



# WIU AGGIES

Western Illinois University School of Agriculture

## WIU Alumna Teaching Pre-Vet Sciences Courses, Conducting Surgeries on Campus

When Dr. Ashley Whiteside was an agriculture student at Western Illinois University, she dreamed of becoming a veterinarian.

Now that the 2015 WIU graduate has completed her education, she is passing her love for veterinary medicine to WIU students as an instructor in pre-vet sciences courses. In addition to working full time as a veterinarian, she teaches two classroom days and one lab day per week.

"My goal for the course was to expose students to veterinary medicine as a veterinarian, veterinary technician, veterinary assistant, as well as let them know about career options allowing them to work in/around vet med without being a veterinarian," Whiteside said. "I wanted them to have exposure to the profession by asking them to complete 10 shadow hours. Most students completed 30-plus hours voluntarily. The majority of students hung out with me while I was still in private practice, and a few others shadowed their hometown clinics."

The class covers several topics, including an introduction to equine medicine, small and large animal medicine, pharmacology, legal issues, diagnostic options and physical exams.

Some of the classes moved students outside the classroom to perform physical exams on dogs and horses.

"We had several case review days where I put together patient cases I personally have dealt with, and guided them through the thought process of a case when an animal is sick from how the animal presents to physical exam findings to what diagnostics to choose to interpreting diagnostic," Whiteside said. "The students have really come out of their shells this semester and really engage in conversation and discussing the cases."

For another class session, Whiteside took students to a robotic dairy near Carthage, IL, to gain exposure to dairy cattle and dairy medicine.

This fall, a second course has been added to the School of Agriculture curriculum to focus on developing clinical skills such as blood draws, suture patterns, surgery tools and techniques, and performing various diagnostic procedures on a variety of species.



"The students will have a skills competency list to complete by the end of the semester," Whiteside said. "It will be very hands on and lab based vs. classroom lecture."

In addition to teaching on campus this semester, Whiteside and a colleague performed abdominal surgeries on two heifers who live on campus. Through the surgeries, Whiteside, along with Dr. Emily Conrad-Gibb placed persistent rumen cannulas.

WIU students were invited to watch the surgeries, and Whiteside estimated that over the 2.5 hours of surgery, about 30-40 students came to watch.

"We did the surgeries in the bull-test chute/facility," Whiteside said. "Incisions were made into the abdomens of the heifers under epidurals with mild sedation on board to place these permanent cannulas. The cannula is a closed seal directly into the rumen of the cow allowing us to perform various research projects on the heifers going forward. As the rumen is the largest "stomach" of the cow we will gain significant insight to the animals and their nutrition etc. during various stages of their life such as young vs. old or pregnant vs. non-pregnant."

Whiteside said she and Conrad-Gibb stopped several times during the surgeries and explained visible anatomical structures, and why/how they did what they did.

One of the students in Whiteside's class, and who observed the surgery is senior agriculture science major Caitlyn Welton, who said the course has allowed her to find a place where she belongs.

"I have found like-minded people with the same passion," she said. "To find a teacher and mentor like Dr. Whiteside has been one in a million. I could never thank her enough for all she has done for me, and taught me. She allowed us to come in and watch her do a surgery, which was an amazing opportunity. It refueled my passion for vet medicine, and taught me so many things along the way. This course has been a God send. It really reminded me what I'm here for and, what I want do with my life. I'm so excited to take her next course."



## **WIU School of Ag Legacy Sale Continues Setting Records**

The 10th annual Legacy Sale by Western Illinois University's School of Agriculture once again set a new fundraising record, bringing in \$131,000 with last week's event.

The record proceeds from the one-day sale exceed last year's total by \$38,000.

The Legacy Sale is organized by the School of Agriculture's Livestock Merchandising Class and the WIU Livestock Judging Team. Money brought in by the sale helps pay for travel expenses for the University's Livestock Judging Team and improvements at the University Farm.

The sale's lead student, Ashtin Guyer, a senior agriculture business major, of Flat Rock, IL, called this year's sale "one for the books."

"To be a part of this record breaking sale was one of the most challenging, yet rewarding things that I have had the privilege to be a part of," said Guyer. "I would also like to send a huge thanks to Dr. Mark Hoge, as the sale would not be possible without him and his commitment to his students, as well as the Ag Department, and SC Online Sales for their continued support year after year. Their team is one of the best in the business and we are thankful for their support in our program"

This year's sale featured 215 lots, which included custom WIU wooden bars, travel opportunities, and frozen genetics.



# WIU Agricultural Educators Continue to Inspire Future Agricultural Leaders

The Illinois State FFA Convention was held in Springfield, IL, June 13-16, and, once the last gavel dropped, Western Illinois University's Agricultural Educators recorded numerous achievements that highlight leadership activities among their students.

Sydney Riden, a 2021 agriculture education graduate and agriculture teacher at Rushville-Industry High School, inspired her student Rachel Hood to follow her dreams in becoming an Illinois FFA Major Officer. Hood was elected the 2022-2023 IL FFA president.

FFA chapters are reviewed and evaluated every year on the activities they conduct. The Streator FFA Chapter was announced as the Premier FFA Chapter in Illinois, which is considered the top program in the state. Riley Hintzsche, a 2014 agriculture education graduate, is the FFA adviser for the Streator agriculture program.

Illinois FFA Stars, who are individuals that receive recognition for their SAE's (Supervised Agriculture Experience), are also presented prestigious individual awards. FFA Stars Sam DeCounter, a 2002 agriculture education graduate, has been inspirational in assisting his son Braydon DeCounter, of the West Prairie FFA chapter, to obtain the Illinois FFA State Star Farmer designation.

