

# IAFP 2025 OPENING SESSION

**SUNDAY  
JULY 27<sup>TH</sup>**

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# OPENING SESSION

## WELCOME TO IAFP 2025

Mark W. Carter, IAFP President

## PRESENTATION OF AFFILIATE CHARTERS

Mark W. Carter, IAFP President

## IAFP FOUNDATION

Gary Acuff, Foundation Chairperson

## PEANUT PROUD STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

*Presented by: Darlene Cowart, Peanut Proud  
Emil Joson*

## TRAVEL AWARDS

*Presented by Mark W. Carter, IAFP President,  
and Gary Acuff, Foundation Chairperson*

## STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIPS

Kingsley Emmanuel Bentum  
Sitara Cullinan  
Victoria A. Felton  
Shuyi Feng  
Ellen Gabriel  
Bless Hodasi  
YeonJin Jung  
Ziqi Liu  
Daniel Tichy Navarro  
Elias Oyesigye  
Dhananjai Muringattu Prabhakaran  
Amber Richards  
Yi Wang  
Katherine Woo  
Li Xiao  
Tongzhou Xu  
Zhiyuan "Zane" Xu  
Caroline Yates  
Yuzhen Zhang  
Carlos Zelaya

## HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA

Emily Feldpausch  
Jeff Jackson  
Kelly E. Kline

## FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY

Amina Badmos  
Kolawole Banwo  
Rowaida Khalil

## FELLOW AWARD

*Presented by: Mark W. Carter, IAFP President, and  
Manpreet Singh, IAFP President-Elect*  
Yuhuan Chen

## IVAN PARKIN LECTURE

Introduction: Manpreet Singh, IAFP President-Elect  
Alejandro Mazzotta  
*Less is More: Ditching Distractions  
and Focusing on Value*

## CLOSING COMMENTS

Mark W. Carter, IAFP President

## CHEESE AND WINE RECEPTION

7:30 p.m. – 9:30 p.m., Exhibit Hall

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*Cheese provided by*



# IVAN PARKIN LECTURE



## ALEJANDRO MAZZOTTA

**SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF QUALITY,  
FOOD SAFETY & REGULATORY AFFAIRS**

**Chobani | New York, New York**

Dr. Alejandro Mazzotta is Senior Vice President of Global Quality, Food Safety and Regulatory Affairs for Chobani, LLC in New York, New York. Before joining Chobani, Dr. Mazzotta held positions in Food Safety, Quality, and Microbiology at Campbell Soup Company, McDonald's Corporation, Pillsbury/General Mills, and The National Food Processors Association.

Prior to his career in the food industry, Dr. Mazzotta was appointed as Scientific Investigator by the Argentine Antarctic Scientific Institute where he served for four years, two of which were based in the Antarctic Peninsula conducting research on the ecology of Antarctic fish under a national fisheries program.

Dr. Mazzotta joined IAFP in 1999. In 2013, he was elected to serve on the IAFP Executive Board for a five-year term of successive positions, assuming the presidency in 2016. He served on the *Journal of Food Protection (JFP)* Management Committee from 2000 to 2002 and the *JFP* Editorial Board from 2001 to 2003. He is a member of several IAFP Professional Development Groups (PDGs) and served on IAFP's Program Committee from 2006 to 2011. In addition, he has served on numerous IAFP Award Selection Committees.

From 2004 to 2009, Dr. Mazzotta was appointed to the National Advisory Committee on Microbiological Criteria for Foods (NACMCF). He served on the Editorial Board of Applied and Environmental Microbiology from the American Society for Microbiology. He currently serves on both the Center for Food Safety at the University of Georgia (CFS) and the bioMérieux Industry Advisory Boards. Dr. Mazzotta is a Professional Member of the Institute of Food Technologists. He has published more than 25 publications in peer-reviewed scientific journals in both English and Spanish and has spoken at numerous international meetings and symposia.

Dr. Mazzotta participates in the Cornell Food Science Advisory Council and was appointed as Adjunct Professor at Cornell University's Department of Food Science. A native of Argentina, he earned his B.S. and M.S. in Biological Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires and his Ph.D. in Food Science from Rutgers University.

# IVAN PARKIN LECTURE ABSTRACT

## Less is More: Ditching Distractions and Focusing on Value

In the fast-evolving world of food production, maintaining the highest standards of food safety is not just a necessity but a responsibility that directly impacts public health and consumer trust. Established in May 2000, the Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) aimed to harmonize food safety standards globally. Similarly, the signing of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) into law in January 2011 represented a significant shift towards prevention-focused regulatory frameworks in the United States. Yet, more than a decade later, the effectiveness of these measures warrants critical examination.

Despite an increase in the number of audits and addendums conducted at food processing plants, the rate of foodborne outbreaks and recalls has not seen a proportional decline. This paradox raises crucial questions: Has the FSMA truly modernized food safety regulatory requirements, or has it primarily added layers of complexity to an already burdensome system? Likewise, have GFSI schemes alleviated the audit burden, or have they merely expanded the paperwork requirements at the operational level?

Drawing from years of hands-on experience in the food production industry, this presentation delves into these pressing issues. It reflects on the critical need to streamline processes and eliminate non-value-adding activities, particularly in the realms of external audits and regulatory compliance. By shifting focus away from exhaustive audit procedures that contribute little to actual food safety outcomes and redirecting resources towards proactive hazard control, organizations can enhance their food safety management systems significantly.

Data underscores the need for such a transformative approach. In 2022 alone, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported approximately 48 million cases of foodborne illnesses in the United States, leading to 128,000 hospitalizations and 3,000 deaths. Furthermore, the economic cost of foodborne illnesses is estimated to exceed \$15 billion annually. These figures highlight the urgent need for a paradigm shift in how the industry addresses food safety challenges.

This presentation will explore practical strategies and best practices for optimizing food safety efforts. Join us to uncover actionable insights that bridge the gap between regulatory requirements and operational excellence in food safety management.

