Creamery that will be open to everyone.

To learn more about the UConn Creamery, please visit: www.animalscience.uconn.edu