

2025 Plant Pathology Honors, Awards, & Graduation Recognition Event May 6, 2025



Department of Plant Pathology
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



Welcome New Faculty

Welcome Dr. Marc Chevrette!

- Assistant Professor start date of August 1, 2025
- RISE - EARTH
- Dr. Chevrette's research focuses on the ecology and evolution of the genes that encode secondary metabolism and how microbial metabolites shape microbiome interaction networks. He deploys both computational and experimental approaches to describe the eco-evo dynamics of bacteria and the genes that assemble their secondary metabolites.
- Great interest in undergraduate instruction



Wisconsin RISE Initiative

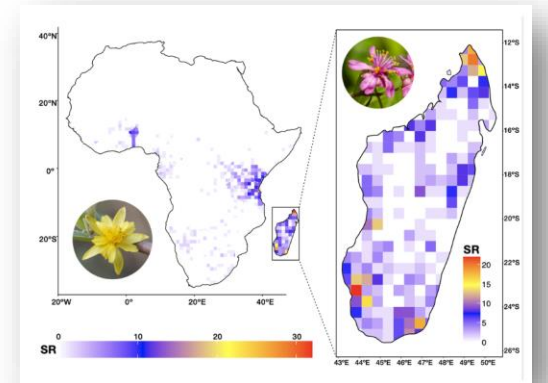
Wisconsin Research, Innovation and Scholarly Excellence



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Welcome Dr. Nisa Karimi!

- Teaching Faculty II with start date of June 1, 2025
- Experience in botanical research and large enrollment undergraduate instruction
- Dr. Karimi will teach Plant Pathology 311 (Food Security) this Fall 2025 and will expand instructional capacity for the Department
- Currently an Assistant Scientist with the Missouri Botanical Garden
- Graduate of UW-Madison Botany
- Research interest in spatial diversification of flora





Plant Pathology Graduations

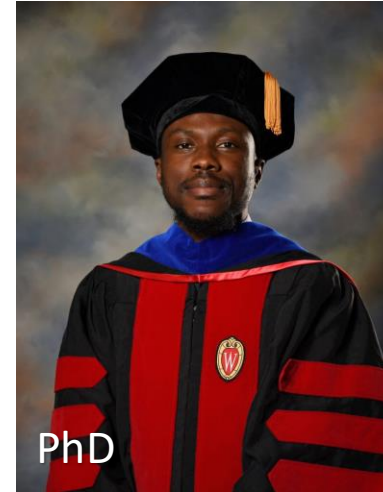


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Graduates

Spring 2024 Plant Pathology Graduates – Congratulations!
Maxwell Chibuogwu, Mariama Carter, Afona Irabor



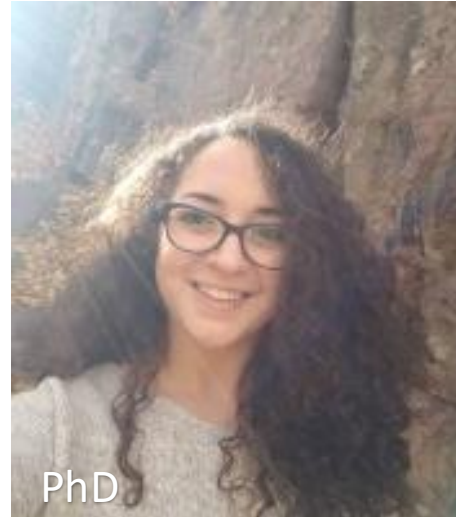
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Graduates

Summer/Fall 2024 Graduates – Congratulations!

Daowen Huo, Casey Trickle, Jeysika Zayas-Rivera, Celeste (Huff) Mezera (Ento & Agroecology, Holland Lab)



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Graduates

Spring 2025 Graduates – Congratulations!

Yulin Du, Sarah de Souza, Zoltan Banyai, Daniel Hayden



PhD



Ms



Ms



PhD



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Graduates

Graduating in May or Summer 2025 Doctoral Graduates – Congratulations!

Aaron Lowenstein, Evan Lozano, Jose Sanchez Gallego, Austin VanDenTop, Ana Maria Vazquez-Catoni



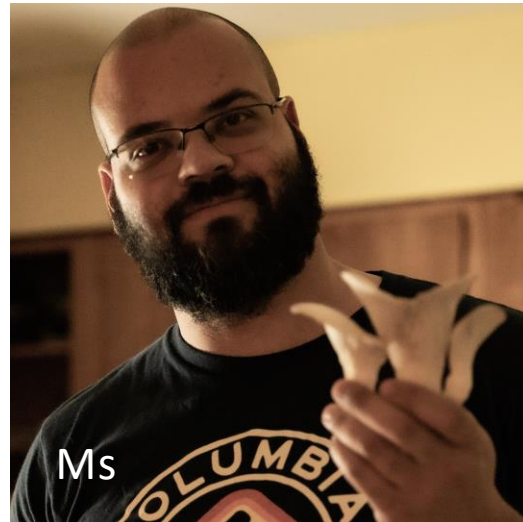
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Graduates

Graduating in May or Summer 2025 Masters Graduates – Congratulations!