# FELLOW AWARD



**YUHUAN CHEN**

Falls Church, Virginia

Dr. Yuhuan Chen is a recipient of the 2025 IAFP Fellow Award. Dr. Chen is an Interdisciplinary Scientist in the Human Foods Program at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Falls Church, Virginia, where she leads and coordinates multidisciplinary risk assessments to inform policy decisions. She brings risk modeling expertise and industry experience to help bridge risk assessment application to food safety management. In particular, she has led the development of a Risk-Ranking Model for Food Tracing in support of the Food Traceability Rule and the FDA-iRISK® tool, making rapid risk assessment more feasible and accessible to the food protection community, as well as the integration of molecular subtyping and enumeration baseline data to quantify risk from *L. monocytogenes* to inform risk-based preventive controls.

Before joining the FDA, Dr. Chen was Director of Science Policy at the Grocery Manufacturers Association, where she coordinated industry task forces, resulting in guidance such as "Control of *Salmonella* in Low-Moisture Foods." As an active member of IAFP for more than 20 years, Dr. Chen has volunteered on many IAFP committees and co-organized and presented dozens of symposia, roundtables, and workshops. She currently serves on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Food Protection* and other journals. She is a past chair of the IAFP Modelling and Risk Analysis PDG and the Technical Committee of the U.S. Interagency Risk Assessment Consortium.

A graduate of Peking University, Dr. Chen received her M.S. in Nutrition from Eastern Illinois University and her Ph.D. in Food Microbiology from Rutgers University.

# TRAVEL AWARD FOR A FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY



## **AMINA BADMOS**

*Federal University of Agriculture  
Abeokuta, Nigeria*

Dr. Amina Badmos is a recipient of the 2025 Travel Award. Dr. Badmos is a passionate Food and Industrial Microbiologist and Lecturer at the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria. Her work focuses on ensuring food safety and security, biological control of antimicrobial-resistant microbes, drug discovery, and mycotoxin mitigation, particularly in the context of climate change.

Dr. Badmos has extensive experience in quality control, food safety regulations, and monitoring and evaluation. Her research includes innovative projects like assessing the quality of locally produced pharmaceutical syrups and antifungal creams, and investigating the antifungal efficacy of biosynthesised selenium nanoparticles from clove extract on mycotoxigenic fungi in staple cereals. She continuously seeks to advance scientific knowledge and practical solutions for global food challenges. Her goal is to contribute meaningfully to food safety, public health, and sustainable development through impactful research and leadership.

Dr. Badmos holds a bachelor's degree in Microbiology from Olabisi Onabanjo University, and a master's degree and Ph.D. in Food and Industrial Microbiology, both from the Federal University of Agriculture. She was funded by the Nigerian government through TETFund in 2022 for an eight-month postdoctoral research in Ghent University in its Mycotoxicological Laboratory, where she worked on the biocontrol potential of some fungi in the mitigation of mycotoxins in staple cereals in Nigeria.



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# TRAVEL AWARD FOR A FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY



**KOLAWOLE BANWO**

*University of Ibadan*

Oyo State, Nigeria

Dr. Kolawole Banwo is a Senior Lecturer and Food Safety Researcher in the Food Microbiology and Biotechnology Unit of the Department of Microbiology at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Dr. Banwo mentors young academics in the area of food safety and quality assurance in his Department and University. He is a Visiting Scientist at the Aflasafe and Pathology Unit of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Ibadan, Nigeria, where he works on the joint exploration of detoxification of various food toxicants in African traditional foods. His current area of research focuses on the detoxification of mycotoxins and metabolite profiles in traditional fermented foods in Nigeria utilizing probiotics; rapid detection of food adulteration using near-infrared spectroscopy; and the antimicrobial resistance profile of foodborne microorganisms, exploring the One Health Approach.

Dr. Banwo joined IAFP in 2018 and received the Travel Award for a Food Safety Professional in a Country with a Developing Economy in 2020. He was awarded a Travel Grant from the Society for Applied Microbiology (now Applied Microbiology International) in the United Kingdom in 2018 and 2022. He won a Travel Award Grant and Best Poster Award at the Copenhagen Bioscience Conference: Microbial Foods 2022, issued by the Novo Nordisk Foundation Initiative in Denmark. He was on a brief collaborative research visit in 2019 to the Department of Plant Sciences, North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota. Dr. Banwo is a member of several professional organizations.



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# TRAVEL AWARD FOR A FOOD SAFETY PROFESSIONAL IN A COUNTRY WITH A DEVELOPING ECONOMY



## **ROWAIDA KHALIL**

*Alexandria University*

Alexandria, Egypt

Dr. Rowaida Khalil is a Full Professor of Food Microbiology in the Department of Botany and Microbiology, Faculty of Science, Alexandria University in Egypt. Dr. Khalil received her B.Sc. in Microbiology and her Ph.D. in Dairy Microbiology through a channel program between Alexandria University and the University of Georgia in Athens. She was a Fulbright scholar and a postdoc researcher at the Food Science and Technology Department at UGA in 2008–2010 and worked among a team studying the behavior of *E. coli* O157:H7 in leafy greens.

Dr. Khalil has spent her career in improving food safety standards, finding solutions to extend shelf life and safety profile of various food products. From 2012 to 2020, she led four research projects funded by governmental/international bodies that made an impact on development of rapid methods of foodborne pathogen detection and application of non-thermal techniques in food safety.

Dr. Khalil has supervised several M.Sc. and Ph.D. students seeking a degree in Food Microbiology/Technology in her department, and has received distinguished awards from Alexandria University for excellence of her extensive publication record in peer-reviewed top five Q1-journals.

Dr. Khalil is proud to represent Alexandria University in various local/international conferences including IAFP 2025. Her current team's interest focuses on the valorization of agro-industrial wastes to develop novel sustainable active/smart biodegradable food packaging materials and coatings.