Aaron Heartt, a 2001 agriculture education graduate, and Hannah Libby and Brandon Livingston, both 2020 WIU agriculture education graduates, encouraged Katie Wagner, of the Mercer County FFA chapter, who was awarded the Illinois FFA State Star in Agribusiness to continue her dream of managing her own agribusiness.

Discovery FFA Stars are dedicated to middle school FFA members. Morgan Lemley Nelson, a 2019 agriculture graduate and the agriculture teacher at Pleasant Plains High School, recorded two Discovery FFA Stars. Bryson Stickler was awarded the Discovery FFA Star in Agribusiness and Amelia Krispensky was awarded the Discovery FFA Star Agricultural Placement.

Drake Slutz was awarded the Discovery FFA Star Farmer, who is from the Sycamore FFA chapter, which is guided by 2018 agriculture education graduate Christian Thurwanger. John Davin, a 2003 agriculture education graduate, had the top creed speaker in the state of Illinois, from the Staunton FFA chapter.

All of these educators have put in a substantial amount of time with their students to achieve new heights and their encouragement has certainly been highlighted in this year's Illinois FFA Convention.



# WIU Alumni Named Finalists for National FFA Leadership

The National FFA Organization has released its National Chapter finalists for the upcoming 2022 National FFA Convention.

Several WIU alumni, who are now agriculture teachers, have been recognized for their leadership in assisting their students to achieve new heights this past year in their agriculture programs.

These WIU alumni include:

- Cambridge FFA: Trent Taber, a 2015 WIU graduate: Premier Chapter in Personal Growth
- Eastland FFA : Cindy Feltmeyer, a 2009 WIU gr: Premier Chapter in Agriculture Literacy
- Streator FFA : Riley Hintzsche, a 2014 WIU graduate: Model of Excellence Finalist



## WIU Alumni Ag Teachers Have Nationally Recognized FFA Students

The National FFA Organization has announced students who will be recognized at the 2022 National FFA Convention in specific proficiency areas, and the schools they reside in.

Those with WIU alumni as teachers include:

Agriscience Research - Animal Systems: Eastland FFA - teacher Cindy Feltmeyer, a 2009 WIU graduate - student Delana Erbsen National Finalist

Dairy Production - Placement: Eastland FFA - teacher Feltmeyer - student Nevin Erbsen National Finalist

Division 1, Animal Systems: Sycamore FFA - teacher Christian Thurwanger, a 2018 WIU graduate - student Drake Slutz.

Division 6 Social Systems: Sycamore FFA - teacher Thurwanger - students Ally Yoakum and Lorelei Darlak

Forest Management and Products - Entrepreneurship/Placement: Sycamore FFA - teacher Thurwanger - student Cole Roach silver rating

Vegetable Production - Entrepreneurship/Placement: Cambridge FFA - teacher Trent Taber, a 2015 WIU graduate - student Kendra Downing gold rating

Veterinary Science - Entrepreneurship/Placement: Rushville/Industry FFA - teacher Sydney Riden, a 2021 WIU graduate - student Grace Pollitt silver rating



# WIU Ag Major Matches Illinois State Fair Record During Sale of Champions

Not only did Western Illinois University senior agriculture major Ashtin Guyer, of Flat Rock, IL, show this year's Illinois State Fair Grand Champion Market Steer, her entry also created a bidding war between Illinois Governor J.B. Pritzker, and his wife, MK, to purchase her entry, "King," which ended by matching a fair record of \$105,000.

In addition to the grand champion steer, Guyer also exhibited the Grand Champion Gilt and the Reserve Supreme Heifer at this year's fair competitions.

"Our family had a great week at the state fair," said Guyer. "My sister also exhibited the Champion Land of Lincoln Market Lamb. To say this week was nothing short of amazing would be an understatement. We are so grateful, thankful and blessed to be a part of an industry that pushes you to work hard and show you that hard work will pay off."

Guyer and her family have worked toward these livestock goals for many years and it was this year when "all the stars aligned."

"My family and I have been in the livestock industry ever since I can remember," she said. "Both my parents, Dave and Lucy Guyer, grew up showing livestock, so the passion for this industry was instilled in my sister and I at a very young age. I began my career in the show ring at age 6, when I showed my first heifer at the North American in Louisville, KY. Since then my family has been very fortunate and blessed in the show ring."

For at least the past two years, Governor Pritzker and his wife have bid against each other in the Illinois State Fair Governor's Sale of Champions to buy the champion steer. This year's \$105,000 winning bid matched the record amount bid for last year's champion steer, also placed by MK Pritzker.

"Standing up there on the platform, I had a front row seat to watching the bid off," said Guyer. "I have often been asked what it's like to win something like this, and my answer is always that it's an unexplainable feeling. The flood of emotion is something that cannot be expressed. I have been showing livestock since I was 6 years old and now, at 21, we finally checked this big goal we've had for a long time off the bucket list. I cannot even begin to thank my family and all those who are involved because without them, and the good Lord, none of this would be possible."

Guyer said she and her sister, Nalaney, have exhibited cattle, pigs and sheep at the county, state and national levels for many years. She said over that time she has realized that it's important to realize others are observing.

"One thing I can say to anyone is to never forget that you are a role model for those to come; little eyes are always watching," Guyer said. "This is something I hold very close to my heart more now as I get older. I want to show them that when you reach for the stars great things can happen, and although I am about to age out at the age of 21, there is no doubt that I am going to be as involved if not more involved in this industry. I want to help them achieve those goals, and let them know that I will always be there to cheer them on."



Guyer added that being a part of showing livestock over the years has brought her support from a variety of unexpected directions.

"The livestock industry is one that I would encourage anyone to be a part of because I can guarantee you will find your best friends here, all who will support you no matter what," she said. "I can say with confidence that this industry has brought me those friends, and I would do anything for each and every one of them. It has also taught me the importance of work ethic, drive and passion for something I love so much."