Roberto Regalado, Smita Shrestha



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Undergraduates

Congratulations to our Plant Pathology graduates!

Conor Bendett
Santina Cullison
Madigan Freng
Lucia Hyzer
Katrina Lebl
Rilee Schmit



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Congratulations to our Plant Pathology Student, Post-doc, & Staff Travel Scholarship Winners May 2024-April 2025!

Austin Hall
Yulin Du
Madeline Bondy
Nathan Kolbow
Sungsik Kong
Even Gorstein
Austin VanDenTop
Shashini Welmillage (post doc)
Evan Lozano
Fernanda Proano Cuenca (post doc)
Susana Ferrer Orgaz
Sarah Caroline de Souza
Eithan Pozas Rodriguez
Aфона Irabor
Mira Syahfrienя Amir Rawa (post doc)



Shan Shan (post doc)
Natalie Wieber
Grant Nickles
Olee Hoi Ying Lam
Kody Hughes
Brooke Babler (staff)
Dante Calise
Madeline Bondy
Sarah deVeer (staff)
Dante Tauscheck (staff)
Fatma Ezzahra Besbes
Jolene Spurgeon (staff)
Cole Lubinski (staff)
Sushant Puri
Fabian Rodriguez Bonilla (staff)
Courtney Meeks
Susana Giraldo Ramirez



Much appreciation to Lizzy Burkhalter for supporting our award process!





Student & Post-doc Awards, Milestones 2025



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Congratulations to researchers of Dr. Leslie Holland's Lab for their significant milestones!

Longtime undergraduate assistants graduating with BS degrees in the Spring of 2025: **Daniel Ortega** and **Katrina Lebl**



Congratulations to researchers of Dr. Leslie Holland's Lab for their significant milestones! continued

Fabian Rodriguez Bonilla, research scientist, celebrates 3 years with the Holland Lab this summer!

Eithan Pozas Rodriguez, PhD student, was invited to present his research at the Sainsbury Laboratory!



Congratulations to PhD Student **Courtney Meeks** of the Holland Lab for receipt of a North Central Regional SARE Graduate Student Grant!





Undergraduate student and researcher **Tianyi Xu**, with Dr. Claudia Solis-Lemus, was awarded the Holstrom Environmental Research Fellowship. Congratulations, **Tianyi!**



Congratulations to **Nathan Kolbow**, PhD Student, **Dr. Josh Justison** (post-doc), and **Dr. Claudia Solis-Lemus** for recognition in the Open-Source Hall of Fame by the Data Science Institute for the development of their software ecosystem **JuliaPhylo**

JuliaPhylo 

A software ecosystem for phylogenetics in Julia



Congratulations to post-doctoral researcher **Dr. Rosa Aghdam** with Dr. Claudia Solis-Lemus for winning the Wisconsin Initiative for Science Literacy (WISL) Award!



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Office of Postdoctoral Studies

Enhancing the Postdoctoral Training Experience



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Congratulations, **Susana Giraldo Ramirez** for receiving the ROOT and SHOOT (Rooting Out Oppression Together and Sharing Our Outcomes Transparently) NSF-funded travel award to attend the MPMI meeting in Cologne this summer 2025 with mentor **Dr. Aurelie Rakotondrafara**!





Congratulations to **Austin Hall** for winning the Wisconsin Institute for Discovery John D. Wiley Graduate Student Award! Austin is a Plant Pathology graduate student under the mentorship of Dr. Jo Handelsman. Well-earned, Austin, and congrats!



Congratulations, **Dr. Deepak Haarith**, post-doctoral scientist with Dr. Andrew Bent, for accepting an Assistant Professor position at the University of Florida in Gainesville in the Dept. of Entomology & Nematology. He starts in August 2025!



