

## WALSAA Congratulates 2023 CALS Graduates and Offers New Memberships



WALSAA was honored to celebrate this year's newest UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) alumni by sharing a special gift with them during the CALS Pre-Commencement Reception held in the Allen Centennial Garden prior to the UW Commencement Ceremony. New CALS graduates were congratulated by WALSAA Board Members, David Cooper, June Roush, and Brooke Trustem. They received a UW CALS Alum shirt and were extended the offer to receive a complimentary WALSAA membership to connect with fellow CALS alumni. Congratulations, graduates! We look forward to seeing you at upcoming WALSAA events!

**walsaa** Our College,  
Creating Connections for 50 Years Our Connection

### New Legacy Members

Ciera Ballmer '19  
Hermery Gonzales '25  
Veronica Goveas '25  
Sophia Green '25  
Kaela Groppel '25  
Robert Hall '23  
Molly Hendrickson '19  
Mae Hurtado-Thiele '23  
Kylie Konyn '25  
Lauren Lansing '23  
Siyun Liu '25  
Kayla Okla '23  
Lindsay Propst '25  
Julia Prouse '25  
Natalie Roe '25  
June Roush '87  
Taylor Schaefer '22  
Sophia Schoenfeld '25  
Marcus Schroepfer '22  
Mitchell Schroepfer '22

If you studied or majored in agriculture or life sciences at UW-Madison, you can also join the alumni association at no cost. Under the banner of "Our College, Our Connection," WALSAA is offering either free or paid membership to anyone who graduated or was a student in CALS.

"We welcome both CALS graduates and attendees to join," said WALSAA President Michael Murphy. "Anyone who wishes to promote the college and its students, is interested in college updates and enjoys reconnecting with alumni and current CALS students is welcome to join at no cost."

To join, former or current CALS students can register for either a free or paid WALSAA membership at [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org). All members automatically receive the organization's e-newsletter, are invited to WALSAA events ("Football Fire-Up," summer picnic, FISC Reunion, etc.) and have opportunities to network with students and alumni. Those choosing to pay annual, or lifetime membership fees are considered voting members and will continue to receive the WALSAA newsletter in the mail and other special offers. WALSAA members who have already paid lifetime dues are also voting members known as Legacy Members.

Stay up-to-date with WALSAA on **Facebook** [www.facebook.com/WALSAAUW](http://www.facebook.com/WALSAAUW) and **LinkedIn** [www.linkedin.com/company/WALSAA/](http://www.linkedin.com/company/WALSAA/). WALSAA is also on **Instagram** and **Twitter**.

### IN THIS ISSUE

Football Fire-Up.....	2
Member Spotlight.....	4
Scholarships & Awards.....	5
Summer Picnic & FISC Reunion..	15

### CONTACT US

Wisconsin Agricultural and Life Sciences Alumni Association  
PO Box 5177  
Madison, WI 53705-5177  
P: 608.438.1994 E: [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org)

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## It Takes a Dedicated Team Effort



*Michael Murphy, WALSAA President*

It's time to kick off summer and we're planning some great WALSAA events for 2023! Summer is filled with socializing and attending events and the WALSAA team is on a similar path as we continue building off conversations with our Outstanding Sophomore and Senior Award recipients and recent CALS graduates. We are finalizing plans for our Farm and Industry Short Course Reunion and Summer Picnic and preparing for another WALSAA Football Fire-Up. It takes a dedicated team effort to get these things completed.

It is gratifying to recognize our young leaders and see our great CALS and WALSAA members in quality conversations at our social and fundraising events. Please save the dates for our summer and fall events so that we can see you in person this year. I wish you all the best, and thanks for being a part of our incredible membership.

Sincerely,  
Michael Murphy (B.S. 1987)

## *Save the Date!* Saturday, September 9, 2023 *WALSAA Football Fire-Up: Watch Party Edition* *at J. Henry & Sons, Dane, WI*



The Annual WALSAA Football Fire-Up Tailgate Party and Silent Auction raises funds to support CALS scholarships. NEW in 2023, Fire-Up will be held as a viewing party at J. Henry & Sons for the UW/Washington State away game.

**walsaa** 50  
Creating Connections for 50 Years  
*Register at* [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org)

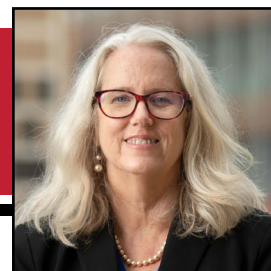
## FIRE-UP SILENT AUCTION

Looking for a great way to support current Badgers? Consider a donation to our WALSAA Football Fire-Up Silent Auction! Proceeds benefit UW CALS students through the Outstanding Sophomore Award scholarships, WALSAA Impact grants for student organizations and Senior Impact Awards. Contact Stephanie Hammerly, [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org) or 608.438.1994, for more information or to confirm your donation!



# CALS MESSAGE

## An Investment in Rural Wisconsin



**Glenda Gillaspy, CALS Dean and Director**

UW-Madison has launched a new initiative, and it is focused on rural communities. It's designed to better meet the needs of rural citizens by creating new partnerships and supporting community-based projects. This is a prime example of how UW pursues its land-grant mission — truly, the Wisconsin Idea in action — and I'm proud to announce that CALS will be a part of it.

