



February 2025

## The Spore Print (2/24/25): Department of Plant Pathology February 2025 Newsletter



Please enjoy these updates from our department for February 2025.

***Mary, representing the editorial team: Ko, Megan, Sasha, Koy, Mason, Sheersa, Arild, Bipin, Monique, Cynthia, and Xianming.***

If you have news you would like included in the *next newsletter*, please email [mary.steele@wsu.edu](mailto:mary.steele@wsu.edu).

[Click here to access past newsletters!](#) You will also be able to download the PDF version there.

If you have any feedback, please fill out the [questionnaire](#) for the Spore Print.

Thank you to Ninh Khuu for providing many of the photos seen in newsletter headings.

## Updates



### **Save the date: Investments 101 Workshop on Friday, March 7**

Dr. Siyang Hao has kindly offered to provide a **workshop on financial investments** aimed at graduate students. Details for this event are being finalized and this workshop is planned for **Friday, March 7**. Save the date and stay tuned for more information.

### **APS Pacific Division Meeting and Conference on Soilborne Plant Pathogens: March 25-27**

The 2025 meeting of the American Phytopathological Society (APS) Pacific Division and the 70th Conference on Soilborne Plant Pathogens are being held jointly on March 25-27 in Davis, California.

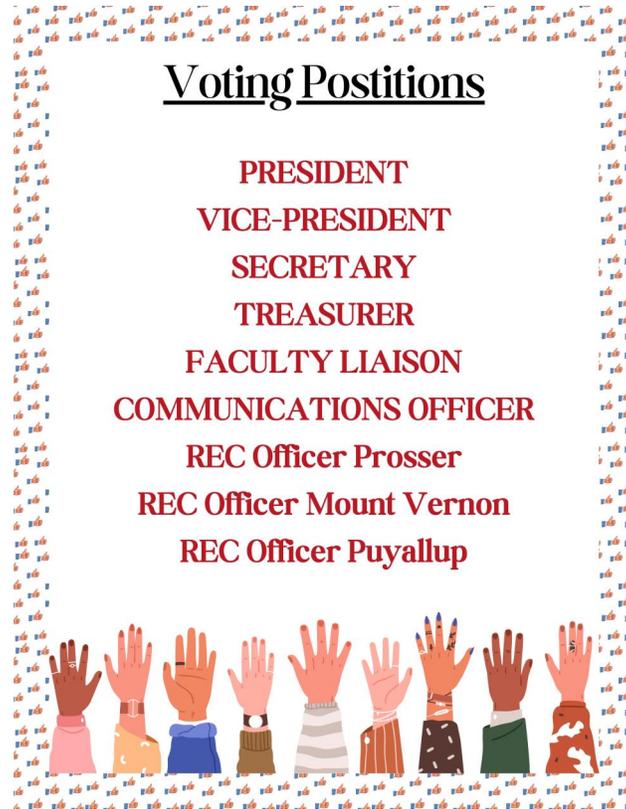
For department members attending, enjoy the meeting and don't forget to take photos of presentations and posters so they can be included in the March 31 Spore Print!

More information on the meeting can be found here:

<https://www.apsnet.org/members/community/divisions/pac/meetings/Pages/default.aspx>

## 2025-2026 PPGSO Officer Election

A link to vote in the upcoming **Plant Pathology Graduate Student Organization (PPGSO) officer election will be sent soon to graduate students. Voting will be open March 1 - April 11.** Thank you, graduate students, for your continued participation in giving back to the department!



1 - PPGSO Election Flyer Back: Officer positions; President, Vice-president, Secretary, Treasurer, Faculty Liaison, Communications Officer, REC Officer Prosser, REC Officer Mount Vernon, REC Officer Puyallup.

## PPGSO bioinformatic consultations available by appointment

To better organize the PLP Bioinformatic Consultation Table, we decided to cancel our meeting hour on Thursday. Instead, we are open by appointment (15min - 30min, via Zoom or in person). Please provide the time you want to meet and your bioinformatic questions to the consultants below.

Ko <[itsuhiro.ko@wsu.edu](mailto:itsuhiro.ko@wsu.edu)> : Kamiak HPC, Transcriptome and Genome analysis, Sequencing, Python/Linux coding

Megan <[megan.nickerson@wsu.edu](mailto:megan.nickerson@wsu.edu)> : R coding: Statistic and data visualization

Mason <[mason.hoskins@wsu.edu](mailto:mason.hoskins@wsu.edu)> : Kamiak HPC, Gene co-expression network, Transcriptome (Mason is willing to provide help in person at the Prosser IAREC)

## Student Spotlight: Harpreet Kaur



*2 - Ph.D. student Harpreet Kaur*

**Degree:** Ph.D., Plant Pathology

**Advisor:** Dr. Youfu (Frank) Zhao

**Academic background:** B.S. in Agriculture Honors from Punjab Agricultural University, M.S. in Agricultural Sciences from Tennessee State University (research focused on bacterial wilt of cucurbits)

**Hometown:** Burj Hari Singh, Punjab, India. One of the things I love most about my hometown is its strong connection to agriculture. Surrounded by vast fields and a close-knit farming community, my village embodies the essence of rural life, where hard work and a deep respect for nature are part of everyday living.

