



WSSA

GRADUATE STUDENT
ORGANIZATION

VOLUME 2

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PAGE 1

May 2022

Graduate Student of the Month

Nick Hurdle – PhD Student at University of Georgia

What University do you attend and what is your research focus?

I have attended the University of Georgia since the Fall of 2017 at which time I began my Master's program under the guidance of Dr. Timothy Grey. After graduating in the Spring of 2020, I immediately started my PhD program, again under Dr. Grey, and expect to graduate this December. My research covers a broad range of agronomic topics in addition to weed science. Some of my experiments include herbicide application rate and timing effect on early season peanut growth, POST weed-control in peanut, residual herbicide control in numerous perennial crops, seed storage conditions effect on peanut seed germination, and investigating polymer seed treatments for use in peanut production.



What drew you to weed science?

While in undergrad, I had the opportunity to hold several internship positions with one involving entomology in corn and soybean production. A fellow intern had an interest in weed science and having conversations with him started my interest. A few years later, I had a weed science class in which a guest speaker visited and demonstrated new sprayer technology for herbicide applications. After that class I knew weed science was the field for me. Turns out, I worked for that same guest speaker the following summer which further solidified my love for weed science.

What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

My favorite thing about WSSA and SWSS has to be the friendships made at meetings. Several of the professors, industry members, and students that attend the annual meetings also attend other societal meetings so we see each other several times a year. Keeping up with these friends and the ability to share ideas and life experiences with them throughout the year helps us both personally and professionally. I also enjoy hearing all of the incredible research projects students are working on.

What is your favorite weed and why?

Honestly, all weed species are my favorite. Each one is unique, and we can learn from them all to advance the field of weed science. But, if I must choose only one, it would be yellow nutsedge (*Cyperus esculentus*). I have spent several early mornings hand weeding and afternoons spraying peanut research plots for yellow nutsedge. How quickly and prolific this species grows always kept me on my toes trying to control it. This time spent has earned me the nickname "Nutsedge Nick".

What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to assist growers in producing high yielding crops through sound agronomic recommendations. I would like to work directly with growers and provide weed management options that are both environmentally friendly and profitable for the grower. I would also like to perform small scale weed science research with potential to beginning a private research business.

If you know a hardworking graduate student you would like to be featured, nominate them by emailing osburnaw@tamu.edu. The graduate student of the month will be randomly selected after nomination.

WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Cara McCauley – Herbicide Biologist and Discovery Herbicide Screening Leader, Corteva Agriscience

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

BS, Biological Engineering and Plant Science, Cornell University
PhD, Weed Science, Purdue University.

What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

Herbicide Biologist and Discovery Herbicide Screening Leader at Corteva Agriscience in Indianapolis, IN. I have worked at Corteva for almost 4 years.



What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

My favorite thing about my job so far is that I'm surrounded by so many smart and motivated people that are interested in discovering and developing new herbicide technologies. If I have an idea, I can work with them to make new compounds and test a hypothesis within a few weeks – something that I dreamed about while in grad school.

What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

Just try it! There are so many opportunities that might interest you - a class outside your degree program, an extracurricular club, an internship/travel opportunity that you're curious about. It's easy to not explore new things, but you never know what you might learn or person you will meet that will open your eyes to something that could change your life. I had an internship in Weed Science at Dow Agrosiences after my junior year in undergrad and had taken 0 agriculture/weed science classes. It was tough to get up to speed, but I was hooked! So sign up for something new and give it a try!

What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

My biggest piece of advice is to not apply to a job that you are really interested in without reaching out directly to someone that works with that group. The benefit of the WSSA community is that we have members from many companies, universities, or other organizations. I encourage you to reach out to someone and express your interest, this will help your resume rise to the top (plus this is the perfect way to engage the professional network that is built through the weed science societies).

Any final thoughts?

Make sure you keep having fun and connect with friends within the weed science community. I am grateful for the friends and mentors that have motivated me to be passionate about the work I do and hope that everyone can find the fun in the work, even if there are never-ending days of field research, lab experiments, and data analysis.

