

Western Society of Weed Science – GSO President

Jodie Crose - PhD Student at University of Wyoming

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

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Wyoming where I have focused on evaluating a suite of tools aimed at improving restoration of native species while providing extended invasive annual grass control.

How do you manage the time requested to serve the society? How many hours do you spend in a month?

While the student liaison position within WSWS is the most active student role within the society, there are only a few occasions that require a lot of time. Organizing and preparing different events at the annual meeting are the most demanding. Outside of that, I probably average around 2-3 hours a month between newsletters, emails, and BoD meetings. All of which develop different skills that are useful beyond academics.

Tell us about different events (throughout the year or at the annual meeting) that your society utilizes to increase student involvement.

The majority of student involvement occurs during the WSWS annual meeting. The society offers multiple social events for students and professionals, including a student luncheon, a student reception, a welcome reception, and student night out. Student night out is a unique event at the annual meeting where a small group of professionals take a group of students to dinner. The purpose of this event is to provide students the ability to network and have conversations that are more intimate with professionals working in the realm of weed science.

What advice would you give to someone who is interested in getting more involved in your society?

WSWS is a small, tight knit community with professionals that provide a lot of support. There are a couple of ways to become more involved as a student. There are multiple committees looking for student involvement, which is highly encouraged from the society. These roles require little time and provide an inside view of the society's functioning. A list of these committees can be found on the WSWS website under the Society tab. If someone is interested in a more active role, the student liaison is an elected position by the WSWS student body that serves on the Board of Directors.

Are there any socials or events at your upcoming annual meeting that your students should put on their calendars?

Absolutely! As I mentioned previously, our biggest student event is student night out (Wednesday, March 9th). If interested, please send me an email! Otherwise, we will have some exciting guest speakers at our student luncheon and our student reception. Both can be found on the annual meeting program on the WSWS website. Please email me if you have any questions (jcrose@uwyo.edu)!

Society Social Media (twitter, Facebook, Instagram)

Our Instagram handle is: wsws_students. We also have Facebook and twitter: Western Society of Weed Science Student Section and WSWStudents. Give us a follow!

Follow the Western Society of Weed Science on twitter:



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.



Graduate Student of the Month

Lucas Kopecky Bobadilla – PhD Candidate at the University of Illinois

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

I am at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign. My research focus on the use of genomics and other "omics" to study non target site resistance in waterhemp with a focus on dicamba (the first part of this story was published at Weed Science: <https://bit.ly/354S8cc>). I am also involved in studying the evolution of dioecy and weediness traits in *Amaranthus* species using genomics and bioinformatics approaches.

What drew you to weed science?

I was always fascinated by how some organisms can adapt and evolve to human actions and disturbances. Weeds are incredible organisms that have been doing this for a long time.

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

I always enjoyed the weed science societies and to be part of them. I was the student liaison for WSWS from 2017 to 2019 and I really enjoyed the experience. All societies provide an excellent opportunity for networking, discuss cool science, and meet our fellow graduate students. I doubt that any professional society is like our weed science societies!

What is your favorite weed and why?

My favorite weed is horseweed (*Erigeron canadensis*). I like to think of horseweed as the "evil" dandelion! The adaptation potential of this weed is immense, and it can be found all over. It has a very cool biology and also evolved to have very unique NTS resistance mechanisms.

What is your long-term goal?

I think my long-term goal is to continue to provide meaningful research on weeds evolution and adaptation and to stimulate the usage of bioinformatics/data science tools by weed scientists.



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WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Neeta Soni – Herbicide Biologist, Crop Protection Discovery, Corteva Agriscience.

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

I completed my Ph.D. at Colorado State University where I worked with Dr. Todd Gaines. Obtained my M.S. at the University of Florida under the advisory of Dr. Ramon Leon. I have a B.S. in Agronomy from EARTH University, Costa Rica.

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

I am a Herbicide Biologist in Crop Protection Discovery at Corteva Agriscience. I started in September 2020, so it has been about one year and half.

What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

I work on early-stage herbicide discovery. In this group I get to be on the forefront on what will be the next herbicide in the market. I enjoy the knowledge exchange and learning opportunities among many other scientists with diverse scientific backgrounds.

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

- Create good habits on how you manage the archiving of your files, data, meeting notes in ways that you can easily track them. These habits will become handy for your “future you”.
- Be honest with yourself, assess your life-work balance, and think realistically how much time you have available before you take in another project.

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

Build up your network. Identify the type of job that you will be interested in and reach out to the professionals in the area. Make sure to communicate how your career plan would align with the professional's institution. Try to incorporate your research in interdisciplinary collaborations and keep up to date with technology and scientific releases.

Don't be afraid to apply for jobs that you think you might not be qualified for. You might get selected. If you don't get the job, your resume will become a resource if another similar position becomes available.

Any final thoughts?

This is an exciting time to be in Weed Science. The need to increase in food supply, mitigate climate change, tackle herbicide resistance evolution, among many other challenges are driving the scientific community to develop novel and more efficient solutions. Keep your mind open and stay creative because there is much more to do!



