

NDSU Agriculture

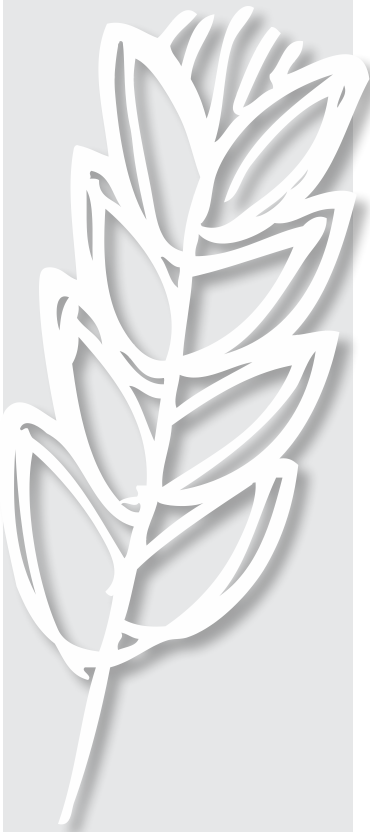
*Faculty and Staff*  
**Awards**

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**Wednesday, November 6, 2024**

**4 p.m. CST**

Holiday Inn, Fargo  
and by Zoom Webinar



**NDSU**

VICE PRESIDENT FOR  
NDSU AGRICULTURE





# Larson/Yaggie Excellence in Research Award

*This annual award, established by the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, recognizes outstanding faculty and Research Extension Center principal investigators with 10 or fewer years of service (2000 job band). The recipient must have made a significant research contribution that addresses an applied problem or increases the basic knowledge of the area investigated.*

## ■ Barney Geddes

Assistant Professor  
Department of Microbiological Sciences

*“Dr. Geddes is passionate about improving the lives of North Dakotans and beyond with his innovative and creative research efforts in nitrogen-fixation technology for sustainable agriculture.”*

Barney Geddes joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2020.

Geddes focuses his research on genetic engineering of microorganisms and biological nitrogen fixation to enhance agricultural productivity and sustainability. His work on high-throughput tools for engineering bacterial strains and improving nitrogen use efficiency has significant implications for reducing synthetic fertilizer reliance and environmental impact.

Geddes has secured nearly \$3 million in research grants and received a \$2 million philanthropic award, becoming the Richard and Linda Offerdahl Endowed Faculty. He has mentored numerous students, and his research team has delivered 46 conference presentations, with several students winning awards. Geddes has published eight peer-reviewed and two non-refereed articles, and delivered 11 invited seminars.

In teaching, Geddes has excelled in courses like Microbial Genetics and Microbial Genomics, earning high student evaluations. His service includes organizing seminars, participating in hiring committees, and engaging in outreach projects such as the NATURE Sunday Academy Workshop and the Annual Exploring Biotech & Biofuels Teacher’s Workshop.

Geddes earned a bachelor’s degree and a Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba, Canada.

## ■ Febina Mathew

Associate Professor  
Department of Plant Pathology

*“Dr. Mathew’s solid research in plant pathology has made significant strides in developing practical solutions for farmers’ crop disease challenges while advancing foundational knowledge in the field.”*

Febina Mathew joined NDSU as an associate professor and oilseeds pathologist in 2022.

Mathew’s research focuses on the biology of plant pathogens affecting soybean and sunflower crops. She investigates pathogen life cycles, infection mechanisms and plant health impacts that aim to develop effective disease management strategies. Her work includes evaluating fungicides and studying host plant resistance to enhance crop resilience and yield. Additionally, she integrates precision agriculture techniques like remote sensing for precise crop health monitoring.

Mathew has secured nearly \$16 million in research grants and mentored numerous students. She has published 40 refereed journal articles in the last five years and delivered 36 presentations. Her extension and outreach programs translate research findings into practical advice for farmers, which significantly impacts regional agriculture.

In teaching, Mathew has excelled in courses related to plant pathology, earning high evaluations from students. Her service includes organizing seminars, participating in hiring committees, and engaging in outreach projects such as the NATURE Sunday Academy Workshop.

Mathew earned a bachelor’s degree from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India, and a master’s degree and a Ph.D. from NDSU.

## ■ Miranda Meehan

Associate Professor  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Dr. Meehan’s contributions to applied research, particularly in virtual fencing and environmental sustainability, have made a tangible difference to both producers and the scientific community.”*

Miranda Meehan joined NDSU as an assistant professor and Extension livestock and environmental stewardship specialist in 2015 and became an associate professor in 2022.

Meehan’s research focuses on livestock grazing using precision technologies, integrated crop and livestock systems, and riparian ecology. She is pioneering research on virtual fences for livestock management, securing over \$1.1 million in grants. Her work on grazing cover crops and soil reclamation has garnered significant funding and collaborations, enhancing livestock production and soil health. Meehan has also focused on the impacts of drought on grazing management and the effects of grazing on riparian ecosystems.

Meehan has published 14 refereed journal articles in the last five years and delivered 35 presentations. Additionally, she has published 47 Extension bulletins and 209 extension articles, and given 135 extension talks. Her contributions have earned her several awards, including the Society for Range Management Outstanding Young Range Professional Award in 2022.

Meehan earned a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, and a Ph.D. from NDSU.

## Larson/Yaggie Excellence in Research Award (continued)

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### ■ Sandro Steinbach

Associate Professor  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied  
Economics

*“Dr. Steinbach’s groundbreaking research combined with his extensive publication record, interdisciplinary collaborations, leadership in securing significant extramural funding, and research leadership, has profoundly advanced knowledge, informed regional and global policymaking, and strengthened the economic sustainability and competitiveness of North Dakota agriculture.”*

Sandro Steinbach joined NDSU in 2022 as an associate professor. He is also Director of the Agricultural Policy and Trade Research Institute.

Steinbach’s research focuses on international trade, agricultural policy, and agribusiness, addressing global trade disruptions, food security, and climate-related challenges. His work on trade policies, market structures, and policy shocks provides critical insights into global trade dynamics and their impact on agriculture. Steinbach’s research on climate disruptions and supply chain vulnerabilities informs policy decisions and supports economic resilience in agriculture. His interdisciplinary approach and use of advanced econometric models and AI have significantly influenced regional and international agricultural policies.

Steinbach has secured over \$16.7 million in extramural funding and published 35 refereed journal articles in the last five years. He has delivered 51 presentations and authored 33 other publications.

Steinbach received a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Humboldt University of Berlin, Germany; a master’s degree from the University of California, Davis; and a Ph.D. from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Switzerland.

### ■ Xin Sun

Associate Professor  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering

*“Dr. Sun is a nationally recognized researcher of precision agriculture technologies who is highly respected by students as an educator and is active in outreach programs.”*

Xin (Rex) Sun joined NDSU as a research scientist in 2015 and became an associate professor in 2023.

Sun’s research focuses on precision agriculture technologies to enhance livestock, crop, and food production. He integrates AI, robotics, IoT, and remote sensing to improve phenotyping, crop management, and livestock health. His innovations include intelligent weed management solutions and predictive analytics for livestock health, which has significantly advanced sustainable agriculture practices. Sun’s work on hyperspectral imaging and machine learning has led to breakthroughs in identifying herbicide-resistant weeds and monitoring livestock behavior.

His contributions have positioned NDSU as a leader in precision agriculture, benefiting both local and global agricultural systems.

Sun has authored 57 refereed journal articles and secured over \$21 million in research funding. His projects, such as the Multifunctional Robotic Platform, have gained widespread recognition. His leadership has expanded NDSU’s Precision Agriculture curriculum and established strategic industry partnerships, enhancing the program’s impact.

Sun earned a bachelor’s degree from Yantai University, China, and a Ph.D. from Nanjing Agricultural University, China.



# Eugene R. Dahl Excellence in Research Award

*This annual award, established by the North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, recognizes outstanding faculty and Research Extension Center principal investigators in their 11th year or more of service (2000 job band). The recipient must have a distinguished research program in basic or applied sciences that has gained significant recognition in the state, region or nation and/or internationally.*

## ■ Igathinathane Cannayen

Associate Professor  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering

*“Dr. Igathinathane Cannayen is an innovative researcher who brings new technologies to solve the problems faced by agricultural stakeholders. He is also an avid publisher of research findings, known for his attention to detail and high-quality outputs.”*

Igathinathane Cannayen joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2009 and became an associate professor in 2017.

Cannayen’s research focuses on biomass feedstock preprocess engineering, biomass logistics, bioenergy, and the application of computer programming in agriculture. Cannayen has developed numerous innovative tools and methods, including the ND Drought Calculator, Cover Crop Chart, and various image processing techniques for agricultural applications.

His work has significantly impacted the field, addressing practical problems for North Dakota users through scientific research.