Called the Wisconsin Rural Partnership, this initiative is made possible through \$9.3 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The investment is part of a total of \$28 million the USDA has given to UW and two other universities to establish the Institute for Rural Partnerships. The institute's members will work to address the unique challenges facing rural communities through research, outreach activities, and partnership development. Funding comes from the 2022 Agriculture Appropriations bill, which was led by Senator Tammy Baldwin and then included in the bipartisan fiscal year 2022 omnibus legislation.

At least one project at UW has already been identified to receive funding as part of the Wisconsin Rural Partnership. It's called the Wisconsin Environmental Mesonet, a statewide network of as many as 90 weather and soil monitoring stations. The Mesonet will provide data, research, and education for farmers and producers; it will help them boost harvests and yields, protect crops and resources, and increase overall economic benefits.

The Mesonet's campus partners include CALS, the Nelson Institute Center for Climatic Research and the Division of Extension. It's also supported by \$1 million from the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation.

The Institute for Rural Partnerships is housed at UW-Madison, Auburn University, and the University of Vermont. It aims to promote equitable, resilient, and prosperous food and agricultural systems; a fair marketplace for producers; and expanded opportunities for economic development in rural communities. The partnership will also collaborate with community-based initiatives, local researchers, educational institutions, and subject matter experts. As such, a second part of the Wisconsin Rural Partnership will include research focused on improving the social, educational, and economic facets of rural life in Wisconsin. More information will be shared about this aspect of the initiative as the details are finalized.

Land-grant universities were built to solve problems in partnership with the residents of their states. The faculty, staff, and students of CALS are proud to continue this tradition. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to expand our work with Wisconsin's rural communities. We look forward to working with alumni and friends in those communities as we advance our shared goals.

## WALSAA BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2022-2023

**Michael Murphy '87 - 2023**  
President  
DeWitt, IA

**John Brunnquell '85 - 2025**  
Vice President  
Port Washington, WI

**June Roush '87 - 2023**  
Treasurer  
Middleton, WI

**Taylor Fritsch '14 - 2024**  
Past President  
Sun Prairie, WI

**Kara Luedtke**  
CALS Rep/Ex-Officio  
Madison, WI

**Curt Lauderdale**  
CALS Rep/Ex-Officio  
Madison, WI

**CALS Ambassadors Student Rep**  
**Claire Michel**

**CALS Student Reps**  
**Nicole Broege & Gabi Conidi**

**FISC Student Rep**  
**Halei Heinzl**

**David Cooper '89 - 2024**  
Sun Prairie, WI

**Alison Demmer '18 - 2024**  
Peosta, IA

**Pierce Dopp '81 - 2024**  
Wausau, WI

**Jane Hillstrom '80 - 2025**  
Dodgeville, WI

**Mike Kawleski '84 - 2024**  
Sobieski, WI

**Julie Larson '86 - 2023**  
Viroqua, WI

**Kay Maas '79, '82 - 2025**  
Pewaukee, WI

**Jill Makovec '00, '02 - 2023**  
Madison, WI

**Brittney Muenster FISC '11 - 2024**  
Seymour, WI

**Scott Rasch '93, '97 - 2023**  
Racine, WI

**Brooke Trustem '20 - 2023**  
Evansville, WI

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

## Life Sciences Start, Leads to Personal Success



Jenn Vincent

*One of the factors that lead to the success of CALS and WALSAA is that we have students and alumni who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and in various career fields. Life Sciences Start, Leads to Personal Success features some of our members that have taken their degrees, skills or passions learned from Life Sciences into new careers, community or personal development. Read on to learn how their degree in a Life Sciences major led to success.*

**Meet Jenn Vincent**

**B.S. Food Science, 2002**

**Food Safety and Quality Consultant; Founder of Vincent Group LLC**

**What brought you to your current career?**

I've recently started my own consulting company after working for more than 24 in the food industry for a variety of companies including large retail entities, privately owned food service firms, and multiple QSR suppliers. I am grateful to have had experiences in manufacturing quality, research and development, and corporate food safety/quality assurance for products including confections, deli meats, hot dogs, lunch kits, pickles, plant protein products, sauces, various produce, shell eggs, and packaging items. This diversity allows me to help my clients strengthen their food safety and quality systems through auditing, training, coaching, etc.

**It's rewarding to see CALS grads being sought after and utilizing their degree and skills outside of their major. How have you adapted to your career area and how did your CALS degree support you or help you navigate the change?**

My food science degree from CALS gave me a strong foundation for all of the technical challenges I've encountered in the food industry. More importantly, however, my time at CALS afforded me the opportunity to learn how to work within teams, network with peers and industry professionals, and be challenged to learn difficult things.

**How did you come to be involved with WALSAA?**

I was a CALS Ambassador while at UW-Madison and had the opportunity to serve on the WALSAA Board and co-chair the NAADA Conference shortly after graduating. I am also incredibly grateful to have received an Outstanding Sophomore scholarship while at UW, along with serving as a Short Course Housefellow.

---

**UW-Madison afforded me an amazing opportunity to gain meaningful leadership experiences, obtain robust work experiences and build a network of peers and industry experts throughout the food and agricultural industry.**

---

**What was the biggest influence UW-Madison and/or WALSAA had on you?**

UW-Madison afforded me an amazing opportunity to gain meaningful leadership experiences, obtain robust work experiences and build a network of peers and industry experts throughout the food and agricultural industry. For me, being a founding member of the Sigma Alpha chapter at CALS, representing CALS on the UW Homecoming Court, and interning for Kraft Foods were among the top of my most influential college experiences.