**What made you interested in plant pathology / microbiology?** Growing up on a farm, I became familiar with various pest problems affecting crops and their impact on livelihoods. I was curious about the black spots on potato leaves and the yellow powder on wheat, which I later learned were plant diseases. This curiosity led me to choose plant pathology as my career, so I could help protect crops and improve farming.

**What is your favorite plant pathogen?** My favorite pathogen is *Erwinia amylovora*—not just because it’s infamous for causing fire blight, but because it actually smells pretty nice while growing! Plus, it’s easy to work with in the lab—no fastidious conditions or stubborn streaks, just a cooperative little microbe doing its thing.

**Hobbies:** My hobbies include getting lost in a good book, knitting (because making cozy things is oddly satisfying), and cooking—mostly experimenting in the kitchen, sometimes with delicious results!

**Pets:** I have one dog named Mickey back home.

**What would you like to do after graduation?** After graduation, I would love to work in academia and contribute to the field of plant pathology through research and teaching. No matter where I end up, my goal is to make meaningful contributions to plant health and agricultural sustainability!

## Community Corner



PLP COMMUNITY CORNER  
SEMINAR

# LGBTQ+ Ally Training: Expanding Intersectional Access & Inclusion

By Josie Cohen-Rodriguez



**DATE:** Friday, February 28th  
**TIME:** 12pm to 2pm  
**LOCATION:** Zoom

**ZOOM**



3 - Please join us on Friday, February 28th for a LGBTQ+ ally training with Josie Cohen-Rodriguez.

## Student Soundbites



This month, graduate students shared if they are planning on attending the joint APS Pacific Division meeting and Conference on Soilborne Plant Pathogens mentioned above.

**Koy Chandler** (MS student advised by Dr. Cynthia Gleason) is planning on attending and presenting a talk.

**Ninh Khuu** (Ph.D. candidate advised by Dr. Scott Harper) is planning on attending and likely presenting a poster.

**Lora Keyte** (MS student advised by Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka) is planning on attending and presenting a poster.

For those attending, keep an eye out for these graduate students and their research!

## Statewide Updates



### Pullman Updates

Plant Pathology helped represent CAHNRS at the **Experience WSU Resource Fair** from 5-7 pm on February 10! Thank you to Dr. Jana U'Ren, Dr. Hira Kamal, Mason Hoskins, and Megan Nickerson for helping out with this event.

We got to meet with prospective Cougs and their families and display some of the great outreach materials curated by Monique from the Shaw Mycological Herbarium.



4 - Mason Hoskins and Megan Nickerson posing next to a poster board displaying plant pathology information at the Experience WSU Resource Fair.

Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka and lab members attended the **2025 Washington and Oregon Potato Conference** in Kennewick, WA from January 28-30, 2025. Dr. Tanaka presented a talk titled "Powdery Scab and Spongospora Biology".



5 - Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka presenting "Powdery Scab and Spongospora Biology" at the 2025 Washington and Oregon Potato Conference. Photo credit: Natalia Moroz.

## Mount Vernon Updates

Members of the WSU Plant Pathology department presented at the **43rd annual Western Washington Potato Workshop** on Friday, February 2. The event was held at the WSU Mount Vernon NWREC and is organized by WSU Skagit County Extension.

Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli presented "Updates from the Berry and Potato Pathology Program" including outcomes of trials evaluating potato skin set under variable boron and calcium application rates and silver scurf development at different sites and under different soil moisture conditions.

Dr. Cynthia Gleason and Cassandra Bates presented "Molecular Advances and Diagnostic Support for Nematode Management".



6 - Dr. Chakradhar Mattupalli presents "Updates from the Berry and Potato Pathology Program" at the 43rd annual Western Washington Potato Workshop.

**Prosser Updates: A winter wonderland and the new PGSA leadership team**



Prosser experienced a stunning snowfall last week, covering the campus and its surroundings in a crisp, white blanket. The fresh snow brought a serene beauty to the area, offering a refreshing change of scenery and a chance for the campus community to enjoy the winter season.

