



## VERÓNICA ACOSTA-MARTÍNEZ

### **Lead Soil Scientist (Microbiologist/Biochemist)**

United States Department of Agriculture  
Agricultural Research Service  
*Lubbock, Texas*

**V**erónica Acosta-Martínez first came to Purdue University in 1993 in a summer-long scholarship cohort from Puerto Rico. After digging deep into microbiology and soils and honing her English skills, Acosta-Martínez vowed she would return for a master's degree. By 1997, she had it.

Today, Acosta-Martínez has established nearly 20 years of research and leadership for the Agricultural Research Service arm of the United States Department of Agriculture. She is a soil scientist specializing in microbiology and biochemistry for the Wind Erosion and Water Conservation Research Unit of USDA-ARS's Cropping Systems Research Laboratory in Lubbock, Texas.

As her unit's lead scientist, Acosta-Martínez strives to better understand how soil processes affect agricultural outcomes in arid Texas climates. Alongside her team, she examines the ways in which soil's microbial composition affects its overall health and functions of soil, plant and animal productivity in a changing climate.

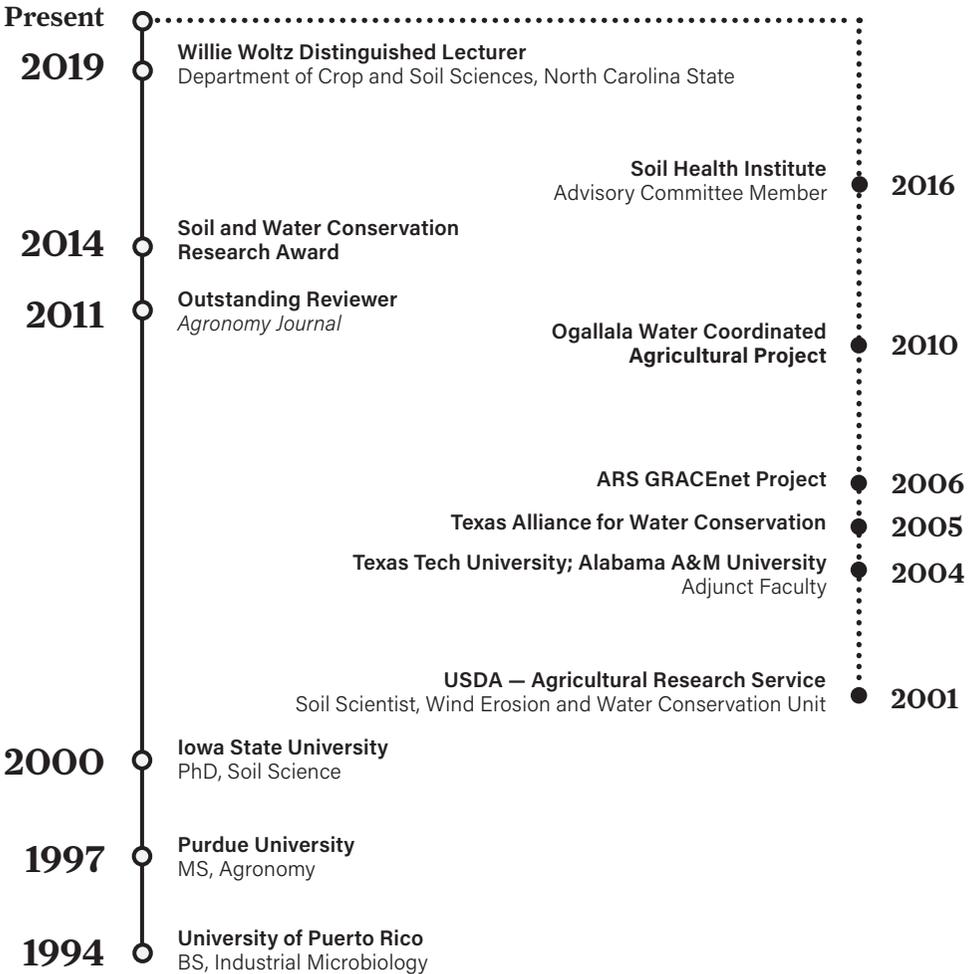
Her 2016 efforts to identify indicators for national soil health assessments helped build framework for the Soil Health Institute, a nonprofit organization that coordinates and supports soil stewardship. As a member of SHI's Advisory Committee, Acosta-Martínez is working to link the efforts of the SHI and the USDA Soil Health Division.

Acosta-Martínez also contributes to the Ogallala Water Coordinated Agricultural Project, which addresses water decline in the Ogallala Aquifer — spanning 225,000 square miles of the Great Plains — and its implications on agricultural sustainability. She also leads the ARS Soil Biology Group, which quantifies greenhouse gas emissions from farmed soils.