**What message would you give to current and potential members?**

Thank you for your support of CALS students! WALSAA is not only a wonderful organization to support financially but actively participate in as well. If you can volunteer your time and talent, it will not go unnoticed by students, faculty, staff and alumni. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of future leaders from Wisconsin!



## Hermary Gonzales • Wildlife Ecology

Hermary Gonzales of Pearl City, Hawaii, is pursuing a degree in wildlife ecology and a certificate in environmental studies. She is part of the UW's McNair Scholars Program. "I hope to make a difference in my field," she says, "by finding ways to promote the intersectionality between culture and wildlife and to inspire kids who look like me to become part of the future generations of scientists in this field."

Gonzales is cultural chair of the Filipinx American Student Organization, a member of the Association of Filipino

Scientists in America, the Audubon Society, and student chapter of The Wildlife Society. She works as a research assistant in the Peery Wildlife Ecology & Conservation Lab and previously was a summer intern for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service at their Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge. She volunteers at the Fossil Preparation Lab and is a STEM mentor for a school science club in her hometown.

Gonzales appreciates the "intimate environment" of her CALS classes and college saying, "CALS has allowed me to continue appreciating the large campus culture, while also having the smaller community I miss about home."



## Veronica Goveas • Biology

Veronica Goveas is a biology major from Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin, with plans to be a physician-scientist. She is in the CALS Honors Research Program and pursuing certificates in global health and biology core curriculum honors.

Goveas is a CALS Ambassador. She is active in Wisconsin HOSA – Future Health Professionals where she is vice-president of the Postsecondary/Collegiate Division and previously was a state secretary. She volunteers with the local and state program of Distinguished Young

Women (DYW) where she was earlier a state winner and national finalist. She also volunteers in a community health clinic in her hometown. Goveas is a research student at the Wisconsin National Primate Research Center and spent a summer as an undergraduate research fellow for the American Heart Association. She is also involved in the Undergraduate Research Scholars (URS) and Students Understanding Principles of Research Education through Medicine, Engineering and Science (SUPREMES).

What does Goveas love about CALS? "Its unique interdisciplinary environment provides the ability to build community through many student organizations while developing a global view," she replies. "That plus ice cream from the Babcock Dairy Store!"

## *Meet the 2023 Outstanding Sophomore Award recipients!*

Each year, WALSAA names 10 second-year CALS students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as outstanding sophomores. The award focuses on the qualities that truly exemplify an outstanding student, including leadership, service, experience, and academic success. Continue reading to learn more about this year's award winners and why they are truly outstanding.

*Since 1972, WALSAA has been THE alumni association of the UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) and Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC).*

*WALSAA is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that supports the connection of students, faculty and alumni to the UW-Madison College of Agricultural & Life Sciences.*

**Wisconsin Agriculture  
and Life Sciences Alumni  
Association  
P.O. Box 5177  
Madison, WI 53705-5177  
608.438.1994  
admin@walsaa.org**

*Continued on next page*

## 2023 Outstanding Sophomore Award Recipients



### Sophia Green • Animal Science

Sophia Green is a pre-veterinary student from Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, majoring in animal science with honors in research. She was a participant in the 2021 CALS QuickStart program, and now gives back to the university as a CALS Ambassador.

Green is a member of the Association of Women in Agriculture (AWA), where she has served on two committees. She is co-chair of volunteering for the Pre-Veterinary Association and a member of the Badger Dairy Club. Green is a research assistant in the Dr. Heather White Laboratory in the Department of Animal & Dairy Science where she earned a sophomore research fellowship after just a semester in the lab. She furthers her future career aspirations by working as a veterinary assistant at a pet clinic.

Green appreciates the “profound sense of community” she has found within CALS and encourages others to attend CALS “because of its ground-breaking research and one-of-a-kind courses available to students to prepare them for success beyond graduation.”



### Kaela Groppe • Biochemistry and Psychology

Kaela Groppe of Appleton, Wisconsin, is pursuing degrees in biochemistry and psychology, along with certificates in leadership and global health. Her intent is to go to medical school where she hopes to produce positive change as a physician in the communication and relationship between doctors and patients.

Groppe has worked in chemistry and psychology-based laboratories on campus and is looking forward to a study abroad experience. She has gained hands-on, real-world experience in her field by working as a nursing assistant at University Hospital, volunteering at Agrace Hospice Care and belonging to the American Medical Student Association. Groppe is an advising fellow and community group lead for Matriculate.

She has held various jobs at the Target store, as well as being a competitive swimmer, a lifeguard, and manager at a farmers' market.

Groppe says “CALS strives to foster community, humanity and openness; attributes needed in present and future leaders of the world. CALS is the representation of what the world needs more.”



### Kylie Konyn • Dairy Science

Kylie Konyn is a dairy science major from San Diego, California, also working towards certificates in agricultural business management and communications. She hopes to pursue a doctorate in nutrition so she can become a dairy management consultant.