If you would like to suggest a WSSA alumni to be spotlighted in the WSSA Graduate Student Organization newsletter, send your suggestion to sarah.kezar@tamu.edu

Transitioning and Running an Online Society Meeting

Dr. Anita Dille and Dr. Dr. Marie-Josée Simard

Dr. Anita Dille – Kansas State University

1. What factors went into the decision making and the time it took to transition to the online format? As the Covid-19 pandemic evolved from the summer of 2021 into the fall, the WSSA and CWSS leadership saw a clear opportunity to continue planning an in-person meeting. However, the key factor that led us to a quick shift to a virtual format was an increase in the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in late December that resulted in the CDC declaring a "no travel to Canada" level 4 recommendation for folks in the USA. This ruling resulted in most academic and industry folks being prevented from getting permission to travel. Members in the federal government agencies (both in USA and Canada) were also restricted from in-person meetings and from traveling internationally. These were the final triggers that resulted in a pivot to virtual. No one was going to be able to make in-person. Because of our previous experience in 2021, we were able to 1) work with the same vendor to develop our virtual program, and 2) able to work closely with the hotel to minimize financial impacts on the WSSA and CWSS, by committing to a future meeting at the location. We look forward to being back in Vancouver in 2025!

2. How were you adaptable in your leadership?

The key leadership role that I had was to rapidly share information to the membership about our pivot to a virtual meeting, to work closely with our program committees (both CWSS and WSSA) through regular weekly update meetings (via zoom), and to encourage and support the new ideas that our Program Chair and President-elect, Stanley Culpepper proposed for the virtual meeting. I felt confident in our ability to pivot based on our previous years' experience, excellent volunteers that support the WSSA and CWSS, and tremendous administrative support of Eric Gustafson, our WSSA Executive Secretary and our meeting management team at IMI.

3. What advice do you have for others who may be in a similar position?

It was important to be clear about what we desired for our membership, that is an in-person annual meeting. There is so much value in the networking and connections that our members can make when meeting in-person. But it was also very important to make a clear decision when it was necessary, and to communicate that to our members and attendees quickly. Communication is key and having an excellent team of leaders in the WSSA and CWSS helped me in my role to make the right decisions and to have open dialogue and discuss needs as we proceeded to our second annual virtual meeting.



Dr. Marie-Josée Simard – Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada

1. What factors went into the decision making and the time it took to transition to the online format? The first factor to consider is the hotel deadlines and re-booking options. Secondly, the time needed for approvals by employers and universities and the time needed to book or cancel flights etc. Finally, when the CDC did not recommend travel to Canada it was clear that many employers and universities would not send their people and we had to transition to online.

2. How were you adaptable in your leadership? I kept the information flowing from the CWSS board and local arrangement committees. I had a personal meeting with the WSSA president and called our local arrangement chair to give personal feedback.

3. What advice do you have for others who may be in a similar position? Have some form of back-up plan. Determine early in the process how decisions will be taken if problems arise.



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Graduate Student of the Month

Annu Kumari – PhD Student at Auburn University

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

I joined Auburn University in the Spring of 2021 as an MS student and then switched to Ph.D. in the Fall of 2021 as my major advisor Dr. Andrew Price (USDA-ARS), provided me with this opportunity. My research primarily focuses on investigating the weed host range of Cotton Leaf Roll Dwarf Virus (CLRDV), the role of cover crops in managing the troublesome weed species, and determining the critical period for weed control in cotton and soybean cropping system by utilizing cover crops.

What drew you to weed science?

Agriculture has fascinated me the most since childhood as I grew up on a small family farm. I was always curious about the intensive cropping system with multiple crops in a year on our family farm, and I had keenly observed the struggle of producers to grow a successful crop regardless of pest pressure. My enthusiasm for pest management directed me to pursue my career in the Agricultural field with a major in Weed Science by enrolling in an undergraduate degree at the CCS Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, India, in 2016.

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

WSSA and SWSS provide us with the best platform to connect with academia and industry weed scientists. Attending the society meetings is the best way to learn about the research perspectives of other students and experts. Also, I really enjoyed the top golf event organized by SWSS to socialize with other students.

What is your favorite weed and why?

Morning glory is my favorite weed. I really like its colorful flowers, climbers, and the shape of its leaves. Although it is one of the most problematic weed species in the southeastern United States and causes yield loss.

What is your long-term goal?

I would like to assist producers as a weed scientist in ensuring global food security by managing pest problems, regardless of industry or academic role.



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WSSA Alumni Spotlight

Albert Adjesiwor – Assistant Professor & Extension Weed Management Specialist, University of Idaho

What Universities did you attend/ degrees did you earn?

B.Sc. degree in Agriculture (Crop & Soil Science major), Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana. M.S. in Agronomy, University of Wyoming. Ph.D. in Plant Science (minor in Statistics), University of Wyoming.



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

I am an Assistant Professor & Extension Weed Management Specialist, University of Idaho. I started in July 2020.

What is the favorite thing about your job so far?

Undergraduate and graduate student mentorship. Being able to guide students through their research and chat about data is by far the favorite part of my job.

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

I wish I knew how much time I needed to spend writing grants and managing budgets. I learned very quickly after I started the job that I am pretty much running a small business (except you don't get to take the profit).

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

Be willing to step out of your comfort zone. As a graduate student, my dream job was Teaching and Research. I was hesitant to apply for Extension positions because I never thought I will be good at it. Now, I will say Extension is one of the favorite things about my current job. The truth is, it's hard to tell where you will end up, but you might be surprised that what you never thought you will be good at is actually what you might enjoy doing.

Any final thoughts?

Our Extension director tells us all the time that "in a world where you can be anything, choose to be nice". You never know where you might end up working, who you will collaborate with, who will review your proposal or manuscript, and the list goes on. Be a good, nice weed scientist!

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