Science Societies

Society-Wide Graduate Student Competitions Showcase Top Students

February 21, 2024

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CROP SCIENCE, SOIL SCIENCE, AGRONOMY

csa news



The 2023 SSSA and CSSA Society‑Wide Graduate Student Competitions were an opportunity to highlight and showcase the top students from our CSSA and SSSA divisions! These unique competitions feature the top student winner from each division's traditional contest. They advanced to the Society‑wide competition where they competed in a poster session and five‑minute rapid oral session. The competitions were held virtually via Zoom two weeks after the Annual Meeting, and all students were recognized and the winners announced on Zoom with a recording posted to our social media channels.

There were significant prizes—each Society provided:

First place: $1000 plus a 2024 San Antonio meeting registration (value of $300)

Second place: $750

Third place: $500

CSSA Society‑Wide Student Competition

Winners



Hallie Wright



Kayla Beechinor



Madigan Eckels

First Place: Hallie Wright, University of Georgia–Athens (Genomics, Molecular Genetics, and Biotechnology Division), “Identifying Host and Pathogen Genes Involved in Finger Millet Blast Resistance”

Second Place: Kayla Beechinor, Texas A&M University (Crop Breeding and Genetics Division), “Assessing Stay Green via UAS in Advanced Stage Testing of Sorghum Hybrids”

Third Place: Madigan Eckels, Utah State University (Crops for Nutrition and Health Division), “Hormonal Modification to Eliminate Male Flowers in Medical Cannabis”

Finalists

- **Nicolas Caram**, University of Florida (Forage and Grazinglands Division)

- **Sarah Chu**, Texas A&M University (Seed Physiology, Production, and Technology Division)
- **Om Prakash Ghimire**, Clemson University (Crop Physiology and Metabolism Division)
- **Jackie Lyn Guevara**, Michigan State University (Turfgrass Science Division)
- **Reagan Heinrich**, Texas A&M University (Plant Genetic Resources Division)
- **Haleigh Ortmeier Clarke**, University of Wisconsin Madison (Crop Ecology, Management, and Quality Division)

Thank You to the Judges

Marilyn Warburton, USDA ARS and 2023 CSSA Past President Perumal Ramasamy, Kansas State University and CSSA Early Career Members Committee Member, Leah Brilman, DLF Pickseed and Corporate Member Board Representative Paul Scott, USDA ARS and 2021–2023 Editor of *Crop Science* Kevin Smith, University of Minnesota–Twin Cities and 2023 CSSA Fellow recipient

