

# MSA STUDENT AND POSTDOC SECTION



*Cantharellus cibarius*. Photo by Mira Polishook  
Want to see your photo here? [Submit one!](#)

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SEPTEMBER 2025  
NEWSLETTER

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# General Announcements

Follow us on social media to keep up to date!!!



**@msastudentsection**



**@MSASTUDENTS.BSKY.SOCIAL**



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**DISCORD**



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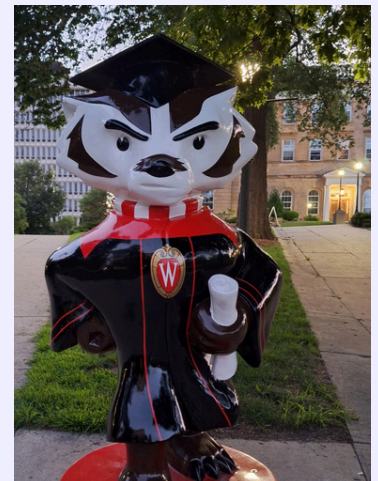
# MSA Annual Meeting Recap

Hello all!

This year's meeting was the largest in MSA's history, and it was incredible to see so many of you come out to Madison to present your hard work.

A huge thanks to everyone who attended the SPS hosted events: the student lunch, SPS social, and *Mycologists & Musings*. They were all a blast thanks to you!!! We appreciate your research, energy, and great conversations. We're looking forward to making next year in Portland even better!

-MSA SPS Executive Board



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# MSA DEI

## 2026 NOMINATIONS



SELF AND PEER NOMINATIONS  
ENCOURAGED

PLEASE FOLLOW AND FILL OUT  
[THIS LINK](#) BY NOV 1, 2025 TO BE  
CONSIDERED  
REVIEW AND VOTING  
PROCESSES WILL TAKE PLACE  
EARLY 2026







A 100-Year Fund for the Future of Mycology

## What is the Sclerotia Project?

The Sclerotia Project is a philanthropic initiative created by students and early-career mycologists to build a long-term endowment for the Mycological Society of America (MSA). Like a fungal sclerotium that endures through time, this fund is designed to grow steadily for 100 years and support future generations of mycologists.

## How It Works

- Launching with an initial ~\$5,000 raised by students, mycologists, and supporters.
- Funds are invested through the MSA endowment system, ensuring stability and transparency.
- Funds go to support student and postdoc opportunities in mycology starting 100 years from now.

Visit: <https://sclerotiaproject.org/>

# Student Spotlight:

## The 2025-2026 Executive Board

This year we're hoping to make the Student Spotlight section of our newsletter a bit more approachable. We know you've done fantastic work in mycology, but we know you're busy! So we'll be trying out shorter spotlights for the meantime. Let us know what you think!

For this edition, we're highlighting the Student and Postdocs Section board, their research, and some insight into why fungi was the choice for them.



### President: Diana Vargas-Hernandez

PhD. Candidate  
North Dakota State University

I'm an enthusiastic learner of the mycology world. I'm especially interested in plant-fungi interactions and science communication. Currently, I'm working on the identification of potential synergistic effects of fungal endophytes against the coffee pathogen *Mycena citricolor*. Being part of the executive board

has given me the chance to connect with peers across different areas of mycology and expand my network, much like growing mycelium.



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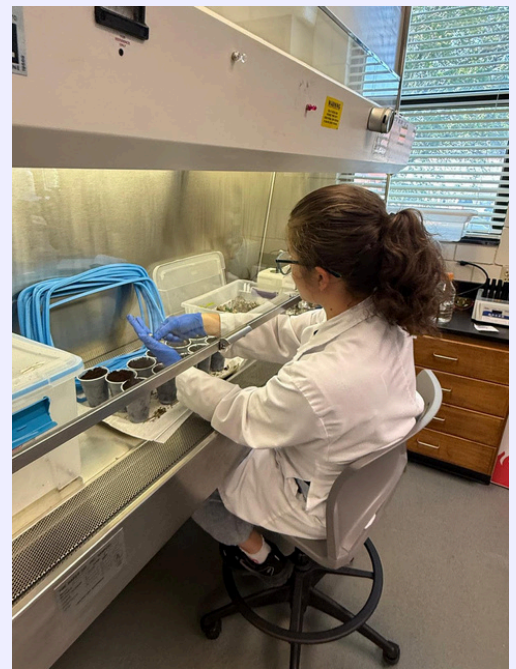


## What got you into mycology?

I got into fungi thanks to my undergraduate experience as research assistant in the Biotechnology Research Center (CIB) in Costa Rica. That experience opened my mind about the potential that fungi have in agriculture and plant health.

## Being in the cold state of North Dakota, do you face any challenges working with a coffee pathogen?

Yes, definitely, a lot of challenges! From the very beginning, it's been tough, starting with obtaining the fungal isolates and then trying to grow and keep coffee plants alive in conditions so different from their natural habitat. It has been a difficult journey at times, but also one full of learning and growth along the way.