The sale of champions was emotional for Guyer, she said, in part because her grandfather surprised her by showing up at the Illinois State Fair unexpectedly after health concerns nearly kept him home.

"The feeling of knowing that was the last time I would step foot in the ring at the ISF, the last time grabbing the halter of a steer, and also having my grandpa sitting in the front row meant the world to me," she said. "This show will always hold a special place in my heart, and I am so blessed to be part of an industry that has taught me everything I know."

At WIU, Guyer is the president of the Hoof-N-Horn club and previously worked at the University farm.



## **WIU Alumnus Teaches in Division Winning Agriculture Program**

For the past two years, a middle school or secondary school agriculture program, taught by a Western Illinois University School of Agriculture graduate, has been named the Outstanding Middle/Secondary Agricultural Education Program for the National Association of Agricultural Educators Division IV.

Christian Thurwanger, a 2018 WIU agriculture program graduate, is one of two agriculture teacher at Sycamore High School, this year's Division IV winner. Sycamore is Thurwanger's home high school.

The 2021 winner was Cambridge High School, where WIU alumnus Trent Taber, a 2015 WIU graduate, is an agriculture teacher and FFA advisor.

Thurwanger said the Sycamore program applied for the honors and it was reviewed based on its programs, mission and goals, as well as program curriculum, experiential learning, leadership development, partnerships, marketing and professional growth.

"When I attended WIU I can remember Dr. (Andy) Baker mentioning how each program can be successful as long as you are willing to put in the work," said Thurwanger. "From that moment forward I knew I would have big aspirations of achieving great things, no matter where I was located. I was fortunate enough to end up back in my home high school, but I still stay connected with previous alumni in our cohort that have been great motivators as well as great resources in making those big aspirations I had as a freshman at WIU come true."

The Division IV area encompasses Missouri, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Ohio and Illinois.



# WIU Livestock Judging Team Places Second at National Barrow Show

The Western Illinois University Livestock Judging Team captured second place in the overall team competition of the National Barrow Show Livestock Judging Contest Sept. 12 in Minnesota.

The team, advised by WIU Agriculture Associate Professor Mark Hoge, included: senior agriculture major Zach McCall, of Greenville, VA; senior agriculture major Nate Brookshire, of Woodland, CA; junior agriculture major Sawyer Schlipf, of El Paso, IL; senior agriculture major Caleb Boden, of Clear Brook, VA; senior Jeb Schwager, of Bellevue, IA; senior agriculture major Emily Fry, of Danville, IN; and senior agriculture major Dane Robertson, of Mooresville, IN. Other WIU students competing in the events included junior agriculture major Gage Tebo, of Idaville, IN; junior agriculture major Zach Cline, of Allenton, MI; and senior agriculture major Bree Gaffney, of Barneveld, WI.

Members of the WIU team claimed the Champion Truckload category, and also had a champion Berkshire gilt, which sold for \$2,900.

## Emeriti Professors Recall Crop Research to Improve Accuracy of Hail Damage Claims

It wasn't the strange looks they got for intentionally damaging their corn crop, or the hundreds of pounds of ice they had to haul to campus to hurl at their corn plants – it was the industry-changing research that resulted that brought two Western Illinois University Emeriti Agriculture faculty members acclaim for creating more accurate hail damage tables for the insurance industry, tables which are still used today.

School of Agriculture Emeritus Professors Ed Breece and Dean Wesley worked on the project as part of a research grant from the Hail Insurance Adjusters Research Association. The purpose of the grant was to develop a more precise way to determine yield loss when hail storms strike crops. The WIU research was conducted on non-irrigated corn plants, while the University of Nebraska conducted the tests on irrigated corn crops.

"They were looking for better data for the adjusters, such as what to look for in the field 10-14 days after a storm," said Wesley. "There are different types of injury to the plants at different stages of growth: stand reduction and defoliation to the plants."

During the research period in the late 1960s and early 1970s, nine acres of University Farm ground, translating to 900 study plots, was dedicated to the research on corn plants at various stages of growth. The area that was used for the plantings is now the front nine holes of the University's Harry Mussatto Golf Course.

"We participated in the training of insurance adjusters, most who worked during the summer as per-diem adjusters, and were teachers the rest of the year," said Breece. "We damaged special plots with ice, which were set up to simulate hail damage on the corn crop. We created the hail damage by hauling 400-pound blocks of ice to WIU, and having student workers break them into basketball-size pieces. They were then put into a forage harvester to chop them into hail size pieces to launch the pieces of ice at the corn plants. We also had to orient them about agricultural practices so they could communicate better with the farmers."

Breece and Wesley, and their student workers, used scissors to defoliate the plants and a hoe to reduce the stand to simulate hail damage.



Wesley said the research gathered from the various ways of simulating hail damage took into consideration a variety of factors, including the population of plants per acre and how a loss of leaf area (sunlight) impacted the ability of hail-damaged plants to recover from the loss.

"We would harvest each plot and determine the yield related mathematically to modify the charts given to adjusters," said Wesley. "The data we collected was made into charts used by adjusters to determine yield loss."

Breece said the work came with some strange looks when those not working on the study found out what it involved.

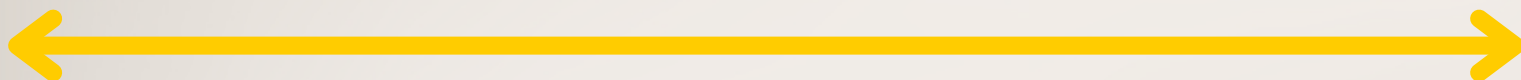
"One of our students told his dad we were cutting the leaves off the corn plant and he just about didn't let his son come back to campus," he said.

During part of the research, Breece paused working at the University in 1970, to spend two years pursuing his doctoral degree from Iowa State University. While studying in Ames, IA, Breece worked with a professor who had constructed an ice machine to simulate hail damage to soybeans as part of the same pool of research.