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# TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA



## EMILY FELDPAUSCH

*Michigan Department of Agriculture*  
East Lansing, Michigan

Ms. Emily Feldpausch is a recipient of the 2025 Travel Award. Ms. Feldpausch is a microbiologist with the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) Food Microbiology Laboratory in East Lansing, Michigan. The MDARD Food Microbiology Laboratory provides regulatory testing for ready-to-eat foods, produce, dairy, environmental, and animal feed samples for the state of Michigan. During her career at MDARD, Ms. Feldpausch has assisted with FDA Lab Flexible Funding Model testing and project requirements, FERN laboratory surveillance testing with partners at the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Rapid Response Team sampling projects, and outbreak investigation testing for pathogens such as *Salmonella*, *Listeria monocytogenes*, and Shiga Toxin-producing *E. coli*.

Outside of the laboratory, Ms. Feldpausch is a member of MDARD's Partners Enhancing Emergency Response (PEER) workgroup, bringing the opportunity to present on laboratory testing methods at annual training meetings and at Integrated Food Safety Centers of Excellence Epi-Ready training courses for new MDARD field inspectors and local health department staff. Ms. Feldpausch has also completed All Hazards Incident Command System training for several Incident Management Team positions and was able to assist as Planning Section Chief during MDARD's response to the spring 2024 Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza outbreak.

Throughout her career, Ms. Feldpausch has been involved in multiple outbreak events and exercises and is very passionate about the process from the laboratory through to the response effort, seeing the benefit of emergency response training for food safety professionals. She earned a B.S. in Microbiology and an M.S. in Food Safety from Michigan State University.



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# TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA



## **JEFF JACKSON**

*Arkansas Department of Health*  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Mr. Jeff Jackson is a 2025 Travel Award recipient. Mr. Jackson began his career with the Arkansas Department of Health in Little Rock in 2006 as an Environmental Health Specialist, and accepted positions as the Northeast Region Retail Food Program Specialist and the statewide standardization and quality assurance officer before being named the Retail Food Program Section Chief in December of 2024.

In addition to his day-to-day duties at the Arkansas Department of Health, Mr. Jackson frequently participates in food safety outreach on both the state and national level. In 2023, he collaborated with the University of Arkansas Extension Service and the National Agricultural Law Center to obtain a USDA Specialty Block Grant to develop and deliver statewide just-in-time training to home-based food producers on the legal and food safety concerns associated with home-based food businesses.

Mr. Jackson is an active participant in the Conference for Food Protection, serving as a voting member on the Food Safety Management System Committee and the Food Protection Manager Certification Committee and member of Council III. Additionally, he collaborated with the Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) to create and deliver an industry-focused training aimed at increasing Active Managerial Control of foodborne illness risk factors under the Retail Food Safety Regulatory Association Collaborative.

A Registered Sanitarian, Mr. Jackson earned a B.S.E. with an emphasis in Biology Education from Arkansas State University in 2005 and obtained a Post Baccalaureate Certificate in Public Health from the University of Arkansas for Medical Science – Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health in 2013.



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# TRAVEL AWARD FOR HEALTH OR AGRICULTURAL DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES IN NORTH AMERICA



## **KELLY E. KLINE**

*Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture*  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Ms. Kelly E. Kline is a recipient of the 2025 Travel Award. Ms. Kline currently serves as the Rapid Response Team Food Safety Program Specialist at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture in Harrisburg, where she plays a critical role in safeguarding public health during human food and animal feed emergencies, including outbreaks, contaminations, and product recalls. She leads efforts to coordinate swift and effective responses by fostering strong partnerships within a diverse, multi-agency coalition. This includes collaboration with professionals at the federal, state, and local levels. She also provides subject matter expertise in food safety, emergency preparedness, and incident management. She has worked in this role since June 2022.

Ms. Kline's areas of interest include outbreak response, especially the intersection between epidemiology and environmental health; food defense; the role of emerging pathogens, such as highly pathogenic avian influenza, within human food and animal feed emergencies; and the integration of chemical hazards into public health response.

Prior to her current role, Ms. Kline worked for seven years as an epidemiologist at the Pennsylvania Department of Health. She began her public health career in 2015 as a CDC/CSTE Applied Epidemiology Fellow in the Bureau of Epidemiology, where she supported multiple infectious disease programs. From 2017 to 2022, she served as the Enteric Disease Coordinator, overseeing investigations into enteric disease outbreaks and leading a team dedicated to protecting community health through timely surveillance and response.

Ms. Kline earned her MPH in the Epidemiology of Microbial Diseases from the Yale School of Public Health.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**KINGSLEY EMMANUEL BENTUM**

*Tuskegee University*

Tuskegee, Alabama

Dr. Kingsley Emmanuel Bentum is a veterinarian and a doctoral student at Tuskegee University under the tutelage of Drs. Woubit Abebe and Temesgen Samuel. Dr. Bentum obtained his DVM from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Kumasi, Ghana, in 2018, where his graduating research focused on determining the prevalence of *Toxoplasma gondii* in small ruminants.

Dr. Bentum's current research is on improving *Salmonella* detection through traditional culture and test kit development; investigating the epidemiology of *Salmonella* among cow-calf farms in Alabama; and the dynamics of the intestinal microbiota in cattle infected with *Salmonella*. In his work, he adopts an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on his expertise in molecular microbiology, bioinformatics, data analysis, and pathogen genomics. Food safety, regardless of the pathogen involved, is a passionate subject to him. It has often informed and influenced his research, which has extended to investigating other food pathogens such as *Campylobacter* spp., *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Coxiella burnetii*, and *Staphylococcus aureus* and even the potential inter-species transmission of viruses among humans and food animals.

Dr. Bentum is an IAFP Student Member and has had the opportunity to present his research at meetings organized by the Association. He is honored to receive the Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to enhancing his knowledge in food safety as he connects with fellow experts in the field.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**SITARA CULLINAN**

*University of Georgia*  
Athens, Georgia

Sitara Cullinan is a doctoral candidate and dietetic intern in the Department of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Georgia in Athens. Ms. Cullinan completed her undergraduate education in human nutrition and dietetics at The University of Texas in Austin before transitioning to food safety microbiology for her graduate work under the mentorship of Dr. Carla L. Schwan.

