

SWSS Report to WSSA - February 2026

Current Officers (until the postponed SWSS meeting on March 8-12, 2026)

President - Eric Palmer eric.palmer@syngenta.com
President Elect – Shawn Askew saskew@vt.edu
Vice President – Drew Ellis andrew.ellis@corteva.com
Secretary-Treasurer - Hunter Perry hunter.perry@corteva.com
Immediate Past President – Todd Baughman todd.baughman@ag.tamu.edu
Editor – Te-Ming Paul Tseng tt1024@msstate.edu

Additional Executive Board Members

Director at Large Academia – David Russell dpr0013@auburn.edu
Director at Large Industry - Matthew Wiggins matthew.wiggins@fmc.com
Director at Large Academia – Nick Basinger nicholas.basinger@uga.edu
Director at Large Industry – John Richburg john.richburg@corteva.com
Representative to WSSA – Peter Dotray peter.dotray@ttu.edu

Ex-Officio Board Members

Constitution and Operation Procedures - Carroll Johnson carroll@whitetailinstitute.com
SWSS Business Manager – Eric Gustafson Eric@IMIGroup.org
Graduate Student Organization Representative – Megan Singletary mil09024@ttu.edu
Director of Communications – Justin Calhoun jscgvf@missouri.edu

Endowment Foundation Board of Trustees – Lauren Lazaro, Lawson Priess, Sandeep Rana, Gary Schwarzlose, Connor Webster. Ex-Officio – Jason Bond, Eric Gustafson

New Officers after the March 8-12, 2026 meeting

President - Shawn Askew saskew@vt.edu
President Elect – Drew Ellis andrew.ellis@corteva.com
Vice President – Tom Barber tbarber@uada.edu
Secretary-Treasurer – Charlie Cahoon cwcahoon@ncsu.edu
Immediate Past President – Eric Palmer eric.palmer@syngenta.com
Editor – Hannah Wright-Smith hwrightsmith@utk.edu

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Director at Large Industry – John Richburg john.richburg@corteva.com
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Ex-Officio Board Members

Constitution and Operation Procedures - Carroll Johnson carroll@whitetailinstitute.com
SWSS Business Manager – Eric Gustafson Eric@IMIGroup.org
Graduate Student Organization Representative – Tanner King tak196@msstate.edu
Director of Communications – Justin Calhoun jscgvf@missouri.edu

Endowment Foundation Board of Trustees – Gary Schwarzlose (President), Lauren Lazaro, Lawson Priess, Hunter Perry, Connor Webster. Ex-Officio – Sandeep Rana, Eric Gustafson

The 79th annual meeting of the Southern Weed Science Society was scheduled to take place at the Sheraton Music City Hotel in Nashville, TN, January 25-28. Considering the forecasted ice/sleet/snow that was projected to impact most of the SWSS region, the Board had an emergency virtual meeting the week prior to the conference and decided to postpone the meeting to March 8-12. This turned out to be an excellent decision. Pre-registration was 263. We are not sure how many we will lose (or gain) with the new date. Eric G. was able to reduce the F&B minimum for the postponed meeting. There were 226 total presentation entries (104 posters and 122 oral papers). There were 91 graduate student competition presentations - 42 posters (30 M.S. and 12 Ph.D.) and 49 oral papers (20 M.S. and 29 Ph.D.). The theme for the 2026 meeting is “Cultivating Tomorrow: Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Agriculture and Education”, and the General Session will feature four global AI specialists. There is also an AI symposium. Graduate student events included a 15-Minute Oral Paper Competition and a Poster Competition, a pre-conference mixer at The Putt Shack, a luncheon, a Women’s Networking Event, and the Quiz Bowl. During the year, the graduate student organization hosted the following webinar:

Title: Proposal Writing for Agricultural Commodity Group; **Date:** October 10, 2025

Key Topics Covered: Priorities for commodity groups, what makes a strong proposal, and insights from being on the funding and funded side

Speakers: Dr. Gaylon Morgan, Director of Agricultural and Environmental Research - Cotton Incorporated; Dr. Brent Bean, Director of Agronomy - United Sorghum Checkoff Program; Dr. Todd Baughman, Center Director & Weed Scientist - Texas A&M AgriLife Research & Extension Center at Lubbock

Several members of our society will be recognized at the Awards Banquet in March. Timothy Grey, University of Georgia, Fellow; Todd Baughman, Texas A&M AgriLife Research, Outstanding Educator; Nicholas Basinger, University of Georgia, Outstanding Young Weed Scientist-Academia; Eric Reasor, PBI-Gordon Corp., Outstanding Young Weed Scientist-Industry; Juan Ramon Romero, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Outstanding M.S. Graduate Student; and Pamela Carvalho-Moore, University of Arkansas, Outstanding Ph.D. Graduate Student. Until the SWSS meeting in March, please keep this information confidential.