Cannayen has authored or co-authored 98 refereed journal articles, 212 abstracts and meeting proceedings, and six book chapters. He has also made 36 presentations and secured over \$2.6 million in grant funding, with more than \$1.2 million administered by him.

Cannayen earned a bachelor’s degree from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, India, and a master’s degree and a Ph.D. from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India.

## ■ Carl Dahlen

Professor  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Dr. Dahlen’s visionary approach to multigenerational experiments and knowledge gained from his research will advance management practices and provide important insights to improve performance in beef cattle.”*

Carl Dahlen joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2010 and became a professor in 2023.

His research focuses on improving fertility in livestock species and evaluating how nutrition and management strategies affect reproductive performance and offspring outcomes. Dahlen has developed novel research techniques and training methodologies that significantly impact both applied and basic research efforts. His work includes optimizing assisted reproductive techniques for cattle and sheep, and evaluating the effects of maternal and paternal nutrition on offspring.

Dahlen’s research has a direct impact on state and regional agriculture, enhancing producer profitability through improved reproductive and management strategies.

He has authored or co-authored 126 refereed journal articles, 290 abstracts and meeting proceedings, and four book chapters. He has also made numerous presentations at regional, national and international levels and helped secure nearly \$5 million in grants.

Dahlen earned a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

## ■ Brian Jenks

Agricultural Experiment Station Specialist/  
Weed Scientist  
North Central Research Extension Center

*“Dr. Jenks prioritizes the needs and wants of North Dakota farmers and ranchers, and has demonstrated a strong commitment to practical, real-world solutions in weed science.”*

Brian Jenks joined NDSU as an assistant Agricultural Experiment Station specialist and weed scientist in 1997 and attained his current title in 2020.

He is responsible for developing and implementing an integrated weed management program in north central North Dakota, focusing on key weed management problems in various crops, including canola, mustard, small grains and more.

His work is distinguished by its practical application and scientific rigor. He has played a crucial role in securing emergency chemical labels for new crops and expanding chemical options for minor crops. His efforts in identifying and controlling invasive species such as Palmer amaranth have been vital in protecting the region’s crops. Jenks’ dedication is evident in his personal handling of grower calls and his willingness to assist at the North Central Research Extension Center office.

He has authored or co-authored five refereed journal articles and 120 abstracts and meeting proceedings. Jenks has made 675 presentations and helped secure \$5 million in grant funding

Jenks earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Utah State University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

## Eugene R. Dahl Excellence in Research Award (continued)

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### ■ Julie Pasche

Associate Professor  
Neil C. Gudmestad Endowed Chair of  
Potato Pathology  
Department of Plant Pathology

*“Dr. Pasche is a well-respected potato pathologist known worldwide for significant contributions to diagnosis of devastating potato disease problems, investigating fungicide resistance, and providing effective disease management strategies.”*

Julie Pasche joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2012 and became an associate professor and the Neil C. Gudmestad Endowed Chair of Potato Pathology in 2019.

Pasche’s research focuses on managing soil-borne pathogens affecting potatoes, such as *Alternaria solani*, which causes early blight. Pasche’s team works on identifying fungicide insensitivity and assessing fungal diversity to develop new management strategies, including genetic resistance.

Pasche has led significant initiatives, such as the “black dot initiative,” addressing a major disease affecting potato growers. Her team has developed molecular diagnostic assays for various soil-borne pathogens, aiming to make these tools commercially available to growers. Pasche’s research has garnered substantial funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other sources, supporting projects that directly benefit the potato industry.

She has authored or co-authored 56 refereed journal articles, 88 abstracts and meeting proceedings, and four book chapters. Pasche has also made 55 presentations and helped secure over \$16.5 million in grant funding.

Pasche earned a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree, and a Ph.D. from NDSU.

### ■ Md Mukhlesur Rahman

Associate Professor  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Dr. Rahman is a trained plant breeder/geneticist in oilseed improvement and variety development, utilizing both traditional breeding methods and modern tools such as double haploids, molecular markers, genomic selection, high-throughput phenotyping with robotics and drones, and nanotechnology.”*

Md Mukhlesur Rahman joined NDSU as an assistant professor and canola breeder in 2008, and became an associate professor in 2019.

With 31 years of experience in teaching, research and extension, Rahman focuses on plant breeding, genetics and genomics. His research incorporates modern methodologies such as UAV and robot technology for high-throughput crop phenotyping. Rahman has developed several high-yielding canola and flax cultivars and is working on enhancing genetic diversity and stress tolerance in these crops.

His collaborative efforts with institutions such as the University of California, Los Angeles, and various agricultural companies have been crucial for advancing his research. Rahman frequently presents his findings at international conferences and field days, maintaining strong relationships with stakeholders.

Rahman has helped secure \$5.3 million in competitive grants and has supervised numerous graduate students and research specialists. He has published 59 peer-reviewed articles, two book chapters and 105 abstracts.

Rahman earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Bangladesh Agricultural University, Bangladesh; a master’s degree from Tokyo University of Agriculture and Technology, Japan; and a Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba, Canada.

### ■ William Wilson

University Distinguished Professor, CHS  
Chair in Risk Management and Trading,  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied  
Economics

*“Dr. Wilson has had a very concentrated and impactful research program focusing on some of the most important issues confronting agriculture and its domestic and international marketing system.”*

William Wilson joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 1980 and became a University Distinguished Professor in 2007.

His research focuses on the microeconomics of risk and strategy in agriculture, with an emphasis on ag technology development, commercialization, procurement, logistics and international marketing. Wilson has developed models to manage commodity price risk, evaluate new technologies, and optimize supply chain logistics. His work has been instrumental in projects such as the expansion of the Panama Canal and the privatization of the Russian grain marketing system.

Wilson has authored or co-authored 165 refereed journal articles, 24 abstracts and meeting proceedings, and 21 book chapters. He has made 604 presentations and helped secure \$49.6 million in grant funding. He teaches a renowned short course on grain procurement management at the Northern Crops Institute and serves on several boards, including NCH Capital.

Wilson earned a bachelor’s degree from NDSU and a Ph.D. from the University of Manitoba, Canada.



## Eugene R. Dahl Excellence in Research Award (continued)

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### ■ Michael Wunsch

Plant Pathologist/Assistant REC Specialist  
Carrington Research Extension Center

*“Michael has had a tremendous impact on agriculture in the region. He might have the most rigorous field pathology research program in the nation.”*

Michael Wunsch joined NDSU as a plant pathologist in 2010.

His research focuses on applied strategies to combat broadleaf foliar and root diseases using cultural and chemical methods. Wunsch collaborates extensively with farmers, consultants and industry to test and implement effective disease control techniques. His work has been widely adopted across dry bean and chickpea acres in the U.S. and Canada, emphasizing practices that improve disease control without increasing costs.

Wunsch’s rigorous field pathology research program addresses key issues such as root rot in field peas, optimal spray techniques for various crops, and innovative tank mixtures for disease control. His efforts have significantly impacted agricultural practices, making existing products more effective and improving application strategies. Wunsch’s recommendations are highly trusted among crop consultants and farmers, leading to high adoption rates and substantial economic benefits.

He has authored or co-authored 15 refereed journal articles and 18 other publications, and has made 132 presentations. Wunsch has helped secure over \$5.6 million in grant funding.

Wunsch earned bachelor’s degrees from the University of Missouri-Columbia, and a Ph.D. from Cornell University.



## Earl and Dorothy Foster Excellence in Teaching Award

*This annual award recognizes outstanding teaching faculty with 10 or fewer years of service in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources. The award encourages and rewards excellence in teaching at all levels and among all disciplines.*

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### ■ Chris Byrd

Assistant Professor  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Dr. Byrd is an outstanding educator whose dedication to his students is evident in everything he does, including his ability to explain complex concepts in a clear and engaging manner to make learning accessible and enjoyable.”*

Chris Byrd joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2019.

Byrd excels in enhancing student experiences through innovative course design, student engagement, and fair evaluation. He has redesigned ANSC 300 and ANSC 484 to incorporate student feedback, case studies, and hybrid learning models, effectively adapting to challenges posed by COVID-19. His commitment to inclusivity is demonstrated through Safe Zone Ally training and by ensuring course materials are accessible.

Byrd’s participation in teaching development programs highlights his dedication to improving his pedagogy. Student feedback reflects his engaging teaching style, well-organized content, and focus on real-world applications, making him an outstanding educator who fosters both intellectual and personal growth.

Byrd earned a bachelor’s degree from Iowa State University, and a master’s degree and a Ph.D. from Purdue University.

### ■ Erik Hanson

Assistant Professor  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics

*“Dr. Hanson demonstrates student-centered instruction across many classroom settings and enthusiastically shares his experiences via mentorship and pedagogical research.”*

Erik Hanson joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2016.

