

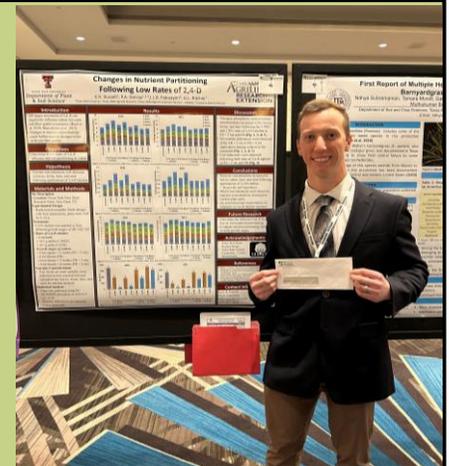


### Graduate Student of the Month

Kyle Russell – Ph.D. Candidate at Texas Tech University

#### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am currently a Ph.D. candidate at Texas Tech University with Dr. Peter Dotray. My research focus is on off-target movement of 2,4-D and its influence on nutrient partitioning, fruiting pattern changes, and fiber development. While the core of my research is in weed science, it has been really interesting to see how other disciplines are connected and influenced by the decisions we make to control troublesome weeds.



#### What drew you to weed science?

While I've always been interested in agriculture, my interest in weed science started when I was a student worker at Western Illinois University working with Dr. Mark Bernards. Dr. Bernards not only showed me the importance of weed management, but he also encouraged me to pursue an advanced degree and introduced me to Dr. Adrian Moses and Dr. Peter Dotray who have both been tremendously influential in my career in weed science.

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

My favorite part about both the SWSS and the WSSA is being able to network with other graduate students and professionals who are passionate about weed science. Its always great meeting new people and folks from all across the nation.

#### What is your favorite weed and why?

Because I am at Texas Tech, my favorite weed has to be Russian thistle. There's something unique about watching giant tumbleweed blow across cotton fields in the West Texas wind.

#### What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to work with industry and make a meaningful impact on producers globally. When I worked at both DuPont Pioneer and Syngenta as an undergraduate, I was able to experience potential products that could change normal agricultural practices. Both to those experiences are why I have become so interested in working in the industry and pursuing a degree in weed science.

If you know a hardworking graduate student you would like to be featured, nominate them by emailing [ngodara@vt.edu](mailto:ngodara@vt.edu)

## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Mayank Malik – Global Principal Agronomic Solutions Manager, Bayer Crop Science

### What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

B.S. in Agriculture (Major-Agronomy), CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, India;  
M.S. in Weed Science, University of Arkansas; and  
Ph.D. in Weed Science, Clemson University.

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

I am working with Bayer Crop Science as Agronomic Solution Manager, involved with developing new herbicide products/ solutions development in row crops globally. I have been with the company from last 13 years.



### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

Developing new products and crop protection solutions to help growers produce more and enrich their lives.

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

When I was in graduate school, all I knew was whether I can be a university faculty or an industry rep. I wish I knew all the possible career opportunities for weed science graduate students.

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

Networking is the key to success. Get involved with weed science societies, network with other research professionals (fellow students, faculty, industry people), and participate in various collegiate weed contests where you will get to test and improve your weed science skills. Weed Science is one of the best pest management disciplines, get the best out of this opportunity provided to you.

#### WSSA GSO Contact Info

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#### Important Events & Dates

##### **April 3**

Science Policy Fellows  
(SPF) Application Due

SPF application packet requires resume, one writing sample on science policy issue, and two letters of reference and submit it to Dr. Lee (Lee.VanWychen@wssa.net)

##### **July 25-27**

National Weed Science  
Contest

#### Follow us on Social Media!



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@WSSAGSO

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# WSSA

GRADUATE STUDENT  
ORGANIZATION

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ISSUE 2

April 2023

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## Graduate Student of the Month

Damilola Alex Raiyemo – Ph.D. Student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

### What university do you attend and what is your research focus?

I am a Ph.D. student in Dr. Patrick Tranel's lab at the University of Illinois. My research is focused on the genetic factors and mechanisms of sex determination in weedy dioecious amaranths.

### What drew you to weed science?

Although my college major was in plant biology, I became interested in weed science in 2016 after reading excerpts from Dr. IO Akobundu's book, "Weed Science in the Tropics: Principles and Practices." I wanted to know more about biology of weeds, herbicide MOAs, and mechanisms weeds use to circumvent management practices. I went to University of Idaho for my MS degree and have enjoyed research in weed science ever since.

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

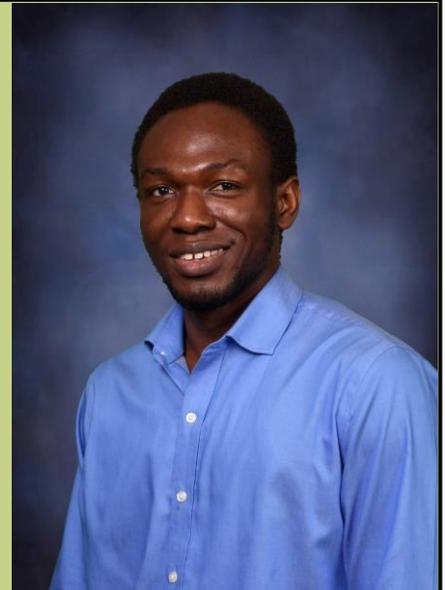
The first WSSA conference I attended was held in New Orleans in 2019 and since then it has always been an excitement to be a part of the annual meetings. One key aspect of the societies is that they offer an opportunity to network or share ideas with fellow students and researchers.