Acosta-Martínez is the associate editor of several journals and an adjunct faculty member at Texas Tech University, Texas A&M University – Kingsville, Alabama A&M University and the University of Puerto Rico's Mayagüez campus. She also is a member of the American Society of Agronomy, Soil Science Society of America, and Soil and Water Conservation Society.

*Dr. Acosta-Martínez is well respected throughout the USDA for her efforts to strengthen collaborative research, target funding opportunities and facilitate the exchange of resources for efficiency. Not only is she an incredible asset to the agricultural community, she embodies the level of success to which Purdue students can look forward after receiving a degree from the College of Agriculture.”*

— Ron Turco, Professor and Head,  
Department of Agronomy, Purdue University





## KELLY BRAYTON

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### Professor, Department of Veterinary Microbiology and Pathology

Washington State University  
Pullman, Washington

**K**elly Brayton is an internationally recognized authority on the genomics of tick-borne pathogens that cause livestock disease worldwide. Brayton's career success reflects her commitment to solving this ongoing challenge in agriculture.

Brayton received her PhD from Purdue University's Department of Biochemistry in 1993. Under the guidance of professor Jack Dixon, she received the David Ross Research Fellowship and National Institutes of Health Training Grant position. Brayton continued to follow her passion through a unique postdoctoral position at Onderstepoort Veterinary Institute in Pretoria, South Africa, where she later became a chief researcher.

Her work addresses areas of transmission biology, pathogen persistence and vaccine discovery. At Washington State University, Brayton focused her efforts on *Anaplasma marginale*, the world's most prevalent tick-borne livestock pathogen. Each year, the pathogen incurs more than \$300 million in costs to American livestock production. Other nations rely on live vaccines, which are barred in the

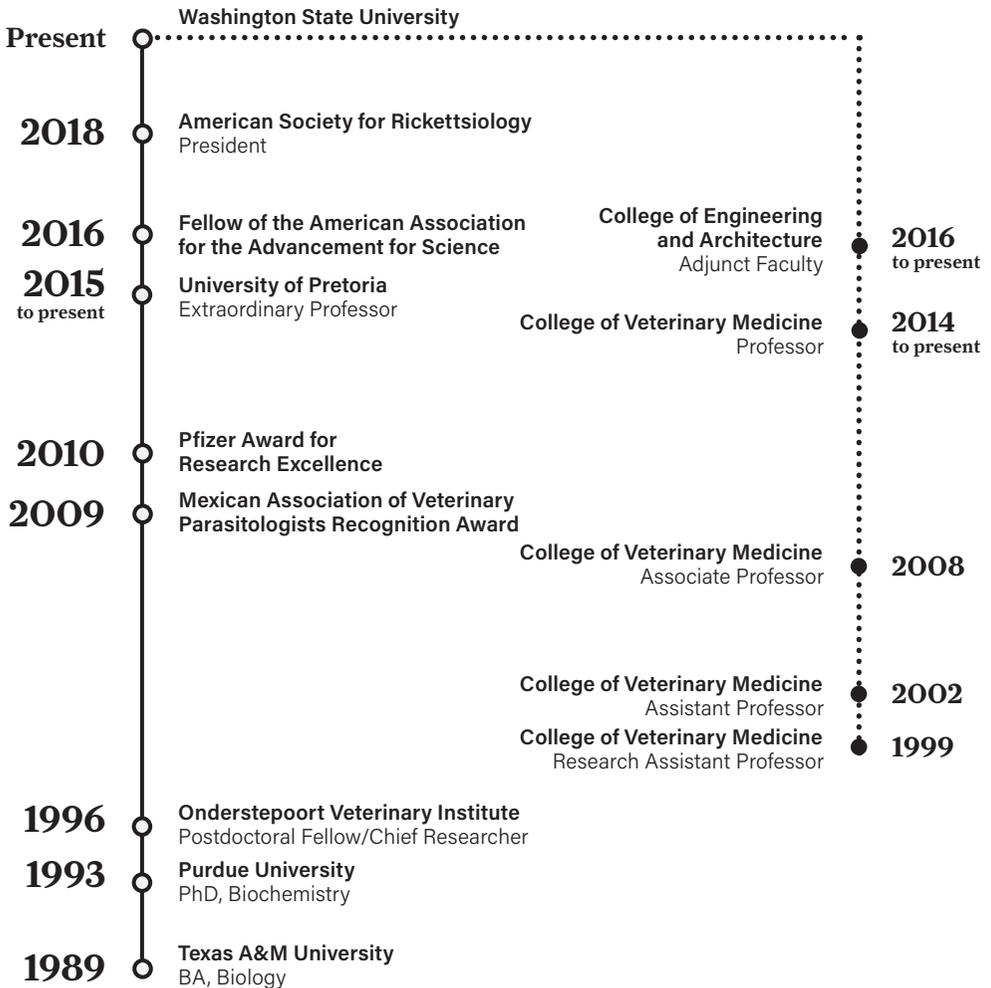
United States due to a risk of incidental transmission. As such, there are currently no approved vaccines for *Anaplasma marginale* in the U.S.