Hanson exemplifies teaching excellence and commitment to student success through innovative course design and industry partnerships. He transformed AGECE 356 (Advanced Ag Lending) by incorporating real-world case studies from local financial institutions, providing students with practical and timely learning experiences. In AGECE 420 (Integrated Farm/Ranch Management), Hanson’s hands-on exercises and capstone projects mirror industry practices, preparing students for professional success. His teaching is student-centered, as demonstrated by high student ratings and multiple awards, including the NACTA Educator Award and the Distinguished Teaching Award from the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association.

Hanson’s dedication to fair evaluation is evident in his use of external evaluators for student projects. He continually enhances his teaching methodology, integrating professional development and peer learning, while also contributing to the broader teaching community through published research and mentorship programs.

Hanson earned bachelor’s degrees from Minnesota State University, Moorhead; a master’s degree from the University of Illinois; and a Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota.

## Earl and Dorothy Foster Excellence in Teaching Award (continued)

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### ■ Ewumbua Monono

Assistant Professor  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering

*“Dr. Monono is not only an excellent classroom teacher but also a great mentor to students who work with him in the lab, especially the undergrad students interested in bioprocess engineering.”*

Ewumbua Monono joined NDSU as a research specialist in 2015 and became an assistant professor in 2020.

Monono enhances student learning by incorporating hands-on activities in ABEN 458/658 and ABEN 750, such as a spray dryer lab and a distillation column project, which help students apply theoretical concepts to real-life scenarios. His innovative teaching methods engage students through in-class activities and relatable examples, earning praise from peers and students alike. He ensures fairness and clarity in evaluation, with consistent feedback and a well-defined grading rubric that has reflected strong student ratings (SROI average of 4.6).

In response to the pandemic, Monono adapted his teaching to a HyFlex model, allowing for in-person lab experiences, which students appreciated over recorded sessions. He also collaborates with colleagues to ensure skill development continuity between courses.

His contributions to teaching have been recognized with the 2023 College of Engineering Early Career Excellence in Teaching Award.

Monono earned an agricultural engineering diploma from the University of Dschang, Cameroon, and a master's degree and a Ph.D. from NDSU.

### ■ Jiajia Rao

Associate Professor  
Department of Plant Sciences

*Dr. Rao's passion for the subject matter is infectious, inspiring students to think critically and explore topics in depth while making complex concepts accessible and engaging.*

Jiajia Rao joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2016 and became an associate professor in 2022.

Rao exemplifies teaching excellence through her innovative and inclusive methods in food and cereal science courses. She offers a diverse range of courses, including the capstone Food Product Development course and newly developed classes like Food Ingredient Technology. Rao's dedication to enhancing student learning is evident in her use of both traditional and hybrid teaching tools, especially during the pandemic, where she ensured continuity through Zoom and Blackboard. Her teaching consistently receives high evaluations from students.

Rao fosters intellectual growth by integrating real-world problem-solving, case studies, and group projects, equipping students with critical skills like creativity, communication, and collaboration. She also emphasizes inclusive learning by providing tailored instruction for graduate students and hands-on lab experiences. Her commitment to professional development, collaboration with industry, and innovative teaching methods significantly enhance the educational experience and student employability in the food science field.

Rao earned a bachelor's degree from Sichuan University of Science and Engineering, China; a master's degree from Chongqing University, China; and a Ph.D. from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst.





# H. Roald and Janet Lund Excellence in Teaching Award

*This annual award recognizes outstanding teaching faculty in their 11th year or more of service in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources. The award encourages and rewards excellence in teaching at all levels and among all disciplines.*

## ■ Deying Li

Professor  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Dr. Li loves teaching because it is more than just his profession. He believes that education is important for our next generation and the strength of our nation.”*

Deying Li joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2002, became an associate professor in 2007, and professor in 2019.

Li teaches a diverse range of courses, from technical to practical, including World Food Crops and senior seminars. He adapts his teaching methods to meet course objectives, incorporating industry trends and hands-on experiences, particularly in applied courses like Irrigation Installation and Management.

He enhances student learning through problem-solving approaches, case studies, and laboratory-style lectures that provide real-world applications in classes like Sports Turf Management. He is dedicated to supporting student growth by offering immediate feedback through quizzes and using digital textbooks for accessibility. In large, diverse classes like World Food Crops, he prioritizes being available and flexible to help students navigate college life.

Li also brings in industry experts and alumni to guest lecture, connecting students with real-world practices. He is committed to accommodating diverse learning needs, ensuring fair and personalized instruction for all students, including those with disabilities.

Li earned a bachelor’s degree from Shanxi Agricultural University, Jinzhong, China; a master’s degree from China Agricultural University, Beijing, China; and a Ph.D. from Iowa State University.

## ■ Siew Hoon Lim

Professor  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics

*“Dr. Lim’s support and belief in her students fosters a deep sense of trust and connection. They know she believes in their abilities, even when they might doubt themselves.”*

Siew Hoon Lim joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2005, becoming an associate professor in 2015, and professor in 2021.

Lim’s teaching portfolio is extensive and includes a range of courses, such as ECON 201 Principles of microeconomics, AGECE 378 Intro to Transportation and Logistics, ECON 410/610 Econometrics, ECON 480/680 Industrial Organization, and AGECE 739 Analytical Methods in Applied Economics.

She champions higher-order thinking and learning through her course assignments. Recognizing the value of connecting classroom knowledge to real-world scenarios and fostering effective communication skills, she incorporates research projects that culminate in both a written paper and an oral presentation. Lim’s commitment to staying at the forefront of her field is evident in her continuous efforts to update and revise course materials. She embraces innovative teaching methods, incorporating multimedia learning tools and partially flipped classroom models that empower students to take ownership of their learning progress.

Helping students learn is her highest priority. She is deeply committed to their academic success and believes that genuine care for students is a cornerstone of effective teaching.

Lim earned a bachelor’s degree from Bemidji State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Georgia.

## ■ Tara Swanson

Senior Lecturer  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Tara embodies what an instructor should be – someone who sets high expectations for each one of her students, while being their greatest supporter, advocate, and the one who will go above and beyond without thinking twice.”*

Tara Swanson joined NDSU in 2006 as a lecturer and became a senior lecturer in 2020.

Swanson incorporates active learning, guest lectures, field trips and hands-on application of subject matter that focus on core material, current events, best practices and global perspective discussions.

She is a dedicated educator who tailors her teaching to various learning styles, ensuring that every student can succeed. In her ANSC 260: Introduction to Equine Studies course, she replaced the final exam with a semester-long project where students budget for horse ownership that encourages practical application of the class content. This hands-on approach helps students connect theory to real-world decisions.

In ANSC 461: Advanced Horsemanship, she empowers students to develop teaching skills by creating lesson plans and teaching their peers, fostering growth through self-assessment and peer feedback.

Swanson’s innovative courses, including the Industry Tour and Study Abroad Equine Industry Tour, immerse students in hands-on experiences, exposing them to diverse equine sectors. Her teaching philosophy centers on creating a supportive environment where students can thrive academically and professionally.

Swanson earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska - Lincoln and a master’s degree from NDSU.



# William J. and Angelyn A. Austin Excellence in Advising Award

*This annual award recognizes the contributions of faculty and staff who have demonstrated excellence in advising undergraduate and graduate students enrolled in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources and/or its student organizations.*

## ■ Greta Gramig

Professor  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Dr. Greta Gramig is one of the best advisors and is dedicated to supporting her students. She helps them realize their potential and achieve success in their academic and professional journeys.”*

Greta Gramig joined NDSU in 2008 as an assistant professor, and was promoted to associate professor in 2016, and professor in 2024.

Gramig is an excellent advisor, dedicated to supporting her students in realizing their potential and achieving success in their academic and professional journeys. Her commitment to fostering critical thinking, providing hands-on learning opportunities, and offering ongoing support to her students extends well beyond graduation.

One of Gramig’s most admirable qualities is her approach to research mentorship. She empowers her graduate students by giving them ownership of their research projects while providing unwavering support throughout the process.

She is adept at connecting students with the right resources at crucial moments. When students face challenges in their writing, she proactively directs them to the university’s writing center, ensuring they receive the support necessary to improve their skills. This timely intervention empowers students to enhance their writing abilities and overall academic performance. Her dedication to helping students navigate their academic journeys, improve essential skills and plan for their futures demonstrates her profound impact on their lives.

Gramig earned a bachelor’s degree from Montana State University, and a master’s degree and a Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

## ■ Lauren Hanna

Associate Professor  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Dr. Hanna consistently checks in with her students, pushing them to reach their greatest potential while remaining approachable and supportive.”*

Lauren Hulsman Hanna joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2013 and became an associate professor in 2020.