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Graduate Student of the Month

Jeanine Arana Cordonero – PhD Student at Purdue University

What University do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am a Ph.D. student at Purdue University in the Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture. My Ph.D. thesis project will evaluate multiple herbicide systems and cover crops in multi-year plasticulture strawberries.

What drew you to weed science?

In my undergrad, I took a weed science course that I enjoyed, but it never crossed my mind that I would specialize in weed science. However, I came to Purdue in 2019 as a visiting scholar to work in corn production, in which farmers always talked about the problems they had controlling weeds. So I decided that weed science was an area I would like to work to help farmers. I talked to Dr. Stephen Meyers (my advisor), who had an opening in weed science in horticultural crops. He had projects that were interesting to me, and the rest is history...

What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

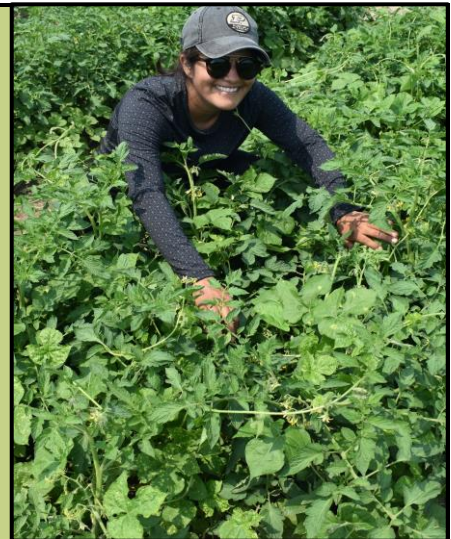
My favorite thing about the WSSA and the NCWSS is their initiative to improve weed science research. A good example is the surveys to obtain the input of current scientists to determine the future of weed science research.

What is your favorite weed and why?

Not a weed but a genus of weeds: Ipomoea spp. AKA morningglories. My master's project included morningglories. These were the first weeds that I deeply learned about. Of course, my first weed-related accepted journal article includes morningglories! They have beautiful flowers, but a beautiful thing is never perfect, and they are troublesome weeds for farmers.

What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to become a trustworthy weed scientist to which farmers or industry fellows can reach out. However, I am still unsure whether it will be in industry or academia.



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WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Sandeep Rana – Global Head of Design & Optimization for Bayer Crop Science R&D

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I grew up in a family of agricultural researchers and administrators on the campus of a public-funded agricultural university, CCS Haryana Agricultural University, India. I did my B.Sc. Agriculture (Honors, Major: Agroforestry) from the same university. I then came to the USA to first pursue an M.S. in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences (Major: Weed Science) at University of Arkansas followed by a Ph.D. in Plant Pathology, Physiology, and Weed Science (Major: Turfgrass Weed Science) at Virginia Tech. I also spent 6 months at North Carolina State University as a Postdoc before starting with Bayer Crop Science (@Bayer4CropsUS).



What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

Global Head of Design & Optimization for Bayer Crop Science R&D. I will complete my 5 years with the company in the fall of 2022. I started out as an Agronomic Research Manager based out of Galena, MD, in 2017, and then transitioned to the role of North America Agronomic Research Lead in 2019. I have been in my current role since June 13, 2022 (just a few days!).

What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

There is never a dull day. Working with cross-cultural and multi-functional teams across the globe is a blessing. When everyone, ranging from a computer scientist to a weed scientist, is all working towards the same common goal #HealthForAllHungerForNone, innovation and operational excellence just come naturally to teams. And, it is an absolute pleasure to be a part of the team that gets it done.

What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

A lot actually, ha! I would say my advice below. I wish I knew the scale and scope of opportunities that the industry provides. Could have added more diversity to my skillset and taken more risks.

What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

Don't limit yourselves to jobs that your peers or predecessors might have taken. You are a scientist and a problem solver; you can apply your skills in more places than you can imagine. Leverage the "six degrees of separation" strategy to network and you will be surprised how many new connections you will make to catapult your career to new heights. Find a mentor who not only guides you but also provides the most candid feedback. Pay it back when it's your turn.

Any final thoughts?

