Greetings to all! If there ever was a period for significant change, we are going through it right now as a department, college, and university. This fall we are welcoming a new CALS dean, a new chancellor, and the department is also going through many changes itself.

First, the interview process for our extension faculty forage systems agroecologist position was completed in spring, and we will be welcoming Dr. Marta Kohmann to the department with an official start date in early 2023! She is currently a post-doctoral scientist at the University of Florida, and we are all extremely excited to have her joining our department. Second, work regarding the potential restructuring of the departments of Agronomy and Horticulture continued during the summer as Horticulture chair Patrick Krysan and I worked on a proposal to merge our two departments. The departments had a joint meeting in early September to review the proposal and discuss the vision as well as potential names of a newly combined unit. This process will continue during the fall semester and I look forward to talking with new CALS dean Glenda Gillaspy about our ideas very soon.

Last – but certainly not least – our longtime department administrator Sandy Bennett has retired after 36 years of total service and the last 30+ years in Agronomy! Her last official day was July 29. Sandy has been an amazing administrator for the department, and I know we will all miss a level of comfort that she provided by making sure we were all taken care of with our assortment of varied requests and answering difficult questions. She always put the needs of others above her own, often outside of regular working hours. Thank you, Sandy, for all that you have done for the Department of Agronomy over the past 30 years. We will all miss your presence and guidance! A retirement celebration for Sandy was planned for September 29th.

As always, thanks for reading our newsletter and learning about all the amazing things we are doing. We are extremely grateful for the continued support of our alumni, emeritus faculty, staff, and other friends!

On, Wisconsin!

Chris Kucharik
Professor and Chair
Congratulations!

Caitlin Collies received a 2022 UW-Madison Graduate Program Coordinator Award for Excellence in Graduate Student Support! The award recognizes individuals who support the academic, research, and scholarly success of master’s and doctoral students at UW–Madison through their work across the graduate lifecycle and who help cultivate a welcoming and inclusive graduate learning environment. These individuals positively influence students’, faculty, staff, and/or other stakeholders’ experiences with campus.

Calli Anibas was awarded the Arthur J. and Ellen A. Maurer Extra Mile Award for her hard work and dedication to the students in Agronomy. This award honors a faculty or staff member who has demonstrated unusual concern for, and provided exceptional service to under-graduates, graduates, and/or Farm and Industry Short Course students. The recipient has a track record of impact on students’ education, career plans, leadership, or other aspects of students’ lives. The service should exceed the level that might normally be expected from faculty or staff.

Professor Shawn Kaeppler has been awarded a Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF) Named Professorship! This professorship honors faculty who have made major contributions to the advancement of knowledge, primarily through their research endeavors, but also as a result of teaching and service activities. This professorship confirms the great esteem that colleagues and the campus hold for Prof. Kaeppler’s work. As part of the process, Shawn choose a person by which this Professorship is to be known, and in doing so, he decided on Ransom A. Moore.

Alumni Spotlight

Casey Johannesen (BS, Agronomy, 2017) began a masters program at NC State this fall in Agri-cultural Economics. He hopes to focus on sustain-ability economics as it relates to the international cocoa and coffee trade, in which he is currently employed. He works with Barry Callebaut (world’s largest cocoa manufacturer) and has been with the company for nearly 5 years. Casey works as a Commercial Analyst for their largest customer.

Submitted by Casey Johannesen.
Congratulations!

Bala Devisetty, right, has been named Fellow of The American Society of Agronomy and received the Agronomic Industry Award. Both will be presented to him during the Annual Science Societies' meetings in Baltimore in November. Devisetty did his Ph.D. under Prof. Robert Gordon Harvey. He graduated from the Department of Agronomy in 1975, and still has fond memories of student life at the University. His study location was in the Tower Room. Prof. Johnny Pendleton was the department Chairman. Correspondence for the graduate program was with Prof. D.C. Smith. For more information on these awards, visit here.

Submitted by Bala Devisetty.

Ashley Becker was awarded a Graduate Student grant from USDA North Central Region SARE to interview row crop farmers in Iowa and Wisconsin to understand their perceptions about impediments to grassland agriculture.