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PhD student Olee Hoi Ying Lam was awarded the Wisconsin Potato Industry Board Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship for 2024-2025

- Olee is co-advised by Amanda Gevens in PP and Phil Townsend in FWE
- Olee will be presenting components of her doctoral research work in an oral presentation entitled: Pre-symptomatic detection of early blight in potato crops using imaging spectroscopy at the 2025 Grower Education Conference in Stevens Point



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Faculty Awards 2025



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Congratulations,
Dr. Nancy Keller!
for her recognition
as a 2024 Top
Scholar by
Scholar GPS




Medical Microbiology & Immunology
University of Wisconsin - Madison



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**Congratulations,
Dr. Aurelie
Rakotondrafara on
her promotion to
full professor!**

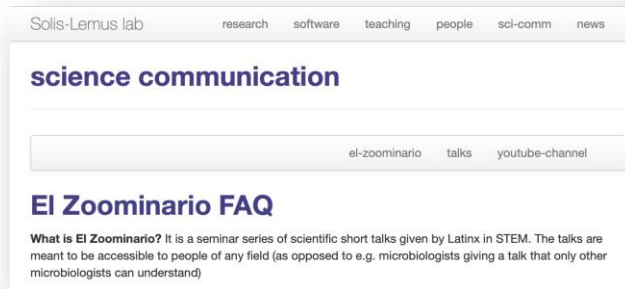




Congratulations, **Dr. Aurelie Rakotondrafara** on her receipt of the 2024 Chancellor's Distinguished Teaching Award & the CALS Robert Spitzer Teaching Excellence Award in 2024!

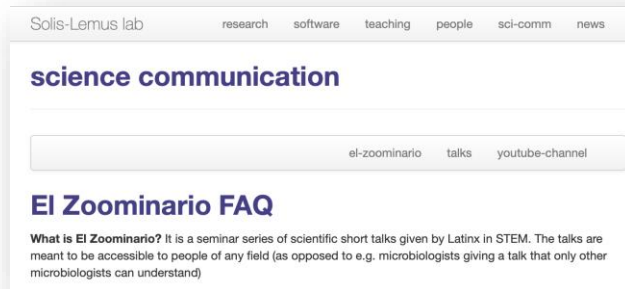
Congratulations, **Dr. Claudia Solis-Lemus**, on her promotion with tenure!

Dr. Solis-Lemus was also awarded the Bassam Z. Shakhashiri Public Science Engagement Award & the WID Wiley Faculty Award!



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Dr. Solis-Lemus was also awarded the Holstrom Environmental Research Fellowship (UW-Madison) and an Undergraduate Mentor Award (UW-Madison)! Congratulations Dr. Solis-Lemus!



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Congratulations to **Dr. Leslie Holland** for being awarded the APS Hewitt Award & the Wisconsin State Cranberry Growers Association Service to the Industry Award!



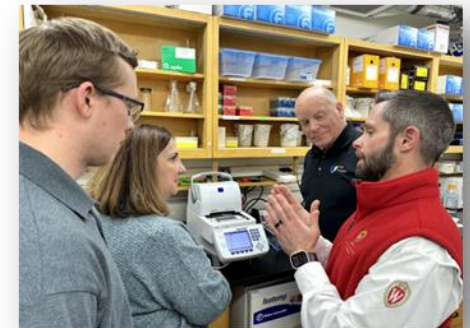
Hewitt Award

The **William Boright Hewitt and Maybelle Ellen Ball Hewitt Award** recognizes APS members who are within seven years of receiving a Ph.D. and have made an outstanding and innovative contribution directed towards the control of plant disease.



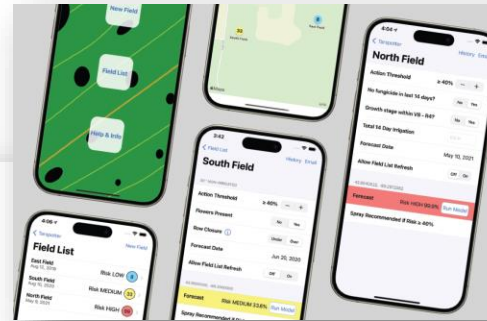
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Congratulations to **Dr. Damon Smith** for receipt of the 2024 CALS Donald Peterson Farm Technology Transfer Award, the Vaughan Bascom Professorship in Plant Pathology – to be awarded 2025 (5-year award), and the APS Excellence in Extension Award!



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Congratulations to **Dr. Damon Smith** for his recognition in CALS Grow Magazine for impactful research and resulting Tar Spot management tools!



Summer 2024

NATURAL SELECTIONS

This App Hits the Tar Spot

Armed with data from eight states, a CALS research team has created free mobile software that helps farmers fight a devastating corn disease.

By Nicole Miller MS'06

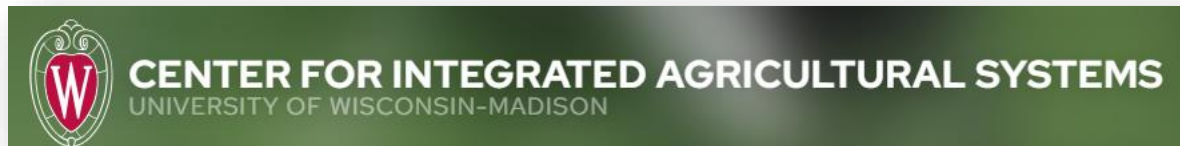


COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURAL & LIFE SCIENCES



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Congratulations to **Dr. Erin Silva** for receipt of the Clif Bar Endowed Chair in Organic Agriculture and Outreach (2021-2026), the Organic Center/Organic Voices “Most Impactful Organic Research Result” in 2024, and the Vilas Mid-Career Award (2023-2025)!