Brayton's group was the first to generate a complete genome sequence of the pathogen. Their application of genomics and bioinformatic analysis has led to testing for a number of U.S.-viable vaccine candidates. The work also spawned a study assessing the movement of tick-borne pathogens from wildlife into domestic animals and humans. That study is in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, where Brayton holds the title of Extraordinary Professor.

Throughout her career, Brayton has published 135 articles and mentored seven postdoctoral researchers and 21 graduate students. She also has opened her laboratory to 10 visiting international scholars from South Africa, Australia, Mexico and China. For her achievements, Brayton has earned numerous awards and accolades, including the Mexican Association of Veterinary Parasitologists Recognition Award, the Pfizer Award for Research Excellence and a position as president of the American Society for Rickettsiology.

*Dr. Brayton has a career filled with impressive contributions in the field, extensive international collaborations and mentorship to the next generation of researchers. Her demonstrated accomplishments in the application of basic science to a key agricultural problem are a testimony to the spirit of the land-grant university researcher.*

— Andrew Mesecar, Professor and Head,  
Department of Biochemistry, Purdue University





## CURT EMENHISER

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### **Food Research & Development Leader**

*Fremont, Michigan*

**C**urt Emenhiser's work has improved the availability and nutritional quality of baby food products and processes on a global scale.

Emenhiser has led research efforts concerning nutrients in fresh and thermally processed fruits and vegetables through his work at Nestlé-Gerber and in academic collaboration with faculty at Purdue, Ohio State, Cornell and other universities. His work has sought to improve the nutrient content and health benefits of processed foods, primarily baby foods.

Emenhiser has held positions of increasing responsibility in product development since beginning his career as a food chemist at the Gerber Products Company in 1996. As vice president for global technology management at Nestlé-Gerber, Emenhiser managed pilot plant operations; safety, health and environment; and other continuous improvement initiatives. He oversaw more than 2,800 development or engineering trials to support innovation and capability development. In this capacity, he also provided technical assistance to all Nestlé baby food factories worldwide.

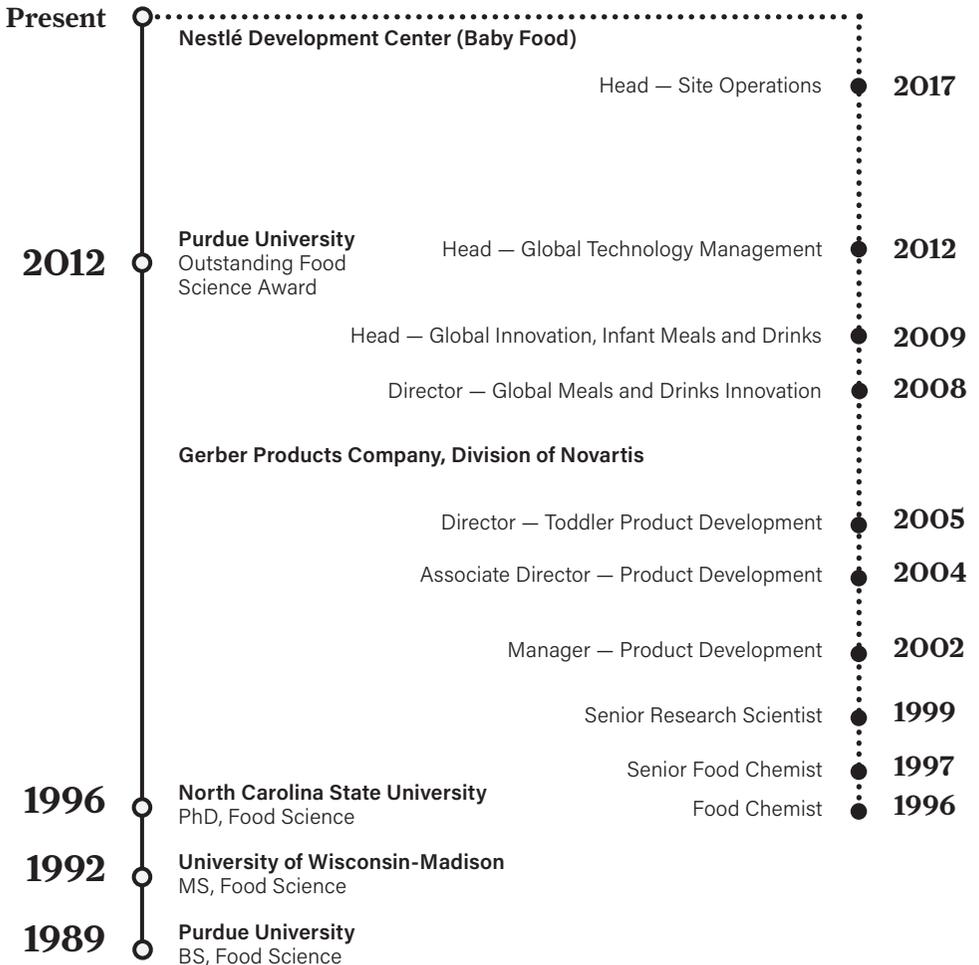
As the company's vice president of global innovation, Emenhiser led innovation platform teams in product development, packaging and process engineering. His teams delivered some of the most successful products in company history, including Melts (a freeze-dried yogurt snack for toddlers), and such packaging innovations as a self-feeding pouch for toddlers. During this period, the company attained record U.S. market share and more than doubled sales within its toddler segment. These efforts contributed to the 2007 sale of Gerber to Nestlé for \$5.6 billion.