Organizing Committee

R. Scott Tubbs (Chair), University of Georgia–Tifton

Rachel Veenstra, Kansas State University

Ambika Chandra, Texas A&M Agrilife Research

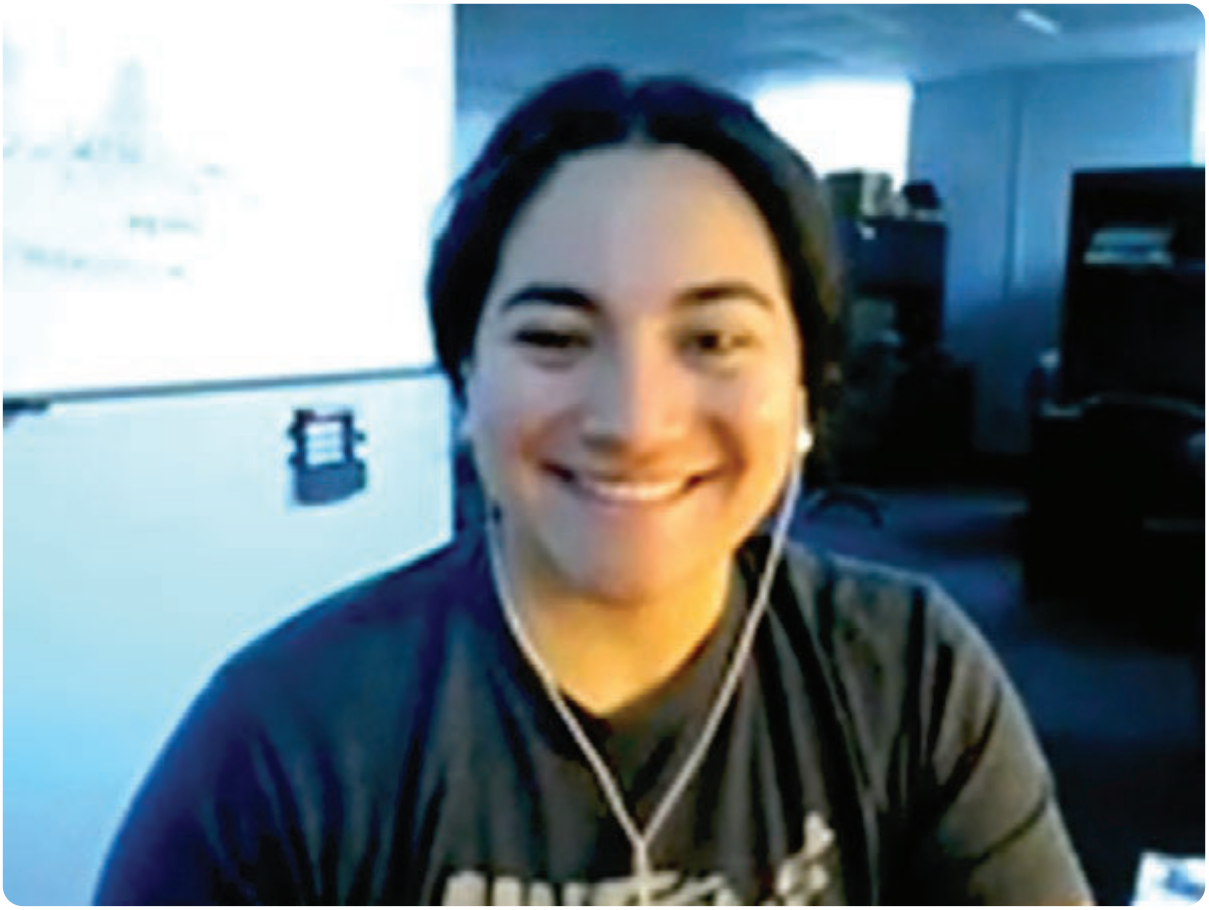
SSSA Society Wide Student Competition



Caroline Wolcott



Endy Lopes Kailer



Grace Bodine

Winners

First Place: Caroline Wolcott, Virginia Tech (Soil Physics and Hydrology Division), “Characterizing Gas Dynamics and Water Movement through Pine Bark Soilless Substrates”

Second Place: Endy Lopes Kailer, Kansas State University (Soil Biology and Biochemistry Division), “The Mycorrhizal Puzzle: The Impacts of Three Decades of Tillage and Fertilization on Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi”

Third Place: Grace Bodine, University of Maryland–College Park (Wetland Soils Division), “Evaluating IRIS Film Performance in the Early Growing Season for Wetland Restoration”

Finalists

- **Ashleigh Montgomery**, University of Delaware (Soil Mineralogy Division)
- **Carlos Bonini Pires**, Kansas State University (Soil Education and Outreach Division)
- **Benjamin Newcomb**, Texas Tech (Pedology Division)
- **Harrison Coker**, Texas A&M University (Soil Fertility and Plant Nutrition Division)
- **Sevendeep Kaur**, University of Guelph (Nutrient Management and Soil and Plant Analysis Division)
- **Alexandrea Rice**, University of Virginia (Forest, Range, and Wildland Soils Division)
- **Gbenga Daniel Adejumo**, University of Saskatchewan (Soil Chemistry Division)
- **Natalie Sturm**, Washington State University (Soil and Water Management and Conservation Division)
- **Tiffany Legg**, University of Oklahoma (Urban and Anthropogenic Soils Division)
- **Carlee Epting**, North Carolina State University (Soils and Environmental Quality Division)

Thank You to the Judges

- Harold van Es, Cornell University and former SSSA President
- Poulamee Chakraborty, Michigan State University and Early Career Members
- Committee Member Laurel Mueller, Corporate Member and SSSA Board Member
- Gurpal Toor, University of Maryland and SSSA Board Member
- Maysoon Mikha, USDA□ARS and *Soil Science Society of America Journal* technical editor
- Jacob Berkowitz, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and Incoming CPSS Representative to the SSSA Board
- April Ulery, New Mexico State University and former SSSA President

Organizing Committee

Xia Zhu Barker (Chair), University of Wisconsin Madison

Patrick Drohan, Penn State University

Diana Bagnall, Soil Health Institute

Paul Tietz, University of Idaho

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