Hanna emphasizes trust and respect in her advising relationships, meeting with each advisee at least once per semester. She prepares thoroughly for these meetings, reviewing degree progress and advising notes to ensure the conversations are valuable.

She helps students set realistic goals and provides guidance on achieving them, whether it’s helping them recognize their strengths and weaknesses or encouraging them to pursue challenging opportunities, such as professional schools. She uses an advising calendar to encourage more frequent interactions.

Hanna is knowledgeable about campus resources and helps students connect with services when needed, particularly when they face personal challenges. She encourages students to take an active role in problem-solving and gradually empowers them to navigate resources independently. Her approach fosters growth in students, helping them mature as they work toward their academic and career goals.

Hanna earned a bachelor’s degree, a master’s degree and a Ph.D. from Texas A&M University.

## ■ Thomas Krumel

Assistant Professor  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics

*“Through his unwavering commitment to building meaningful relationships and empowering students to exceed their potential, Dr. Krumel exemplifies how the transformative impact of mentorship is shaping the future.”*

Thomas Krumel joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2021.

Krumel is a dedicated advisor and educator known for fostering strong relationships with students and encouraging their intellectual and personal growth. He consistently maintains the largest advisee list in his department, reflecting his trust and respect among students.

His “tough but fair” approach inspires students to challenge themselves, knowing he supports their success. Krumel excels at identifying student potential and guiding them toward suitable majors and careers. Krumel encourages students to take challenging courses, such as ECON 410 Econometrics, to develop essential skills for their future careers. His mentorship helps students achieve significant academic and professional success.

He also played a pivotal role in launching the interdisciplinary Agribusiness and Data Analytics graduate program, focusing on real-world applications and promoting diversity, empowering underrepresented groups in the field.

Krumel earned a bachelor’s degree from Mount Union College, a master’s degree from the University of Akron and the University of Minnesota, and a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut.

## William J. and Angelyn A. Austin Excellence in Advising Award (continued)

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### ■ Matthew Olhoft

Senior Lecturer  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering

*“Matthew’s advising is geared to the big picture of a student’s life.”*

Matthew Olhoft joined NDSU as a senior lecturer in 2016.

Olhoft strives to visit with each advisee, learning more about where they come from and their goals. He works to ensure they get the most out of their time at NDSU and that their degree helps them get where they want to go.

He encourages his advisees to take advantage of the opportunities NDSU provides for them. His advisees say he cares about them and motivates them to reach their academic and career goals.

Olhoft is the primary faculty member of the Precision Agriculture Technology and Management program and serves as the advisor for most of the students in the agriculture technology side of the program. Additionally, he is the faculty advisor for the Agricultural Systems Management student organization, the annual student-sponsored Agricultural Technology Expo, the Project P 3D printing club and the Bison Pullers quarter-scale tractor club.

Olhoft earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU.

### ■ Rachel Richman

Senior Lecturer  
Department of Microbiological Sciences

*“What stands out the most in Rachel Richman is her absolute dedication to students, their personal well-being, their academic successes, and their future careers.”*

Rachel Richman joined NDSU as a lecturer in 2003 and became a senior lecturer in 2010.

Richman starts building relationships with most microbiology majors in the student’s first semester at NDSU. Throughout that semester, she designs activities to help the students adjust to college life and access resources to help them be successful. She also teaches the microbiology capstone and the nonmajors’ introductory microbiology courses.

Her advisees say she spends as much time as needed to help them determine the courses they need to graduate and makes sure they stay on track. She also is knowledgeable about career opportunities and is proactive in keeping up with curriculum and policy changes that affect students’ academic plans. Whether students are just beginning or in their senior year, Richman is here for them in whatever capacity they need.

Richman earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Texas and a master’s degree from the University of Minnesota.



# Excellence in Extension Early Career Award

NDSU Extension established this annual award to encourage and reward significant accomplishments and excellence in Extension educational programs. Individuals with 10 or fewer years of cumulative service to NDSU Extension are eligible for nomination. Nominees must hold an Extension appointment and be in the 2000 job band. Nominations are inclusive to county agents and specialists in the NDSU College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources.

## ■ Erin Berentson

Extension Agent,  
Family and Community Wellness  
Bottineau County

*“Erin’s commitment to engaging people of all ages and her dedication to community involvement reflect her innovative approach to promoting health and wellness, making a significant impact in Bottineau County.”*

Erin Berentson joined NDSU as an Extension agent in 2019.

Berentson’s work with the Bottineau County Extension team significantly contributes to the needs of North Dakotans through impactful programs like the Diabetes Prevention Program and Tai Ji Quan: Moving for Better Balance (TJQMBB). The TJQMBB program has been particularly effective for elderly residents living alone, with participants reporting a 24% decrease in fear of falling and a 33% improvement in recognizing ways to reduce falls. Additionally, 89% of participants felt more confident in reducing their fall risk, and 78% reported enhancements in physical strength. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants praising the program’s effectiveness.

Her initiatives exemplify teamwork and innovation. She successfully launched the virtual On the Move Kids Baking School, engaging 63 children across five counties. This program focused on nutrition and food safety through hands-on activities, featuring recipes like Whole Wheat Pancakes and Cherry-chocolate Scones. Berentson also co-hosts the annual Progressive Ag Safety Day which fosters community collaboration to promote safety awareness among youth.

Berentson earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of North Dakota and a master’s degree from NDSU.

## ■ Kelsey Deckert

Extension Agent, Agriculture and  
Natural Resources – Horticulture  
Burleigh County

*“Kelsey is a respected horticultural expert in the Bismarck-Mandan area and is known for her community outreach through personal consultations, newsletters, media appearances, and her popular TV program, Dakota Growing.”*

Kelsey Deckert joined NDSU as an Extension agent in 2020.

Deckert is a prominent horticultural expert serving the Bismarck-Mandan area, where she addresses the growing demand for horticultural knowledge. Through hundreds of monthly interactions, including calls, texts, and office visits, she gathers valuable insights into the community’s specific gardening concerns and interests. Deckert actively engages with residents through community gardens, guest lectures, and home visits, allowing her to understand their unique challenges and successes.

Her outreach efforts, including guest lecturing at garden club meetings, help identify knowledge gaps and tailor educational programs to meet local needs. Deckert collaborates with Tom Kalb and Dakota Media Access to produce the popular Dakota Growing TV program, showcasing teamwork and innovation while providing viewers with relevant information. Her diverse media presence not only raises awareness but also informs the development of new resources and support systems, ensuring that NDSU Extension effectively meets the horticultural needs of North Dakotans.

Deckert earned a bachelor’s degree from NDSU.

## ■ Travis Hoffman

Associate Professor/  
Extension Sheep Specialist  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“You won’t find anyone more passionate about their industry than Dr. Hoffman, who effortlessly connects with individuals of all ages and experience levels.”*

Travis Hoffman joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2016 and became an associate professor in 2023.

Hoffman has made significant contributions to North Dakota’s sheep and wool industries through his extensive educational programming. Since joining NDSU Extension, he has developed both online and hands-on learning opportunities that address the entire supply chain, from production costs to marketing strategies. Hoffman has collaborated with various organizations to host numerous events, including beginner shepherds clinics, lambing workshops, and goat production workshops, completing 407 outreach events and featuring in 193 media pieces.

As co-lead of the NDSU Extension Livestock Team, he facilitates communication and training among agents, ensuring they meet the state’s livestock needs. His quick adaptation to virtual programming during the pandemic has resulted in 77 webinars for youth and small ruminant producers. Additionally, his innovative video series on lamb quality has provided essential education to producers and sparked interest in American lamb consumption. Hoffman’s efforts have inspired youth involvement in the livestock industry and advanced agricultural knowledge across North Dakota.

Hoffman earned a bachelor’s degree from NDSU and a master’s degree from South Dakota State University.



## Excellence in Extension Early Career Award (continued)

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### ■ Bryon Parman

Assistant Professor/  
Agricultural Finance Specialist  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied  
Economics

*“Dr. Parman’s Extension programming is outstanding. What makes his program truly exceptional is how it compliments other Extension programs in various disciplines.”*

Bryon Parman joined NDSU as an assistant professor in 2018, and has since become one of the most sought-after speakers in the NDSU Extension system.

His expertise is highly valued by stakeholders in North Dakota and the surrounding region. Parman covers a wide range of topics, including macroeconomics, farm management, livestock production and finance, land values and rents, general agriculture finance, and overall production economics.

His Extension education delivery method empowers stakeholders to make informed decisions based on the same information he analyzes. During his presentations, Parman employs various decision aids and tools to enhance understanding and application. He also highlights the decision tools created by NDSU, demonstrating their practical use for participants.

