

# Graduate Student RESOURCE MANUAL



ACADEMIC YEAR 2021-2022

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# DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

## Department Head Welcome



**DR. CHRISTOPHER STAIGER**

Department Head &  
Distinguished Professor

[staiger@purdue.edu](mailto:staiger@purdue.edu)

Dear Botany & Plant Pathology Graduate Students:

Welcome to the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at Purdue University! We hope you find your time as a Ph.D. or M.Sc. graduate student in our departmental program both rewarding and stimulating. Our faculty and staff are here to assist with both your short- and long-term career aspirations and to provide a challenging, yet nurturing environment.

Plant and microbial science research are at the cutting edge of providing technological solutions to real world problems. Our faculty, staff and students conduct innovative, world-class research that spans the spectrum of fundamental to applied, providing students with myriad opportunities to engage in research opportunities in the laboratory, the field, and/or world-class facilities on campus and off.

Good luck with your research, teaching, and engagement and we very much look forward to helping you develop as both a scientist and a person.

Best regards,  
Chris

## Department Facts

- The Department of Botany and Plant Pathology was founded in 1887.
- The very first Ph.D. degree awarded from Purdue University was to a student in our department in 1897 named Daniel MacDougal for his thesis titled, "Curvature of Roots".
- Today the department consists of 37 faculty member who perform research in Plant Pathology, Plant Biology, and Weed Science.
- We have 65 graduate students and 55 undergraduate students.
- Our department also manages the Joseph C. Arthur Herbarium, the Plant and Pest Diagnostic Lab, and Purdue Pesticide Programs.

## Contact Information

Department of Botany and Plant Pathology

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West Lafayette, IN 47907

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# Graduate Program Committee

These faculty members serve on the Botany and Plant Pathology Graduate Committee.



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LISA GROSS  
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## Graduate Student Organization 2021-2022 Officers

Mariela Fernandez  
Katherine Rivera  
Mariama Triconia  
Brenden Lane  
BeKa Leuschen

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary  
Media Manager

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# POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

## Introduction

The purpose of this section of the manual is to acquaint the student with the policies and procedures that govern the Graduate Program in Department of Botany and Plant Pathology at Purdue University. The department reserves the right to change these policies and procedures at any time.

The Graduate School regulates all graduate programs at Purdue University. In this way, standards are maintained across the University. These standards include admissions, advisory committee structure, course credit, plan of study format, and registration requirements. Our departmental Graduate Committee uses these general guidelines when reviewing programs and establishing departmental procedures and guidelines.

## Student Responsibilities

Success in graduate school requires that you take ownership for your own learning and professional development. It is important to be aware of the fact that being a graduate student involves more than completing coursework. Graduate school is quite different from undergraduate programs. Generally speaking, there is less structure in a graduate program. This means that you will have to take accountability for keeping your research focused and on track. As such, you will be responsible for the following:

### 1. CHECK YOUR PURDUE.EDU EMAIL

Your purdue.edu email is the official method of communication used by the University, the department, and your advisor. You are responsible for the materials and information sent to your email, even if you choose not to read them. *If you choose not to use the Purdue University email system as your primary email account, be sure to have your email forwarded and regularly check your email so you receive information in a timely fashion. Periodically check your purdue.edu email to make sure all messages have forwarded correctly.*

### 2. UNDERSTAND YOUR DEGREE REQUIREMENTS

It is your responsibility to read and understand this manual and the requirements within. If you have questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

### 3. DEFINING EXPECTATIONS

It is imperative that you meet with your major professor to define what is expected of you. Research and course expectations should be discussed every semester.

### 4. TAKE ACTION

You are required to follow up on any academic or financial actions that have been requested. Failure to do so can result in termination of your registration or a hold placed on your account. Remember, it is easier to remain in good standing than to try to correct oversights for the simple reason that some may not be correctable.

# Graduate Student Progress

Use this checklist to keep track of your progress and monitor upcoming deadlines. Each semester you register for classes and/or research counts towards these deadlines, including the summer semester.

