

# PANELIST BIOS

*Session 1 -Lifelong Professional Development*

## JENNIFER CLARKE

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Quantitative Life Sciences Initiative Director*

Jennifer Clarke, Ph.D., is a Professor in Food Science and Technology, and Statistics, and the Director of the Quantitative Life Sciences Initiative at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (<https://bigdata.unl.edu>). Dr. Clarke received her undergraduate degrees in Mathematics and Psychology from Skidmore University, a M.S. in Statistics from Carnegie Mellon University and a doctorate in Statistics from the Pennsylvania State University. She conducted postdoctoral research at the National Institute of Statistical Sciences in Research Triangle Park and the Department of Statistical Sciences at Duke University before joining the faculty at Duke. Prior to coming to UNL in 2013, she was a faculty member at the University of Miami in the Division of Biostatistics and the Center for Computational Sciences. She serves as Chair of the seed grant steering committee of the Midwest Big Data Hub, Director of the PhD program in Complex Biosystems (<https://cbio.unl.edu>), and is leading efforts to develop a blueprint for a national agricultural producers data framework for the USDA. Her current interests include statistical and AI methodology for robust prediction and training the next generation of data scientists.



## YUFENG GE

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Associate Professor Biological Systems Engineering*

Yufeng Ge is an associate professor of Biological Systems Engineering and operational director of the Plant Phenomics at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). He earned his Ph.D. in Agricultural and Biological Engineering from Texas A&M University. His training and expertise are in the field of sensing and instrumentation for agricultural and environmental applications, in particular the measurement of plant responses to various stresses and soil properties important for crop production. He is heavily involved in UNL's plant phenotyping efforts, conducting plant phenomics research in greenhouses and fields. He has collaborated broadly with plant scientists, statisticians, and computer scientists. He has published nearly 80 peer-reviewed journal articles and holds two patents. His research is supported by USDA-NIFA, Department of Energy, National Science Foundation, and Nebraska commodity boards.



## JOCELYN GORDAN

*CASNR, Coordinator for Graduate Student Professional Development*

Jocelyn Gordon is the Coordinator for Graduate Student Development in the CASNR Dean's Office. Jocelyn received her undergraduate degree from Central Christian College of Kansas, where she studied Psychology and Theology. Continuing her educational pursuits, Jocelyn graduated from Dallas Baptist University with an M.A. in Counseling Psychology and Mediation. While living in Texas, Jocelyn worked for several educationally based non-profit organizations. She then moved to Oklahoma to begin her career in higher education. During this time, Jocelyn attended the University of Central Oklahoma, where she earned a Master in Public Administration with an emphasis in Urban Management. Jocelyn completed two research projects during this degree. The first project focused on the moral perception of those involved in political protest. Her second project questions the socioeconomic and moral implications of low-income families disproportionately affected by the Olympics. Jocelyn comes to UNL with ten years of experience in higher education. In her role, Jocelyn provides graduate students with professional development opportunities through diverse experiences, CV and resume assistance and graduate student communication.



## MARY ANN JOHNSON

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Department Chair for Nutrition and Health Sciences*

As professor and chair of the Department of Nutrition and Health Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Mary Ann mentors faculty and staff at all career stages to reach their goals in research, teaching, Extension, and outreach. UNL's chapter of the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) seeks to improve the research environment for women and all members of the UNL community and it is here that Mary Ann serves on the steering committee. Additionally, she is active with the American Society of Nutrition (ASN) including the Nominations Committee for the Board of Directors and the Fellows Selection Committee. With ASN, she also served as President from 2017-2018. On behalf of the Association of Nutrition Departments and Programs (ANDP), Mary Ann also serves on the Board of Directors and has been designated as the ANDP President for 2021-2022.



## NATHAN MEIER

*University of Nebraska - Lincoln, Assistant Vice Chancellor for Research*

Nathan Meier is assistant Vice Chancellor for Research in the Office of Research and Economic Development at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Directing a group of eight research development professionals, Nathan increases funding competitiveness through the intentional design and hands-on leadership of proposal development, internal funding, faculty development and recognition, and research impact programs. Since 2004, he has helped UNL faculty and staff secure more than \$314 million in competitive funding from federal agencies and private funders.



## PAT MORGAN

*Bayer Crop Physiology Lead*

Pat Morgan focuses on research at the nexus of crop physiology and technology. He is the Crop Physiology Lead at Bayer Crop Science and holds an adjunct appointment in the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, School of Natural Resources. As a plant biologist, Pat specializes in deploying technologies and phenotyping tools to measure whole-plant carbon metabolism and crop productivity drivers. He has 20+ years of experience measuring photosynthesis and a fundamental understanding of the technologies and techniques, which he leverages as Associate Editor for Photosynthesis Research (Springer). Pat leads a team to achieve data-driven, product-development decisions guiding the next-generation of biotechnology row crops that will change farming.



