

# BIOGRAPHIES FOR 2024 SWSS OFFICERS ELECTION

## Vice-President



Dr. Tom Barber was born and raised on a small cattle and row-crop farm near Texarkana in Southwest Arkansas. Tom received his B.S. in Agronomy (1998) and M.S in Weed Science (2000) from the University of Arkansas under the leadership of Dr. Dick Oliver. In 2001 he moved to Mississippi State University where he pursued a PhD in Weed Science (2004) under the direction of Dr. Dan Reynolds, and immediately accepted his first role as Extension Cotton Specialist for Mississippi State. In 2007 Tom returned to Arkansas where he currently holds the position of Professor/Extension Weed Scientist and Director of the Jackson County Extension Center with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. Tom has received numerous awards from colleagues, associations, conferences and the Division of Agriculture for his work as both as an Extension Agronomist and Weed Scientist. Tom currently conducts applied

weed control research in corn, cotton, grain sorghum, peanut, soybean and rice to provide accurate recommendations to farmers, consultants and other members of the Arkansas Agricultural Industry. In 2018 Tom accepted administrative responsibilities to manage research projects and construction of a new office and meeting facility at the Jackson County Extension Center. Over his career he is listed as author or co-author of 69 peer reviewed journal articles, 127 extension publications and 260 abstracts submitted to regional and national symposia.

Tom has always had a passion to serve both the agricultural industry and various support organizations. Among others, Tom has served on the Board of Directors and as President of the Arkansas Crop Protection Association, Section Chair and Steering Committee for Beltwide Cotton Conferences, Associate Editor for the Journal of Cotton Science, and WSSA Herbicide Resistant Plants Committee. Tom has been an active member of SWSS since 1998 and he began serving the society as President of the Graduate Student Organization in 2003. Over the last 20 years, Tom has volunteered to judge the student paper and poster contests and serve as section chair over numerous poster and paper sessions. In addition, he has served on various committee assignments including Sales Coordination, Sustaining Membership, Continuing Education, and Finance. Tom recently rotated off the SWSS Board of Directors where he served for the last three years as Member-at-Large for academia.



Shawn Askew is originally from Mississippi, USA and obtained his B.S. and M.S. degrees at Mississippi State University. He received his Ph.D. degree in weed science at North Carolina State University in 2001 and currently serves as professor of turfgrass weed science at Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences. Dr. Askew's primary responsibility is to provide statewide leadership in the development of weed control programs for turfgrass and serves as the state's extension specialist for turfgrass weed science. His research in turfgrass at Virginia Tech has generated over \$13 million in funding with \$4.5 million to his lab. He has graduated 23 graduate students and currently mentors 4 Ph.D. students, and 1 M.S. student. Dr. Askew has authored or coauthored 115 peer-reviewed journal articles, 505 scientific abstracts, 300 extension articles, and over 1300 invited talks, lectures, and extension presentations. He is Past President and Fellow of the Northeastern Weed Science Society, Outstanding Young Weed Scientist (2012) for the Southern Weed Science Society and Outstanding Early Career Weed Scientist (2011) for the Weed Science Society of America.

## **Member at Large – Academia**



David Russell is an Assistant Professor and Extension Weed Specialist in the Department of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences at Auburn University. David grew up in south Mississippi where he learned early the value of hard work on his family's small cow-calf operation. He received dual undergraduate degrees in Landscape Architecture and Contracting in 2009 and his M.S. degree in Agronomy in 2012 from Mississippi State University. In 2013, David began working as an Extension Associate with Dr. John Byrd at MSU where he conducted Weed Science research and provided statewide outreach programs in forages and non-crop areas. During this time, he earned his PhD in Weed Science focusing on pasture renovation techniques and controlling toxic and invasive species in forages. David continued working as an Extension Associate until he joined Auburn University in 2019 where he was stationed at the

Tennessee Valley Research & Extension Center.

