



DIVERSITY FOSTERS INNOVATION AT PIONEER

The high-tech laboratories of Pioneer Hi-Bred International Inc. may be a world away from the rural Chinese countryside where research scientist Mei Guo grew up, but the company's goal to be the leading developer and supplier of advanced plant genetics spans the globe.

"Pioneer is a great place to work, and they promote diversity," said Guo, 47, who earned a master's degree and Ph.D. in plant genetics from Oregon State University. "Pioneer understands that diversity is not an option in today's world — it's a necessity."

Guo, who came to the United States in 1985, joined Pioneer in 1997 to research yield enhancement in corn. She appreciates the camaraderie at the company, especially among her fellow Asian employees. Pioneer celebrates the Chinese New Year, for example, and the company's Chinese employees get together to celebrate other major festivals.

"You don't feel isolated," said Guo, whose husband works for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. "Otherwise I wouldn't have stayed here this long."

The Guos have appreciated the chance to live in West Des Moines and raise their two children in Iowa. "The Des Moines area is known for being quiet and safe, with great schools, and it's home to us," Guo said. "In fact, our son chose to go to the University of Iowa, because he wanted to stay here."