Gregg Sanford and team were awarded a Long-term Research and Education Grant by USDA North Central Region SARE to build-out the Soil Organic Carbon Network (SOCnet), a farmer-scientist collaboration to evaluate the soil carbon sequestration potential of cropping systems by linking on-farm research to long-term cropping systems experiments in Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

Submitted by Randy Jackson.

Alumni Spotlight

Comfort Ateh' received her MS in Agronomy with Professor Jerry Doll and her PhD, also in Agronomy, with Gordon Harvey. Then she completed a post-doctoral appointment at UC-Davis, where she obtained a second PhD in Education. She is now at Providence College, where she has blossomed. Congratulations!

Submitted by Martha Wilcox, Bill Tracy, and Jerry Doll.

Tom Novak, owner of Total Crop Management, LLC has been elected as President of the Wisconsin Association of Professional Agricultural Consultants (WAPAC) for 2022/23. Tom is a 1990 UW CALS graduate living in Sullivan, WI, with his wife Tracey. He has two daughters; one studying at UW Platteville and one studying at UW Madison; both in agriculture-related fields. Tom has been consulting in south central and south east WI for the past 32 years. Tom and Tracey also own and operate Pleasant Valley Acres, LLC growing pumpkins, squash and gourds that they sell at their own farm stand, as well as direct sales to grocery stores and other farm markets. Tom also collaborates with UW Extension Specialists on a multitude of projects and is active in local and State level agribusiness.

Submitted by Eric Birschbach, Ag Site Crop Consulting, LLC.
The Badger Crops Judging team competed in the NACTA Crops Judging Competition in North Platte, NE, this spring. The Badgers Team placed fifth overall against a fierce field of over 28 teams from around the nation. The team included seniors Tanner Oyen & Brandon Strupp & Juniors Mackenzie Hintz & Chenxin Luo. Reserve team members included Juniors AnnaMarie Hintz, Sophomore Zach Olson & Freshman Thijs Laux.

The team lost two incredible seniors in May, and they have begun to fill their shoes with fresh new talent by nearly doubling in student competitors and hunger to improve scores. With the increased interest comes the opportunity to compete in additional competition areas such as Knowledge Bowl at SASES and the Precision Ag and Agribusiness contests at NACTA which build upon the base Crops contest, thanks to a diversity of majors among the 12 student competitors. By competing in multiple contests, the Badger Crops Club becomes eligible to enter the overall “sweeps” category which requires entries into at least two different competitions. This is a way to show off CALS programs and gain spotlight as a top agricultural school in the nation. The team meets three times a week outside of their regular coursework to study, and they set high goals for this year’s competitions. Their dedication and eagerness to represent the Agronomy Department and CALS to the best of their ability is their secret fuel to succeed at competitions.

Designed to prepare students for a future in Agronomy, the crops judging contest includes four separate sub-competitions in which students are scored individually and then cumulated for a final team score. These include an agronomic exam, a math exam, plant and seed identification, and a lab practical. Individuals compete for a chance at scholarships ranging from $100 - $650 when placing in the top six overall, while teams compete for a chance at the traveling trophy and, of course, bragging rights.

The team travels to Baltimore, MD, November 5th – 7th to compete at the SASES Crop Judging Showcase as part of the Tri-Societies Annual Meeting. NACTA will be held in Modesto, CA, in Mid-April 2023. Travel to these competitions is not possible without the generosity of sponsors to the team. The team is once again looking for sponsors for their 2022-2023 travels. If you are interested in learning more about sponsorship please refer to the official request letter from captain M. Hintz or contact their coach, Calli Anibas (canibas@wisc.edu). Go Badgers!

Thank you to all of our 2021-2022 donors!

The Badger Crops Club now has their own newsletter! Find them here!

Become a 2022-23 Sponsor!
The UW BeanTeam has added two new members over the summer! **Andrew Malcomson** is from a corn and soybean farm outside of Rushville, Illinois. He received his BS degree in Crop Sciences from the University of Illinois. Dr. Conley and UW Madison's dedication to Extension and helping farmers by providing unbiased agronomic data is what drew him to the program. Andrew is working on evaluating intercropping and double cropping methods with soft red winter wheat and soybean in Wisconsin.