"The machine had a blower on it, and a four-inch tube, so it was a lot more sophisticated than what we had been doing," said Breece.

While at WIU, Breece and a group of his students also organized the first Agriculture Mechanization show in 1970, on one end of Western Hall. The idea originally came from a student who had seen a similar show at another school and the first event included an agriculture mechanization skills contest for high school students and evolved from there.

The show has grown into the largest student-run farm show in the nation, with the core goals of bringing the latest in agricultural technology to the region and state, providing an opportunity for manufacturers to introduce new product lines, providing students the opportunity to meet potential employers and to promote the University and the School of Agriculture.



## WIU Welcomes Pre-Veterinary Sciences Club to Campus

Western Illinois University is welcoming a new student organization to further the mission of preparing students to study veterinary medicine after graduation.

The Pre-Veterinary Sciences Club, founded by club President Jessica Alonso, a junior agriculture science major, from Maple Park, IL, is seeking to be an add-on to the WIU agriculture curriculum in giving students hands-on experience, networking information and access to community service opportunities.

"I think this organization is important to WIU due to the growing number of students interested in pre-veterinary sciences," said Alonso. "The Pre-Vet Club can give those who are interested more opportunities to build relationships with professionals in the field and peers around them, while also gaining experience needed for their future."

WIU alumna and School of Agriculture Instructor Ashley Whiteside, a veterinarian in the region, is serving as club advisor.

"I am happy to be able to help the students gain experience and exposure to vet med to help guide their decisions regarding the profession," said Whiteside. "I am excited to work with these students and provide hands on experience, as well as mentorship. The club will give students access to vet med exposure their entire duration at WIU."

Alonso said the hope is to hold wet labs, host guest speakers and educate members about graduate school.





# WIU Ag Student Organization Place Well at State

## Competition

The Illinois Professional Agricultural Student Agricultural Student Conference was held Thursday, Oct. 13 at Illinois State University.

WIU's PAS chapter competed in a variety of events including:

Soils Competition (team event): Second place - team members Christine Mahr, a senior agriculture education major, of Hanna City, IL; Clayton Walch, a junior agriculture science major, of Raymond, IL; and Elaina Allaman, a senior agriculture science major, of Monmouth, IL.

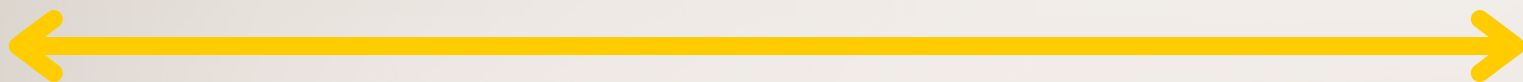
Soils Competition (individual event): Second place - Walch

Equine Competition (team event): Third place - team members Emma Lowe, a sophomore pre-veterinary medicine major, of Quincy, IL; Laurel Keyt, a junior agriculture education major, of Hannah City; and Luke Jesgarz, a senior agriculture business major, of Shelbyville, IL.

Agribusiness Administration Employment Interview (individual event): First place - Jesgarz

Agricultural Education Employment Interview (individual event): Tessa Sargeant, a sophomore agriculture education major, of Macomb; and Avery Isringhausen, a freshman agriculture major, of Vandalia, IL.

Livestock Production Employment Interview (individual event): Jett Vickery, a junior agriculture education major, of Taylorville, IL.



## Research Pennycress Planted at Western Illinois University Farm this Month

Just as most of the field crops in west central Illinois are being harvested from the fields, one Western Illinois University professor and his team are planting a unique cover crop at the University farm.

Through an IPREP grant, WIU Agriculture Professor Win Phippen and his staff planted five acres of pennycress seed Oct. 1 on the University farm, north of campus. The plantings will be harvested for seeds in the spring.

WIU received \$1 million of a \$13 million U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) grant to genetically strengthen pennycress plants for use in sustainable energy work. Phippen said through these plantings, researchers are looking for plants that can handle different environmental plant stresses, such as heat or flooding.

The seeds planted on campus represent 435 lines of wild pennycress from all over the world.

"We are trying to identify the useful genes to help the plants handle environmental stresses," said Phippen. "Our purpose is two-fold: conducting observations and looking at agronomic traits, such as plant height, flowering time and seed yield."



Prior to the seeds being placed in the ground by a special planter, purchased as part of the grant, they were divided into small envelopes to keep the types separate. Each plant line was planted individually and then replicated three times across the field.

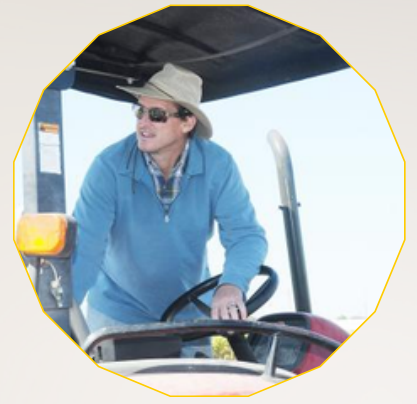
"All 435 of the wild lines were DNA sequenced, and we are applying new, molecular techniques to identifying which genes are controlling the important traits we are observing in the field," Phippen added.

As the plants germinate, Phippen said they are taking notes of how the plants present themselves, including measurements of the leaf rosettes the plants produce, and all the weather data such as soil moisture and temperature throughout the entire growing season. The goal is to produce consistency, hardiness, and the best plant types available.

The University's other pennycress-related grant, awarded in 2019, through the Integrated Pennycress Research Enabling Farm and Energy Resilience (IPREFER) project, is a five-year, \$10 million bio-fuel project to investigate pennycress as a new cash cover crop in the Midwest. The plan was to plant thousands of acres of a variety of genetically edited (GE) seeds this fall in fields in central Illinois.