Thank you to **Dr. Richard Lankau** for his years of service as Associate Chair of Plant Pathology! The Department has highly valued and benefitted from his leadership and guidance.

Dr. Lankau was promoted to full professor in 2024!



Congratulations to **Dr. Paul Koch** for his recognition as the CALS Pound Extension Award winner in 2024!

Dr. Koch was also selected as the 2025 Donald Peterson Farm Technology Transfer Award from CALS, and was promoted to full professor in 2024.

Dr. Koch will serve as our new Department Chair on July 1, 2025!

Congratulations, Dr. Koch!



Congratulations to **Dr. Mehdi Kabbage** for his promotion to full professor in 2024!

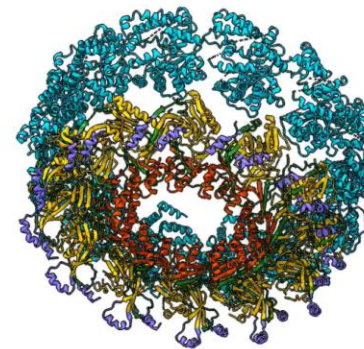
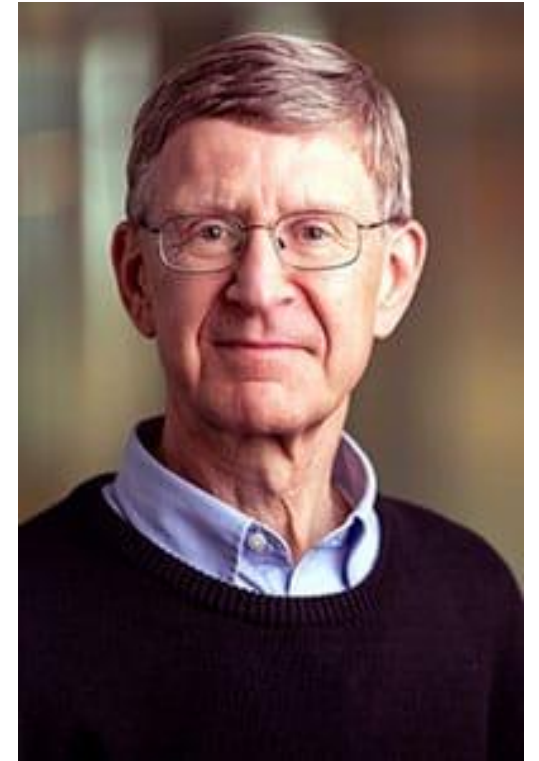
Congratulations, Dr. Kabbage!



Congratulations to **Dr. Paul Ahlquist** for his New Frontiers in Science and Technology Award from Thermo-Fisher Scientific in 2024!

Dr. Ahlquist holds the Endowed Steenbock Professorship in Microbiological Sciences and the Endowed John and Jeanne Rowe Chair in Virology at Morgridge.

Congratulations, **Dr. Ahlquist!**





Staff Awards 2025



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Congratulations to **Dr. Joshua Pultorak**, for his promotion to Teaching Faculty II!



Josh acts as a mentor to dozens of undergraduate researchers involved in the global Tiny Earth initiative aimed at addressing the world's antibiotic crisis.





Congratulations to Dianna Kessler, Inspector with the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program on her well-deserved Industry Leadership award from the Wisconsin Seed Potato Improvement Association in honor of her outstanding work.

Congratulations to Kevin Bula, Inspector with the Wisconsin Seed Potato Certification Program on his well-deserved induction into the Wisconsin Potato Hall of Fame 2025 for his outstanding service to potatoes over 46 years



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A big thank you to our **Russell Labs administrative staff** led by **Alyson Amenda** and faculty director **Dr. David Drake** for their support of the work we do in our RL building community!

Mariah Allen
Brandon Baumgard
Matt Bohne
Ashley Bowman
Lizzy Burkhalter
Tori Cooper
Amy Ducey
Nyasha Gwaza
Allee Hochmuth
Emily Laabs

Dixie Lang
Tim Lorenz
Laurie Luther
Alex Nelson
Elyce Rodrigues
Janet Seidl
John Slaybaugh
Megan Sullivan
Chad Teubert
Margaret Webster



Thank you to all our Plant Pathology students, staff, post-doctoral scientists, and faculty for your hard, smart, and creative work! Your contributions are valued!