Parman earned a bachelor’s degree from Peru State College in Nebraska, a master’s degree from the University of Nebraska–Omaha, and a Ph.D. from Kansas State University.

### ■ Jan Stankiewicz

Community Health and Nutrition  
Specialist & Tribal Liaison  
Extension Family and Community  
Wellness

*“Jan is always eager to lend a helping hand, offer a listening ear, and provide thoughtful guidance to those around her.”*

Jan Stankiewicz joined NDSU as an Extension community health and nutrition specialist in 2016 and was also appointed as the NDSU Agriculture Tribal Liaison in 2020.

Stankiewicz has demonstrated exceptional leadership in engaging communities across North Dakota to address pressing public health challenges. By focusing on community-driven solutions, she empowers local populations to take ownership of their health outcomes. Through partnerships with local leaders, Stankiewicz co-develops initiatives that respect the cultural and historical contexts of the people she serves. Her comprehensive approach promotes sustainable change, resulting in tangible improvements in food security, healthcare access, and the adoption of sustainable practices.

Stankiewicz’s cultural competence allows her to integrate indigenous traditions into her work, using traditional foods and cultural values in health promotion. She has been instrumental in driving systemic change that benefits indigenous and New American populations, ensuring their voices are included in decision-making processes. By fostering collaboration and innovation, Stankiewicz has built strong connections between communities and NDSU Extension, leading to culturally relevant solutions that effectively address local needs.

Stankiewicz earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU.

### ■ Lynnette Vachal

Extension Agent, 4-H Youth Development  
Mountrail County

*“Lynnette is dedicated to enhancing the lives of Mountrail County residents through engaging, hands-on 4-H youth programming, consistently delivering high-quality initiatives that meet local needs.”*

Lynnette Vachal joined NDSU as an Extension agent in 4-H Youth Development in 2016.

Vachal serves as the 4-H youth development Extension agent in Mountrail County, where she is committed to creating the next generation of leaders through hands-on educational programs. She actively assesses local needs by engaging with the 4-H Council, families, and volunteers. Vachal’s impactful initiatives include the Reality Store, which teaches 8th and 10th graders about financial literacy, engaging over 200 students annually. She emphasizes STEM education, delivering programs such as Breakout EDU, Ozobots, and youth horticulture activities. Vachal also leads archery and air rifle sports, helping approximately 80 youth develop essential skills like self-discipline and decision-making.

Additionally, her Farm to Table initiatives educate youth about agriculture and food sources. Vachal fosters teamwork by collaborating with other agents and local organizations to offer comprehensive programs, ensuring her community has access to vital resources and science-based information. Her innovative teaching methods make learning both engaging and effective.

Vachal earned bachelor’s degrees from Minot State University.





# AGSCO Excellence in Extension Award

NDSU Extension established this annual award to encourage and reward significant accomplishments and excellence in Extension educational programs. Individuals in their 11th year or more cumulative years of service to NDSU Extension are eligible for nomination. Nominees must hold an Extension appointment and be in the 2000 job band. Nominations are inclusive to county agents and specialists in the NDSU College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources.

## ■ Ronda Gripentrog

Extension Agent,  
Family and Community Wellness  
Richland County

*“Ronda is a natural leader and great mentor. She has helped me with creative ideas and challenges me to think outside the box when collaborating on programs.”*

Ronda Gripentrog joined NDSU as a supplemental nutrition assistant in 2014 and has served as the family and community wellness/4-H youth development extension agent in Richland County since 2020.

In her role, she plays a key part in planning, developing, and evaluating programs for both adult and youth audiences by working closely with Extension and 4-H leaders. She is responsible for recruiting, managing, and training volunteers to organize 4-H programs, while fostering collaborative relationships with peers on various initiatives.

Gripentrog is an effective communicator where she utilizes listening, speaking, writing, and both mass and social media to meet client needs and deliver information. She is constantly finding creative ways to enhance the local 4-H program’s visibility and improve her teaching methods.

For National 4-H Week, she secured partnerships with local businesses for promotions, organized a countywide scavenger hunt, and recruited numerous new members. Additionally, Gripentrog is passionate about mental health advocacy, having developed a youth curriculum focused on mental well-being and promoting its importance in schools. Her innovative approach and dedication have significantly enriched the 4-H experience in the community.

Gripentrog earned a bachelor’s degree from NDSU.

## ■ Ron Haugen

Farm Management Specialist  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied  
Economics

*“Ron has demonstrated exceptional leadership, a commitment to impactful educational programming, and outstanding service to the agricultural community in North Dakota and beyond.”*

Ron Haugen joined NDSU as a farm management specialist in 1991 and has served in this role for the past 33 years.

Haugen is a vital resource for farmers and county agents where he offers expertise on farm bills, crop budgets, and developing budget software tailored to agricultural operations. He leads workshops on farm accounting software and provides consultations on tax planning, estate planning, and cash flow analysis. Haugen also plays a key role in agricultural commodity price projections and contributes to the land valuation model used by the North Dakota State Tax Commissioner.

He works closely with NDSU Extension and the Department of Agribusiness and Applied Economics to enhance educational programs for both students and farmers. Haugen leads initiatives on the evolving USDA Farm Bill and maintains the Agricultural Risk Coverage-Price Loss Coverage Farm Bill decision tool that helps farmers navigate regulations and make informed decisions about their operations. His work ensures farmers stay updated on the most relevant and impactful policy changes.

Haugen earned an associate degree from North Dakota State School of Science, and a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU.

## ■ Samuel Markell

Professor/Plant Pathologist and  
Interim Chair  
Department of Plant Pathology

*“Dr. Markell’s work has significantly shaped the landscape of soybean production, not only in North Dakota but across the country.”*

Sam Markell joined NDSU as an assistant professor and Extension research plant pathologist in 2007, became an associate professor in 2013, professor in 2018, and was appointed interim head in 2024.

Markell’s leadership in addressing the soybean cyst nematode (SCN) crisis led to the creation of the SCN Coalition in 2018, a collaboration of 24 universities and eight agricultural-chemical partners. By coordinating national messaging and fostering a public-private partnership, he significantly increased grower awareness and management of SCN. His innovative approach, backed by market research, earned the coalition multiple awards, including eight National Agri-Marketing honors and a Silver Anvil from the Public Relations Society of America.

His strategic vision in building the SCN Coalition resulted in a groundbreaking public-private partnership, uniting major agricultural companies and 70 university scientists behind a unified message. Markell’s efforts secured essential financial and in-kind support, driving an outreach campaign that engaged media and delivered critical information to growers nationwide.

Markell earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU, and a Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas.

## AGSCO Excellence in Extension Award (continued)

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### ■ Thomas Peters

Associate Professor/Sugarbeet Agronomist  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Dr. Thomas Peters has been integral, timely and impressive relative to supportive information and research in sugarbeet production.”*

Thomas Peters joined NDSU in 2014 as an assistant professor and the Extension sugarbeet agronomist and weed control specialist. He has held this position since then and was promoted to associate professor in 2020.

Peters has made a significant impact on North Dakota’s sugarbeet growers through innovative education and outreach. Collaborating with the Sugarbeet Research and Education Board (SBREB) and Extension specialists, he has tackled key challenges like weed management, disease control, and pesticide development. His Annual Sugarbeet Production Guide, webinars, and “Machine Shed Meetings” have provided growers with practical strategies to improve yields and enhance sustainability. These hands-on sessions foster open dialogue, leading to widespread adoption of best practices.

Peters has also played a pivotal role in securing pesticide exemptions which has benefited more than 800,000 acres of sugarbeets since 2014. His ability to unite multi-state collaborators to improve production practices, including crop rotations and conservation tillage, has resulted in measurable gains in both productivity and sustainability, establishing him as a leader in agricultural education.

Peters earned a bachelor’s degree from the University of Minnesota, a master’s degree from the University of Nebraska, and a Ph.D. from NDSU.



# Charles and Linda Moses Staff Award

*This annual award, established by the Office of the Vice President for Agriculture, recognizes significant contributions to the mission of NDSU Agriculture by professional staff (3000 job band) on and off campus. The recipient must have at least three years of continuous service in a staff position with an appointment in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources; North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station; or NDSU Extension.*

## ■ Susan Finneseth

Grants Coordinator  
College of Agriculture, Food Systems,  
and Natural Resources (SNRS, ABEN  
and MICRO)

*“Susan consistently keeps track of every detail, not only with regard to formats, but also content, allowing researchers to concentrate on crafting strong research proposals.”*

Susan Finneseth joined NDSU as an administrative secretary in 2005 and later served as an administrative assistant and program manager for the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and Family Nutrition Program.