Because of changing federal regulations on gene-editing plants, the only plantings that can be made this growing season are for demonstration purposes only.

"We had 10,000 acres ready to plant this year," said Phippen. "We are trying to figure out the new regulations. Meanwhile we will make this a demonstration year, where we can host field days and provide valuable information to producers but not harvest the plants commercially. We were ready to grow all of our advanced GE breeding lines in nine locations, but this year we are adjusting to the new rules and will focus on the wild lines until all the regulations get figured out."



## Mary Phippen Honored for Outstanding Poster at National Conference

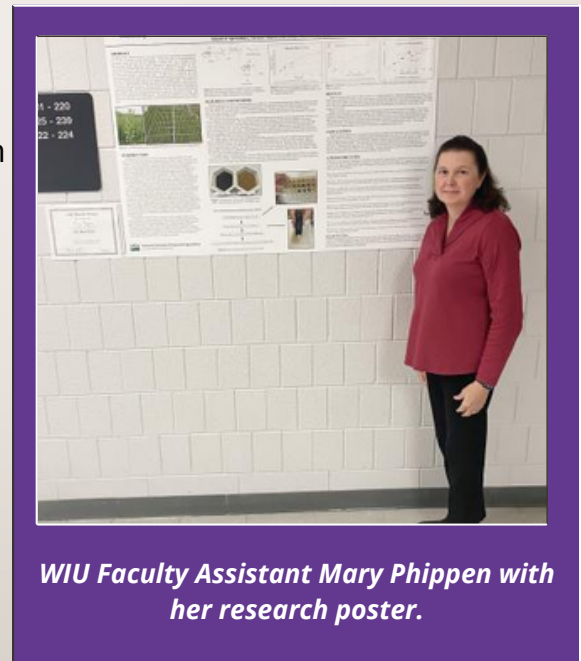
Western Illinois University Faculty Assistant Mary Phippen recently captured the title of outstanding poster of the Oilseed Division at the 33rd annual Association for the Advancement of Industrial Crops conference in Bozeman, MT.

The poster outlines Mary's research done while working in the Alternative Crops Research Program in the School of Agriculture at WIU. The Alternative Crops Research Program has received multiple grants to fund research on the cover crop pennycress and its uses in biofuels.

Mary, who began working at WIU in 2001, and is a research chemist and statistician with WIU and the IPREFER and IPREP research projects. She was looking for a more cost effective way to test sinigrin levels in pennycress seeds. Sinigrin is a glucosinolate that helps protect plants against potential insect predators.

"Typically high performance liquid chromatography, coupled with a mass spectrometer (HPLC-MS) is used in the lab for glucosinolate analysis, but that can be expensive," said Mary.

Through her research, Mary found someone who had done similar testing with horseradish roots using a diabetic testing meter and accompanying strips to test the ground root for glucosinolates.



*WIU Faculty Assistant Mary Phippen with her research poster.*




"During the development of the method, it was noted that glucosinolate levels in seeds varied with fertilizer input," said Mary. "This will be the basis for future studies on the connection between glucosinolate levels and fertilizer rates. The key to research is looking to find the best growing conditions with the smallest input. This method, which is both accurate and inexpensive with the testing supplies, will help us optimize our production protocols."

The glucose meter method costs about \$1-\$2 per sample. Since the lab lacks expensive HPLC-MS instrumentation, sending the samples out for HPLC-MS analysis would cost \$100-\$200 per sample.

"It makes a difference when we are testing thousands of samples," said Mary.

Mary put together the research poster for the national conference in hopes the idea could be useful to other researchers working on pennycress or other oilseed crops.



## WIU Livestock Judging Team Finishes Season with Third Place National Finish

In what is known in the livestock world as the "Super Bowl," the Western Illinois University Livestock Judging Team returned from Louisville, KY, recently with a third place national finish.

In addition, WIU agriculture science student, senior Caleb Boden, of Clear Brook, VA, captured the high overall individual title.

The North American International Livestock Expo (NAILE), in November, was the final competition of the judging team's season.

Other WIU results include:

- Team Honors: Second in swine, fourth in cattle and reasons and sixth in sheep/goat individual.
- Boden: Third in reasons, seventh in cattle and third in swine, in addition to his high overall individual win.
- Zach McCall, a senior agriculture science major, of Greenville, VA – fourth in swine and 20th overall.
- Jeb Schwager, a senior agriculture science major, of Bellevue, IA – sixth in swine and 14th overall.
- Nate Brookshire, a senior agriculture business major, of Woodland, CA – 16th overall.

In addition to Boden, McCall, Schwager and Brookshire, the 2022 WIU Livestock Judging Team members include Sawyer Schlipf, a junior agriculture science major, of El Paso, IL; Emily Fry, a senior agriculture business major, of Danville, IN; Dane Robertson, a senior agriculture business major, of Mooresville, IN; Gage Tebo, a senior agriculture science major, of Idaville, IN; Zach Cline, a junior agriculture business major, of Allenton, MI; and Bree Gaffney, a senior agricultural business, pre-MBA major, of Barneveld, WI.



# School of Agriculture Student Graduating with Multiple Honors

During her time at Western Illinois University, senior agriculture major Kinsey Tiemann, of La Grange, MO, has amassed a long list of accomplishments, including capturing three of the University's top honors as she graduates.

When Tiemann crosses the Western Hall Commencement stage Saturday, she will do so as the School of Agriculture Departmental Scholar, a Centennial Honors Scholar and as the Commencement speaker. She will also receive highest academic distinction, summa cum laude.

At WIU, Tiemann was also a student member of the University's Board of Trustees, and was a student trustee, vice president and Centennial Honors College Senator for the Student Government Association (SGA). She also served on the WIU AgVocator Recruitment Team, was president and vice president of Women in Business, was a member of the WIU Agronomy Club and conducted two years of cover crop research at the WIU Agronomy Farm, the results of which were presented at two national Agronomy contests for undergraduate students.