Don't be afraid to fail. Win or lose, keep trying new things. You will come out stronger from your life experiences and those experiences will serve you well in both your personal and professional lives. Above everything else, be nice, have fun, and stay close to your family & friends.

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Graduate Student of the Month

Hannah Wright – PhD Student at University of Georgia

What University do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am getting my Ph.D. at the University of Georgia under Dr. Stanley Culpepper, who conducts weed science research for cotton, vegetables, and small grains. Since there is such a wide variety of crops in his program, I have had a couple of research projects in cotton and wheat, with most of my research focusing on vegetables like cantaloupe, broccoli, and collards.

What drew you to weed science?

I find weeds and how they interact with their environment fascinating, so focusing on weed science was an easy choice for me when deciding what area of crop science I wanted to focus on in grad school. Growing up on a vegetable farm, I also saw first-hand how devastating weeds can be and how much more difficult they can make a farmer's life, so studying how to manage weeds in more efficient ways than hand pulling acres and acres was also a driver in studying weed science.

What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

My favorite thing about both the Southern Weed Science Society and WSSA is the comradery between colleagues that I've both seen and experienced. One of the things I've missed the most during the pandemic is seeing my friends from across the country in person and connecting with them at meetings.

What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is musk thistle (*Carduus nutans*)! It's such an interesting looking plant and is actually very pretty to look at, especially when it's flowering.

What is your long-term goal?

Once I finish my Ph.D. I'll start at the University of Arkansas as an Extension Weed Specialist for turf and specialty crops. I'm very excited to work with county agents and growers and support them applied and timely research.



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WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Steve Young- National Program Leader, USDA-ARS

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

B.S. 1996 Washington State University *Horticulture*; M.S. 2000 University of Idaho *Plant (Weed) Science*; Ph.D. 2007 University of California, Davis *Soils & Biogeochemistry*

What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

My title is National Program Leader – Weeds and Invasive Pests and I have been in this position since January 2021.

What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

The best part of my job as a national program leader is that I get to be involved in research and think about where science is going and how ARS scientists are helping to shape it and make it applicable in addressing the biggest issues and the needs of individual stakeholders. I also enjoy research for the flexibility and creativity it brings with every new opportunity.

What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

My one recommendation to students is to learn at least one technique, whether it is operating a high-level piece of lab equipment, performing a sensitive and detailed measurement, conducting a specialized experiment, or writing a policy paper or other type of document besides a journal paper. As a student, this will be the one and only time in your life that you will have the most time to learn at least one specialized skill that you can take with you for the rest of your career.

What is the biggest piece of advice you'd give students searching for a job?

My advice to students who are searching for a position, is to make sure that you do not overlook an opportunity and never assume that you are not qualified. Also, know what you want and how you want to spend your time. For me, after I got my MS degree, I knew where I wanted to go next, which was UC Davis, and the reason, which was to have control of my time. I was not accepted at first, but through a series of connections and being persistent, I got there and every position that I have had since, I have been able to decide how I wanted to spend my time and what I wanted to do in the context of each one. It has been a very interesting and rewarding journey that is not done, yet!

Any final thoughts?

Weed science is like most any other field of study in biology - fundamental principles and tested methodologies that support reliable approaches. However, weed science is different from all others in the plant realm because of its ubiquitous nature. Weeds are everywhere from the backyard garden to the national park and impact everyone from the homeowner to the land manager to the plant breeder to the policy maker to the.....national program leader. Because of the way weeds touch all places and people, the approach in how to deal with them is endless, if we remember their definition, which is a plant whose virtues have yet to be identified, some good and some bad. *What could be more exciting than to be in a field of science with so many different possibilities and directions to pursue?*

Check out my bio in an edition of the *Paper Trails* published in ESA's Bulletin:

<https://esajournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/bes2.1233> or look me up on my USDA

ARS profile: <https://www.ars.usda.gov/people/steve-young-phd/>



Steve Young: National Program Leader,
USDA-ARS

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Graduate Student of the Month

Pamela Carvalho-Moore – PhD Student at University of Arkansas

What University do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am a Ph.D. student at the University of Arkansas under Dr. Jason Norsworthy. My research focuses on investigating the addition of metabolic inhibitors as an approach to improve glufosinate efficacy under varied environmental scenarios, as well as understanding the mechanism of resistance to glufosinate in resistant Palmer amaranth.