Eighteen students from eight academic institutions applied for the SWSS Endowment Enrichment Experience in 2025. The following three students were selected and paired with their chosen sponsor: Matthew “Cole” Woolard, Texas Tech University was hosted by Matthew Wiggins, FMC; Gavin Sparks, LSU was hosted by Gary Schwarzlose, Bayer CropScience; Tanner King, Mississippi State University was hosted by Scott Moore, Syngenta. All these students will give an overview of their experience during the SWSS General Session in Nashville.

The Southern Weed Science Competition was held in Newport, Arkansas on August 7. This year's competition was hosted by the University of Arkansas with local arrangements being handled by Drs. Bob Scott, Tom Barber, and Hannah Wright-Smith. There were 10 universities represented from across SWSS and a record number of participants - 105 total students!

Top Overall Teams: First Place Team – Graduate - University of Arkansas Team 1 (Cory Ketchum, Cade Holbrook, Rhet Baxley, Noah Chandler), Undergraduate – Texas A&M University (Noel Lepore, Aliya Abdul-Razzaq, Hunter Kern, Ayden Castillo (alternate)); First Place Individual – Graduate – Gavin Sparks, LSU, Undergraduate – Haydon Houser, University of Arkansas; First Place Weed ID – Graduate – Garin Sparks, and Undergraduate – Avery McMillin (LSU); First Place Unknown Herbicide Identification – Graduate – Ben Stoker (LSU) and Undergraduate – Haydon Houser; First Place Farmer Problem – Graduate – Jacob Dodd (Mississippi State University) and Undergraduate – Colton Conrady (Oklahoma State University); First Place Individual Calibration – Graduate – Aidan Ross (University of Arkansas), and Undergraduate – Haydon Houser; First Place Team Sprayer Calibration – Graduate –

University of Arkansas Team 2 (Diego Rodriguez, Aidan Ross, Juan Velasquez), and Undergraduate – Texas A&M University (Noel Leprone, Aliya Abdul-Razzaq, Hunter Kern, Ayden Castillo (alternate)). The 2026 Southern Weed Contest site and date has yet to be determined.

Last year we had several problems with the Confex system and our concerns were expressed here and elsewhere, and the result was to move to a new system. Below are thoughts of the SWSS Program Chair, Shawn Askew, when asked to summarize his experience with the new Four Waves system:

I found the Fourwaves system easy to use, flexible, and dynamic enough to handle most of our needs. The following attributes are based on my experience and opinion:

Pros:

- 1) Mostly intuitive build system that allows a wide range of modules that can be inserted into informational pages or forms with back-end attributes that allow for customized forms that build based on user preferences.*
- 2) Rapid response to questions, including an AI assistant that can handle most basic questions.*
- 3) Fairly good export system that allows for summary of user data.*

Cons:

- 1) The system currently does not allow for different due dates between titles, abstracts, and presentation files. Thus, the submission system must remain open to allow for changes to abstracts or the uploading of files; events that typically take place far after the title submission deadline. This allows patrons to enter new titles after the program has been printed, thus causing confusion among the user data and the systems schedule pages.*
- 2) The title submission module does not allow for text formatting, although these features are present in the abstract module.*
- 3) Once the program chair has arranged titles by time and place, all titles must be manually renumbered for effective indexing. A system feature that allows for numbering based on order within a section would be most helpful.*

Although I'm hopeful that we can work with Fourwaves to make a few improvements, I would not hesitate to use the same system in the future, nor would I be motivated to seek better options.

Future SWSS annual meeting locations, hotels, dates:

2026 – Sheraton Music City, Nashville, TN March 9-12 (postponed)

2027 – Omni Corpus Christi, Corpus Christi, TX January 25-28

2028 – Hyatt Regency Savannah, Savannah, GA (Joint with WSSA), January 17-20

Respectfully submitted,

Peter A. Dotray
SWSS Representative