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GROWTH Opportunities

The summer before her senior year, Ivy Mumo '14 yearned for a new challenge. "I wanted to try research, because that was the one experience I was missing at Cornell," she says. Mumo found her frontier in the lab of Nancy Wells, associate professor of design and environmental analysis, where as a Cornell Cooperative Extension summer intern she investigated children's diet and physical activity.

A nutritional sciences graduate who plans to become a dietitian, Mumo was drawn to the lab because "I really like how it uses gardens to improve kids' health and get them excited about where their food comes from." The Wells lab directed the data collection and analysis for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's national Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth project to study how school gardens affect children's diet, nutritional knowledge, fruit and vegetable preference, and physical activity levels.

Following her internship, Mumo remained part of the lab, benefiting from its "very positive, inviting atmosphere" and an interdisciplinary spirit that brings together half a dozen undergraduates, a staff research aide, and several graduate students.

"One of the fun things about our research is that it resonates with different majors in the college, including DEA, Nutritional Sciences, Human Biology, Health, and Society, and Policy Analysis and Management," Wells says. "Plus, the three PhD students I've had—Kim Rollings, MS '10, PhD '13, Beth Myers, PhD '15, and Kristin Aldred Cheek, PhD '17—have backgrounds in architecture, public health, and natural resources."

Now an assistant professor at the University of Notre Dame's School of Architecture, Rollings works with Wells on the Cafeteria Assessment for Elementary Schools (CAFE), a tool to examine how lunchroom characteristics—from plate sizes and shapes to cafeteria design and furnishings—influence kids' fruit and vegetable intake. The research team also developed new ways to measure physical activity and diet, comparing children's movements and postures during class- and garden-based lessons and analyzing photos of school lunch trays taken before and after meals to gauge what students eat.

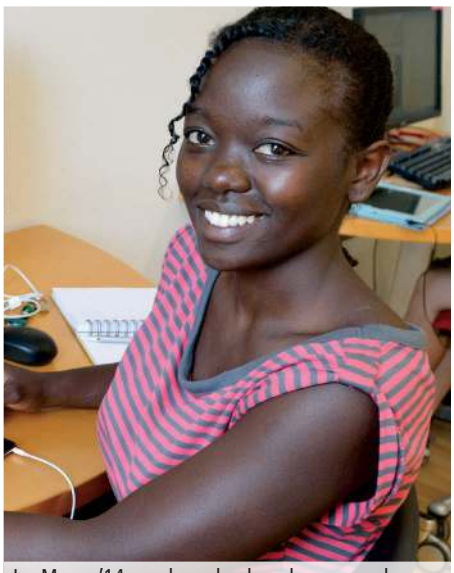
Ultimately, Wells hopes these measures will be used by researchers, teachers, and policymakers to consider the impact of the environment on education. "Hopefully, lots of different kinds of subjects—not just plant science or biology, but also English—will ultimately be connected to the garden, and the fact that kids are more active outside could help make the case," Wells says.

Mumo, for one, says her favorite lab task was data collection, and as a final project she wrote a research paper on the links between children's physical activity and vegetable consumption.

"Working with the research team has shown me a different way to promote healthy eating, such as incorporating hands-on gardening into schools," she says. "That's something I see myself using in my future career as a dietitian."

—Olivia M. Hall, PhD '12

A student at Long Island's Riverhead Charter School, part of the Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth project, inspects tomato plants.



Ivy Mumo '14 says her school gardens research feeds into her career plan to become a dietitian.

Wells Lab wellslab.human.cornell.edu • **Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth** nyc.cce.cornell.edu/UrbanEnvironment/Pages/PeoplesGarden.aspx

Caroline Kiang (Top); Mark Vorreuter