Konyn is a member of the Association of Women in Agriculture (AWA). She is outreach officer for Badger Dairy Club and Selection Chair for its 2023 Badger Invitation Sale, communications officer for the Collegiate Farm Bureau, and a member of the dairy judging team and Chuck Nicholson Dairy Export Research Team. Konyn works as an undergraduate research assistant in the Dr. Heather White Lab and has spent an internship with ABS Global. She is past president of both the California

Junior Holstein and Jersey Associations and continues to be involved in her family's Holstein and Jersey operation.

Konyn is grateful for her CALS experience noting “UW Madison has proved to be a home away from home where I have learned new innovations in the dairy industry and explored segments of the industry I would have otherwise not been able to experience in California.”

*Continued on next page*





### **Siyun Liu • Genetics and Genomics**

Siyun Liu is a genetics and genomics major from Shanghai, China. She is pursuing a second major in mathematics and a certificate in computer science. "As someone passionate about genetics," she says, "I hope to bridge the gap between the world of genetics as an information processing program and a series of chemical reactions."

Motivated to do scientific research, Liu has been working as an undergraduate research assistant in the Han Wang genetics and neurobiology laboratory in the Department of Integrative Biology since January 2022. She received a sophomore research fellowship and undergraduate summer research award for her work in this lab. She maintains a 4.0 GPA while also working as a catering server for the UW's Grainger Hall.

Liu says of CALS: "The opportunity to study with like-minded students and learn from top experts in my field has truly been a highlight of my college experience so far. The dedication and care that the college shows for its students is truly unparalleled."



### **Lindsay Propst • Genetics and Genomics**

Lindsay Propst is from Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, and majoring in genetics and genomics with a certificate in agriculture applied business management. She plans to become a genetic counselor.

Propst is a member of the Association of Women in Agriculture (AWA) and serves on their activities committee. She is on the UW Homecoming Committee and helps to plan events for this special campus week. She also belongs to the Undergraduate Genetics Association (UGA) and Women in Science Education and Research (WISER). Propst has gained hands-on experience as a research assistant in the Ikeda Research Lab where she is already conducting an independent research project. She has also

worked as a 4-H program analyst for UW-Extension and held jobs with the Beaver Dam Area Chamber of Commerce and as a lifeguard. A former 4-H member, she remains active on her family farm.

Propst says, "I have already had a great CALS experience. CALS provides so many different opportunities to not only meet people, but to gain new experiences, skills and perspectives that I can take into my professional life."



### **Julia Prouse • Microbiology**

Julia Prouse is a microbiology major from Beloit, Wisconsin. She hopes to eventually attend the UW veterinary school and work in rural large animal medicine.

After feeling overwhelmed by the size of her classes and the UW campus, Prouse transferred to CALS after talking to a CALS advisor. She is grateful for the support she has received from CALS faculty and advisors and credits them with helping her to find a new passion for molecular ecology after becoming an undergraduate researcher in the Crall Entomology Lab. Prouse is an academic mentor for the UW's Center for Academic Excellence, show chair for the UW's equestrian team, and active in the Make a Wish Foundation and Italian Club. She also works as a horseback riding

instructor, and veterinary assistant at a local animal clinic. She volunteers with several church organizations, a therapeutic horse-riding center, and the Humane Society of Southern Wisconsin.

As Prouse says, "CALS completely changed my experience at the UW. I now can say that I feel I truly belong here."

*Continued on next page*

**2023 Outstanding  
Sophomore Award Recipients**

**walsan** 50  
Creating Connections for 50 Years



### Natalie Roe • Dairy Science and Life Sciences Communication

Natalie Roe of Monticello, Wisconsin, is a double major in dairy science and life sciences communications at the UW. "I hope to combine these majors into communicating with the world's consumers about the nutritious, healthy benefits of dairy products, and bring more awareness to agriculture's eco-footprint, and assure consumers that farmers are stewards of the land," she says.

Roe is sentinel for the Association of Women in Agriculture (AWA), a student recruitment ambassador for the Animal & Dairy Sciences Department, member of the dairy judging team, and involved in Badger Dairy Club and the Collegiate Farm Bureau. She currently is a communications and outreach intern at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection.

Roe has been president of the Wisconsin Brown Swiss Junior Association, vice-chair of the

Wisconsin Agricultural Youth Council, and active in 4-H, FFA, and volunteer work.

Roe is appreciative of the "plentiful" opportunities CALS offers students, like having a personal mentor and participating in programs like the Purina Nutrition Experience, which helps her and others to grow and develop professionally and personally.



### Sophia Schoenfeld • Biology

Sophia Schoenfeld is from Waterford, Wisconsin, and working towards a degree in biology and a certificate in health policy. Her goal is to become a doctor in a rural community.

Schoenfeld participated in CALS's 2021 QuickStart program and today gives back to QuickStart as an undergraduate teaching fellow (UTF). She will be the "Lead UTF" in summer 2023. Schoenfeld was selected an undergraduate research fellow for two research laboratories (Wiltbank and Hernandez) in the Department of Animal & Dairy Sciences where she is now a student lab manager, leads some of her own research projects and shares her research at seminars. She is a chemistry tutor through Greater University Tutoring Services and president of the Campus Cursive student organization. She volunteers as a medical assistant in a clinic and last summer volunteered

her time to update her local high school's healthcare policies.

Schoenfeld is grateful for the involved, passionate faculty at CALS and their willingness to connect students to internships and undergraduate research. As she states, "CALS offers an incredible network of support for students to carve their own paths."