David has an applied weed science program that focuses on troublesome species in corn, soybean, small grains, forage pasture, and non-crop areas across Alabama. He and his family recently moved in June 2023 to Auburn where he continues his statewide weed management and Extension programs from Auburn University's main campus.

David has been actively involved in the Southern Weed Science Society and the Weed Science Society of America since 2013. He has served as chair or co-chair on the program committee for Pastures, Rangeland, Utility, & ROW; Soil & Environmental Aspects; and the Forest Vegetation Management sections. David has also worked as a contest judge for student competitions at the annual WSSA and SWSS conferences as well as a volunteer and coach for regional weed contests since 2019. He is actively involved in the Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents & Specialists and has been awarded 5 Communications Awards with the organization since 2020. He is currently serving on the boards of the Alabama Vegetation Management Association and the Alabama Invasive Plant Council. David has authored or co-authored 5 peer-reviewed papers, 21 peer-reviewed Extension publications, and 48 meeting abstracts. David is currently advising or co-advising 6 Master's students and has served, or continues to serve on, 4 Master's and 2 Doctoral students' committees.



Hannah Wright-Smith joined the University of Arkansas Horticulture Department in October of 2022 as an Assistant Professor and Extension Weed Specialist for Turf and Specialty Crops. Hannah grew up on small vegetable farm in Long Creek, SC where she and her family sold fresh produce at the local farmers market and to restaurants in a nearby town. She attended Mississippi State University, earning her B.S. degree in Agribusiness in the fall of 2016. During her undergraduate career Hannah had three summer internships with FMC as a sales and marketing intern. During her sales internships she had the opportunity to experience southern agriculture from the Carolinas to Arkansas and Louisiana, and work in corporate headquarters in Philadelphia, PA. After completing her undergraduate degree, Hannah attended the University of Arkansas and began working on her M.S. degree as a student of Dr. Jason Norsworthy. After completing her Masters thesis

work, she joined Dr. Stanley Culpepper's program at the University of Georgia and defended her dissertation in September 2022. Throughout her graduate career, Hannah worked with multiple row and specialty crops, including rice, cotton, cantaloupe, and broccoli. She has authored or coauthored 5 peer-reviewed publications and is preparing several more, 28 meeting abstracts, 3 research series articles, 4 Extension publications, and given 18 Extension presentations and 3 invited presentations.

As a student Hannah was active in WSSA and SWSS, serving as the Social Chair and Endowment Committee student representative for the SWSS Student Organization. She was the recipient of the 2021 SWSS Endowment Enrichment Scholarship and placed 1<sup>st</sup> in the SWSS oral Ph.D. contest (2021), 2<sup>nd</sup> in the M.S. poster contest (2018), and 3<sup>rd</sup> in the WSSA 3MT Ph.D. contest (2021). Hannah competed multiple times at the SWSS Weed Contest, placing in the top 5 twice (4<sup>th</sup> – 2018; 5<sup>th</sup> – 2021), as the top individual in the Farmer Problem twice (2018, 2021), and as a member of the 1<sup>st</sup> place team (2018). At the North American Weed Science Contest (Weed Olympics), she placed in the top 3 for the Southern Region and top individual in unknown herbicide identification for the Southern Region (2019). She continues her involvement by serving on the SWSS student contest committee and as the Turf and Ornamentals Section Vice Chair for WSSA. Additionally, Hannah serves as treasurer for the Sports Field Managers Association – Arkansas Chapter, and secretary for SERA48. Hannah resides in Little Rock, AR with her husband Tyler and dog, Doug. In her free time, she loves cooking with Tyler, cuddling with Doug, and crocheting.