**What drew you to weed science?**

I have been involved with academic research since my second semester in college. The first opportunity I had was to work with sunflower production under different periods of weed competition in Brazil's Amazon region. After that, I ventured into other research areas, but it was not as exciting as before. Before I finished my undergrad, I had the opportunity to intern with Dr. Carlos Schaedler and Dr. Nilda Burgos in different experiments applied to Weed Science. These internships led to the opportunity to obtain a M.S. in Cell and Molecular Biology applied to Weed Science at the University of Arkansas.

What is your favorite thing about the WSSA or your regional society?

I like how the societies (WSSA and Southern Weed Science Society) allow us to have honest feedback about our research projects. After conversations during the meetings, I have come up with different methodologies or new ideas to improve my experiments. This is priceless. On top of that, I love to catch up with my friends from different universities at conferences and visit new places around the country.

What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*). Since a young age I have been fascinated by its seed dispersion and how beautiful the seed head of this plant is. Plus, dandelion leaves make a yummy salad.

What is your long-term goal?

Upon completing my Ph.D., I aim to be in a governmental or industry position, specifically in research and development. I truly believe that meaningful and well-conducted research is a valuable tool for the future of agriculture. I am also keeping my options open for jobs in extension. My dream job would be working with herbicide resistance identification and management in row crops.

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WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Lawson Priess – New Technology Specialist, Corteva AgriScience

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I attended Stephen F. Austin University, where I earned a B.Sc. in Agronomy. I received an M.Sc. and Ph.D. in Weed Science from the University of Arkansas. Woo Pig Sooiie!

What is your current job title and how long have you been with your current employer?

I started with Corteva AgriScience in October of 2021. I am a New Technology Specialist with a heavy focus on the Enlist Weed Control System. I work closely with the PhytoGen, Pioneer, and Corteva Crop Protection brands.



What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

I love the people I work with and being a part of a team that is constantly collaborating with others to find innovative solutions. There are so many people in Corteva that have taken time out of their day to teach me how to be impactful in my new role. The continued education, collaboration, and new relationships with colleagues, consultants, and growers has been my favorite part of the job.

What is something you wished you knew as a student that you know now?

I know when I was a Graduate Student, I heard many people say “diversify” but it never resonated with me until now. Sometimes advisors can become one trick ponies and encourage you to focus solely on the discipline you are studying. I strongly encourage you to diversify your understanding of different disciplines of Pest Control and Agronomy. When working with growers, consultants, and ag retail it is sometimes better to have row-crop understanding that is mile wide and inch deep rather than mile deep in one subject.

What is the biggest piece of advice you’d give students searching for a job?

I would recommend starting the job search earlier rather than later. Start by reaching out to acquaintances and let them know you will be applying for jobs in the near future. They can help keep you in the loop of possible jobs that will be opening up or are already open. Cast a wide net but only apply for jobs that you would take if offered.

Any final thoughts?

I know graduate school can be a grind but try to stay motivated and finish your degree. Set clear expectations with your advisor on when you would like to complete your degree and work to meet all obligations in that time frame. Hold your advisor accountable to the agreed-upon expectations.

The extremely long hours worked in Grad school were a grind, but the memories made are cherished. Make sure to have fun and set aside time for friends, family, and faith.

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ANNUAL MEETINGS

Deadlines

WSSA/NEWSS

Title Submissions

Oct. 31, 2022

Abstract Submissions

Jan. 9, 2023

Presentation Submissions

Jan. 23, 2023

NCWSS

Title Submissions

Sep. 9, 2022

Abstract Submissions

Nov. 1, 2022

Presentation Submissions

Nov. 28, 2022

SWSS

Title Submissions

Oct. 7, 2022

Abstract Submissions

Jan. 13, 2023

Presentation Submissions

Jan. 20, 2023

WSWS

Title Submission

Dec. 1, 2022

Abstract Submission

Feb. 6, 2023

Presentation Submission

Feb. 13, 2023