Emenhiser also has been instrumental in such improvements as implementing a stage-gate process, creating a culinary center and packaging design capabilities, and integrating Nestlé systems and work processes following the Gerber acquisition.

Emenhiser is a premier member of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT) and has chaired IFT's Great Lakes section and its Student Association. He has a dozen peer-reviewed publications in food chemistry and nutrition from his graduate research and technical roles at Nestlé-Gerber.

*Curt's career accomplishments, along with his support of Purdue's Department of Food Science and contributions to the food science discipline and industry, make him an ideal candidate for this award.*

— Brian Farkas, Former Department Head and Professor,  
Department of Food Science, Purdue University





## TREY HILL

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### **Chief Executive Officer**

Harborview Farms  
Rock Hall, Maryland

**N**ot one to back away from a challenge, Trey Hill has become a prominent leader and spokesperson for sustainable, successful agriculture in the nation's Mid-Atlantic region — balancing a sensitivity to environmental stewardship with the economic potential of agricultural production.

Hill and his father, Herman Hill, own and operate Harborview Farms, which spans 13,000 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat on the banks of the Chesapeake Bay. Together, they innovate at an intersection of production, technology and ecology. Since 1999, Harborview has fully adopted the use of cover crops and is now 100 percent no-till. In 2017, Hill implemented a pollinator program to establish natural habitats through those cover crops. He also established over 100 acres of quail habitat in collaboration with the Washington College Center for Environment. Harborview also powers a good portion of its daily operation through the use of solar arrays.

Hill's insights and initiatives have been featured in *Farm Futures Magazine*, *Farm Journal* and a Chesapeake Bay Foundation podcast. He also has been a featured

speaker at the National Academy of Science and the Soil Conservation Society's National Soil Health Conference.

In 2015, Hill was one of 12 individuals nationwide recognized as a White House Champion of Change for Sustainable and Climate-Smart Agriculture. Additionally, DuPont Pioneer recognized Harborview as the "World's Most Widely Visited Farm" in 2015, citing visitors from at least 42 different countries. Harborview also was named the first Bayer ForwardFarm in North America in 2018.

Hill's passion for the environment has led to many partnerships with other businesses and organizations to find techniques and discoveries that can provide an even more sustainable future for Mid-Atlantic agriculture. Harborview has teamed with the University of Maryland, United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Health Institute, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and others to perform on-farm soil research. Hill also serves his local community as a United Way board member and leads Harborview's monthly efforts to supply protein to a local food pantry.

*Trey's commitment to, and innovation in, sustainable agriculture is a model from which producers nationwide can seek inspiration. Under his guidance, Harborview Farms uses many techniques — including precision agriculture, extensive cover cropping, solar power and wildlife habitats — to successfully manage operations and drive change in the industry.*

— Jayson Lusk, Distinguished Professor and Head,  
Department of Agricultural Economics, Purdue University





## MARVIN N. MILLER

**Market Research Manager**  
Ball Horticultural Company  
*West Chicago, Illinois*

**E**ven before he completed his second of two degrees from Purdue University, Marvin Miller was helping to drive change and success in the horticulture industry.

Miller received his BS degree in Horticulture and his MS degree in Agricultural Economics at Purdue. Under the mentorship of professor Eric Oesterle for the latter, Miller researched consumer preferences and attitudes toward cut flowers in supermarkets. At the time, only five national chains regularly sold cut flowers due to profitability concerns. By identifying mass-market potential for mixed bouquets, Miller's work helped increase sales; within several years, over 80% of U.S. supermarkets profitably sold cut flowers.

After completing his PhD at the University of Florida in 1983, Miller joined the Ball Horticultural Company, which breeds, produces and distributes seeds, cuttings, plugs and liners to commercial floriculturists worldwide. Today, Miller plays an essential role in organizing sales coverage, training sales representatives and new employees, and identifying trends to meet consumer demand.