**Mark Kendall** is from a beef and crop farm near Mineral Point, WI, and he obtained his BS in agronomy from UW-Madison in 2015. He and his wife live in Oregon, WI, and they enjoy the outdoors, sporting events, and time with family and friends. He is excited to join the BeanTeam as a master’s student focusing on no-till soybean production and the effects of different residue management and tillage practices.

And just as we gained new students, we said goodbye to **Emma Matcham** and **Lindsay Malone**. Emma now battles blazing sunshine and fire ants as an assistant professor at the University of Florida. Her research and Extension programs are focused on developing sustainable nutrient management strategies for agronomic row crop production including corn, peanuts, and sugarcane. You can follow the Matcham Lab on Twitter [@MatchamLab](https://twitter.com/MatchamLab).

In the opposite weather extreme from Emma, Lindsay started as an assistant professor at North Dakota State University in August. Her research will focus on Climate Smart Agriculture, helping farmers in North Dakota and beyond navigate the changing climate. You can follow the Malone Lab on Instagram [@climatesmartag](https://www.instagram.com/climatesmartag/).

This spring, **Haleigh Ortmeier-Clarke** was awarded the **Graduate Student Service Scholarship** from the University of Wisconsin Graduate School. "The Graduate Student Service Scholarship recognizes and honors the graduate students who volunteer to take on service roles in addition to their research, work, and family obligations. While service can come in many different forms and all service to the university is appreciated, priority for this scholarship is given to students who conduct multiple service activities and/or whose service activity is notably impactful." Haleigh was nominated based on her work in the department and in the greater university community.

Submitted by Haleigh Ortmeier-Clarke.

"Who doesn't want to be around goats?"

That was the question **Stefania Cartoni-Casamitjana** posed when commenting on the growing popularity of using goats for weed control. Stefania is a PhD student with Mark Renz and is leading the study on using goats to remove invasive weed species. Currently there are 22 goats on American Family Insurance property that are part of this research.

See the full story by Channel 58—WDJT-Milwaukee [here](https://wdjt.com/). Submitted by Mark Renz and Stefania Cartoni-Casamitjana.
Bob Karls, Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board, was a longtime friend of the Agronomy Department. We were deeply saddened to hear of his passing in April 2022.

Bob “dedicated the entirety of his professional career and over 30 years of service to the Soybean Farmers of Wisconsin, working tirelessly and selflessly as an advocate for farmers both regionally here in Madison and in Washington D.C, inspiring many future soybean and agricultural advocates alike.”

Bob’s full obituary can be found here.

WiscWeeds Team Update

Three new members joined the team recently. Dr. Ahmad Mobli is a Postdoctoral Research Associate working on Weed Ecology and Integrated Management.

Jacob Felsman is an MS Graduate Research Assistant working on cover crops for integrated weed management. He won the 2023 Gordon Harvey Distinguished Fellowship in Weed Science. Awardees will have a minimum GPA of 3.5 and are judged on academic performance, research competency, leadership as assessed from the curriculum vitae and an essay.

Zaim Ugljic is a PhD Graduate Research Assistant working on Smart Sprayer Technology (“green-on-green” applications).

The Badger Weeds Team, coached by Rodrigo Werle, participated in the 2022 North Central Weed Science Society Student Weed Contest. Corteva Agriscience hosted the contest in Johnston, IA, on July 28. Three graduate teams were coached by Werle. Mark Kendall (MS student in Conley’s lab) was awarded 1st place grad student farmer problem. Kendall, Nikola Arsenijevic (PhD student in Werle’s lab), Guilherme Chudzik (MS student in Werle’s lab), and Felipe Faleco (PhD student in Werle’s lab) were awarded 1st place grad team sprayer calibration. For a complete list of the Weed Contest winners, please see http://ncwss.org/weed-contest/

Nikola Arsenijevic was awarded the 2022 Graduate Student Support Competition Fellowship from the UW Graduate School.