Requirement	Deadline	Complete
<b>Submit Plan of Study</b>	Prior to the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	
<b>Submit Research Proposal</b>	Prior to the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	
<b>Teaching Assistant Assignment</b> *PhD Only	Prior to final year	
<b>Oral English Proficiency</b> *International students requirement to TA	Prior to TA assignment	
<b>Appointment of Advisory Committee</b> <b>MS</b> -Composed of major professor who serves as chair, and 2 other faculty. At least one member from outside BTNY <b>PhD</b> - Composed of major professor who serves as chair, and 2 other faculty. At least one member from outside BTNY	Prior to the end of the 1 <sup>st</sup> semester	
<b>First Committee Meeting</b>	Prior to the end of the 2 <sup>nd</sup> semester	
<b>Committee Meetings</b>	Required Annually	
<b>Preliminary Exam</b> *PhD Only	Required by 7 <sup>th</sup> semester after appointment begins and at least 2 sessions (including Summer session) before date of doctoral final	
<b>Final Exam and Thesis Deposit</b>	Required in final year	
<b>CORE COURSE REQUIREMENTS</b>		
BTNY 69100 (1 cr) Skills for Success in Grad School	Take 1 <sup>st</sup> fall semester	
BTNY 59000 (1 cr) Scientific Presentation		
BTNY 66000 (2-3 cr) or HORT 60300 (1-2 cr) Scientific Writing		
GRAD 61200 (1 cr) Responsible Conduct in Research	Take within 1 <sup>st</sup> year	
STAT 50300 (3 cr) (may take equivalent course approved by committee)		

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# Graduate Program Options

The department offers M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in three graduate programs: Plant Biology, Plant Pathology, and Weed Science.

## Non-Thesis M.S. Program

A non-thesis M.S. degree is designed for those students who do not plan to pursue a career in research. A student who selects a non-thesis Master's option should satisfactorily complete a minimum of 32 hours of coursework. In addition, the student will be required to pass a final examination over the coursework.

## Thesis M.S. Program

The M.S. Program requires the student to complete coursework listed on the plan of study, execute research that culminates in a thesis, and pass an examination over coursework and thesis research. Master's plans of study require 30 hours of combined course and research credits.

## Doctor of Philosophy Program

The Ph.D. Program requires that the student complete coursework listed on the plan of study, execute research that culminates in a dissertation, and pass the required preliminary and final examinations. Ph.D. plans of study require 90 hours of combined course and research credits. Up to 30 credit hours of courses taken during a Master's program may apply toward a Ph.D. program.

# Grades and Index Requirements

A graduate student is expected by both the department and the Graduate School to maintain a cumulative and semester GPA of 3.0. If a student's cumulative or semester GPA falls below 3.0, the student will be placed on departmental probation. If a student earns a GPA less than 3.0 in any two successive semesters or the cumulative GPA stays below 3.0 for two successive semesters, he or she may be asked to discontinue graduate study at Purdue University.

Graduate students are expected to earn S grades for research credits. If a student earns a U grade in two successive semesters the department is required to take formal action with regard to discontinuation or conditions for continuation of the student's graduate study.

# Major Professor

The major professor is a key individual in the development of an individual graduate student's program. The major professor helps the student plan a program of study that will best prepare the student to reach his or her career goals. It is the responsibility of the student to achieve the prescribed level of excellence, with the major professor directing the way. Typically, the major professor is the principal investigator on a grant or project on which the student will be conducting his or her research. During the application phase, the major professor and student may have corresponded or met during a recruiting visit, and have agreed to conduct a research project together.

# Advisory Committee

An advisory committee will be formed during the first semester of the student's enrollment. For those students doing a rotation during their first semester, an advisory committee will be formed once a major professor has been chosen. The student, in consultation with the major professor, will determine the composition of this committee. The committee consists of at least three faculty members for the M.S. and four for the Ph.D. These numbers are including the major professor. All members of the M.S. advisory committee may be from the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology. Three members of the Ph.D. committee may be from the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology, but the fourth member must be from another department. At least half of the members of the Advisory Committee must be from Purdue's West Lafayette campus.

It is the function of the advisory committee to assist the student in developing an appropriate plan of study and to review the detailed research proposal once the preliminary program has been outlined by the major professor and student. The role of

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the committee members is to offer helpful suggestions toward the most effective execution of the research effort. Students are required to have their first committee meeting by the end of their second semester of study. If this deadline is not met, the student will not be allowed to register for the next semester of courses.

The student is required to meet with their advisory committee at least once annually thereafter so that progress can be evaluated. The student's progress is recorded on a report sheet by the committee and then returned to Lisa Gross to be maintained in the student's departmental file.