Ms. Cullinan's dissertation research focuses on characterizing the social and structural aspects of the neighborhood food environment for communities across Athens-Clarke County, Georgia. This mixed methods project incorporates human subjects research, microbial genomics, and traditional culture-based microbiology methods, and aims to characterize if differential exposure to microbial hazard on food available in the neighborhood retail food environment exists between communities of distinct socioeconomic and demographic profiles; if such differences do exist between communities in Athens, what factors or interactions between factors may be contributing to such differences; and the antimicrobial resistance profiles of isolates collected during the sampling period of the project.

Ms. Cullinan is honored to have been awarded one of the IAFP Student Travel Scholarships and looks forward to learning from and connecting with fellow students, researchers, and food safety professionals at this year's meeting.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## **VICTORIA A. FELTON**

*Old Dominion University*  
Norfolk, Virginia

Victoria A. Felton is an undergraduate student in the College of Sciences at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia. Ms. Felton is pursuing a degree in biomedical sciences with a concentration in pre-health and is an undergraduate researcher in Dr. Rishi Drolia's Cellular and Molecular Microbiology Laboratory.

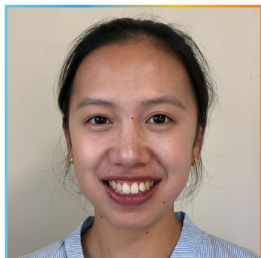
Ms. Felton's current research focuses on comparing food and clinically isolated *Listeria monocytogenes* isolates and their ability to traverse the blood-brain barrier. Through this project, she will discover the virulence factors responsible for this effective translocation and allow for better prevention of zoonotic transmission of this bacterium through food products. She also works with *Cronobacter sakazakii* and its ability to form biofilms under dry environments in a collaboration with a team at Purdue University. Her third project is a collaboration with Kansas State University, concerning the visualization of dual-species formation of *Listeria monocytogenes* and *Pseudomonas fluorescens*. These research projects provide key insight into creating more targeted interventions for reducing food safety risks. After graduation, she plans to continue similar research through an M.D./Ph.D. program.

Ms. Felton is ecstatic to have been awarded the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to the opportunity to present her research among global experts and network with peers as she enhances her knowledge of food safety.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## SHUYI FENG

*University of Maryland, College Park*  
College Park, Maryland

Shuyi Feng is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Nutrition and Food Science at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the mentorship of Dr. Abani K. Pradhan. Ms. Feng earned her undergraduate degree in Food Science from Zhejiang Gongshang University in China.

Ms. Feng's current research focuses on leveraging machine learning and bioinformatics to improve seafood safety associated with *Vibrio* spp. Specifically, she has developed machine learning models to predict the concentration of *Vibrio* spp. in oysters and seawater samples based on environmental conditions, supporting risk assessment of *Vibrio* spp. in the context of a changing climate. In addition, she has identified potential risk factors related to *Vibrio* spp. using comparative genomics along with machine learning, which could aid in developing novel control strategies across the seafood supply chain. She is currently exploring the optimal genomics workflow as machine learning input to enhance the accuracy of *Vibrio* spp. source attribution. Her work holds significant promise for advancing seafood safety and promoting public health in the era of big data.

Ms. Feng is extremely grateful and honored to be awarded the 2025 IAFP Student Travel Scholarship. She is excited to attend IAFP 2025 to present her research, learn about cutting-edge developments in the field, and network with food safety experts worldwide.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**ELLEN GABRIEL**

*Virginia Tech*

Blacksburg, Virginia

Ellen Gabriel is a dedicated and driven Food Science & Technology M.Sc. student working as a graduate research assistant at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia, under the guidance of Dr. Laura Strawn.

Ms. Gabriel graduated in May of 2024 from the University of Maryland, College Park, where she received her B.Sc. in Biological Sciences. Her strong interest in microbiology led her to the First-Year Innovation and Research Experience (FIRE) Program in the Host-Pathogen Interactions Lab where she worked as an undergraduate research assistant investigating the role of metabolic *E. coli* genes using lytic bacteriophage.

This experience led Ms. Gabriel to develop a proclivity for food microbiology, which she fostered as an ORISE Intern at the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Maryland in the Environmental, Microbial, and Food Safety Laboratory under Dr. Manan Sharma. She is grateful for the experience she gained assisting with projects, including evaluating the survival and transfer of *E. coli* 0157:H7 and *Salmonella* to romaine lettuce in soil side-dressed with biological soil amendments, as well as using digital PCR technology to detect *Listeria monocytogenes* and antibiotic resistance genes in agricultural irrigation water.

Ms. Gabriel's research at Virginia Tech explores control strategies for *Salmonella* in pre- and post-harvest systems. She is currently working on a project seeking to identify the minimum inhibitory concentration of commercial copper pesticides *Salmonella*, as well as characterizing the die-off of *Salmonella* over time in pesticide-mixing scenarios.

Ms. Gabriel is very excited to attend her first IAFP Annual Meeting and is honored to have received a 2025 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to using this opportunity to enrich her knowledge, connect with professionals in the field of food safety, and share her passion for food safety through presenting her research.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## **BLESS HODASI**

*University of Ghana*

Accra, Ghana

Bless Hodasi is a distinguished MPhil candidate in Molecular Cell Biology of Infectious Diseases (MGBI) at the West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens (WACCBIP) at the University of Ghana (UG), situated in the Greater Accra Region. Mr. Hodasi received his undergraduate degree in Biochemistry, Cell and Molecular Biology, also earned at the University of Ghana. During his undergraduate research, he meticulously employed molecular methodologies to assess the prevalence and diversity of probiotics, specifically lactic acid bacteria, within the gastrointestinal tract (GIT) of animal models.

Mr. Hodasi's master's research focused on probiotic lactic acid bacteria (LAB) associated with fermented millet-based milk beverages (*Brukina*<sup>™</sup>) and the impact on the gut microbiome. He is currently engaged in investigating the safety of *Brukina* and Molecular Characterization of Antimicrobial Resistance Genes in Isolated Lactic Acid Bacteria from *Brukina*.

