

2004 Midwestern Section Award Winners

Graduate Student Research Paper Competition—Ph.D. Sponsored by Akey

First Place

Michelle Martínez was born in Bayamón, Puerto Rico. She completed a B.S. in biology and a M.S. in animal science at the University of Puerto Rico, where she determined the incidence of swine respiratory diseases in western Puerto Rico and developed a vaccination program for the university swine farm. Selected by Michigan State University as a summer intern, she conducted initial studies on feeding phytase and pharmacological zinc to weaned pigs. As a Ph.D. candidate at Michigan State, her studies revealed that phytase improves zinc availability, as demonstrated by increased metallothionein expression. Also, she identified two oxidative stress genes affected by pharmacological zinc in pig liver, which may be part of zinc's mechanism of action for health enhancement.

Second Place, tie

Tara McDaneld graduated from Hays High School in 1994, where she was active in FFA and 4-H. In 1998, she earned her B.S. degree from Kansas State University in animal science. While at Kansas State, she was an active member in Block and Bridle. In 2000, she received her M.S. degree in animal science from the University of Nebraska under the direction of Drs. Jess Miner and Merlyn Nielsen. Her thesis work focused on mediation of maintenance energy requirement by a thermogenic protein (uncoupling protein 1). McDaneld is currently pursuing her Ph.D. under the direction of Dr. Diane Moody at Purdue University. Her thesis work focuses on molecular genetics and skeletal muscle development. Upon graduation, McDaneld plans a career in teaching.

Second Place, tie

Robert E. Peterson grew up on a commercial cow/calf operation in central Montana, earned a B.S. from Montana State University, and participated in the Feedlot Management Specialization internship coordinated by Dr. Terry Klopfenstein at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln. Peterson completed the requirements for a M.S. in animal science in spring 2003 under the direction of Dr. Don Gill at Oklahoma State University and is currently working toward a Ph.D. at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln in the area of preharvest food safety under the direction of Dr. Klopfenstein.

Peterson earned first place at the Plains Nutrition Council Poster Contest in 2003 with research titled “Instrument vs. Manual Sortation of Feedlot Steers and Heifers.”

Graduate Student Research Paper Competition—M.S. Sponsored by DeKalb Feeds, Inc.

First Place

Rebecca C. Bott completed her undergraduate degree at the University of Missouri and was involved with many organizations in the College of Agriculture. She served as Chancellor for Alpha Zeta and interned in the F.B. Miller/Select Sires internship during her senior year. The most valuable experience for Bott was her undergraduate research internship with Dr. Mike Smith, where she conducted research on the estrogenic effects of progestins commonly used in beef heifer estrus synchronization. She began her master's degree at the University of Nebraska with Dr. Andrea Cupp in June 2003, studying the molecular mechanisms involved in embryonic testis morphogenesis. In addition to her graduate work, Bott is advising the UNL Equestrian Team.

Second Place

Erin K. Sissom was raised in Chowchilla, California. She was actively involved in 4-H and FFA and received the American FFA Degree in 1999. After graduation, Sissom attended California State University–Fresno, where she obtained her B.S. in animal science in 2002. She was awarded the undergraduate student achievement award for the College of Agriculture Sciences and Technology. Sissom played an active role in chartering the Sigma Alpha professional agricultural sorority for women at Fresno State and was also involved in numerous departmental activities. She also served as an intern with the California Milk Advisory Board. She accepted a graduate research position at Kansas State University, where she is currently working toward her M.S. degree in the area of muscle growth and development. Upon completion of her M.S., she plans to continue her education at Kansas State.

Third Place

Kylie J. Daniels is a third-year graduate student at Purdue University and will graduate in August 2004 with a M.S. in dairy management. She received her B.S.

from the University of Vermont. Daniels was raised on a registered Holstein dairy farm and is now part owner of her family's 85-head, registered Milking Shorthorn dairy farm in central Vermont. While at Purdue, Daniels has become involved in many activities outside my research. She is a teaching assistant for Dairy Cattle Management, Reproductive Management of Livestock, Dairy Farm Evaluation and other introductory courses. She received the W. R. Featherston Graduate Student Teaching Award for this involvement. Further, Daniels has worked with the Dairy Club as a graduate student advisor and is the assistant coach for the Dairy Farm Evaluation Team.

**Undergraduate Student Research
Paper Competition
Sponsored by
Midwest Branch ADSA
and Midwestern Section ASAS**

First Place

Leslie H. Bach is in her final semester of undergraduate study in the animal science department at Michigan State University. Since August of 2003, she has worked in Dr. Catherine Ernst's molecular genetics laboratory, studying differential gene expression in differentiating porcine skeletal muscle satellite cells. In addition to gaining experience in molecular genetics, Bach has worked in the reproductive unit of an equine clinic and in the toxicology unit of the Animal Health Diagnostics Laboratory at Michigan State; she has also aided in the conditioning of Michigan State quarter horses for auction. She plans to attend the University of California–Davis in the fall of 2004 in order to pursue a Ph.D. in genetics.

Second Place

Jessica Wirrenga is the daughter of Dale and Nancy Wirrenga and the oldest of three daughters. Her hometown is South Heart, ND. She developed an early passion for animal agriculture by participating in the 4-H and FFA programs. Wirrenga will graduate in May from North Dakota State University with a B.S. in animal science and a minor in chemistry. She has begun graduate coursework and will be pursuing a master's degree from North Dakota State in animal physiology, with an emphasis on scrapie research. Wirrenga is currently active in Saddle and Sirloin and was recently named the 2004 Outstanding Senior, Postsecondary Agricultural Students Organization, having just served as the 2003–2004 state president, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, and Golden Key Honor Society.

Third Place

Blueax M. Johnson is a 22-yr-old senior at North Dakota State University, hailing from the Morristown, SD area. Growing up on a diversified crop and livestock farm, Johnson always had a strong interest in production agriculture. Johnson has been attending North Dakota State University for the past 5 yr in pursuit of a degree in animal and range sciences, with a minor in chemistry. While at North Dakota State, she has been involved in the Saddle and Sirloin Club, Judging Club, and Meat Judging team, as well as the McNair Scholar program. She was recently accepted into the veterinary medicine program at Iowa State University, where she plans to specialize in large animal medicine. After graduation from veterinary school, Johnson intends to return to her home area in southwestern North Dakota to start a mixed large and small animal medical practice.