Currently, Finneseth works as the grants coordinator for three departments within the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources. In this role, she plays a crucial part in supporting the grant acquisition process by assisting with grant proposal preparation, coordinating the internal grant approval process, and ensuring compliance with regulatory requirements. Her responsibilities include managing grant deadlines, reviewing budgetary aspects of proposals, and identifying grant opportunities. Finneseth collaborates with various offices and maintains a comprehensive understanding of grant policies and submission systems. She also provides faculty with information on strengthening their proposals.

Finneseth earned a bachelor’s degree from NDSU and is currently pursuing her MBA.

## ■ Yueqiang Leng

Research Specialist  
Department of Plant Pathology

*“Dr. Leng’s research work has resulted in improved crop resistance to diseases, sustainable farming practices, and enhanced agricultural resilience.”*

Yueqiang Leng joined NDSU as a graduate research assistant in 2007 and became a research specialist in 2012 after completing postdoctoral work.

He conducts both applied and basic research on the biology and management of critical diseases such as Fusarium head blight (FHB) and spot blotch, along with their causal pathogens, which threaten wheat and barley production in North Dakota and worldwide. Each summer, Leng assists NDSU wheat breeders by phenotyping thousands of wheat breeding materials at various locations across North Dakota. He also produces pathogen inoculum for greenhouse and field experiments conducted by NDSU wheat researchers.

Leng has identified and mapped several new genes for FHB resistance from different wheat germplasm and is making significant progress in cloning a novel FHB-resistant gene. He has also developed and refined several protocols used in fungal gene knockout and functional analyses.

Leng earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Nanjing Agricultural University, Nanjing, China, and a Ph.D. from NDSU.

## ■ Glenn Martin

Research Specialist  
Dickinson Research Extension Center

*“Glenn effectively communicates his thoughts and simplifies concepts and processes, providing clear instructions to students.”*

Glenn Martin joined NDSU in 1986 as a work study student in the winter wheat and oat breeding programs and has been an agronomy research specialist since 1990.

Martin is a dedicated researcher with nearly 30 years of experience in crop variety trials at North Dakota State University’s Dickinson Research Extension Center (DREC). He conducts field trials focused on southwest North Dakota cropping systems, integrating pest management, plot management, and data collection. Martin collaborates with fellow researchers to develop and implement research protocols while providing essential support to DREC personnel. His commitment to excellence is evident in his timely completion of tasks, even under challenging conditions, and he expertly operates and maintains field equipment, ensuring safety compliance.

Martin’s contributions have significantly advanced the NDSU Agriculture mission, especially during a period without a research agronomist at DREC. Known for his dependability and excellent communication skills, he effectively mentors students and simplifies complex concepts. His initiative is showcased in his fabrication of a fertilizer applicator to enhance no-till practices, exemplifying his innovative approach to agricultural research and education.

Martin earned a bachelor’s degree from NDSU.

## Charles and Linda Moses Staff Award (continued)

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### ■ Joseph Mettler

Research Specialist/  
Assistant Weed Scientist  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Joseph’s warm demeanor fosters a collaborative atmosphere, empowering others to leverage his organizational skills and enhance productivity, accountability, and reliability.”*

Joseph Mettler joined NDSU as a research specialist in 2017 and became an assistant weed scientist in 2022.

Mettler plays a vital role in the Annual Weed Control in Small Grain and Oilseed Crops project. Mettler conducts essential research on herbicide response, weed population dynamics, and herbicide resistance, ensuring timely and accurate results for producers. He oversees field crop production, maintains detailed records, and manages greenhouse space for ongoing projects. Known for his meticulous attention to detail, Mettler organizes and trains undergraduate and graduate students, enhancing their research skills.

Mettler actively engages in presenting research findings at conferences which has fostered a positive reputation for NDSU Agriculture. Additionally, he holds multiple pesticide applicator certifications and continually seeks professional development opportunities in crop management and statistical analysis. His commitment to improving efficiency and communication within research teams has made him a valuable asset to the agricultural community in North Dakota.

Mettler earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU.

### ■ Didier Murillo Florez

Data Research Statistician Developer  
NDSU Agricultural Data Analytics

*“Didier’s commitment to excellence has revolutionized experimental design and data analysis for breeders globally, as reflected in the gratitude expressed by users who credit his innovative tools with transforming their research.”*

Florez joined NDSU as an hourly staff member in 2019 before becoming a full-time employee in 2022, after previously working as an hourly Optional Practical Training employee in the Department of Plant Sciences as a Statistician and Software Developer.

Florez serves as a Data Research Statistician Developer at NDSU’s Agricultural Data Analytics, where he specializes in experimental design, data analysis, and the application of advanced statistical methods. He has become a pivotal figure in enhancing research capabilities by developing high-quality statistical tools and applications that streamline workflows for end users. Florez is proficient in R, R Shiny, Python, JMP JSL, and SAS, and he actively maintains and implements data quality assurance protocols to ensure data integrity.

His contributions extend to training users in statistical analysis and data management, sharing his expertise through presentations and workshops. Notably, Florez has developed a widely adopted experimental design tool, garnering over 24,000 downloads. His commitment to innovation and collaboration has not only advanced NDSU’s research initiatives but also positively impacted the global agricultural community.

Florez earned a bachelor’s degree from Universidad del Tolima in Colombia, and a master’s degree from the University of Puerto Rico.

### ■ Megan Ramsett

Research Specialist  
Department of Microbiological Sciences

*“Megan is a key contributor to one of our college’s top research labs and is remarkably versatile, having worked in physiology, genetics and genomics across bacteria, plants and animals.”*

Megan Ramsett joined NDSU as a research specialist in 2016. She is currently a research specialist in Dr. Barney Geddes’ lab at NDSU, where she plays a vital role in managing personnel and overseeing nearly \$4 million in research funding across 13 grants. With a background in microbiology and genomics, she has significantly contributed to projects focused on *Salmonella* inactivation and the characterization of *Listeria monocytogenes*, resulting in multiple publications. In her current position, Ramsett trains students, ensures lab safety protocols are followed, and coordinates research efforts on various plant studies aimed at improving crop yields through beneficial microbes.

In addition to her lab responsibilities, Ramsett is committed to professional development, having served on NDSU’s Staff Senate and participating in key conferences to expand her knowledge and network within the field. Her exceptional dependability, communication skills, and cooperative spirit have made her an invaluable asset to the NDSU community. Ramsett’s dedication to mentoring young researchers and her proactive approach to laboratory management exemplify her passion for advancing agricultural research and education.

Ramsett earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU.



## Charles and Linda Moses Staff Award (continued)

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### ■ Niloy Chandra Sarker

Research Specialist  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering

*“Niloy single-handedly manages the Pilot Plant, ensuring safety and successfully coordinating its move to the Peltier Complex.”*

Niloy Sarker joined NDSU in 2015 as a graduate research assistant and became a research specialist and affiliated graduate faculty member in the Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering (ABEN) in 2020.

Sarker manages the NDSU Pilot Plant, which includes a 3,000-square-foot highbay area and three research labs dedicated to ABEN and Food Science projects. As a co-principal investigator on six funded projects, Sarker contributes to ongoing research while overseeing the training and supervision of both graduate and undergraduate students. He has authored seven peer-reviewed papers and collaborates with multiple faculty members to implement analytical techniques for agricultural commodities.

In addition to his research and teaching responsibilities, Sarker actively promotes safety protocols within the Pilot Plant and engages with local farmers, providing practical solutions to agricultural challenges. His innovative modifications to the Pilot Plant’s equipment have enhanced operational flexibility, and his contributions significantly advance NDSU Agriculture’s mission which has demonstrated a commitment to community engagement and academic excellence.

Sarker earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, and a Ph.D. from NDSU.

### ■ Deb Tanner

Graphic Designer  
Agriculture Communication

*“Deb’s insightful designs have enhanced the visual appeal of our publications and documents, making complex information accessible to a wide range of audiences throughout the state and beyond.”*

Deb Tanner joined NDSU in 1978 as a Graphic Artist I. She was promoted to Graphic Artist II in 1982 and became a Graphic Designer in 1989.

Tanner supports the university’s agricultural mission by creating high-quality visuals for print, web, and video. Since joining NDSU in 1978 as a Graphic Artist I, she has advanced to Graphic Artist II and ultimately to Graphic Designer. She develops original designs that effectively communicate research-based content while ensuring materials are aesthetically pleasing and aligned with university standards.

In addition to her design work, Tanner leads the Agriculture Communication graphics team by coordinating projects and maintaining an inventory of design files. Her commitment to excellence has significantly enhanced the effectiveness of educational initiatives at NDSU, making complex information accessible to diverse audiences across the state and beyond. Her thoughtful designs have improved the aesthetic quality of NDSU publications where they convey important research and educational messages to the community.