As a committed researcher, Mr. Hodasi has extensive expertise in microbiology and food safety research, with a particular emphasis on investigating safe microorganisms (probiotics) associated with food and their impact on the gut microbiome. His research interests encompass the safety of fermented foods, host-pathogenic/probiotic interactions, prebiotics, synbiotics, postbiotics, and antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

Mr. Hodasi aspires to integrate innovative interventions, such as probiotics, into the food industry to enhance safety and sustainability. His exceptional diligence and academic excellence have earned him three prestigious awards from scientific and industrial organizations during his master's research, including Nestlé's second-best graduate research award in the College of Basic and Applied Sciences (CBAS); a competitive travel grant from the International Scientific Association for Probiotics and Prebiotics (ISAPP) to present his research findings at the ISAPP Conference in Cork, Ireland; and the second runner-up award for poster presentation at the 2024 WACCBIP Conference and 10th Anniversary Celebration.

Mr. Hodasi is eager to pursue Ph.D. opportunities in food science, food safety, microbiology, or related disciplines, which will enable him to conduct extensive and relevant scientific research.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**YEONJIN JUNG**

*Cornell University*  
Ithaca, New York

YeonJin Jung is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Food Science at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, under the advisement of Dr. Martin Wiedmann. After receiving her B.S. in Food Science with minors in data science and nutrition at Cornell University, Ms. Jung decided to conduct research where she can contribute to food safety with her multidisciplinary background.

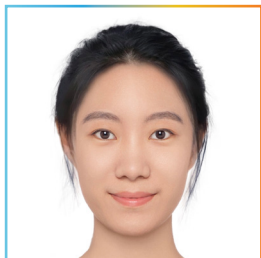
Ms. Jung's research primarily focuses on leveraging modeling tools that can assess food safety practices to improve food safety and quality. She has developed an Agent-Based Model that simulates the transmission of *Listeria* in a retail store, which can be used to optimize environmental sampling plans and suggest *Listeria* control strategies in retail environments. She also developed a machine learning model that predicts fluid milk spoilage types to help with quick spoilage diagnostic testing and reduce the need to rely on expert interpretation. Additionally, she conducted a review of recent microbial risk assessments to evaluate model parameters used in risk assessments of leafy greens contaminated by *L. monocytogenes* to identify data gaps and suggest where additional parameters are needed. Ms. Jung is passionate about bridging the gap between academia and industry by providing data-driven solutions to reduce foodborne risks and support the decision-making process for food safety professionals.

Ms. Jung is extremely honored to receive the Student Travel Scholarship to attend IAFP 2025. She has found presenting at past Annual Meetings highly rewarding and is excited to learn about the most recent and advanced research topics and connect with like-minded professionals who are dedicated to improving food safety and quality.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**ZIQI LIU**

*Zhejiang University*

Hangzhou, China

Ziqi Liu is a Ph.D. candidate in the College of Biosystems Engineering and Food Science at Zhejiang University, Hangzhou, China, under the co-supervision of Dr. Tian Ding and Dr. Jinsong Feng. Ms. Liu obtained her master's degree in Food Science and Engineering from South China University of Technology.

Ms. Liu has been dedicated to studying food microbiology throughout her academic journey. She enrolled at Zhejiang University in 2022, and her current research focuses on the risk control of *Salmonella* by uncovering its survival mechanisms from a microecological perspective. Notably, her work reveals that even dead bacterial cells contribute significantly to biofilm formation and stress resistance. Through cell lysis, these dead bacteria release substances that “glue” the aggregation of surrounding bacteria to form a multi-cellular structure, which enhance the survival and potentially mediate the spread of *Salmonella* under stress.

Ms. Liu has also addressed practical challenges in incomplete sterilization along dairy snack food production lines. By developing and optimizing microwave sterilization parameters targeting common foodborne pathogens, her work has significantly improved the prevention and control of microbial contamination during dairy product processing. Her findings offer new insights for food safety management, particularly in controlling *Salmonella* throughout food processing and storage.

Ms. Liu is honored to receive the IAFP Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to learning about the latest research advances and building connections with professionals in the food safety field as she explores future career opportunities.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## ELIAS OYESIGYE

*Cranfield University*

Wharley End, United Kingdom

Elias Oyesigye recently and successfully defended his Ph.D. in Agri-Food Systems and the Environment at Cranfield University in Wharley End, United Kingdom, under the supervision of Prof. Angel Medina and Dr. Carla Cervini. Dr. Oyesigye's doctoral research focused on the occurrence of mycotoxins and the diversity of *Aspergillus* section *Flavi* along the cassava value chain in Uganda. He developed an innovative, farmer-centered strategy that reduces aflatoxin contamination during cassava storage – an effort that bridges science with practical, community-based interventions.

Dr. Oyesigye's current research integrates laboratory diagnostics, socio-economic analysis, risk modelling, and innovative methods to reduce mycotoxin contamination to acceptable level within food products.

Dr. Oyesigye is passionate about applied mycology, food safety, and designing climate-informed, post-harvest solutions to mitigate mycotoxin risks in staple crops. He is deeply committed to collaborative, cross-cultural research that enhances food security and public health across sub-Saharan Africa.

With more than a decade of experience in agricultural development, Dr. Oyesigye has held various technical and leadership roles, including with Bioversity International, the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture, and currently as a lecturer at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (MUST) in Uganda. His expertise spans food safety, climate resilience, and value chain development.

Before embarking on his Ph.D. journey, Dr. Oyesigye earned an M.S. in Crop Protection from Eduardo Mondlane University in Mozambique, where he specialized in plant pathology, learned Portuguese, and engaged in multidisciplinary research collaborations with plant breeders and pathologists. He also holds a B.S. in Agricultural Sciences from Makerere University, Uganda.

Dr. Oyesigye is honored to be among this year's Student Travel Scholarship recipients and sees this award as a valuable opportunity to disseminate his findings, engage with global experts, and learn from cutting-edge food safety innovations. Attending IAFP 2025 will not only allow him to build strong international networks but also strengthen his capacity to translate research into impactful, context-specific solutions for improving food safety systems in Africa.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**DHANANJAI MURINGATTU  
PRABHAKARAN**

*University of Minnesota*  
Saint Paul, Minnesota

Dhananjai Muringattu Prabhakaran is a Ph.D. student mentored by Dr. Anup Kollanoor Johny in the Department of Animal Science at the University of Minnesota in Saint Paul. Mr. Prabhakaran is a veterinary medicine graduate from India, and completed his M.S. in Animal Science from the University of Minnesota, before continuing with his Ph.D.