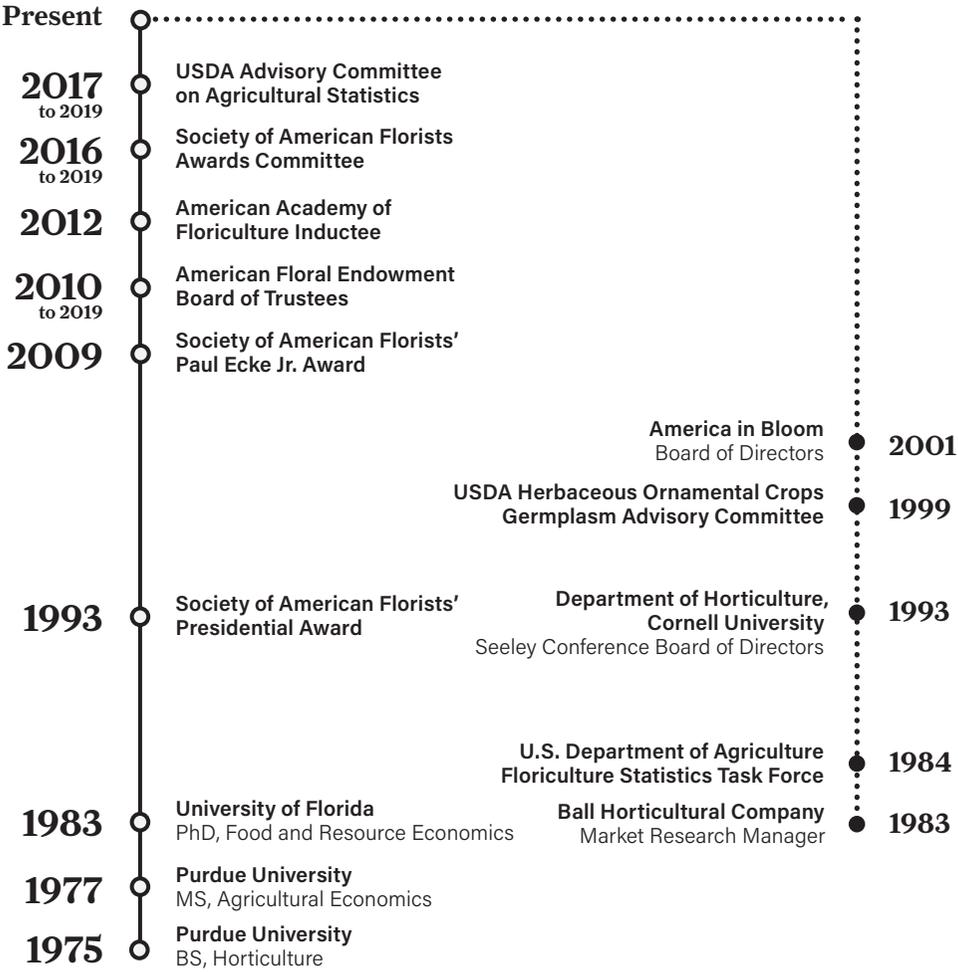
He also regularly contributes to the company's two industry-leading magazines and newsletters.

Miller has also served on many industry boards and advisory committees, including efforts for the United States Department of Agriculture. He also served on the Purdue Agriculture Dean's Advisory Council and previously received Purdue Horticulture's Distinguished Alumni Award. He regularly welcomes opportunities to share his expertise with students, faculty and Extension personnel. Miller also has been a frequent guest lecturer at Purdue, and this past August, he realized his longstanding goal to bring the American Floral Endowment Board's annual meeting to Purdue.

In June 2019, Miller bicycled 150 miles over two days to raise funds for Illinois' chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. He is also a founding board member for America in Bloom, a nonprofit dedicated to building community pride in U.S. cities and towns by incorporating horticulture in beautification efforts while encouraging environmental awareness and heritage appreciation.

*Marvin's exceptional accomplishments are far-reaching. His contributions in administration, national marketing programs for ornamental plants, service on industry boards and governmental advisory committees, and direct participation in meeting with Purdue students have touched the lives of many.*

— Hazel Y. Wetzstein, Professor Emerita, and  
 Aaron Patton, Interim Department Head and Professor,  
 Department of Horticulture & Landscape Architecture, Purdue University





## RYAN MILLETT

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### **Area Business Manager - U.S. Beef**

Zoetis, LLC  
*Pierceton, Indiana*

To say that Ryan Millett wholeheartedly supports his industry, alma mater and community would be an understatement. In the past year, he was elected to the board of directors for the American Feed Industry Association (AFIA), began serving on the Purdue Ag Alumni Association board and was elected vice president of the Kosciusko County (Indiana) Farm Bureau.