## Research Proposal

Prior to submitting the plan of study, students will prepare a brief proposal of their research. It is recommended that the student, in consultation with the major professor, outline the research proposal for the graduate research shortly after the student has selected a topic. Prepare the proposal according to the following format:

1. **Introduction:** A clear statement as to why the project is important and necessary. This statement need not be more than one double-spaced typewritten page.
2. **Objectives:** A short, clear statement of the principal objectives of the study.
3. **Procedures:** A detailed and clear outline as to how the student plans to proceed to satisfy the objectives of the study, including treatments, replication, analytical techniques, and other pertinent information. A tentative timetable, sequence of events, and proposed budget of direct costs, including equipment and supplies, are suggested.

The project proposal should not be voluminous, but should clearly state specific plans. It is intended to assist the student in developing a program and to provide maximum benefit for the time and resources expended. After the proposal is complete, it must be presented to the rest of the advisory committee for approval at the student's first committee meeting. The approved proposal must be submitted to Lisa Gross to be maintained as part of the student's departmental file.

## Publication of Research

Research is complete only after the results of that research have been published. All M.S. and Ph.D. graduates are expected to prepare one or more manuscripts suitable for publication. The major professor, in consultation with the student, will determine the type of and place for publication. Authorship should include the student, major professor, and anyone else who makes an important intellectual contribution to the work.

## Responsible Conduct of Research

The research you conduct is funded and published by external agencies that have specific regulations about how data and associated metadata (instrument settings, sample details, etc.) are maintained and shared. In a university setting, the data you generate is owned by the institution, not the professor or the person who generated the data in the first place. In addition, the way in which data is collected and analyzed can differ among different disciplines and laboratories. As a result, the ethics of research and data management is a complex issue that requires the constant attention of researchers. As an introduction to this topic, all BTNY graduate students are required to take the course GRAD 612, Responsible Conduct of Research. All students are expected to adopt the data management practices of their lab.

## Graduate Student Seminars

Graduate student participation in the seminar series is a crucial and integral part of the graduate education process. Students benefit by being exposed to new and different areas of science, meeting and interacting with renowned scientists from around the country and world, and observing many different and effective methods of presentations.

All students will present their final research seminar (exit seminar) before they graduate. It is expected that the student will present a high quality, professional seminar. At the discretion of the student's advisory committee, this may or may not



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substitute for the final defense seminar, typically given during the thesis/dissertation final defense. It is the responsibility of the student to see that they schedule the seminar through Lisa Gross and Amy Deitrich. Typically, this should be done during the semester prior to the one in which the student expects to graduate. Postponing the final examination is not justification for canceling a scheduled seminar.

## Teaching Requirement (Ph.D. students only)

Graduate teaching assistantships are an important component of the graduate education process. Teaching assistantships help develop organizational, speaking, technical, and time-management skills. All Ph.D. students are required to serve as a graduate teaching assistant for a minimum of one semester during their program. All international graduate students must meet the university's English proficiency requirement before serving as a teaching assistant. This is a different requirement than required during the application process.

The specific semester in which a student is required to teach will be determined in consultation with the student's major professor, the department teaching coordinator, and the department head. As a general rule, a student will not be expected to teach in his or her first semester unless admitted on a teaching assistantship. The teaching coordinator and the instructor will determine the student's specific duties and course assignment. To the extent possible, the student's interest/expertise will be matched as closely as possible with the course assignment.

## Time-to-Degree Policy

The length of time required for students to complete all requirements for an advance degree varies greatly with respect to the student's academic background, the type of graduate program and degree sought, the student's level of effort, as well as other factors. However, students must complete their degree requirements in a timely manner. For students to be competitive in the scientific arena, their coursework and research must remain current and relevant.

M.S.: The expected time period for completion of a M.S. degree is 2 to 3 years. If the degree has not been obtained within 3 years and the student has remained in good standing in the department, he or she may request a 1-year extension. The request must be submitted in writing and approved by both the student's advisory committee and the department head at least one semester prior to the end of the third year. Thus, the maximum allowable time to complete the M.S. degree is 4 years (3 years + 1-year extension). Students failing to meet this time requirement will be dropped from the program. A student in "good standing" is defined as one who has completed all required course work with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative GPA and who is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the M.S. research each semester as determined by the student's major professor and advisory committee.