Exciting news from the Prosser campus! The **Prosser Graduate Student Association (PGSA)** has successfully elected its new leadership team for the upcoming term committed to fostering student engagement, supporting academic growth, and enhancing campus life. We look forward to seeing their vision and initiatives come to life as they work towards building a more connected and vibrant postgraduate community.

Stay tuned for upcoming events and activities organized by the new PGSA team and make sure to enjoy the beautiful winter scenery while it lasts!

### **GPSA Updates**

#### **GPSA PDI Events:**

- Resilience and Resources in the Job Search: An Academic Success & Career Center Collaboration (**February 26 @ 4:00 pm - 5:00 pm**): [Register Here](#)
- Master Your Research: Citation Management with Zotero (**March 4 @ 11:30 am - 1:30 pm**): [Register Here](#)

#### **GPSA Social Event:**

- Restaurant Fridays @ Tokyo Seoul (**Friday, February 28 @6:00–9:00.pm**). *The first 30 graduate and professional students get a \$15 discount.*

## Herbarium Happenings: Shaw Mycological Herbarium



### ***GRADUATE STUDENTS IN MUSEUM STUDIES COURSE VISIT THE SHAW HERBARIUM***

On the morning of February 4th, Dr. Eric Roalson, the Director of the Marion Ownbey Herbarium in WSU's School of Biological Sciences, brought eight of his students to visit the Shaw Mycological Herbarium. These students are members of his inaugural graduate-level course in "Museum Research & Curation". They learned about the history, collections and management of the Shaw Mycological Herbarium from Monique Slipher, and about some current research in fungal biology and phylogeny utilizing Shaw Mycological Herbarium specimens from Dr. Jana U'Ren. The students took lots of pictures and asked many good questions! We were very happy to host them here in the Plant Pathology Department as part of ongoing collaborative efforts among the various research collections and museums on the WSU Pullman campus.



7 - Shaw Mycological Herbarium Collections Manager Monique Slipper shows visiting graduate students how fungi are preserved and organized in the Shaw Mycological Herbarium

The Shaw Mycological Herbarium was also featured in a Halloween article written by Seth Truscott which is now available in the spring 2025 WSU Magazine! Read it here:

<https://magazine.wsu.edu/2025/01/31/stranger-things/>

## Publications



McKeever, K., Johnson, J. and **Chastagner, G.** 2025. Field assessment of Turkish fir (*Abies bommuelleriana*) resistance to five root-rotting *Phytophthora* species. Plant Dis. *first look*. <https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-08-24-1679-RE>

Shin, G. Y., Asselin, J., Smith, A., Aegerter, B., Coutinho, T., Zhao, M., Dutta, B., Mazzone, J., Neupane, R., Gugino, B., Hoepting, C., Khanal, M., Malla, S., Nischwitz, C., Sidhu, J., Burke, A. M., Davey, J., Uchanski, M., Derie, M. L., **du Toit, L. J.**, Stresow-Cortez, S., Bonasera, J. M., Stodghill, P., and Kvitko, B. 2025. Plasmids encode and can mobilize onion pathogenicity in *Pantoea agglomerans*. The ISME Journal *in press*. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ismejo/wraf019>

*Please let us know if we missed your publication so it can be included next month.*

# Funding & Opportunities



### **NOMIS and *Science* Young Explorer Award**

The NOMIS foundation and *Science* is accepting essays for the Young Explorer Award, recognizing "bold young researchers who ask fundamental questions at the intersection of the life and social sciences". Cash prizes up to \$15,000 will be awarded, and essays will be published in *Science*. Applications are due May 15, 2025. More information [here](#). Thank you to Dr. Tanaka for sharing.

### ***Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions* (MPMI) Assistant Feature Editors**

MPMI is looking for volunteers to serve as Assistant Feature Editors for 2025-2027. This is a great opportunity for postdocs. Thank you to Dr. Tanaka for sharing! Applications are due August 1, 2025. More information: <https://www.ismpmi.org/mpmi/Pages/Call-for-Assistant-Feature-Editors.aspx>

### **Oregon Mycological Society**

The Oregon Mycological Society (OMS) has shared three scholarship opportunities: The OMS Scholarship for students pursuing mycology-related Master's or Ph.D. degrees (up to \$2500), The Judy Roger Memorial Scholarship for students pursuing mycology-related Master's or Ph.D. degrees with priority to women (up to \$2500), and the Maggie Rogers Memorial Scholarship for educators / citizen scientists / and individuals pursuing a mycology-related activity or question (amount TBD). More information can be found at: <https://www.wildmushrooms.org/get-involved/oms-scholarships/>

### **GPSA Travel Grant**

GPSA travel grants are available all year round and are awarded as reimbursements post travel for out-of-pocket travel costs. Pullman Service and Activity fee-paying students are eligible to apply. Please see all the information on the GPSA grants website [here](#). Contact [gpsa.granst@wsu.edu](mailto:gpsa.granst@wsu.edu) if you have questions.