In his current position at Zoetis, Millett leads 10 sales professionals accountable for \$58 million in dairy sales across 12 states in the southeastern United States. He has achieved significant growth in sales and expanded the market share of core beef cattle products.

Millett was on the Livestock Judging Team at Purdue. As a student, he worked at the Calvert and Schooler Beef Farms as well as part-time for ABS Global. After joining ABS Global full-time after graduation, he began attending the College of Agriculture Career Fair, where he recruited top interns. He has since participated in most of the career fairs over the past decade, helping students get internships and full-time employment.

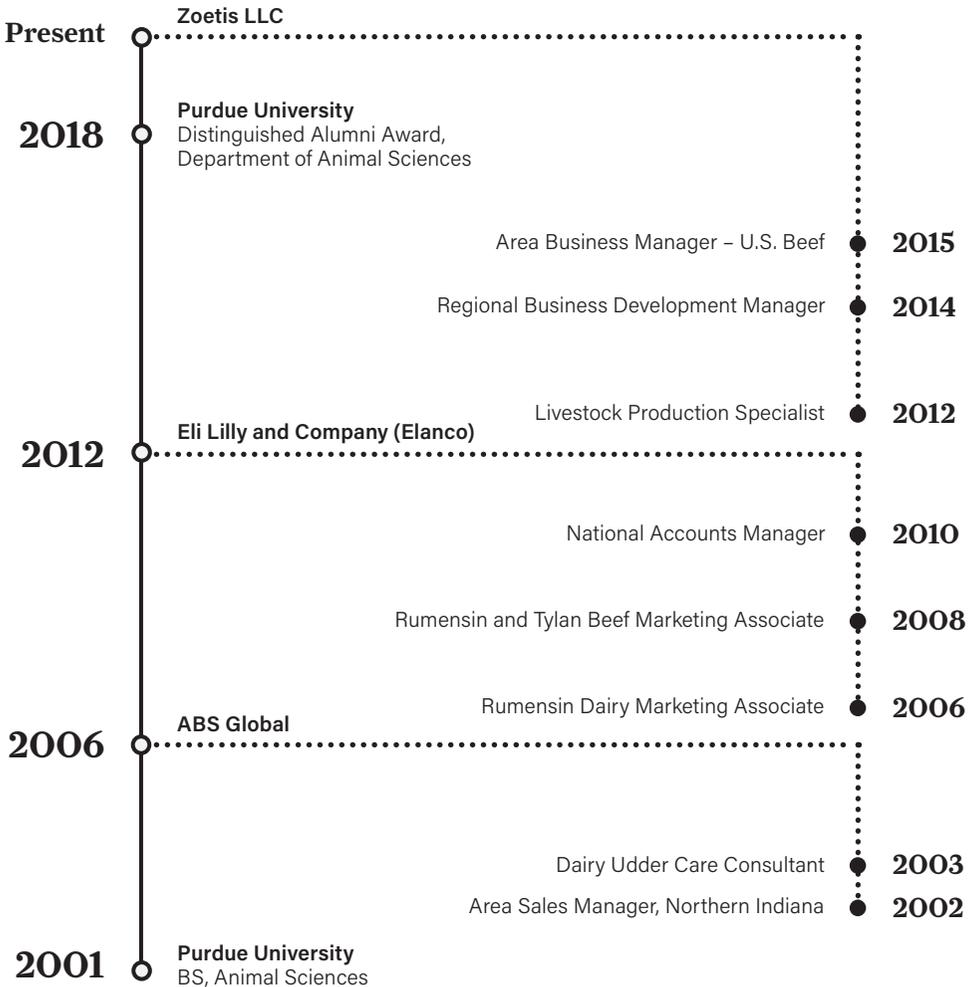
At Elanco, Millett recruited fellow Purdue Animal Sciences alumni to the company. Since joining Zoetis, he was integral in supporting the Zoetis internship program and has hired multiple Purdue students throughout his career.

His many leadership roles have included the AFIA marketing committee, Indiana Beef Cattle Association board and former chair of the Midwest - North American Intercollegiate Dairy Challenge, for which he also serves as a board member.

He has consistently offered his time, expertise and support to students in Purdue Animal Sciences. He has hosted industry tours and taught at the Dairy Center of Purdue's Animal Sciences Research and Education Center multiple times. He has been a guest speaker in Animal Sciences and Agricultural Economics classes and has mentored Purdue students and provided career advice. Most recently, Millett sponsored an educational session for international graduate students at Fair Oaks Dairy.