Tanner earned an associate degree from Northwest Technical College.

### ■ Sarah Underdahl

Manager, Beef Cattle Research Complex  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Sarah is highly skilled in all aspects of her role and, while primarily managing the research facility, has made significant contributions to the three pillars of NDSU’s land-grant mission.”*

Sarah Underdahl joined NDSU as a research specialist in 2004, became assistant manager of the Beef Cattle Research Complex (BCRC) in 2013, and was appointed facility manager in 2019.

Underdahl manages the BCRC at NDSU, where she oversees staff, research planning, cattle health, and facility maintenance. Working closely with faculty and graduate students, she contributes to every stage of research, from project development to data analysis. In addition to her research duties, Underdahl plays a key role in teaching and Extension, leading facility tours and hands-on activities that provide students with valuable experience in cattle management. Her leadership in organizing a beef field day in Fargo helped highlight ongoing research and engage stakeholders.

Known for her dependability, initiative, and strong communication skills, Underdahl consistently goes above and beyond her role to ensure the success of the complex’s operations. She actively participates in departmental service, from serving on committees to supporting outreach programs. Her commitment to lifelong learning is evident in her decision to pursue a master’s degree while working full-time which enhances her ability to contribute to NDSU’s research, teaching, and Extension missions.

Underdahl earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree from NDSU.





# Donald and Jo Anderson Staff Award

*This annual award, established by the Office of the Vice President for Agriculture, recognizes significant contributions to the mission of NDSU Agriculture and/or Extension by office support staff (5000 job band) on and off campus or county Extension support staff with at least three years of continuous service. The recipient must be in a staff position with an appointment in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources; North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station; or NDSU Extension.*

## ■ Eileen Buringrud

Administrative Assistant  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Eileen is very easy to work with, is passionate about her work, knowledgeable, intelligent, helpful, and is the backbone of our department.”*

Eileen Buringrud joined NDSU in 1977 and has been a dedicated member of the Department of Plant Sciences ever since.

For 47 years, Buringrud has supported the Department of Plant Sciences, the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources, and NDSU Extension. In her administrative assistant role, she manages recruitment, coordinates interviews, oversees onboarding, and assists with HR tasks for more than 180 staff members. Her organizational skills and attention to detail ensure the smooth functioning of the large department. Known for her professionalism and approachable demeanor, Buringrud is the “go-to” person for faculty, staff, and students, consistently going above and beyond to support her colleagues.

Her leadership, dependability, and communication skills are essential to her role. During the 2024 financial reorganization, Buringrud demonstrated exceptional initiative, ensuring a smooth departmental transition despite staffing shortages. She is known for her proactive communication and problem-solving abilities, fostering a productive and supportive work environment. Her commitment to professional development and her willingness to assist others further highlight her invaluable contributions. Buringrud’s work has been vital to the success of the Department of Plant Sciences and NDSU as a whole.

Buringrud earned an associate degree from the North Dakota State School of Science.

## ■ Blaine Erovick

Distribution Coordinator  
Agriculture Communication

*“Blaine’s desire to provide quality service and be fiscally responsible to our customers is evident to all who work with him. His attention to providing the customer with a positive experience is his top priority.”*

Blaine Erovick joined NDSU in 2018 as a grounds maintenance worker and became the Ag Communication distribution coordinator in 2019.

Erovick divides his responsibilities between his Ag Communication distribution role and his delivery position with Print and Copy Services. Erovick maintains the print inventory of NDSU Extension publications, including numerous 4-H materials. He collaborates with Agriculture Communication team members and authors to ensure the most up-to-date publications are available. Additionally, he packages and prepares all shipping orders using various shipping companies and oversees the checkout process for 4-H educational trucks.

In his Print and Copy Services delivery role, he plans his delivery route in advance to prioritize efficiency and ensure timely deliveries across campus. He also manages the delivery van’s maintenance schedule and reports monthly mileage.

Erovick consistently demonstrates a high level of customer service and professionalism in both positions.

## ■ Janice Hanson

Administrative Assistant  
McLean County

*“Janice’s positive attitude and problem-solving approach have made a lasting impression on fellow employees and county citizens alike.”*

Hanson has dedicated 18 years to NDSU Extension, becoming an invaluable member of the team with her extensive knowledge of the community and its history. Known for her attention to detail and dependability, she plays a crucial role in organizing major events like Achievement Days, managing 4HOnline and FairEntry, and preparing personalized certificates for award recipients. Hanson consistently goes above and beyond, whether commuting 45 miles daily in all weather conditions or decorating the office with plants and flowers from her garden to boost morale. She also maintains meticulous records, ensuring the history of 4-H, Family and Community Wellness, and Agriculture and Natural Resources programs is well-documented for future reference.

Hanson’s professionalism is evident in her initiative, creativity, and strong communication skills. She serves on the planning committee for the statewide support staff conference and regularly lends her expertise to organizing and coordinating events. Her clear and thorough communication ensures smooth office operations, and her deep understanding of county history helps guide more informed decisions. Hanson is truly the heart of the team, offering unwavering support and stepping in whenever needed to ensure everything runs seamlessly.

## Donald and Jo Anderson Staff Award (continued)

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### ■ Edie Nelson

Administrative Assistant  
Department of Agribusiness and Applied  
Economics

*“Edie takes initiative to serve as the communications hub for the department and to make sure everyone is not only informed but involved.”*

Edie Nelson joined NDSU as an information processing specialist in 2003 and transitioned to her current role as administrative assistant in 2017.

In this position, Nelson supports various departmental functions, including faculty annual reviews, the department’s annual report, faculty and staff awards, promotion, tenure and evaluation documents, position searches, seminars, technical reports, and more. She also takes minutes at faculty meetings and serves as the primary contact for policies.

As office manager, she oversees the workflow and operations of the front office, supervises front office staff, and is responsible for recruitment, interviewing, supervision, and personnel performance management. Additionally, she monitors training opportunities and ensures cross-training among positions.

Nelson has enhanced departmental efficiencies by improving processes for organizing and conducting business while prioritizing workloads. She also redesigned the department’s website and manages its social media platforms.

Nelson earned an associate degree from the North Dakota State College of Science.

### ■ Cindy Olson

Administrative Assistant/  
4-H Program Assistant  
Ramsey County

*“Cindy has an extraordinary ability to make every person who walks into the office feel valued and appreciated, treating them as if they are the most important person in the room.”*

Cindy Olson joined NDSU Extension as an administrative assistant in 1994.

In her more than 30 years of dedicated service to NDSU Extension, she has played a pivotal role in advancing its mission to improve North Dakota communities through education. As both an administrative assistant and 4-H program assistant, she has forged strong relationships with local schools, organizations, and volunteers, ensuring the success of key events such as 4-H Achievement Days and the Progressive Agriculture Safety Day. Her leadership has been instrumental in organizing numerous community programs and expanding Extension’s outreach in Ramsey County.

In her role with 4-H, Olson has increased youth engagement by helping members develop leadership, teamwork, and communication skills. Her dedication has led to higher participation in programs such as 4-H Shooting Sports and Communication Arts contests.

Olson’s commitment to nurturing youth potential and supporting volunteers has made a lasting impact, with many former 4-H members returning as community leaders.

### ■ Sara Schuchard-McGregor

Administrative Assistant  
Langdon Research Extension Center

*“Sara has a strong drive to assist and work collaboratively with fellow employees. She knows it starts with sincere listening to employees’ needs.”*

Sara Schuchard-McGregor joined NDSU in 2012 as an administrative secretary at the Langdon Research Extension Center (LREC) and became the center’s administrative assistant in 2021.

As the LREC’s sole support staff member, Schuchard-McGregor handles a wide range of duties, including assisting with the center’s budget and reports, overseeing processes and procedures, purchasing, billing, editing and proofreading, records management, and human resources assistance. She developed a 42-page QuickBooks billing program and manual for foundation seedstock, which she shares with other research extension centers and the Agronomy Seed Farm. Additionally, she initiated monthly REC support staff meetings via Zoom to facilitate idea sharing and collaboration.

Schuchard-McGregor manages the center’s website, social media, and online variety trials data, as well as serving as the IT point person. She also organizes field days, workshops, agent training sessions, and tours.

Schuchard-McGregor earned a bachelor’s degree from Jamestown College and an MBA from the University of Mary.

# Rick and Jody Burgum Staff Award

*This annual award, established by the Office of the Vice President for Agriculture, recognizes significant contributions to the mission of NDSU Agriculture by support staff in technical and paraprofessional, crafts/trades or services positions (4000, 6000 or 7000 job bands) on and off campus with at least three years of continuous service. The recipient must be in a staff position with an appointment in the College of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Natural Resources; North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station; or NDSU Extension.*



## Donald and Jo Anderson Staff Award (continued)

### ■ Linda Schuster

Administrative Assistant  
Carrington Research Extension Center

*"The CREC and public events run smoothly in large part due to her heart and commitment to doing a good job."*

Linda Schuster joined the Carrington Research Extension Center (CREC) in 2010 as an administrative secretary, and was promoted to administrative assistant in 2022.