### **Member at Large – Industry**



Matthew Wiggins serves as a Regional Business Manager with FMC covering the Midsouth. His passion of agriculture started from being active in 4-H and FFA showing beef cattle and participating in many different development events. Matthew received a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, with an emphasis in Agricultural Engineering Technology (2009) from Tennessee Technological University. Upon graduation, Matthew attended the University of Tennessee and received his M.S. (2012) in Plant Sciences and Ph.D. in Weed Science (2014), under the guidance of Dr. Larry Steckel. His Ph.D. research focused on herbicide-resistance management by integrating winter-annual cover crops and herbicide programs to control Palmer amaranth in corn, cotton, and soybean systems.

Matthew received several awards during his graduate school career and professional career from regional and national organizations. Most recently, he was recognized by SWSS as the Outstanding Young Weed Scientist – Industry in 2021. FMC also recognized Matthew by awarding him the Ignite Award and the Tower Award in 2020. Additionally, he was recognized in 2017 by the Weed Science Society of America as an author for the Outstanding Paper Published in Weed Technology in 2016.

Matthew is involved in many organizations both regionally and nationally, including the Tennessee Agricultural Production Association (past president), Southern Soybean Diseases Workers, Kentucky Agriculture Training School, the Crop Protection Network (advisory board), and SWSS. He continues to serve the Southern Weed Science Society by volunteering to participate on various committees and supporting graduate student activities. Matthew currently serves as the past Student Contest Program Chair, SWSS Weed Contest Chair, and will rotate on to committees and sub-committees in the coming years.



Tom Eubank has over 30 years' experience in the field of agricultural in and around the Mississippi Delta. Tom began his career on his family-owned cotton farm near Scott, MS. Upon graduating from Mississippi State University in 1992 with a B.S. in Agronomy he worked as a field agronomist for a local farmers cooperative. In 2004, Tom returned to MSU to further his education and completed both his master's and Ph.D. in Weed science under the tutelage of Dr. Dan Poston and Dr. David Shaw. Afterward, he accepted a role as a soybean weed scientist and agronomist at the MSU Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, MS. During his time with MSU, Dr. Eubank conducted research on many

troublesome weeds such as glyphosate-resistant horseweed, Italian ryegrass, and Palmer amaranth.

Dow Agrosiences hired Tom in 2014 as a Grain Development Specialist for Mycogen Seeds and supporting the Enlist technology. After the merger of Dow and Dupont to form Corteva Agrisciences, Tom accepted the role of Cotton Development Specialist with PhytoGen cottonseed. In 2022, Dr. Eubank accepted his current role of farm supervisor and agronomist at the Nutrien Innovation Farm in Winterville, MS. His current responsibilities include testing and demonstrating innovative and sustainable farming practices while working in collaboration with many major chemical companies. Tom is active with many professional organizations including Southern Weed Science Society, American Society of Agronomy, National Cotton Council, MS Ag. Industry Council, MS Seedsman Assoc., MS Weed Science Society, MS Agronomy Society, and the MS Agricultural Consultants Assoc. Tom is also very involved with his local church, First Baptist Church in Greenville, MS, as a deacon and men's Sunday school teacher.

### **Endowment Foundation (Regular Election):**



Dr. Connor Webster joined Louisiana State University as an Assistant Professor and Statewide Extension Weed Specialist in February of 2022, working in Rice Weed Science. Connor is a native of north Alabama where he grew up scouting/consulting in cotton, soybeans, and corn. He received a B.S. in Agronomy and Soils from Auburn University in 2017, where he served as the President of the Agronomy and Soils Club. Connor then went on to earn a M.S. in Weed Science from LSU in 2019 and a Ph.D. in Weed Science from LSU in 2022.

As a graduate student, Connor was an active member of the WSSA, SWSS, and the Rice Technical Working Group (RTWG). He was recognized for several accomplishments across these societies throughout his graduate career. He placed first place in the student oral competition at the RTWG meeting in 2018, placed second place in the Ph.D. oral competition at the SWSS meeting in 2020, and placed second in the student poster competition at the RTWG meeting in 2020. Connor was also a member of the third place LSU weed team in both 2018 and 2021, and in 2021 he finished as the fourth-place individual overall and first-place in the weed identification section of the contest.