### **GPSA Excellence Awards**

The GPSA is accepting nominations for GPSA Excellence Awards from now until February 28, 2025. More information can be found [here](#).

[Here](#) is a list of all available funding worldwide. Log in using your WSU account and refine the search.

## Seminars



**Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka is leading seminar this Spring 2025, most Mondays from 4-5 pm.**

*Zoom ID: 935 5851 3144*

*Zoom Password: 1824*

Monday, February 24th: Dr. Marcella Teixeira (Guest Speaker)

Monday, March 3rd: Dr. Kai Battenberg (Guest Speaker)

Monday, March 10th: No seminar; Spring Break

Monday, March 17th: Bipin Neupane & Sudeep Poudel (Student Speakers)

Monday, March 24th: Dr. Dmitri Mavrodi (Guest Speaker)

Monday, March 31st: Anita Paneru & Sasha Zvenigorodsky (Student Speakers)

Monday, April 7th: Dr. David Crowder (Guest Speaker)

Monday, April 14th: Sheersa Manna & Jessica Schallon (Student Speakers)

Monday, April 21st: Dr. Hira Kamal (Guest Speaker)

**WSU Plant Pathology Seminar Series – Spring 2025**

Mondays 4:10 pm, Clark Hall 149, Pullman campus (Zoom ID: 935 5851 3144 | Pass: 1824)

Date	Speaker	
<b>January 27</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. Huiting Zhang</b> Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Horticulture, WSU (Ficklin lab)
<b>February 3</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. Fangming Xiao</b> Professor, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Idaho
<b>February 10</b> Student Invited Speaker		<b>Dr. Jeff Miller</b> President and CEO / Principal Field Investigator, Miller Research LLC, Acequia, ID
<b>February 17</b>	President's Day	No Seminar
<b>February 24</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. Marcella Teixeira</b> Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Plant Pathology, WSU (Gleason lab)
<b>March 3</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. Kai Battenberg</b> Collections Manager, Stillinger Herbarium University of Idaho
<b>March 10</b>	Spring Break	No Seminar
<b>March 17</b> PLP 515 Seminar		<b>Bipin Neupane</b> Ph.D. student, Department of Plant Pathology, WSU (See lab)
<b>March 24</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. Dmitri Mavrodi</b> USDA-ARS, Wheat Health, Genetics, and Quality Research Unit
<b>March 31</b> PLP 515 Seminar		<b>Anita Paneru</b> Ph.D. student, Department of Plant Pathology, WSU (Friesen lab)
<b>April 7</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. David Crowder</b> Professor, Department of Entomology, WSU
<b>April 14</b> PLP 515 Seminar		<b>Sheersa Manna</b> Ph.D. student, Department of Plant Pathology, WSU (W. Zhao lab)
<b>April 21</b> Guest Speaker		<b>Dr. Hira Kamal</b> Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Plant Pathology, WSU (Tanaka lab)

For more information, please visit our website at [plantpath.wsu.edu/seminar-series-2/](http://plantpath.wsu.edu/seminar-series-2/)

8 - Seminar schedule for Spring 2025 put together by Dr. Kiwamu Tanaka.

## Jobs



### Graduate Research Positions

### Postdoctoral Positions

- At Kansas State University, Dr. Erick DeWolf and Dr. Kelsey Anderson Onofre are hiring a postdoc to develop models and disease forecasting systems for wheat diseases. Screening is ongoing. More information [here](#).

### Technician, Industry, and Other Non-Academic Positions

- The University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) is hiring a UC Cooperative Extension Area Orchard Systems Advisor focused on tree fruit and nuts in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. More information is [here](#). Applications are due March 24, 2025.
- WSDA is hiring a Fruit Tree Certification Molecular Lab Supervisor based in Prosser, WA. The job can be found on [careers.wa.gov](https://careers.wa.gov).

- NC State Plant Disease and Insect Clinic is hiring a research associate. Information can be found [here](#).

### **Faculty Positions**

- Missouri State University is hiring a visiting Assistant Professor of Plant Genetics/Genomics, for the 2025-2026 academic year. Information can be found [here](#).
- Iowa State University is hiring a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Diagnostics and Bioinformatics related to seed science. More information can be found [here](#). Applications are due February 28, 2025.
- Kansas State University is hiring a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Molecular Biology of Plant Defense. More information [here](#); applications due March 20, 2025.
- Kansas State University is hiring a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Sustainable Food Production Systems. More information can be found [here](#).