*Ryan is a star in the industry, serves in many leadership roles in multiple agriculture-related organizations, and has served Purdue University and the College of Agriculture as enthusiastically as any alumnus we know. He represents the very best of our graduates who carry our missions forward throughout their careers.*

— Alan Matthew, Professor and Head,  
Department of Animal Sciences





## KRISTEN PAGE

### **Ruth Kraft Strohschein Distinguished Chair and Professor of Biology**

Wheaton College  
*Wheaton, Illinois*

As a PhD student at Purdue University, Kristen Page focused her dissertation on the ecology and transmission dynamics of raccoon roundworm — which can infect humans and inflict neurological damage. Today, Page's continued work on that topic represents just one of her many research accomplishments that is helping improve wellness worldwide.

Raccoon roundworm poses a significant threat to children who inadvertently play in raccoon latrines, where infected feces can leave behind tens of thousands of eggs that are viable for up to a decade. If eggs are ingested, larvae can migrate to the central nervous system and cause encephalitis, brain damage or death. Suburban backyards are particularly high-risk areas; in just one of Page's studies, she found raccoon latrines in more than half of the backyards surveyed.

Page's work has enabled accurate prediction patterns for high-risk infection areas and safe, ecologically responsible mitigation strategies. Both National Public Radio and the Washington Post have highlighted her findings in media coverage. Additionally, Page has

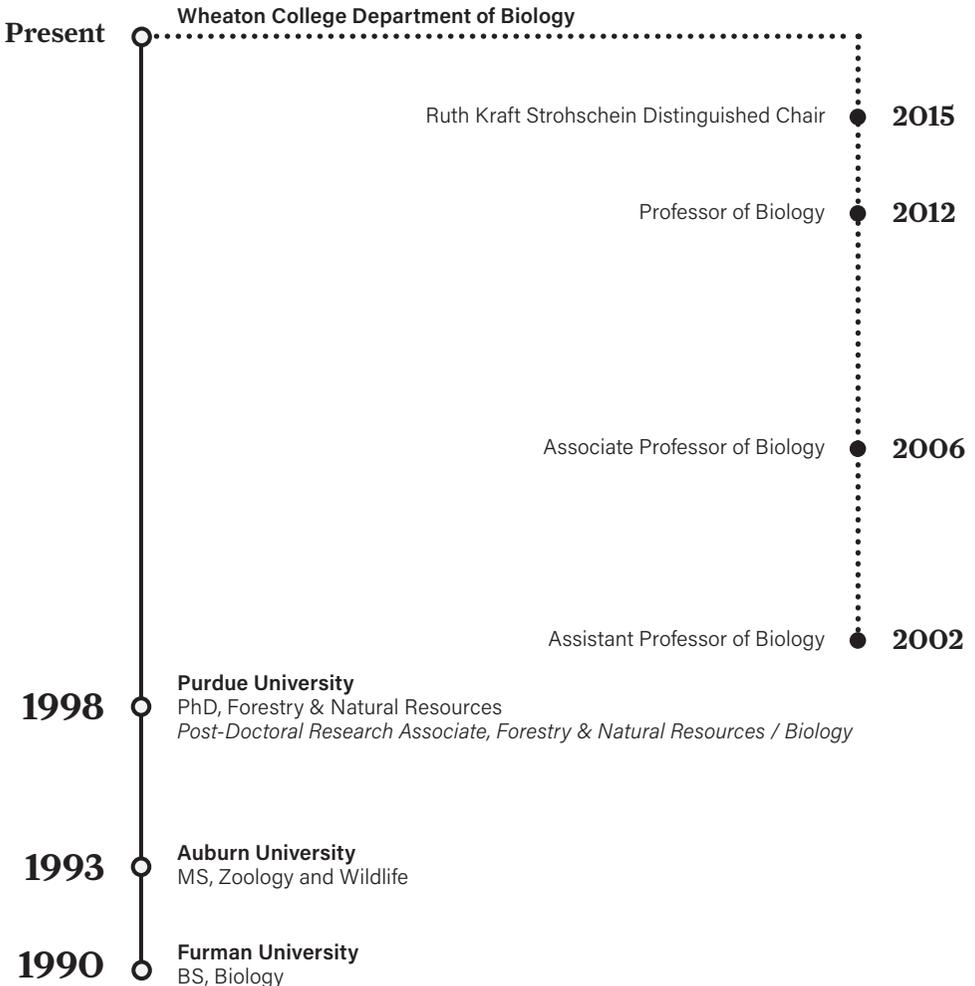
participated in conservation programs for tropical birds in Bolivia, investigated the biodiversity of rare ecosystems in Tanzania, researched agricultural challenges in Thailand, and, in collaboration with physicians, investigated how parasitic infections affect people living with HIV / AIDS in India.

She has also taught biology for 20 years at Wheaton College. Although the college does not require its faculty to sustain research productivity, Page nevertheless remains committed to discovery. She has published 27 papers, including eight with 15 different student co-authors. Her aim is guiding students from the role of pupil to that of colleague, allowing them to experience the full research cycle. She has also personally mentored nearly 100 undergraduate students, as well as 32 students preparing for international internships — an ambassador for her belief that research can improve lives at home and abroad.