For his M.S. project, Mr. Prabhakaran investigated the antibacterial effect of probiotic *Propionibacterium* against drug-resistant *Salmonella* Infantis *in vitro* and the effect of antibiotic alternatives on the cecal microbiome of turkeys challenged with drug-resistant *Salmonella* Heidelberg. His current research focuses on the pre-harvest mitigation of foodborne *Salmonella* Infantis in broilers using antibiotic alternatives and studying the host-microbe interactions in the ceca by metagenomic sequencing analysis to understand how antibiotic alternatives modulate the microbiome of pathogen-challenged poultry. He is also interested in investigating how antibiotic alternatives influence the host immune response to *Salmonella* through transcriptomic analysis.

Mr. Prabhakaran is an active member of IAFP and IAFP's Student PDG and is honored to receive this year's IAFP Student Travel Scholarship. He is presenting his research at IAFP 2025 and is looking forward to meeting with experts and scientists in the field of food safety to receive valuable insights and feedback and learn how to contribute and better serve the global food sector.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## AMBER RICHARDS

*University of Georgia*  
Athens, Georgia

Amber Richards is a second-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Population Health at the University of Georgia in Athens, under the direction of Dr. Nikki Shariat. Ms. Richards received her B.S. in Microbiology and Biology, as well as an MPH with a concentration in epidemiology at the University of Georgia.

During her MPH, Ms. Richards investigated the distribution of *Salmonella* serovar Kentucky subtypes in humans and food animals and demonstrated differential pathogenic capabilities of different subtypes using a macrophage model. She also interned at USDA-FSIS where she investigated reduction of serovar complexity during broiler chilling. Ms. Richards' current research primarily focuses on assessing *Salmonella* serovar dynamics through broiler processing to evaluate the efficacy of antimicrobial use in commercial poultry processing facilities across multiple states. The underlying goal of this research is to support improved processing controls and enhanced food safety by identifying serovar-specific trends.

In these projects and other work, Ms. Richards has learned the importance of food safety and developed a passion to promote public health. As such, she is eager to pursue a career in mitigating foodborne illness. She has had the opportunity to work collaboratively with multiple industry partners as well as with USDA-ARS scientists, which has allowed her to explore different career paths.

Ms. Richards is honored to receive the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to sharing her research, networking with other passionate food safety professionals, and learning about the latest scientific developments in food safety at IAFP 2025.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## DANIEL TICHY NAVARRO

*Universidad Andrés Bello*

Santiago, Chile

Daniel Tichy Navarro is a Bioinformatics Scientist and Ph.D. student in Bioinformatics and Systems Biology at the Universidad Andrés Bello in Santiago, Chile, where he integrates microbiology, genomics, and machine learning to address food safety challenges and combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR). Holding both an M.S. and B.S. in Biotechnology, he specializes in high-throughput sequencing (Illumina/Nanopore) and the development and application of computational tools for pathogen surveillance.

Mr. Tichy Navarro's doctoral research focuses on tracking the global spread of AMR genes in foodborne pathogens such as *Escherichia coli* and *Salmonella enterica*, with a particular emphasis on the dissemination of megaplasmids through Transformer-based models like DNABERT. As a Research Assistant at Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, under the guidance of Dr. Andrea Moreno Switt, he investigates local outbreaks of *Listeria* and *Salmonella* while collaborating with other groups to explore the therapeutic potential of understudied phageomes in Chilean patients.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Tichy Navarro joined Phage Lab as an intern when it was still a small startup. He later transitioned into a full-time role as a Bioinformatics Scientist, where he spent six years driving key innovations and contributing to the company's rapid growth. He played a central role in laying the foundation for what is now the Bioinformatics Department within the R&D team. Mr. Tichy Navarro's contributions include co-authoring peer-reviewed publications and developing patented bacteriophage-based formulations for food safety and therapeutic applications – demonstrating his ability to bridge computational analysis with practical laboratory validation and deliver real-world impact.

A skilled Python programmer and advocate for open science through Git and Jupyter, Mr. Tichy Navarro excels in collaborative, interdisciplinary environments. Driven by a passion for innovation, he is eager to return to industry or work with national agencies to influence policy against AMR and advance new therapeutic strategies.

Honored with the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship, Mr. Tichy Navarro looks forward to networking with global experts at IAFP 2025 and forging impactful collaborations.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**YI WANG**

*University of Connecticut*  
Storrs, Connecticut

Yi Wang is a Ph.D. candidate in Nutritional Sciences at the University of Connecticut in Storrs, under the supervision of Dr. Yangchao Luo. Ms. Wang earned her Bachelor of Engineering in Food Science and Engineering from Nanjing Agricultural University in China before continuing her doctoral studies at UConn.

Ms. Wang initially focused her Ph.D. research on food packaging and food waste valorization before transitioning to food microbiology. Her current research focuses on developing biosensors for the detection and identification of pathogenic bacteria in milk and biofilms on food processing surfaces. She integrates machine learning techniques to enhance bacterial pattern recognition, simplifying the detection process while maintaining high accuracy. Her work has the potential to serve as an alternative to PCR-based methods for multiplex bacterial identification.

In addition to biosensor development, Ms. Wang investigates biofilm characterization using advanced technologies such as rheology, atomic force microscopy, and confocal microscopy. Her research not only informs the design of antifouling materials but also provides valuable insights into biofilm mitigation strategies.

Ms. Wang is actively engaged in IAFP's Student PDG and regularly participates in webinars to interact with experts in the field. She is honored to receive the 2025 Student Travel Award and looks forward to networking with professionals from academia, government, and industry to further her career in food safety.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## KATHERINE WOO

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*  
Amherst, Massachusetts

Katherine Woo is a second-year master's degree student in the Department of Food Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Amherst under the guidance of Dr. Matthew Moore. Ms. Woo earned her B.S. in Food Science and Technology from Seoul Women's University in South Korea.