## **Congratulations to all of our 2023 Outstanding Sophomore Award recipients!**

We are proud of all of our 2023 Outstanding Sophomore Award recipients and look forward to what they will accomplish in the years to come. We would also like to thank all of the applicants for this year's award and wish them good luck as they finish school.

*The ability for WALSAA to provide this type of support is at the core of its mission and solidifies its connection to CALS. Starting with donations and continuing with annual silent auctions, WALSAA has been able to generate continued scholarship support over many years to deserving students of CALS. If you are interested in supporting students and advisors, visit [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org).*



# NEW SCHOLARSHIP SPOTLIGHT

## First Sprecher Award Winners Announced



WALSAA is proud to announce the first recipients of the **Nancy J. Sprecher Enhancement Award**. This scholarship award goes to a CALS graduating senior who has shown outstanding leadership and academic excellence and exemplifies the qualities that the late Nancy Sprecher displayed during her career.

Nancy J. Sprecher (*left*) grew up in Wisconsin. She graduated from UW-Madison in 1978

with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Agricultural Journalism. While in school, she was Queen of the Little International Livestock Show and played an active role in campus life. She loved anything with agriculture in its name. She began her career as a market analyst at DeKalb AgResearch and Gene Kroupa Associates, and then joined the Wisconsin Milk Marketing Board, first as Executive Vice-President and rising to Chief Operating Officer. Toward the end of her long career she moved to Minneapolis, MN, and became a director of Women's Food Service Forum, an organization that promotes women in leadership positions in agriculture/food related industries. She was very involved in her community, traveled widely and had a lifelong love of music. She was a kind, giving person and a leader that staff looked up to for her brains, as well as her integrity. Sprecher was successful in a male-dominated field and paved the way for other women to move ahead in those industries. When she died in 2021 at just 64 years of age, her wish was to have a scholarship fund established at CALS that would support the careers of students' post-graduation.



Three CALS graduating seniors have been chosen to receive the Nancy J. Sprecher Enhancement Award in 2023. They are:

**Sarah Almutawa**, an international student from Saudi Arabia, who is graduating from the UW-Madison with a degree in biology and certificates in global health and Honors biology core curriculum (Biocore). On campus, she has

been part of the Biocore peer mentoring team and an undergraduate teaching assistant for the program, as well as an undergraduate researcher in the UW's School of Medicine and Public Health. She served as an international student Reach Ambassador. She has also been active in Badger Volunteers and the Alpha Lambda Rho Muslim-Interest Sorority. Almutawa plans to pursue a PhD in biology and become an academic researcher.



**Mae Hurtado-Thiele** is a genetics and genomics major from Milwaukee, WI, who will also graduate with certificates in French and leadership. She is a Chancellor's Scholar in the Mercile J. Lee Scholarship program. Active in the UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (MIA RIP) for U.S. service members, she recently founded the UW student organization sector of this project. She is a team member and president of the UW Club

Field Hockey team. Hurtado-Thiele's goal is to have a career in science and medicine with hopes of being a doctor or obtaining a PhD.

**Lauren Lansing**, La Crosse, WI, is graduating with degrees in biology and global health and a certificate in leadership. She was part of the Honors in Research program all four years. She is a BioCommons Ambassador and research peer leader for the Wisconsin Institute for Science Education and Community Engagement (WISCIENCE). She has conducted research in Thailand as part of a study abroad program, been a lab research assistant, and had internships in the health field. She is the travel coordinator for the UW Varsity Swim Club. Lansing intends to obtain a Masters degree in Public Health and seek a career in public health program development.



Congratulations to all of the recipients!

# 2023 Senior Impact Award Recipients



## **Robert Hall • Genetics and Genomics and History**

Robert Hall, Juneau, Wisconsin, is graduating with degrees in genetics and genomics and history with Honors from the UW, in addition to certificates in environmental studies and stem cell sciences.

A non-traditional student, Hall has overcome enormous personal challenges to achieve his goals. During his adolescence, Hall faced poverty and instability which later manifested into him being incarcerated as a young adult. "Entering college changed my life. I excelled, published, and spoke at my UW-Waukesha graduation for my Associate of Arts degree in 2017. Then at UW-Madison, I overcame a medically and personally disastrous 2020 which included homelessness," he says. Since re-entering university in the spring of 2021, Hall has thrived earning high marks in his classes, winning awards and scholarships, and visiting his first foreign country. Helping others is always at the forefront of his endeavors. In 2021, Hall founded "Liberated Intellectuals", an initiative to further the education of formerly incarcerated people in Madison and improve their prospects in society. While still in the developmental phase, Hall has worked tirelessly and collaboratively to get this project off the ground. Hall is the only undergraduate representative on the Wisconsin Evolution's Evolutionary Coordinating Committee. He mentors freshmen students in the genetics program and is a research mentoring volunteer for the Wisconsin Institute for Science Education and Community Engagement (WISCIENCE). He has had extensive undergraduate research assistant experience in several campus labs. He has published and presented articles and papers locally and nationally, and attended conferences like the Strategies for Ecology Education, Diversity and Sustainability program (SEEDS). He is part of Nelson Institute's Community Environmental Scholars Program. Awards like the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program Scholarship and others have allowed him to travel for research, conferences, and study abroad programs to Ghana, Costa Rica, and the California Institute of Technology.