### What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is spiny amaranth (*Amaranthus spinosus*). It is monoecious but male flowers are spatially separated from female flowers on the same inflorescence.

### What is your long-term goal?

My long-term goal is to explore career opportunities in academia or the industry, where I could apply "-omics" to further understand weed evolution, and contribute to sustainable global agriculture.



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## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Sarah Lancaster – Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Kansas State University

### What Universities did you attend/degrees did you earn?

B.S. Plant Science, University of Missouri

M.S. Crop Science, North Carolina State University

Ph.D. Agronomy, Texas A&M University

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

Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist,  
Kansas State University since November of 2019

### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

I love the variety. One day I might be talking about suspected herbicide-resistant weeds in soybean with farmers and agents in eastern Kansas and the next day I might be planning on-farm integrated management trials in western Kansas with students and industry collaborators. And all of it is aimed at making a positive difference for everyone involved.

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

Life is probably not going to turn out according to your plans. But it still has the potential to be wonderful. And bonus tip.... sometimes 90 or 95% is just as good as 100%. Learn how to recognize when good enough and save your resources for things that really matter.

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

Be open minded. Know what your 'must have' requirements are compared to conditions that are just your preferences. When you find something that satisfies that 'must haves', go for it. If you find it doesn't work, look for something else.

### Any final thoughts?

Always see yourself as a student. The world is so big and there are so many perspectives! Take advantage of opportunities to experience and learn something new.



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# WSSA

GRADUATE STUDENT  
ORGANIZATION

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ISSUE 3

May 2023

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## Graduate Student of the Month

Srishti Gupta – Ph.D. Student at the Colorado State University

### **What university do you attend and what is your research focus?**

I am a Ph.D. student in Dr. Frank Dayan's lab at Colorado State University. My research focuses on understanding the mechanism of novel mutation in a transcription factor that imparts non-target site herbicide resistance in rice as well as to study glyphosate resistance inheritance pattern in kochia.

### **What drew you to weed science?**

I have been involved in human proteins research during my MS, which was fascinating, but I always was inclined to work with plants. The first opportunity I had was to work in a biotechnology lab at Indian Agricultural Research Institute. There I worked closely with small stakeholders, farmers and ventured into various applied plant science research. I felt there is a need to adopt integrated pest and weed management techniques to help farmers in their production. Hence, strongly wanted to enhance my knowledge in the field of weed science, so applied for Ph.D.

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

My favorite part about the WSSA and WSWS meetings is to showcase research and get different opinions and ideas on it. Other than this I enjoy the networking sessions which allow me to interact with industry and government employees and learn about their job experiences. Also, one of the best parts is to explore highlights of different places.

### **What is your favorite weed and why?**

My favorite weed is lambsquarters which is an edible broadleaf weed that can be found easily in gardens and pulses fields. I remember how tricky it was to apply foliar herbicide on the leaves as it produces thick epicuticular wax. Interestingly, it is widely consumed in different parts of the world as it is rich in minerals and vitamins.

### **What is your long-term goal?**

My long-term goal is to join the federal sector and understand the regulatory framework. However, I am equally interested in exploring opportunities in industry to gain exposure in product stewardship programs, sustainable agriculture and research and development.



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## WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Nicholas Basinger – Assistant Professor, University of Georgia

### What Universities did you attend/degrees did you earn?

B.S. in Health and Exercise Science, Furman University, Greenville, SC

M.S. and Ph.D. in Weed Science, Dept of Horticultural Science, North Carolina State University with Drs. Katie Jennings and David Monks

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

Assistant Professor of Weed Science, University of Georgia, Athens, GA, for the last 4.5 years.



### What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

The best part about my job is working on interesting research questions with really amazing faculty, students, and staff. I like to try to think about not only the problems of today but to work to answer questions in weed science that haven't been asked yet. The questions of 10, 20, and 30 years in the future. I really appreciate and enjoy working on projects that are wholistic and multidisciplinary. Our world is so multifaceted that being able to see things through many lenses make things so much more interesting. Some of the most exciting questions to work to answer are those that are a little out of the box because it makes you think creatively about how to approach a problem and how to be a good collaborator. As a team we've been able to work with a wide variety of researchers at national and international level.

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

Seek out joy. Grad school is hard. It's the ultimate learning curve. When you graduate with whatever degree you'll realize you know more than you think you know, but there will be so much more to learn. There is plenty of time to grind through the hard parts of your degree. It is the relationships with your fellow graduate students, and relationships with other professionals that you will work with in the future that really matter.

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

Be comfortable with who you are, what you bring to the table, and confident about what you know. Do this while also being humble.

### Any final thoughts?

One of the best things that I've had happen in my life has been having great mentors, both personally and professionally. These are people that are doing the things that you want to be doing when you "grow up." Mentors have a lot to do with who I am and where I am today and have been pivotal for me in all aspects. Take time to identify great mentors and learn all you can as they can truly change the course of your life.

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