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## *Session 2 – Student Initiative In Professional Development*



### SAJJAN GROVER

#### *Postdoctoral Research Associate*

Sajjan received his bachelor's degree in Agriculture from Punjabi University and Master's in Entomology from Punjab Agricultural University, India. He started his PhD at University of Nebraska-Lincoln under the supervision of Dr. Joe Louis in Spring 2017 and graduated in Spring 2021. Currently, he is working as a postdoctoral research associate in the same lab. To gain industry perspective in his graduate research, Sajjan participated in the 2020 summer research internship in one of the leading agricultural industries, Corteva Agriscience. At UNL, Sajjan served as a president of the graduate student association, Bruner Club, and heavily involved in the department service and various outreach activities in the Department of Entomology.

### JEEWAN JOYT

#### *NUtech Ventures, Senior Technology Manager*

Dr. Jeewan Jyot joined NUtech in May 2012 as a technology manager, with a focus on technologies related to agriculture, food science and animal science. She works closely with UNL faculty and students to identify, evaluate and manage aspects of their research with commercial potential. She is passionate about translating discoveries from lab into commercially viable technologies.

Jeewan holds a Ph.D. in plant pathology from the University of California-Davis, a M.S. in microbiology and a B.S. in microbiology and food science. After her doctoral work, Jeewan received the prestigious Ruth L. Kirsten-NRSA postdoctoral fellowship (2011-2012) from NIH to do research on viruses that impact wheat crop. Prior to joining the doctoral program, Jeewan headed the microbiology lab at a hepatitis B vaccine production facility in India from 2000-2005. Her responsibilities included managing and training 15 lab personnel in cGLP and cGMP practices, and implementing and validating standard operating procedures for vaccine production. Jeewan was instrumental in obtaining the WHO and other regulatory approvals for the microbiological testing and monitoring of the vaccine production facility. Outside of her professional interests, Jeewan enjoys reading, baking and pottery.



## NATE KORTH

### *Complex Biosystems PhD Student*

Nate Korth is a current PhD student in the Complex biosystems program working under Dr. Andrew Benson on projects aiming to identify and characterize traits in plants able to benefit the human gut microbiome associated with human health. Nate earned his Bachelor's in Food Science and Technology from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The bulk of his professional development training has come from being awarded a fellowship from the Foundation for Food and Agricultural Research (FFAR). The program seeks to develop the next generation of leaders in agriculture science by encouraging multi-disciplinarity, and active development of interpersonal and professional skills.



## NICOLAS HERRERA

### *UNL Graduate Research Assistant*

Hometown: Cologne, MN

Graduate Student: Animal Science Department

Dissertation Research: Optimization of Dry Aging Flavor

#### Background:

-Grew up on a ~200 acre livestock and crop operation, specializing in the production of purebred Southdown sheep along with raising cattle, pork, and poultry to fill the freezer.

-Was involved in all manner of activities in 4-H and FFA, including livestock showing and judging, meat judging, crop production, engineering, and agriculture communication.

-Started my undergraduate degree with the University of Nebraska in 2014. Completed my Bachelors in 2017, Masters in Animal Science, with Meat Science emphasis in 2020, and started my PhD in Summer 2020. During this time, I participated in Meat and Livestock judging, Block and Bridle, Quizbowl, Undergraduate Research, participated in a plethora of research projects and reciprocal conferences, and discovered my desire to understand muscle biology to enhance product quality and development in meat and other food products. This has led to my involvement with the food industry, as I pursued an internship with Tyson Foods as a Food Scientist in R&D this past summer.

-Hobbies include fishing, tanning pelts/hides, and rooting for the Minnesota Vikings.

## CHRISTINE BOOTH

*University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Science Communication Hub Director*

Dr. Christine Booth is a lecturer in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources in IANR. Her interests include teaching and learning of synthesis activities such as writing and modeling, interdisciplinary communication, and professional development. She is currently the coordinator of the IANR Science Communication Hub and teaches sophomore, senior, and graduate courses in scientific writing and communication, technical writing, and professional development. Dr. Booth received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln and also completed a Master of Science in Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at UNL. She has 10 peer-reviewed research publications spanning chemical engineering, biochemistry, and STEM education. Since she started teaching writing and communication, Dr. Booth has helped over 80 students to effectively communicate their scientific ideas in writing. She has also assisted over 20 students with their theses, manuscript, dissertations, and professional materials during one-on-one consultations. Having benefited from a wide range of professional experiences spanning multiple disciplines, she enjoys the opportunity to work with students in a variety of STEM fields.



## CARA PESAK

*University of Nebraska–Lincoln, IANR Director of Communications*

Cara Pesak is the Communications Director for the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources. She works with communicators from across the Institute to help share the successes and impact of the research, teaching and extension efforts taking place across Nebraska.



## LESLIE REED

*University Communications, Director of Public Affairs*

Leslie Reed is a native Nebraskan and University of Nebraska–Lincoln alumna who spent three decades as a Nebraska journalist, mostly as a reporter for the Omaha World–Herald. She returned to her alma mater to serve as senior news writer and national news specialist in 2013. One of her first jobs was serving as “campus correspondent,” reporting stories about the university for the Lincoln Journal while a college student. She has since come full circle to become UNL’s director of public affairs, a position she has held since 2018. Reed serves as a liaison with the media in Nebraska and elsewhere. In addition to pitching university news stories to the media and providing statements about ongoing issues, she assists faculty in obtaining media placements and helps reporters find the appropriate experts for their stories.