Hall plans to earn a PhD to explore evolution, genetics, and conservation, and eventually become a research professor. He remains driven to give back to the community and be an "integrated scholar". He states, "Beyond using education to transform myself, another goal is to help people similarly disadvantaged like me. I will strive to demonstrate the promise of tenacious scientists regardless of their background."



## **Mae Hurtado-Thiele • Genetics and Genomics**

Mae Hurtado-Thiele of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is graduating with a degree in genetics and genomics, along with certificates in French and leadership. The loss of her grandfather while still in grade school has motivated her to pursue a career in science and medicine with hopes of obtaining either a MD or PhD because of her passion for medicine, research and education.

Hurtado-Thiele is a Chancellor's Scholar in the UW Mercile J. Lee Scholarship program and has served as her cohort's volunteer, class and social co-chairs. She has been awarded the UW Genetics & Genomics Distinguished Research Fellowship which funded her research this past academic year and sponsored her travel to the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science – National Diversity in STEM Conference in Puerto Rico. Hurtado-Thiele has received the Hilldale Research Fellowship, Great Minds in STEM Scholarship, and this year is a recipient of the Nancy J. Sprecher Enhancement award. She currently works as an education student employee with the Berbee Walsh Department of Emergency Medicine and previously was a research assistant in the Simcox Laboratory in the Department of Biochemistry. She is a CALS Ambassador and QuickStart representative. Hurtado-Thiele is active in the UW Missing in Action Recovery and Identification Project (MIA RIP) for U.S. service members and this past year founded the UW student organization sector of this project and was promoted to lead student researcher. She is a community troop leader for Girl Scouts Badgerland and volunteers in a multitude of other outreach programs that provide support to underprivileged individuals in the community. She is a member of the UW Club Field Hockey team and as the group's current president plans tournaments, travel and manages the team of 30 players.

Hurtado-Thiele's advice: "Don't forget to check your email for the opportunity of a lifetime with CALS."; citing the many times she discovered events, scholarships and organizations via email that ultimately changed the course of her career. As she points out, "We aren't simply students at CALS. The people who form CALS are with us throughout our entire academic and professional journey, supporting us through each setback and celebrating at every milestone."

*Continued on next page*



### Lauren Lansing • Biology and Global Health

Lauren Lansing is from La Crosse, Wisconsin, and graduating with degrees in biology and global health, with a certificate in leadership. She participated in the Honors Research program all four years and received a Hilddale Fellowship Award in 2022. Lansing plans to pursue a Masters in Public Health, with a concentration in Global Health, to prepare for a career in public health program development.

Lansing is actively involved in the Wisconsin Institute for Science Education and Community Engagement (WISCIENCE) where as a BioCommons Ambassador and research peer leader she has helped fellow students in finding and navigating

research experiences on and off campus. During COVID, she helped the group to convert their workshops, activities, and materials to a virtual platform, and as part of an independent project created a "What is Research?" guide for them. Lansing has volunteered and worked in various research labs on campus. She is currently an undergraduate research assistant in the School of Veterinary Medicine's Jorgensen Lab, a research assistant with the Osteoporosis Research Team at Gundersen Health System, and a general chemistry lab assistant. In the summer of 2022, she interned with the Kennedy Krieger Institute in South Dakota through its Center for Disease Control Undergraduate Public Health Program. "My research contributions to advocate for Medicaid expansion in South Dakota were utilized by local politicians there and the measure was ratified in November," she says. Through a CALS-related study abroad program, she was able to conduct research in Thailand in 2022. She has also interned with Bridges Health, a free clinic in Minnesota serving low-income and undocumented patients. Lansing volunteers with the Food Recovery Network on campus and as a member of the Wisconsin Pre-Medical Society has volunteered at other food banks, the Red Cross, and Ronald McDonald House. She is currently the travel coordinator for the UW Varsity Swim Club.

Lansing is grateful for her CALS education and experiences saying, "My internships informed my career choice of health program management, while my CALS research and global health courses instilled in me an interest in women's and community health inequities." Lansing is also a recipient of the Nancy J. Sprecher Enhancement award this year.



### Kayla Okla • Wildlife Ecology and Environmental Studies

Kayla Okla is a Wildlife Ecology and Environmental Studies major from Hartford, Wisconsin, graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree. Having grown up spending time outdoors...be it camping, hiking, hunting, fishing, kayaking, managing wood duck houses, or catching frogs...nature has always been a part of Okla's life and shaped her into the steward of wildlife and environment that she is today. She plans to seek a career as an interpretive ranger for the National Park Service so she can spread environmental knowledge to America's youth and the public about our protected lands.

Okla is thankful for the amazing opportunities and hands-on learning her CALS coursework provided like tracking squirrels on campus with radio technology for a wildlife class. As she says, "CALS knows how to bring excitement to your learning." She also appreciates the "signature experiences" she has had that has furthered her passion for nature. Okla is a member of the UW student chapter of The Wildlife Society and is currently its vice-president. She has been instrumental in restarting many of the chapter's traditions following the restrictions of COVID-19. Okla is a naturalist with Friends of Pheasant Branch Conservancy where she is involved with environmental education. This past summer, she had a Diversity in Conservation internship with the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin and gained experience working on various projects at Lake Kegonsa State Park with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. She previously was an undergraduate research assistant in the Lindroth Chemical Ecology Lab. As a freshman, Okla was on the UW Women's Openweight Rowing Team and after having to medically retire from competition stayed on for another year as team manager. She has earned numerous scholarships while at the UW including the James W. Hardin Memorial Scholarship through the Wisconsin Chapter of The Wildlife Society.