Off campus, Tiemann is a member of the Missouri Cattlemen's Association, the LaGrange United Methodist Church and an ASA, CSSA, SSSA National Agronomy and Soil Conservation tri-society member.

After graduation, Tiemann will become a program coordinator for the Adams County University of Illinois Extension Office for the Ag-in-the-Classroom program. She also hopes to pursue a master's degree in crop science/regenerative agriculture and to expand a small business she started in high school, called Square Rooted, which markets farm-to-table meat and canned produce from her family's farm.

"WIU has shaped me with practical knowledge and leadership to apply in my future steps," said Tiemann. "I'm excited to pay it forward and aim to leave a positive influence in the agriculture industry. The past few years at WIU has motivated me to reach for success even after a defeat."

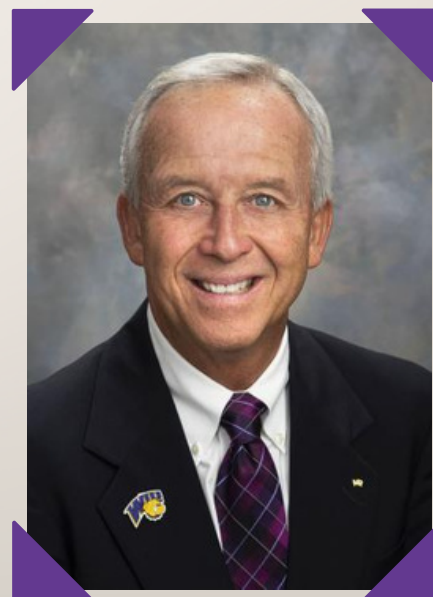


## Alumni Council Member Ends 2022 with Two Major Gifts

Following years of dedicated service and support of Western Illinois University, Wayne Whipps, a 1977 alumnus, answered the call and contributed two majors gifts to For the W: The Campaign for Western Illinois University in December.

A long-time donor to WIU, Whipps worked with WIU Assistant Athletic Director for Development Mark Scherer to provide substantial gifts to the WIU School of Agriculture and to WIU Athletics. Through his generosity, a scholarship will be established in the School of Agriculture, and funds will be made immediately available to several Leatherneck athletic teams.

Whipps grew up on his family farm outside of Ursa, IL, and was raised with a love and appreciation for agriculture. Following high school, Whipps chose to attend WIU to pursue a degree in Agriculture Education and Animal Science. Upon arriving at Western, Whipps quickly found a home in two areas of campus - the School of Agriculture and Intercollegiate Athletics.





Within the School of Agriculture, Whipps became involved in Alpha Gamma Rho, and with the Livestock Judging Team.

"Living in the AGR house was the best years of my life," Whipps shared, reflecting on his time in the organization.

Whipps served as Noble Ruler of the WIU AGR chapter, and as National Undergraduate Director in 1977. Whipps has continued to be involved with the fraternity since graduating from WIU, serving as Alumni Delegate to many national conventions over the years.

Most notably, Whipps was honored as an AGR Brother of the Century when the national organization celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2004. According to Alpha Gamma Rho's website, the purpose of the Brothers of the Century award was to recognize members known for exhibiting the highest principles, values and ideals of brotherhood of AGR, and members who are recognized within their career field and communities as role models for young men.

Whipps credits the Livestock Judging Team as a main factor in his decision to enroll at WIU.

"Working at the Swine Evaluation Station and the Swine Farm, under the guidance of Bruce Engnell, greatly shaped my future," Whipps said, noting that he was able to meet many top swine breeders. He said he also learned a great deal from Professor Bill Henning, who served as the Livestock Judging coach during Whipps' time at WIU.

The Livestock Judging Team's success during the 1976-77 is another favorite memory for Whipps'.

"Our team was very proud to end our career on a high note. We won Swine at the National Intercollegiate Livestock Judging Contest," he shared.

Whipps experienced personal success during that year, noting that he finished as High Individual in Swine and third High Individual overall.

In recognition of his time as an Agriculture student, Whipps established the Wayne Whipps Agriculture Scholarship with one of his major gifts in December. The scholarship will be awarded annually to an incoming freshman Agriculture student from Unity High School, or an incoming transfer Agriculture student from John Wood Community College. With Whipps' gift last month, the scholarship is fully endowed, and will be awarded for the first time for the 2023-24 school year.

"My hope is this scholarship will promote the School of Agriculture and WIU, and influence a student from my home area to become an Ag major at WIU," Whipps said about his decision to fund the scholarship.

WIU School of Agriculture Director Andy Baker said the scholarship reflects the mission of Western Illinois University by attracting local/regional students to attend the University.

"It also provides students the chance to secure exceptional educational opportunities in the agricultural industry, as Mr. Whipps did 50 years ago," he said.

Outside of his involvement in the School of Agriculture, Whipps served as a student employee in the Sports Information Office, working in the press box at games.

"Beating EIU before a standing-room-only crowd of 6,600 was priceless," Whipps remembers.

Since graduating, Whipps has been a longtime supporter of WIU Athletics, maintaining membership in the Leatherneck Club and being a season ticket holder for WIU Football. He has provided financial support to many Leatherneck teams over the years and opted to donate to four teams with a five-figure gift in 2022.

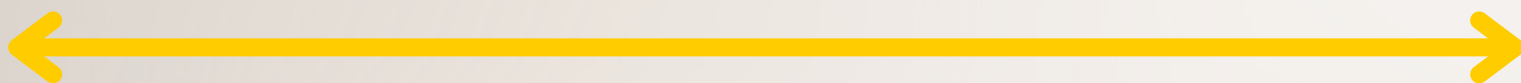
Director of Intercollegiate Athletics Paul Bubb said Whipps' support of Leatherneck Athletics represents the best of WIU alumni, with his passion for the University.