Ph.D.: There is not an "average" time to complete the Ph.D. degree; however, it is expected that most students will complete all requirements within 4 to 6 years. The student should complete the preliminary examination by the end of the seventh semester. If the student does not complete all requirements within the 6-year period, and has remained in good standing in the department, he or she may request a maximum of two 1-year extensions. The request must be submitted in writing and approved by both the student's advisory committee and the department head at least one semester prior to the end of the sixth year. Thus, the maximum allowable time to complete the Ph.D. degree is 8 years (6 years + two 1-year extensions). This policy applies to all Ph.D. students regardless of whether they have a B.S. or M.S. degree prior to entering the Ph.D. Program. It also applies to students enrolled in one of the interdisciplinary programs, but who will ultimately graduate from the Department of Botany & Plant Pathology. Students failing to meet this time requirement will be dropped from the program. A student in "good standing" is defined as one who has completed all required course work with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative GPA and who is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of the Ph.D. research each semester as determined by the student's major professor and advisory committee.

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# Graduate Core Curriculum

The Graduate Faculty have established the following courses that all graduate students are required to successfully complete before they will be eligible to graduate.

- BTNY 69100: Skills for Success(1 cr.) – take during your first fall semester
- BTNY 59000: Scientific Presentation (1 cr.)
- BTNY 66000: Scientific Writing or HORT 60300: Grants and Grantsmanship (1-2 cr.)
- GRAD 61200: Responsible Conduct in Research (1 cr.)-take in first year
- STAT 50300: Statistical Methods for Biology (3 cr.) – may take equivalent course

Total: 8-9 credits

In addition to the core courses above, each student will take additional courses which will be determined in consultation of the student's major professor and graduate advisory committee.

## PLAN OF STUDY

Each graduate student admitted to a degree program must file a Plan of Study. This plan of study is an academic contract between the student and the faculty members of their advisory committee. Students must file their plan of study by the end of their second semester of enrollment. If this deadline is not met, the student will not be allowed to register for the next semester of courses.

### Creating your Plan of Study

You can access the electronic plan of study form via [MyPurdue](#). To begin your plan of study, click on the Plan of Study Generator (POSG) link, then click on "Create new plan of study" link. Once in the POSG, refer to the Help buttons located on each page to assist you in using the electronic POSG. You do not need to complete the entire form in one sitting; you may save your plan of study and return to it later.

When you have completed your plan of study and feel it is ready for approval, submit your plan as "Final." The plan of study form will be electronically routed, reviewed, and, if approved, signed by the required parties. You may check the status of your plan at any time by returning to the POSG and clicking on the Display Submitted Plan of Study link. After the form has been completed and approved by the Graduate School it can be viewed, but not altered. Any changes to the plan require the electronic Change to Plan of Study form.

### Plan of Study Guidelines

The department does not mandate how many course credits an M.S. or Ph.D. student should list on their plan of study. However, the College of Agriculture strongly recommends that M.S. students list approximately 24 course credits and Ph.D. students list 48 - 54 course credits on their plans of study, respectively.

Graduate courses taken while registered as a graduate student at Purdue University may be considered for fulfilling the plan of study requirements only if the student has received grades of C- or better. Courses taken at a different university or undergraduate level courses that a student wishes to use on their plan of study must have received a grade of B- or better. Your major professor may set a higher grade requirement for certain courses. You may use up to 6 credits of 300/400 level courses on your plan of study, so long as those courses were taken during a student's graduate career. **Courses graded on a pass/no pass or satisfactory/unsatisfactory basis cannot be used on a plan of study.**

See Lisa Gross for information on transferring courses or using undergraduate credit towards your advanced degree. Ph.D. students may apply up to 30 credit hours of courses taken during a Master's program towards their Ph.D. program. These courses are not listed individually on the plan of study, but are entered numerically by your major professor.

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# FORMAL EXAMINATIONS

## Final Examination for M.S. Students

For the M.S. degree, the final oral examination is a defense of the thesis, but the questioning may follow many directions. The student's advisory committee typically serves as the Master's Examining Committee. The Graduate School must be notified of a final examination at least two weeks prior to the actual examination date. For this reason, students should prepare the GS Form 8 (Request for Appointment of Examining Committee) and submit it online at least three weeks prior to the final examination date. If this deadline is not met, the Graduate School will not approve the final examination date.