Page is a member of the American Society of Parasitologists, the American Society of Mammalogists and the Wildlife Disease Association.

*Dr. Page tirelessly devotes herself to research, mentorship, education and the improvement of wellness worldwide. She has offered indispensable one-on-one guidance to more than 100 students at Wheaton College. And her discoveries are helping keep communities safe in our nation and around the globe. We are extremely proud of her record, which upholds the highest ideals of a Boilermaker.*

— Robert G. Wagner, Professor and Head,  
Department of Forestry & Natural Resources, Purdue University





## WARREN P. PRESTON

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### **Deputy Chief Economist (retiree)**

United States Department of Agriculture  
*Arlington, Virginia*

Warren P. Preston spent most of his career as a source of expert economic intelligence for the United States Department of Agriculture. Over nearly three decades with the USDA, he thrived amid increasingly influential roles — culminating in a position as its deputy chief economist.

From 2016 until his 2019 retirement, Preston was an integral adviser to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture and top USDA policy officials. His specialty encompassed how economic programs, regulations and legislative proposals would affect America's food and fiber systems, as well as the livelihoods of rural producers who help power America's agricultural efforts.

Preston evaluated policy options for numerous complex agriculture issues stateside and overseas — building especially strong relationships with counterparts in Australia, Argentina, Brazil, China, Japan and Sweden — and oversaw everyday activities in the Office of the Chief Economist. Preston also regularly framed discourse about USDA economic policy in ways that helped navigate divergent opinions,

political consequences and limited public understanding.

In times of animal disease epidemics and natural disaster, Preston provided expert counsel to our nation's leaders — offering analyses of economic impacts on American agriculture during the 2015 avian influenza outbreak and the 2017 and 2018 hurricane seasons. Loss estimates developed by Preston and his colleagues formed the USDA's Wildfires and Hurricanes Indemnity Program. In addition, he regularly analyzed multibillion-dollar mergers and acquisitions, streamlined multiple USDA efforts into one Office of Energy and Environmental Policy, and reassessed regulatory rules to help certain sectors of American agriculture save over \$70 million each year.

From 1992 to 2015, Preston worked with the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service and its Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Prior to that, Preston was an assistant professor of agricultural economics at Virginia Tech, focusing on agricultural marketing and the intersection of public policy and food system performance.

*Warren's career with the USDA is remarkable both for his breadth of service and the depth and dedication he brought to it. The department benefited from his nimble responses, objective analysis, confident leadership and stakeholder connections. Warren demonstrates the skills and values that are paramount in our department, and we're proud to call him an alumnus.*

— Jayson Lusk, Distinguished Professor and Head,  
Department of Agricultural Economics, Purdue University





## CATHY H. WU

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**Unidel Edward G. Jefferson Chair,  
Professor & Director of Data Science  
Institute and Center for Informatics  
& Computational Biology**

University of Delaware  
*Newark, Delaware*

Cathy Wu was born and raised in Taiwan, where she earned an undergraduate degree in plant pathology. After completing graduate study in the same field at Purdue with professors Herman Warren and Charles Tsai, she became a postdoctoral fellow at Michigan State. There, Wu recognized that a new field was going to have a transformative impact on biology — the use of computer technology to solve complex problems, or what we now call “bioinformatics.”

Fast-forward 30 years, and Wu has conducted cutting-edge research in the field and developed protein classification systems and databases used by scientists around the world. Foremost among these is the Protein Information Resource (PIR), a public bioinformatics resource used to analyze and compare the sequences and structures of proteins.

PIR collaborated with European organizations to develop UniProt, a unified worldwide database of protein sequences and functions. PIR and UniProt are among the most important tools used in biological and medical research today.

Wu has received more than 60 grants as principal investigator (PI), consortium PI or co-PI from the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation, Department of Energy and other agencies. Her research interests include some of the most dynamic and important topics in current scientific research — artificial neural networks, machine learning, text mining, systems biology, clinical genomics and data analytics.

She has published more than 260 peer-reviewed papers and is in an elite group of the most frequently cited life scientists. Her body of publications has been cited more than 33,000 times, with more than half of these citations in the last five years. This is a testament to the continuing relevance and importance of her work.

Wu also has played an important role in developing educational programs to train students in bioinformatics, helping to fill the growing demand for people with these critical technical skills.

*Dr. Cathy Wu has had a major impact on bioinformatics research and educational programs. She is an outstanding example of how a Purdue Agriculture degree (in this case, two graduate degrees) can launch a career that has global impact.*

— Christopher Staiger, Distinguished Professor and Head,  
Department of Botany & Plant Pathology, Purdue University