Her current responsibilities focus on supporting Extension, managing office operations, and facilitating public interactions. This includes hardware and software maintenance, videoconference support, financial management, staff training, shipping and receiving, and more. Schuster excels in these areas which helps the CREC function at a high level. Her farm background, strong work ethic, and personal approach to interactions have positioned the CREC to effectively serve and connect with farmers and local communities.

Schuster also manages the weekly Center Points blog and creatively develops electronic and paper projects to enhance NDSU's professionalism. Whether in person or online, she coordinates meetings and webinars, handling scheduling, invitations, reminders, sound checks, troubleshooting, and follow-up.

Schuster earned a bachelor's degree from Moorhead State University.

### ■ Chris Anderson

Print and Copy Services Production  
Manager  
Agriculture Communication

*"Chris ensures that all NDSU Agriculture and Extension materials are printed on time, on budget and with the customer's satisfaction in mind."*

Chris Anderson joined North Dakota State University as a press operator in 2006 and became the production manager for Print and Copy Services in 2013.

He oversees the daily operations of the production staff and collaborates closely with customer service to ensure smooth project execution. Anderson plays a key role in all phases of printed material production, managing projects such as Extension publications, 4-H literature, NDSU football passes, and more for the entire campus.

Known for his problem-solving skills, Anderson has saved the department money by repairing equipment and finding cost-effective solutions. He also assists faculty and staff in completing their printing needs efficiently, even coordinating off-campus services when necessary. Since the retirement of a graphic designer, he has taken on layout and design responsibilities, helping customers address their graphic design challenges.

Anderson earned a bachelor's degree from Moorhead State University.

### ■ Ronald Johnson

Ag Research Technician  
AES Main Station Farm Shop

*"Many have heard the phrase 'make hay while the sun shines.' For Ron, that often means working on weekends and holidays to ensure the forages are harvested and prepared properly."*

Ron Johnson joined the NDSU farm shop staff in 2018 as an ag research technician.

He works primarily in the farm shop but also assists at the livestock units. In the spring, Johnson helps with crop production field operations, while in the summer, he focuses on haying and forage production, including cutting, raking, and baling. During the winter months, he handles snow removal. He also drives trucks as needed and maintains equipment. Johnson particularly enjoys training new student employees on farm equipment operation and participating in Animal Science department activities.

He often takes on tasks outside regular work hours, including assisting at the dairy and beef barns during holidays. During snow events, he arrives early to ensure roadways are cleared for co-workers.

Johnson earned a bachelor's degree from NDSU.



# Celebrate, Integrate and Embrace the Power of Diversity Award

*This annual award recognizes an individual or group who has achieved significant impact for work related to the Agriculture strategic goal, celebrate, integrate and embrace the power of diversity. All departments/units, committees and individuals are eligible.*

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## ■ Erika Berg

Associate Professor and Bison Strides  
Equine-assisted Services Program Director  
Department of Animal Sciences

*“Erika has proven her leadership, creativity and passion for outreach and diversity, and has inspired many others to follow her example.”*

Erika Berg has led NDSU’s Bison Strides Equine-Assisted Services program since its launch in 2017. Bison Strides connects horses with individuals who have physical, cognitive, emotional, behavioral, or mental health disabilities through a range of community outreach programs. Since its inception, the program has provided hundreds of service hours, engaging students in all aspects of its operations.

Participants experience physical, cognitive, social, and emotional benefits, leading to increased self-confidence, greater independence, and an improved quality of life. Students in the equine-assisted services program can also earn professional instructor certification, preparing them to lead equine-assisted services independently in the future.

Bison Strides collaborates with several organizations to fulfill its mission, including the NDSU Counseling Program, Beyond Boundaries Therapy Services, Explorer Academy, Full Circle Academy, West Fargo Transitions Academy, and Red River Human Services Foundation. The program also serves individuals supported by Creative Care for Reaching Independence, Blossom Services Group, and Nexus-PATH Family Healing.

## ■ Shannon Ueker

Graduate and Extension Programs Assistant  
Department of Plant Sciences

*“Shannon feels that meeting people from other countries and cultures makes her whole and completes the community she wants to be involved with.”*

Ueker plays a pivotal role in creating a welcoming environment for students in NDSU’s Plant Sciences department, particularly for international students. She regularly attends international student group meetings, participates in cultural events like Diwali and Black History celebrations, and promotes the Plant Sciences programs at conferences to connect with students worldwide, especially from underrepresented countries. Ueker’s efforts align with NDSU Agriculture’s mission of providing life-long learning opportunities and improving lives.

Her impact is evident, with nearly 62% of the department’s graduate students coming from 23 countries. Ueker is often the first person they meet and provides ongoing support throughout their academic journey. Her dedication has fostered a sense of community, encouraging international students to recommend NDSU to others, making the recruitment process more successful and sustainable. Ueker’s commitment to cultural exchange strengthens the department and builds a better world for students and faculty alike.





## 2023 Award Recipients

Larson/Yaggie

Excellence in Research Award

*Jiajia Rao,  
Department of Plant Sciences*

Eugene R. Dahl

Excellence in Research Award

*Luis Del Rio Mendoza,  
Department of Plant Pathology*

Earl and Dorothy Foster

Excellence in Teaching Award

*Blaine Novak,  
Department of Animal Sciences  
(presently in CAFSNR Dean's Office)*

H. Roald and Janet Lund

Excellence in Teaching Award

*Zhulu Lin,  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering*

William J. and Angelyn A. Austin

Excellence in Advising Award

*Lisa Christenson,  
Department of Animal Sciences*

Excellence in Extension

Early Career Award

*Joe Ikley,  
Department of Plant Sciences*

AGSCO Excellence in Extension Award

*Susan Milender,  
NDSU Extension – Barnes County*

Charles and Linda Moses Staff Award

*Jennifer Carney,  
Academic Advising Center*

Donald and Jo Anderson Staff Award

*Julie Bietz,  
Department of Agricultural and  
Biosystems Engineering*

Rick and Jody Burgum Staff Award

*Timothy Schroeder,  
Carrington Research Extension Center*

Celebrate, Integrate and Embrace the  
Power of Diversity Award

*Sue Isbell,  
NDSU Extension – Sioux County*

## 2024 Faculty/Staff Award Nominees

**Larson/Yaggie**

**Excellence in Research Award**

Barney Geddes  
Febina Mathew  
Miranda Meehan  
Sandro Steinbach  
Xin Sun

**Eugene R. Dahl**

**Excellence in Research Award**

Igathinathane Cannayen  
Carl Dahlen  
Brian Jenks  
Julie Pasche  
Md Mukhlesur Rahman  
William Wilson  
Michael Wunsch

**Earl and Dorothy Foster**

**Excellence in Teaching Award**

Chris Byrd  
Erik Hanson  
Ewumbua Monono  
Jiajia Rao

**H. Roald and Janet Lund**

**Excellence in Teaching Award**

Deying Li  
Siew Hoon Lim  
Tara Swanson

**William J. and Angelyn A. Austin**

**Excellence in Advising Award**

Greta Gramig  
Lauren Hanna  
Thomas Krumel  
Matthew Olhoft  
Rachel Richman

**Excellence in Extension**

**Early Career Award**

Erin Berentson  
Kelsey Deckert  
Travis Hoffman  
Bryon Parman  
Jan Stankiewicz  
Lynnette Vachal

**AGSCO**

**Excellence in Extension Award**

Ronda Gripentrog  
Ron Haugen  
Samuel Markell  
Thomas Peters

**Charles and Linda Moses  
Staff Award**

Susan Finneseth  
Yueqiang Leng  
Glenn Martin  
Joseph Mettler  
Didier Murillo Florez  
Megan Ramsett  
Niloy Chandra Sarker  
Deb Tanner  
Sarah Underdahl

**Donald and Jo Anderson  
Staff Award**

Eileen Buringrud  
Blaine Erovick  
Janice Hanson  
Edie Nelson  
Cindy Olson  
Sara Schuchard-McGregor  
Linda Schuster

**Rick and Jody Burgum  
Staff Award**

Chris Anderson  
Ronald Johnson

**Celebrate, Integrate and Embrace  
the Power of Diversity Award**

Erika Berg  
Shannon Ueker

For a list of prior award recipients, visit the "Faculty and Staff Awards" link at [www.ndsu.edu/vpag](http://www.ndsu.edu/vpag)