Ms. Woo's research focuses on improving the detection of human norovirus, one of the leading causes of foodborne illness worldwide, by concentrating virus particles using bacteria. This approach utilizes the natural interaction between viruses and bacteria to enhance detection sensitivity, particularly in food and environmental samples where virus concentrations are typically low. Her work reflects the interdisciplinary nature of food microbiology, incorporating elements of virology, microbiome research, and public health. It also represents her broader commitment to developing practical tools that can help prevent viral foodborne outbreaks before they occur.

Ms. Woo is honored to receive the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship. Since joining IAFP, she has been eager to engage with the food safety community, present her research, and expand her professional network. She looks forward to sharing her work at the Annual Meeting and learning from fellow researchers who are dedicated to advancing food safety. Her passion for preventing foodborne illness drives her ongoing efforts to bridge scientific discovery and practical application through innovative, real-world solutions.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



**LI XIAO**

*McGill University*

Montreal, Canada

Li Xiao is a Ph.D. candidate in Food Science at McGill University in Montreal, Canada, under the supervision of Dr. Xiaonan Lu. Prior to joining McGill, Ms. Xiao earned both her bachelor's degree and master's degree in Food Science at Southwest University in China.

Ms. Xiao's research focuses on developing rapid detection methods for food hazards and spoilage to enhance food quality and safety using advanced techniques (i.e., vibrational spectroscopy, nanotechnology, machine learning). In her previous work, she successfully developed bacterial cellulose-based sensors for rapid detection of thiram – a commonly used pesticide – in fruits, using surface-enhanced Raman spectroscopy (SERS). She is currently working on developing dual-function gas sensors that combine colorimetric detection and SERS for the rapid assessment of meat spoilage. These innovative sensors are able to exhibit visible color changes and produce distinct Raman spectra when exposed to gas markers released from spoiled meat. The ultimate goal is to commercialize these dual-function gas sensors for use in retail food stores or wholesale markets, providing a practical solution for rapid meat spoilage detection.

Ms. Xiao is honored to receive the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship. She looks forward to engaging with food safety professionals from both academia and industry, and to further deepening her knowledge in this field.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## TONGZHOU XU

*University of Georgia*  
Griffin, Georgia

Tongzhou Xu is a Ph.D. candidate at the Center for Food Safety at the University of Georgia in Griffin, under the supervision of Dr. Xiangyu Deng. Mr. Xu received his B.S. in Food Science and Engineering from Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China.

Mr. Xu's doctoral research focuses on improving the microbial safety of fresh produce, with an emphasis on *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 contamination in romaine lettuce. His work uses a microbiome-centered approach to understand how microbiome on leafy greens influence the survival of foodborne pathogens. He also collaborates with other researchers to visualize microbial interactions at the single-cell level using advanced microscopy, aiming to uncover sustainable strategies for mitigating pathogen risks in agricultural environments.

Mr. Xu also developed *Mashpit*, an offline, ultra-fast genome query platform designed to enhance pathogen surveillance. By compressing the multi-terabyte NCBI pathogen database into a lightweight tool, *Mashpit* enables efficient genome comparisons without the need to share sensitive data. This innovation addresses privacy concerns for food industry stakeholders and supports rapid decision-making in public health and food safety.

Mr. Xu is an active member of IAFP, ASM, and AOAC INTERNATIONAL, where he serves on the Committee on Membership to promote student engagement in the food safety community.

Mr. Xu is honored to receive the IAFP Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to sharing his research, connecting with peers and professionals, and contributing to discussions on food safety innovation at this year's Annual Meeting.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## ZHIYUAN “ZANE” XU

*Virginia Tech*

Blacksburg, Virginia

Zhiyuan “Zane” Xu is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Food Science and Technology at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg under the mentorship of Dr. Haibo Huang and Dr. Monica Ponder. He earned his B.S. in Food Science with a minor in chemistry from Virginia Tech.

Mr. Xu's research is primarily focused on the development of active food packaging material development. His work specifically involves designing photocatalytic antibacterial packaging that inactivates bacteria under visible light. The results have been promising, with the developed materials effectively inactivating drug-resistant *Salmonella enterica* and *Staphylococcus aureus* on both fresh produce surfaces and food contact areas. In addition to his food packaging project, he also participated in other interdisciplinary research such as wastewater treatment using single atom catalysts, emulsifier performance assessment, and biosensor development.

Besides his passion and commitment in food science research, Mr. Xu is actively engaged in the Virginia Tech community. He served as a Graduate Residential Fellow in an undergraduate student dorm, promoting communication among students from diverse academic backgrounds. In his free time, he also works with the Virginia Tech Natural History Collection Club to hold educational tours of the university's natural history collections.

Mr. Xu is deeply honored to receive the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship, which offers him the opportunity to attend IAFP 2025 and experience the city of Cleveland. He looks forward to presenting his research, broadening his professional network, and engaging with fellow scientists and industry professionals who share a common commitment to advancing food safety.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## **CAROLINE YATES**

*Cornell University*  
Ithaca, New York

Caroline Yates is a Ph.D. student in the Food Safety Laboratory at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, under the mentorship of Dr. Martin Wiedmann. Ms. Yates earned her B.S. in Biology from the College of William & Mary before obtaining her master's degree in Food Science and Technology from Virginia Tech.

Ms. Yates' research evaluates the use of a multipronged training approach to assist small and medium-sized dairy processors in developing the skills to build and sustain their own *Listeria* environmental monitoring programs. Her goal is to provide support for small dairy processors and enable them to design and implement environmental monitoring programs in their facilities. Ms. Yates is also active in her role with the New York Food Safety Center of Excellence. She has developed a workshop on environmental sampling during outbreak investigations and enjoys working on projects to support public health efforts.