Connor is an author of four peer-reviewed journal articles and serves as an active reviewer for Weed Technology. He also serves on the editorial board for the Louisiana Agriculture magazine that is distributed by the LSU AgCenter. He is an author of 65+ abstracts, 11 invited international presentations, and gives numerous extension presentations at winter grower meetings, field days, etc. each year. Connor is serving as the student contest chair and the weed control chair for the International Temperate Rice Conference, which will be held in June of 2024 in New Orleans.

He serves as the coach of the LSU weed team and teaches Weed Biology and Ecology as well as Plant-Herbicide Physiology on campus. Connor is currently advising 3 MS students, 1 PhD student, and serving as a co-advisor for another MS student and two other PhD students. Connor served as the Local Arrangements Chair for the SWSS meeting in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in 2023 and continues to be a very active member of the Southern Weed Science Society. In his spare time, Connor enjoys spending time with his family, hunting, and shooting competitive sporting clays. Connor resides in Zachary, Louisiana with his wife Reagen and daughter Annie.



Luis Avila is an Associate Professor and Dr. Glover B. Triplett Endowed Chair within the Plant and Soil Sciences Department, Mississippi State University. Dr. Avila is originally from Brazil where he started his 23-years career in weed science. More recently, he has made a significant transition to the United States to assume a role in teaching and research at MSU. Dr. Avila's research interest is broad in weed science, including integrated weed management, building resilient and sustainable weed management systems, and in innovation in weed science.



**Endowment Foundation (Special Election – 4 Year Term):**



Lawson Priess, a Weatherford, TX native, found his passion in agriculture during high school. He worked on a cattle ranch, raised livestock, and was involved in various FFA activities. Lawson spent multiple summers working in the Panhandle of Texas as Crop Scout and Independent Research Assistant, and interned for DuPont in Arkansas. He graduated from Stephen F. Austin University in 2016 with a B.S. in Agronomy and completed his M.S. and Ph.D. in Weed Science from the University of Arkansas.

His Ph.D. research assessed interactions of auxin herbicides and glufosinate as well as identifying glufosinate resistance in Palmer amaranth populations. Lawson was successful at competing at the SWSS Weed Contest, winning 1st place overall individual in 2021 and 5th place overall individual in 2017 and 2018. During his time as a M.S. and Ph.D. student, Lawson served as Vice President and President of the SWSS graduate student organization. and was recognized for his academic and extracurricular achievements with awards such as the 2019 and 2021 Department of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences Outstanding M.S. and Ph.D. Student Award, Outstanding M.S. student in SWSS, and Outstanding Ph.D. student in WSSA.

After graduate school, Lawson currently serves as a Technical Service Manager with FMC and services the Midsouth States. He works on a team of bright individuals who he enjoys tremendously. Lawson currently resides in the Benton, AR with his wife Rachel and their Labrador JoJo.



Dr. Joey Williams is a native of Franklin, TN and was raised on a small two-century old family farm raising cattle and small grains. He received his B.S. in Agriculture Science in 2015 from University of TN at Martin and M.S. in Agronomy from Miss. State University in 2018, under the direction of Dr. Brien Henry. He also received his Ph.D. from Miss State in 2021 with a concentration in Agronomy and minor in Entomology under the direction of Drs. Darrin Dodds and Brien Henry. During his time at Mississippi State, he attended and competed in an array of student contests at scientific society meetings such as WSSA, SWSS, and Agronomy Society of America.

Currently, he serves as an Agronomic Research Manager with Bayer Crop Science. Joey aids in field testing, protocol development, and trial execution of new plant health and herbicide-tolerant native and biotechnology traits, crop protection products, and system improvement concepts in corn, cotton, soybean, wheat, and weeds research. He also co-hosted the 2023 WSSA National Weed Science Contest in Union City, TN.