"Wayne was one of the first to reach out to me and congratulate me on my selection as Director of Athletics, and immediately asked what he could do to help," said Bubb. "His support goes beyond the financial contributions he has provided, but also includes service to the University, as well as actively recruiting and encouraging prospective students to consider his alma mater when choosing where to continue their education and athletic careers. Western could benefit from more people like Wayne."

Today, Whipps is retired and works frequently as a substitute teacher. He enjoys living 10 miles away from his three daughters and nine grandchildren, volunteering, and giving back to the community. He has been serving as a member of the WIU Alumni Council since July 2020, and is a frequent attendee of WIU Alumni Association events, is regularly in the stands at WIU Athletics competitions, and can often be found at WIU golf outings throughout the year.

Whipps said WIU's School of Agriculture, and WIU Athletics have meant a great deal to him since he stepped foot on campus in September 1973. Now, 50 years after his freshman year at WIU, Whipps is continuing to make a lasting impact on his two most cherished areas of campus.

"Mr. Whipps has been a tremendous supporter of the School of Agriculture for many years and the endowed Whipps Scholarship will solidify his continuous support for generations of agriculturalists that will graduate from Western Illinois University," said Baker. "We are very fortunate to have supportive, dedicated alumni, such as Mr. Whipps, to continue our mission in producing exceptional future agricultural leaders."



## WIU Agriculture Students Advance to National PAS Competition

Western Illinois University Professional Agriculture Students (PAS) competed in the group's spring competition Feb. 9 at Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, IL, with several students becoming national PAS qualifiers.

Students who were honored during the competition include:

- Crops Specialist Team - Third place overall team and National PAS Qualifier:
  - Christy Mahr, a senior agriculture major, of Hanna City, IL
  - Fuller Anderson, a senior agriculture major, of Atwater, IL
  - Clayton Walch, a junior agriculture major, of Raymond, IL, who also placed sixth overall in the individual competition
- Prepared Public Speaking
  - David Ramirez, a junior law enforcement and justice administration major, of Island Lake, IL, who placed third overall and was a National PAS Qualifier.
- Impromptu Speaking
  - Luke Jesgarz, a senior agriculture major, of Shelbyville, IL
- Sheep Specialist Team – Fifth place overall team and National PAS Qualifier
  - Alex Bruno, a senior agriculture major, of Springfield, IL
  - Jett Vickery, a junior agriculture major, of Taylorville, IL, who also placed 10th overall in the individual competition.
  - William Ornduff, a junior agriculture major, of Cameron, IL
- Fall State PAS Qualifiers include:
  - Soil Science Specialist Team - National PAS Qualifier
    - Walch
    - Mahr
    - Elaina Allaman, a freshman agriculture major, of Monmouth, IL
  - Equine Specialist Team - National PAS Qualifier
    - Laurel Keyt, a senior agriculture major, of Hanna City, IL
    - Jesgarz
    - Emma Lowe, a sophomore agriculture major, of Quincy, IL
  - Employment Interview Agribusiness Administration = Jesgarz - National PAS Qualifier



# Eight Named WIU School of Agriculture Distinguished Alumni

During Farm Expo weekend earlier this month, the Western Illinois University School of Agriculture designated eight of its graduates as Distinguished Alumni Award Winners.

The designation began in 2020 as the School of Agriculture celebrated its 100th anniversary and this year's honorees are Jon Althaus, a 1985 graduate, of Mattoon; Randy Bowman, a 1986 graduate, of Hoyleton, IL; David Erickson, a 1980 graduate, of Altona, IL; Bill Henning, a 1968 graduate, of University Park, PA; Rich Hollis, a 1988 graduate, of Columbia, IL; Bill Johnson, a 1987 graduate, of Lafayette, IN; Jana Knupp, a 2002 and 2004 (MBA) graduate, of Macomb; and Mike Thurow, a 1973 graduate, of Naperville.

**Jon Althaus** graduated with a degree in animal science, and was a member of the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity, WIU Hoof-N-Horn Club and the Livestock Judging Team. He was also an employee of the WIU Swine Farm and the Boar Test Station.

"I am deeply honored by this recognition, especially when I consider those who were also recognized and those who have received the award in the past," he said. "I look forward to celebrating the achievements of more WIU alumni in the upcoming years."

After earning his master's degree at Western Kentucky, Althaus worked for the American Yorkshire Club before beginning a 30-year career in higher education at Lake Land College. During his time at Lake Land, he served as agriculture teaching faculty, Livestock Judging coach, Agriculture Division Chair, and was recently retired as Vice President for Academic Services. Althaus has judged numerous county, state and national swine shows throughout his professional career. He attributes much of his career success to his time at WIU, his academic advisor, Dr. Jon Carlson, and his Livestock Coach, Swine Unit Manager and great friend, Bruce Engnell.

**Randy Bowman** graduated with a degree in agriculture education. After graduation, he became general manager of the Great Plains region for The Maschhoffs, a family-owned swine production company, based in Carlyle, IL, where he had oversight over 155 employees, 32,000 sows and 30,000 WTM spaces. He was employed by the Maschhoffs for 19 years, having past oversight of the research production sites, genetic program management and a technical support team.

Bowman served on the WIU Agriculture Advisory Board, the Kaskaskia College Advisory Board and the National Junior Swine Association Advisory Board.

"My path to WIU was created by basketball, but my lifelong skills were developed at WIU through the culture of hands on training and hard work," Bowman said. "The size of the university gave me the chance to be involved in about anything I wanted to be involved in, and allowed me to meet a lot of people that are lifelong friends."

Bowman and his wife, Angie, live in Hoyleton, IL; and his daughter, Brooke, attends the University of Missouri.