Submitted by Rodrigo Werle.

Visit eCALS regularly for breaking news.
Members of the UW Field Maize Breeding and Genetics Program (Prof. Natalia de Leon and Prof. Shawn Kaeppler labs) celebrate the success of 2022 pollination and experiment fields. Summer is typically a busy time of the year for maize people; along with many field trials and evaluations from different members' research, the team needs to ensure hybrid and inbred seeds for the following years. The group works together, and while in the field, staff, faculty, and students discuss genetics and plant breeding, exchange life experiences, and have a lot of fun.

Will de la Bretonne just joined our group as a graduate student. John Searl (grad student) was selected to be one of the 2022 National Corn Growers Association Research Ambassadors. Jonas Rodriguez completed his PhD with our program and is currently a Post-Agreenskills fellow in the Laboratory of Plant Ecophysiological responses to Environmental Stresses (LEPSE) at INRAE, Montpellier, France. Jose Ignacio Varela completed his PhD with our program and is currently a postdoctoral fellow with the Genomes to Fields (www.genomes2fields.org) initiative.

Natalia de Leon was currently featured in the podcast Propelling Women in Power, which is about the careers of women in energy. She speaks about her decision-making process to find balance as a scientist, mother, and mentor. She shares how she fostered her love for plants, people, and field and lab work through collaborative research in plant breeding and genetics. Finally, she gives insights on how she creates the space for herself and others to be the best scientists they can. Listen here.

Shawn Kaeppler received the Crop Science Society of America Outstanding Paper Award for the paper entitled “Diversity and heterotic patterns in North American proprietary dent maize germplasm” Authors: Michael R. White, Mark A. Mikel, Natalia de Leon, and Shawn M. Kaeppler.

Submitted by Dayane Lima, Natalia de Leon, and Caitlin Collies.

Alumni Spotlight

Emma (Smith) Brown is a 2016 agronomy graduate who professors and classmates may remember as the chronic doodler in class. Lately she’s been helping on a project called Seeds of Wellbeing that’s supported by the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN). She is also creating a series of doodle animations on the issue of farmer stress, as well as a resource hub (also photo source) for ag producers in Hawaii. The hub is up and running, and the hope is that all 7 Doodle episodes of the series will be released by September (6/7 are done so far and just need approval). The videos are tailored to the issues of farmers in Hawaii, but may be of use to anyone dealing with stress. We’ve also published some findings here from our survey on farmer stress/depression with more papers to come. Submitted by Emma Brown.

Above: screenshot of Emma’s doodling (source). Right: Brown.
Off and On-Campus Resources for Students

A comprehensive database of resources is available to all students. The link can be found on the Agroecology, Agronomy, and PBPG websites, but you can also find it [here].

Click on “Mental Health and Human Services Resources”, then click on “Off and On-Campus Resources Comparison Chart”.

This site lists different types of concerns you may have and how to find the office that can help you navigate through that concern.

All undergraduate and graduate students who are enrolled for credit (and pay segregated fees) can use University Health Services for physical and mental health care.

UHS also provides services for post-docs, faculty, and staff.

Do you feel you are working in a hostile & intimidating workplace? You are not alone! Please visit this [site], whether you are faculty, staff, or student. You will find answers to your questions and assistance in dealing with and resolving this issue.

Special thanks to our donors! Your generosity is valued!

Click below to support UW Agronomy’s research and professional development opportunities.

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Deadlines to apply to the Agronomy Graduate Program or the Plant Breeding Plant Genetics Graduate Program:

- September 1 for spring entry
- December 1 for summer and fall

For more information please contact:
Caitlin Collies
caitlin.collies@wisc.edu
608-262-1390

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Congratulations to CEO & President of Egg Innovations LLC for being named to the Top 20 Most Dynamic Business Leaders of 2022. The Corporate Magazine’s list for 2022 focused on the importance of embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&) and included John Brunnquell, Ph.D. in their pioneering leaders who are taking their companies to new heights through innovation. See John’s recognition [listing here].

Submitted by Shawn Hendrix.

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