## DONNA JO DENISON

*Cassidy & Associates Vice President*

Donna Jo, a Vice President at Cassidy and Associates, provides clients with expertise on the development and deployment of legislative, regulatory and advocacy strategies. She specializes in food, nutrition and appropriations issues and where these sectors connect with a broad range of policy, budget, and regulatory matters from production, research, health and food safety, to international trade and commerce.

She brings in-depth government relations experience to Cassidy having served for 12 years as a senior policy and political aide in the U.S. Senate advising U.S. Senators Mary Landrieu and J. Bennett Johnston, and uses that background to help her clients successfully navigate the legislative process. Her pragmatic approach to solving multifaceted problems and advancing solutions across party lines has enabled her to develop effective advocacy strategies on behalf of her clients. Her diverse client experience includes advising an agricultural cooperative with \$2B in consumer sales, facilitating trade and food safety crisis management for a multinational meat packing company, to working with a large community college system on the advancement of research, food and nutrition programs. Having a broad understanding of the legislative and regulatory process and how political hurdles often interfere, enables her to drive success for her clients.

Prior to her work at Cassidy, she served as Director of Legislative Affairs for United Fresh Produce Association where she led the produce industry's International Trade Council and served as a member of USDA's Agriculture Technical Advisory Committee in Fruits and Vegetables.



## SCOTT SCHRAGE

*University Communications, Science Writer/Editor*

Scott Schrage is a science writer/editor with University Communication at Nebraska. He covers research that ranges from automated crop-monitoring systems and the physics of a thrown football to dissolvable medical implants and arachnid mating rituals. His stories have generated coverage in The New York Times, The Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe, NPR, Wired, Popular Science, The Atlantic and National Geographic.



# SPEAKER BIO

## *Session 4 – Exploring our Role in Food System Defense*

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### NEAL WOOLLEN

*NSRI Senior Research Strategy Officer*

Colonel, USA (Ret) Neal Woollen is the Senior Research Strategy Officer for the National Strategic Research Institute (NSRI), a University Affiliated Research Center (UARC), sponsored by the US Strategic Command and affiliated with the University of Nebraska.

Dr. Woollen served as a US Navy Hospital Corpsman (1975–1979) and retired from the US Army Veterinary Corps (May, 2018) after more than 29 years of military service. He earned Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Ph.D. degrees from Kansas State University and a Master's degree in Strategic Studies from the US Army War College.

Throughout the second phase of his military career, his work focused primarily on managing consequences associated with zoonotic diseases and high consequence pathogens that may cause endemic or pandemic disease, be used as biological weapons, or be accidentally released from containment. Dr. Woollen is experienced in laboratory studies, field work with outbreak investigations and mobile platform diagnostics, and response to accidental and intentional release of pathogens.

Prior to military retirement he was tasked to develop, staff and execute a new office in the Department of Defense focused on managing risk associated with biological select agents and toxins (BSAT), the BSAT Biorisk Program Office, that merged the disciplines of biosafety and biosecurity.

In between periods of active duty military service, Dr. Woollen was engaged in production animal health research for the United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service, and received training in foreign animal disease diagnostics.

# PANELIST BIOS

## *Session 5 – IANR's Statewide Platform for Integrated Programming*

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### JEFF BRADSHAW

*Interim Director, Panhandle Research, Extension and Education Center*

Dr. Bradshaw began working at the Panhandle Research and Extension Center in 2010. His research focuses on the applied ecology (i.e., agroecology) of insects in High Plains row crops and rangeland. His research is especially focused on the biological control of insect pests, insect pest monitoring, and novel pest strategies that improved profitability through conservation practices and reduced input costs for pest management.

### KELLY BRUNS

*Director, West Central Research, Extension and Education Center*

Kelly Bruns grew up on a diversified livestock and cropping operation near Grand Island, Nebraska. He received degrees from University of Nebraska, B.S.; Michigan State University, M.S.; and South Dakota State University, Ph.D. At South Dakota State he conducted research in beef cattle with an emphasis on management effects on carcass quality and taught courses in beef cattle management and marketing. In 2014 he accepted a position as Associate Director of the West Central Research and Extension Center in North Platte, NE and in 2016 he was appointed as Director of the Center. He served as interim Dean of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture for the 2019/2020 academic year.



### DOUG ZALESKY

*Director, Eastern Nebraska Research, Extension and Education Center*

Native of Western Nebraska

Education

A.S. – Eastern Wyoming College

B.S. – University of Nebraska – Lincoln – Animal Science

M.S. – University of Nebraska – Lincoln – Animal Science

Ph.D. – Texas A& M University – Animal Science

Post-Doc. – University of Nebraska – Lincoln

Employment

Louisiana State University 1991–1993

South Dakota State University 1993–2000

Colorado State University 2000–2010

University of Wyoming 2011–2018

Started as ENREEC Director on April 1, 2018