## Vice President: Isabelle (Bella) Stiver

PhD Student  
Oregon State University

I'm studying fungal endophyte-pathogen interactions within *Dactylis* grass across its native and introduced ranges of Switzerland and the U.S. I have specific research interests related to fungal pathogens and microbial community assembly, but I'm fascinated by all fungal

ecology and evolution, so MSA is a great fit for me! I am thrilled to serve as Vice Chair and utilize my experience on the MSA SPS Executive Board. I love cultivating community and professional opportunities and I hope to do this in MSA SPS, so we can all thrive as people and professionals.



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## What got you into mycology?

I'm interested in studying fungi, because they are incredibly impactful pathogens in plants, animals, and humans that have huge health and conservation impacts. I am also fascinated by the mystery around their functions as endophytes, and their effect on ecosystem processes.

## This past MSA we saw unique sorts of trivia, are there any new genres that you're planning on next year?

I'm super excited to work on trivia again this year! I'm currently in the brainstorming stage, so nothing is guaranteed, but I'm thinking about a PNW-themed round and maybe doing a connections round again. That said, come prepared for anything ;)



## Secretary: Alex Lando

PhD Student  
Cornell University

My current PhD project is on determining the evolutionary trajectory and infection processes of the Entomophthorales ("Insect Destroyers") using comparative genomics. Having been to two MSA meetings thus far, I can't shut up about how much I adore this community and can't wait to participate in it even more on the SPS board!

## What got you into mycology?

What drew me to fungi was honestly a bit of an "offbeat person likes offbeat subject" situation. I loved how central fungi are to our ecosystems, health, history, and even diet. There are so many exciting foundational questions we get to answer!



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## What is an entomopathogenic fungus that you feel is underrepresented or gets a bad rap?

In all honesty I think all entomopathogenic fungi get a bad rap. They're such a dynamic group, and have countless avenues of application to agriculture, pathogenicity, infection, evolution, gene regulation, and others! The Last of Us and other similar media have brought them some attention and excitement, but more often make people wary of the group without learning about what makes them so amazing.



## Treasurer: Nandin Ganjooloo

PhD Student

University of Minnesota

My studies focus on building gene editing tools for the model brown rot species *Gloeophyllum trabeum* to understand the fundamental science behind brown rot degradation of plant biomass and engineer our strain for novel biotechnological applications. As

there are few academic mycology programs and students, it is important to build community around this shared interest.

## What got you into mycology?

My undergraduate research revolved around enzymes from bacteria and yeasts. There, my love for fungi grew as a personal interest: trying at-home-grow kits, taking pictures, documentaries, and crocheting mushroom hats :) It was when I started applying for graduate school that I realized that I could pivot to working with something I felt more passionately about!



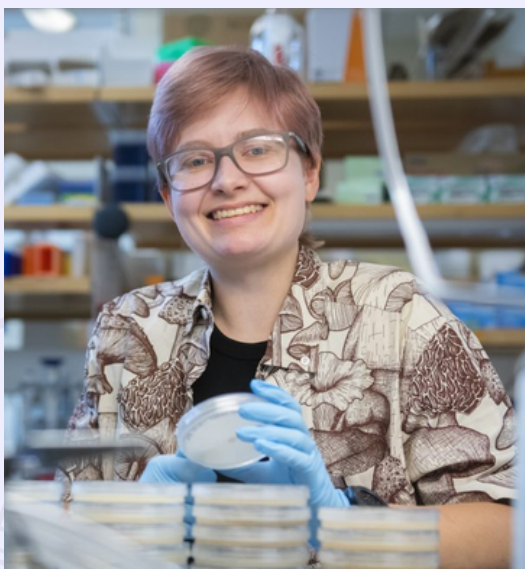
## What surprised you most about your first MSA meeting?

I was surprised at how diverse and spread out the MSA network was! Meeting people with all kinds of research interests and expertise was very inspiring. At the same time, there are few people working in my niche. So it felt rewarding to bring my own perspective to the table as well.



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## Merchandise Chair: Lauren Parry

PhD Student  
Clark University

I study the opportunistic mammalian pathogen, *Basidiobolus*. My research focuses on mechanisms of antifungal response and secondary metabolism within those interactions. When I'm not in the lab, I love backpacking, video games, and crochet.

### What got you into mycology?

My interest in fungi started in childhood where I found them to be mysterious, popping up in lawns overnight and consistently growing on tree stumps. When I started my undergraduate degree I knew my goal was to become a biologist, so I decided to pursue that fascination with fungi.



### Is there any new MSA SPS swag you're hoping to get to us soon?

Last year the tote bags were very popular so I am hoping to expand the design options available! I am also planning to have more art prints designed by our MSA members available at the 2026 conference in Portland, OR.

## Communications and Social Media Chair: Clancy Larmour

Master's Student  
North Carolina State University

I study nutrient dynamics (namely potassium) of Loblolly pine and their symbiosis with ectomycorrhizal fungi in the southeastern U.S. I'm president of the NC State mycology club and I have a YouTube channel where I talk fungus!



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## What got you into mycology?



I tried to grow morels for a high school project over the course of a single semester (you can guess how that went!) I looked into other mycorrhizal fungi, then cultivated ones, and on and on. I've found fungi to be an endless enigma, and I'm here to understand them better!