Okla says, "CALS isn't just a place where I went to class, took notes, and studied for exams. It is where I grew into a young professional, learned valuable skills, engaged beyond the classroom and was able to expand my horizons in the field of natural resources. CALS has given me valuable, lifelong connections that will guide me through my career."

*Continued on next page*

## 2023 Senior Impact Award Recipients





## 2023 Senior Impact Award Recipients



### Aryan Saini • Biology and Global Health

Aryan Saini of Madison, Wisconsin, is graduating from the UW with degrees in biology and global health. He plans to pursue a career in medicine and become a physician, or even surgeon, working with underserved populations to increase healthcare access and health equity. Saini's own difficult personal experience has instilled in him a deep commitment and dedication to care and help others in need. In 2015, he and his family lost their home in the great Nepal earthquake. A tent became their house. In the years that followed he lived in several other countries before relocating to the United States for a high-quality education.

In addition to a strong academic record at the UW, Saini has been very involved in extra-curricular activities that share his desire to strengthen communities and address homelessness. He is very involved in the Habitat for Humanity UW Chapter where he is currently chapter president and serves on the Dane County affiliate board. Last year, he was the build team manager, overseeing the scheduling and execution of the chapter's home building days. He volunteers in a hospital's elder life program and is a tutor and part of the instructional team for a UW math class. In the past, Saini has been a tutor and mentor for the Building Academic Social and Emotional Supports (BASES) program for Madison school children experiencing homelessness in elementary school, and as a mentor at the UW Center for Academic Excellence. He spent a summer internship in a hospital where he researched and presented well-designed healthcare policy changes based on socio-economic effects. Saini currently works as an undergraduate research assistant and as an event manager at the Wisconsin Union. He has previously won the WALSAA Outstanding Sophomore Award and Anna L. Rowe Scholarship, while being on the Dean's list every semester.

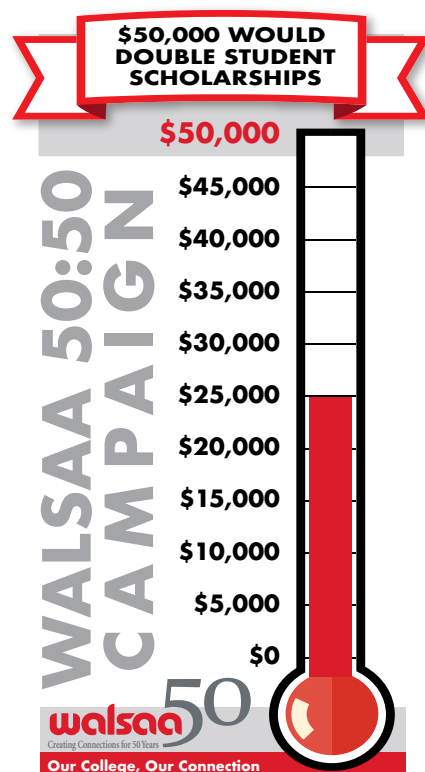
Saini is appreciative of the education, embedded field experiences, practical research, service opportunities and hands-on learning he has gained at CALS. As he says: "CALS provides an exceptional educational experience to students by integrating meaningful community engagement to help them develop their sense of civic responsibility while strengthening communities. Thus, allowing students to live the Wisconsin Idea and fulfill the Wisconsin Experience."

## What's Your Favorite CALS Memory?

Likely not long nights in Steenbock but rather the connections you made ... your lifelong friends and colleagues. During WALSAA's 50th anniversary we set a goal to raise \$50,000 to support CALS students annually through the Outstanding Sophomore Award scholarships, Farm and Industry Short Course awards, Student Organization Impact Grant awards and Senior Impact Awards. It's time to give back to help students. We're halfway to our goal! Will you donate to help WALSAA reach our goal?

**Stay connected to CALS by donating today!**

[www.WALSAA.org/alumni/give-back/donate/](http://www.WALSAA.org/alumni/give-back/donate/)





## WALSAA 50/50 Campaign

*As WALSAA embarks on its next 50 years, we invite you to build on WALSAA's legacy of support for students in UW-Madison's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences by contributing to the WALSAA 50/50 Campaign.*

### About the Campaign

- In connection with WALSAA's 50th Anniversary, WALSAA is launching the **WALSAA 50/50 Campaign** to develop resources for new student scholarship awards.
- Our campaign goal is **\$50,000**—a goal that benefits WALSAA's 50th Anniversary—in contributions or pledges **by August 2023**.
- **50 percent** of all contributions to the 50/50 Campaign will be earmarked to support WALSAA's new Senior Impact Award over the next five years—recognizing undergraduate students who have made outstanding contributions of service and leadership to CALS and the broader UW-Madison community during their time on campus.
- **50 percent** of all contributions will be contributed to WALSAA's Student Scholarship Fund to support long-term student scholarship opportunities.