Ms. Yates is excited and honored to receive a Student Travel Scholarship to attend IAFP 2025. She looks forward to learning and engaging with food safety experts to continue to build her skills to face current and future food safety challenges.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## YUZHEN ZHANG

*University of Massachusetts Amherst*  
Amherst, Massachusetts

Yuzhen Zhang is a Ph.D. candidate in Food Science at the University of Massachusetts Amherst in Amherst, supported by the prestigious Tan Family Fellowship. Since joining the lab of Professor Lili He in 2022, Ms. Zhang has combined academic excellence with visionary research leadership to develop next-generation food safety technologies.

Ms. Zhang's doctoral research focuses on a smartphone-based bacterial detection tool – a rapid, reliable, and cost-effective solution designed to revolutionize hygiene monitoring on food-contact surfaces. This groundbreaking technology has achieved proof-of-concept validation, secured a U.S. patent, and attracted interest from five early adopters in the food industry in the United States. Bridging research and real-world application, she participated in the NSF-funded New England I-Corps program, conducted 54 customer discovery interviews, and secured more than \$100,000 in funding through the I-Corps Innovation Fund and NSF Translational Seed Award.

Beyond the lab, Ms. Zhang manages the Raman, IR, and XRF Core Facility at UMass Amherst, leading collaborations with more than 15 leading companies to address critical challenges in food packaging safety, food adulteration, and pathogen detection. She is also a dedicated mentor, having guided more than 10 undergraduate students in research and skill development in food science and analytical chemistry.

Ms. Zhang's work has received widespread recognition, including multiple scholarships and fellowships both within and beyond the university. She is the winner of several innovation competitions, and was a finalist at the Western Massachusetts Health Tech Challenge and Massachusetts Life Sciences Innovation Day. She has presented her research at leading conferences including IAFP, NEIFT, and the Pioneer Valley Microbiology Symposium, and has authored multiple peer-reviewed publications.

Ms. Zhang is honored to receive the 2025 Student Travel Scholarship and looks forward to connecting with global food safety experts, gathering feedback to enhance her technology, and gaining inspiration for the future of food safety innovation.



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# STUDENT TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP



## CARLOS ZELAYA

*Universidad Andrés Bello*  
Santiago, Chile

Carlos Zelaya is a third-year Ph.D. candidate in Bioinformatics at the Universidad Andrés Bello in Santiago, Chile, under the supervision of Dr. Aiko Adell. Mr. Zelaya serves as a research assistant for Dr. Adell in a state-funded project aimed at developing low-cost water filtration systems for small-scale agricultural producers in Chile's fifth Region. His contributions to this project included water quality assessments, the design and testing of filter prototypes, and their field implementation – efforts that have helped mitigate the presence of antimicrobial-resistant bacteria in irrigation water.

Mr. Zelaya's current doctoral research focuses on the phylogenetic relationships and antimicrobial resistance profiles of *Enterobacterales* isolated from surface waters used for agricultural irrigation, as well as from clinical settings involving hospitalized patients in Chile. The goal is to uncover potential links between environmental and clinical strains and to evaluate environmental risk factors – such as pH, conductivity, and salinity – that may influence the occurrence of critically resistant *E. coli*, *Klebsiella* spp., and *Enterobacter* spp. in river systems. To strengthen these insights, he is applying machine learning models to detect predictive patterns and better understand the dynamics of antimicrobial-resistance transmission from a One Health perspective.

Mr. Zelaya is deeply honored to receive a Student Travel Scholarship to attend IAFP 2025. He looks forward to engaging with researchers from academia, industry, and government, and to learning about the latest advancements in food safety research.



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# PEANUT PROUD STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP



**EMIL JOSON**

University of Georgia  
Athens, Georgia



Sponsored by Peanut Proud

*The Peanut Proud Student Scholarship Award provides a \$2,000 academic scholarship and travel funding for a U.S. student in the field of food microbiology – specifically in the area of peanuts and peanut butter food safety – to attend the Annual Meeting. Peanut Proud is a nonprofit industry organization based in Georgia.*

Emil Joson is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Georgia in Athens, under the direction of Dr. Jake Fountain. Mr. Joson earned a B.S. in Biology and an M.S. in Microbiology from the University of the Philippines, during which time he interned at the Philippine Genome Center.

Mr. Joson's current research primarily revolves around aflatoxin, one of the most carcinogenic natural substances known, and the fungus that produces it: *Aspergillus flavus*. Given that the pathogen thrives in crops high in oil, the Georgia peanut is especially vulnerable to aflatoxin contamination. Mr. Joson's research program aims to tackle aflatoxin contamination through two main angles: by deepening our understanding of the causative pathogen and by exploring novel biotechnological tools. Working closely with local industry collaborators, Mr. Joson's work includes his lab's 1000 *A. flavus* Genome Initiative – a large-scale genome resequencing effort where *A. flavus* is isolated from all over Georgia's peanut-producing environments for population genetics, comparative genomic analyses, and genome-wide association studies. The project aims to further understand populations of *A. flavus* present; provide a better understanding of the genetic regulation involved in aflatoxin production; and ultimately highlight geospatial patterns that can be utilized to recommend better aflatoxin management strategies to growers.

On the biotechnology side, Mr. Joson is investigating the use of RNA interference (RNAi), a natural form of post-transcriptional gene silencing, to inhibit aflatoxin production. Antagonistic RNA produced by genetically modified (GM) host plants have been shown to inhibit *A. flavus* from producing aflatoxin. However, the lack of GM peanuts in the market requires an alternative solution. Therefore, Mr. Joson is taking advantage of RNAi by working on a spray-based alternative where nanoparticle-encapsulated antagonistic RNA can be externally applied to achieve the same results.

Mr. Joson's work allows him to connect and collaborate with the Georgia peanut community through local and international peanut meetings, including the Georgia Peanut Tour.

Outside of research, Mr. Joson serves as the Vice President for the Society of Aspiring Plant Pathologists and is involved in his local community of Griffin, Georgia, where he volunteers for local school system activities and with Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Joson is honored to receive the Peanut Proud Student Scholarship and take part in IAFP 2025, and would like to emphasize his commitment toward working against mycotoxins.

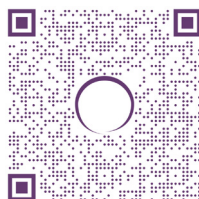


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