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus Jon Althaus



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus Randy Bowman.



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus David Erickson.

**David Erickson**, a 1980 agricultural education graduate, and his wife, Nancy, farm and operate a farm management business. They have one son, Adam. David is a graduate of WIU with a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Education.

David taught Vocational Agriculture and was an FFA Advisor for four years before beginning his farming career. He served as Illinois FFA secretary-treasurer, president of the Illinois Soybean Association, president and chairman of the board of the American Soybean Association, and chairman of the Illinois Foundation FFA. He served as director and president of the Knox County Farm Bureau and as Illinois Farm Bureau vice president. David served six years on the Knox County Board. He is active at Immanuel Lutheran Church of Altona, currently serving chairman of the Church Council.

David is a past director of the Oneida Telephone and Cablevision Companies, the Knox County Zoning Board of Appeals, past chairman of the Galesburg Cottage Hospital Board of Trustees, served on the Unit #10 Extension Council and was past director for Midwest Bank of Western Illinois. David currently serves as chairman on the board of the Galesburg Community Foundation.

**Bill Henning**, a 1968 graduate, has had a plethora of experiences within higher education, teaching his students at Penn State University about various agriculture topics, specifically meat science. Bill has also been able to share his passion through extension and outreach programs. He has been chosen for various titles and awards for his efforts over the years. He is an active member of the American Meat Science Association and has been involved in many other associations and societies in the past.

"I was very fortunate to have attended WIU. I actually started out on a different career path, but felt like I didn't really fit in the school or the major and I transferred to WIU to study agriculture, still not knowing what I wanted to do," he said. "With help from Dr. Loren Robinson, my advisor, my classes, my classmates, my work on the farm with Bob Chatterton, work at the Boar test station and my experience on the livestock judging team with Gary Cowman I received a great education. Not just what I learned, but how to learn and to question things. When I graduated, I had numerous opportunities in industry, banking and grad school. I chose the latter and was fortunate to come back and be on the faculty where I realized what a great group of hard working, intelligent and well grounded students attending. I'm very grateful for everyone at WIU for helping me to become who I am."

**Rich Hollis**, a 1988 agriculture education graduate, joined American AgCredit as chief people experience officer in March 2021. He brings over 25 years of executive leadership in the agricultural industry. Most recently, Hollis served as a member of the executive team for The Maschhoffs, the fifth largest pork production company in the U.S., leading the people strategies, environmental and sustainability initiatives, and generational transfer programs. Prior to that, Hollis led Rabobank's people strategies.

"It's humbling to be recognized by those that I consider leaders in agriculture," said Hollis. "I appreciate WIU and the College of Agriculture for the opportunity."



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus Bill Henning.



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus Rich Hollis.



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus Bill Johnson.



**Bill Johnson**, a 1987 WIU graduate, received his master's and doctoral degrees in weed science from the University of Arkansas before beginning his professional career. He began his working as a field research scientist with Cenex/Land O' Lakes in 1994, before joining the University of Missouri as an assistant professor of weed science and the State Extension weed specialist, where he spent seven years.

In 2002, Johnson joined Purdue University, where he has been ever since, as a professor of weed science in the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology. He has statewide responsibilities for weed science research and extension in agronomic crops, he teaches a graduate level weed biology course, and an undergraduate course on communication of scientific information. Johnson is a past president and Fellow of the North Central Weed Science Society. He has won many awards for his outstanding efforts, has published over 175 peer-reviewed scientific manuscripts, over 100 extension publications, and received over \$10 million external funding to support his research and extension program. He has trained 33 graduate students, three post-doctoral research associates, and currently has an additional four students currently working on master's and doctoral degrees in weed science.

"My time at WIU helped to bring my career goals into focus and launched me into the next step of my professional journey," Johnson said. "I am very appreciative of the quality of instructors I had in the classroom and while I worked on the WIU Farm. The instructors were always available to help with academic questions and willing to chat and provide guidance about my career questions as well. I am very appreciative of receiving this recognition from the WIU School of Agriculture, and have no doubt that my trajectory might have been different had I chosen to do my BS degree at another institution."

**Jana Knupp**, a 2002 agriculture and 2004 MBA graduate, is a "two-time 'Neck" from a family of Leathernecks. Knupp served as the program director for the Illinois Agricultural Leadership Foundation and the associate director of WIU Alumni Programs before heading back to the School of Agriculture, where she currently serves as an associate faculty member. Outside of her classes, Knupp wears many hats on campus, all in an effort to help students have a memorable Western experience. Off campus you can find her cheering on one of her three sons at a sporting event with her husband, and fellow Leatherneck, Scott.

"I am humbled and honored to receive this award and join a group of WIU Agriculture alumni that have made great strides for WIU, the agriculture industry, and their communities," she said.

**Mike Thurow** was raised on a grain and livestock farm in northern Illinois. He received his bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering-Mechanization from WIU with Hhonor in 1973, and completed an MBA degree at Keller Graduate School of Management in 1985. His career started at International Harvester Company with over 13 years in various sales, marketing and product management positions.

"Receiving this honor along with other talented individuals was very special," said Thurow. "Seeing former professors Dr. Breece and Dr. Wesley from 50-years ago was heartwarming."

Thurow wrote a business plan in graduate school for a company he would later start, with a mission to bring plant measurement technology to aid in decision making for agricultural producers and researchers. He started Spectrum Technologies, Inc. in 1987, and has grown the company into a world leader in advanced plant measurement technology. The company does over half its business internationally and has 45 employees. Spectrum has 25 products, which are AE50 award winners by the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers for outstanding product innovation. Mike and his wife, Donna, live in Naperville, IL. They have three daughters and three grandchildren.



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumna Jana Knupp.



WIU Office Manager Carrie Lowderman is pictured with Distinguished Alumnus Mike Thurow.