# COMMITMENT FORM

**walsaa**  
Creating Connections for 50 Years

**Our College,  
Our Connection**

**YOUR CALS CONNECTION FOR LIFE: *Staying Connected, Great Networking, Giving Back***



Your Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Company Name (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Here is what we want to sponsor/donate:**

## 1. WALSAA Football Fire-Up: Watch Party Edition

**Saturday, September 9, 2023**

☐ VARSITY LEVEL: \$1,500

☐ BADGER LEVEL: \$750

☐ RED LEVEL: \$500

☐ WHITE LEVEL: \$250

### SILENT AUCTION ITEM(S)

☐ \$1,000 VALUE AND UP

☐ \$200 TO \$999

☐ \$100 TO 199

## 2. WALSAA Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) Alumni Reunion

**Tuesday, July 18, 2023**

☐ VARSITY LEVEL: \$1,500

☐ BADGER LEVEL: \$750

☐ RED LEVEL: \$500

☐ WHITE LEVEL: \$250

## 3. ANNUAL DONATION Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ RED & WHITE: \$50 TO \$124

☐ HENRY MALL: \$125 TO 249

☐ BABCOCK HALL: \$250 TO \$499

☐ AG HALL: \$500 TO \$999

☐ WALSAA SOCIETY: \$1,000+

## I want to pay this way:

☐ Please send invoice now

☐ Please send invoice 30 days prior to event

☐ Online payment: [www.WALSAA.org/alumni/give-back/donate/](http://www.WALSAA.org/alumni/give-back/donate/)

☐ Check enclosed (payable to WALSAA)

**Instructions:** Please return to [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org) or send with payment to: WALSAA, PO Box 5177, Madison, WI 53705-5177.

*If you have any questions, contact Stephanie Hammerly at 608.438.1994.*



# WALSAA SUMMER PICNIC & FISC REUNION

## 2023 TICKET ORDER FORM

Tuesday, July 18, 2023 at 4 p.m. ♦ WI Farm Technology Days ♦ S3347 Sand Rd., Baraboo, WI

Online registration available at: [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org)



The University of Wisconsin-Madison's College of Agricultural and Life Sciences (CALS) and Farm and Industry Short Course (FISC) alumni and friends are invited to the annual WALSAA summer picnic during Wisconsin Farm Technology Days. It will be held onsite in a tent near the food vendors **Tuesday, July 18 from 4 to 7 p.m.** at Badger Steam & Gas Engine Club's grounds, S3347 Sand Rd., Baraboo, Wisconsin. Join us to catch up with old friends and network with new friends. The 2023 WALSAA Farm and Industry Short Course Reunion will be held in conjunction with the picnic. A short program for the FISC Reunion will begin at 5:30 p.m. with more details shared about upcoming FISC programs at UW-Madison and UW-River Falls. New in 2023! We will kick-off the WALSAA Football Fire-Up Silent Auction at the picnic to raise scholarship funds for students. This year's Varsity sponsors include American Foods Group and Compeer Financial. Daluge Travel is a Red sponsor for this year's reunion. Register online at **[www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org)**, or you can mail in this form. Register by July 10 for \$15. Registrations will also be accepted the day of the event for \$20. For more information, contact WALSAA at [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org) or 608.438.1994.

### VARSITY SPONSORS:



### RED SPONSOR:



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State & Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Names for name tags: \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Special Recognition for 25 and 50-Year FISC Alumni\***

**Make checks payable to: WALSAA**

**Mail registration and payment to:**

**WALSAA, PO Box 5177, Madison, WI 53705**

**Register by July 10 - Walk-ins are also welcome**

*After that date, tickets will be available online and at the event for an additional \$5/each.*

Number of reservation(s) at \$15 per person until July 10 _____	\$ _____
Additional 100% tax deductible donation to WALSAA _____	\$ _____
Total Cost _____	\$ _____



Your CALS Connection For Life

P.O. Box 5177, Madison, WI 53705-5177



### Follow WALSAA on social media at:



[www.facebook.com/WALSAAUW](http://www.facebook.com/WALSAAUW)



[www.twitter.com/WALSAA](http://www.twitter.com/WALSAA)



[www.linkedin.com/company/WALSAA](http://www.linkedin.com/company/WALSAA)



[www.instagram.com/WALSAAUW](http://www.instagram.com/WALSAAUW)

[www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org)

## STAY UP-TO-DATE!

Have you not yet received the digital version of the WALSAA Connection e-newsletter? Scan the QR code and share your email with us to opt-in to the e-newsletter or sign-up at [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org).



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**July 18 ♦ WALSAA Summer Picnic/FISC Reunion**  
WI Farm Technology Days, Baraboo

**Sept. 9 ♦ WALSAA Football Fire-Up**  
Watch Party Edition at J. Henry & Sons

## RED JACKET AWARD NOMINATIONS

WALSAA is seeking nominations for the 2022 WALSAA Daluge Red Jacket Award. The Red Jacket Award was established in 2016 in recognition of lifetime service to WALSAA. It is named after two of WALSAA's most dedicated alumni, Rick and Peggy Daluge. A red jacket will be presented to someone who has helped WALSAA grow each year in their honor. Nomination form available at [www.WALSAA.org](http://www.WALSAA.org). Please send your nominations to WALSAA, PO Box 5177, Madison, WI 53705-5177, or email to [admin@walsaa.org](mailto:admin@walsaa.org) by July 15.