## Do you have any hobbies outside of fungi or mycology?

**No.**

(Cooking, making my silly YouTube videos, camping, and games with friends!)



## Webmaster: Kim Correll Syring

PhD Candidate  
Oregon State University

I currently study the functional genomics and cell biology of *Basidiobolus*. I am particularly interested in discovering how environmental factors influence functional expression, and how this ultimately impacts the ecology and evolution of fungi.

## What got you into mycology?

My first introduction was a medical microbiology course studying human pathogenic fungi. I then worked in the brewing industry for a few years, focusing on yeast fermentation and identifying wild species. My love for fungi has overlapped many disciplines, and I feel so lucky to continue in fungal research!



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What is your favorite thing about working with *Basidiobolus*?

I really enjoy all the wildly different phenotypes that it has. I love microscopy, so getting to observe and photograph all of the amazing structures and spore types it produces is endlessly fun for me.



Postdoc Representative:  
Eduardo Perez-Pazos

Postdoc  
Oregon State University

I am broadly interested in fungal ecology, but currently I work with foliar yeast and bacteria associated with *Populus trichocarpa*. I've been a proud member of MSA since 2019, and during that time, the society has always felt like a welcoming and inspiring community.

What got you into mycology?

My interest in fungi began during my undergraduate studies at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. There, I was introduced to mycology by Professor Margarita Villegas-Ríos. I was immediately captivated by the diverse shapes of sporocarps, and soon after, by the complexity of their life cycles, the variety of their reproductive strategies, and especially their essential ecological roles across nearly every environment on Earth.



What advice do you have for students in MSA?

I would say... spend enough time consolidating a research question that you are passionate about. You will spend countless hours working on your research, but if you really enjoy what you do, it will make everything easier and fun.



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# Bonus Spotlight: MSA Awardees

We also want to extend a congratulations to the various presenters who won best presentation at the meeting!

## **Graduate Student Presentation Award**

Nicolas Pereira

## **Undergraduate Presentation Award**

Carter Peterson

## **John Taylor Graduate Research Awardee**

Eli Cytrynbaum

## **Graduate Student Poster Award**

Amanda Wilson

## **Undergraduate Poster Award**

Sean O’Gorman

## **Meredith Blackwell Graduate Research Awardee**

Aishwarya Veerabahu

# We want to hear from you!!!

Did you just accomplish something cool? Was it big? Was it not so big but you’re still proud of it? Well we want you to boast! Let us know about your accomplishments for a chance for them to be featured in the next spotlight!



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**Coming soon!**

**Prizes for winners!**

MSA Student & Postdoc Section Presents:

# Pacific Northwest Mycology Art Contest

Get your art featured on  
SPS merchandise for the  
2026 conference in  
Portland, OR

More info to follow in  
October, check your email  
& Instagram for updates!

From rugged coastlines to temperate rainforests, the Pacific Northwest is known for its extensive fungal diversity. Find creative ways to incorporate aspects of mycology that remind you of this region, appreciation for the beautiful landscapes, and (maybe) Bigfoot too!

Categories:

1. Full color Pacific Northwest (PNW) – future poster & postcard designs
2. <4 color PNW – future tote bag & t-shirt designs
3. Full color mini open mycology- future sticker designs



# Resources

Mycological Society of America

[MSA membership portal and renewal](#)

[MSA awards](#)

Student and Postdoc Section

[Student spotlight signup form](#)

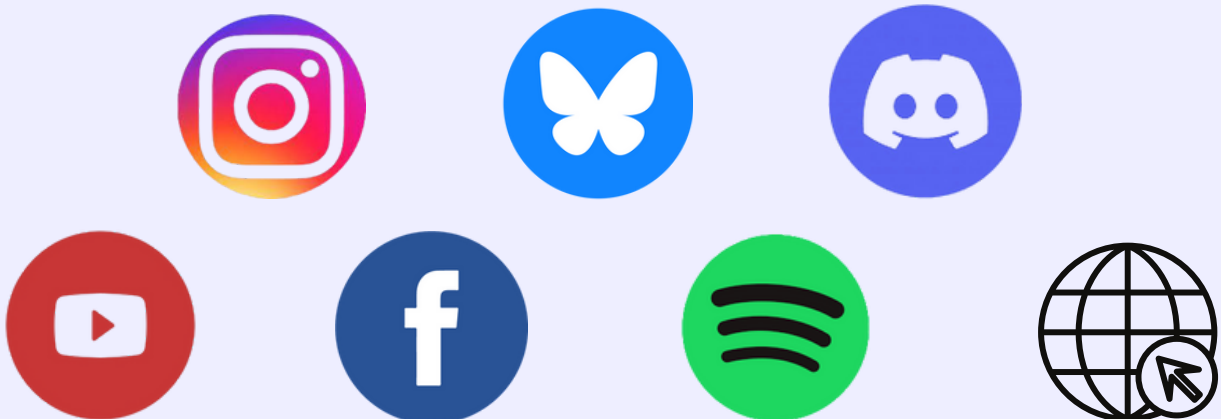
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MSA SPS Social Media



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