## Preliminary Examination for Ph.D. Students

The objectives of the preliminary examination are to assess the student's knowledge of the subject area, both in general terms and as it applies to his or her research, and to stimulate the student to develop original research ideas. There are two distinct parts to the examination:

### The Written Preliminary Examination

- 1.1. The basis of the preliminary examination is the written portion of the examination. The student's advisory committee will choose one of the following options for the written portion:
  - 1.1.1. Answer questions designed by the advisory committee and major professor to test general knowledge of the plant sciences, with emphasis on the student's particular sub-discipline of plant biology, plant pathology, or weed science. Questions will be presented to the student on a mutually agreeable date at least two weeks before the date of the oral preliminary examination. The student will submit to the major professor a written response to each question within one week (i.e. at least one week before the date of the oral preliminary examination). The examining committee for the oral preliminary examination will evaluate the written responses.
  - 1.1.2. Defend a research proposal in writing. Written proposals are not to exceed 15 double-spaced pages, excluding the title page, references, figures, and figure legends. Font size is limited to 11 pt. Arial or 12 pt. Times New Roman. Excessive length may be considered grounds for not accepting the proposal. There are two options for the topic that your committee may choose from:
    - 1.1.2.1. The topic can be your own research area, i.e. you may defend the approaches being actively pursued or planned in your own research. In this case, you should also be prepared to propose novel approaches that extend beyond the immediate plans of the research and thus reflect your own scientific creativity. A preliminary examination proposal that reflects only ideas previously conveyed by the major professor to you is unacceptable. A proposal on the student's own research will be expected to be developed with somewhat more rigor than one in an unrelated field.
    - 1.1.2.2. The topic can be in an area unrelated to your research area. In this case, you should develop an original proposal that would advance the current state of knowledge in the chosen field.

### The Oral Preliminary Examination

- 1.2. The oral preliminary examination is a comprehensive examination administered by a committee of four that is chaired by a faculty member other than your major professor. The other members of the Examining Committee are typically the same as the advisory committee. The major professor may only attend as a non-voting, silent observer. The student and major professor are responsible for selecting another faculty member to make up the fourth member of the examining committee. At least half of the members of the Examining Committee must be from Purdue's West Lafayette campus.
- 1.3. During the oral preliminary examination, the student will be asked to respond to questions of a general and specific nature. Questions are expected to examine the student's general knowledge of the plant sciences (particularly his or her specific sub-discipline of plant biology, plant pathology, or weed science) and the specific knowledge of his or her field of research. Questions related to the responses provided in the written preliminary examination also may be

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asked.

- 1.4. The Graduate School must be notified of an oral examination at least two weeks prior to the examination date. For this reason, students should prepare the GS Form 8 (Request for Appointment of Examining Committee) and submit it online at least three weeks prior to the final examination date. If this deadline is not met, the Graduate School will not approve the final examination date.

Once the examination is complete, a Report of Preliminary Examination Form must be sent to the Graduate School (this form is provided electronically to the examining committee by the Graduate School upon receipt of the GS Form 8). The student must pass the preliminary examination at least two semesters prior to the final examination. In addition to the rules of the Graduate School, the Department of Botany and Plant Pathology requires preliminary examinations to be completed within seven semesters of the start of the doctoral program (including summer semesters). If this deadline is not met, the student will not be allowed to register for the next semester of courses.

The student is admitted to doctoral candidacy upon satisfactory completion of the preliminary examination. If the report is unfavorable, the Examining Committee may recommend that the student be permitted to request a second examination by submitting a new request GS Form 8. The student must wait at least until the following session (including summer sessions) to repeat the examination. If failed twice, a student may not be given a third examination except upon the recommendation of his or her examining committee and with the special approval of the University's Graduate Council. The Examination Committee may instead recommend that the student not be allowed to continue in the Ph.D. Program, in which case the student may be eligible to continue for the M.S. degree.

## Final Examination for Ph.D. Students

For the Ph.D. degree, the final examination is a defense of the student's dissertation. The Examining Committee for the final examination is typically comprised of the advisory committee and chaired by the major professor. It may include invited members from the department or other departments.

The Graduate School must be notified of a final examination at least two weeks prior to the actual examination date. For this reason, students should prepare the GS Form 8 (Request for Appointment of Examining Committee) and submit it online at least three weeks prior to the final examination date. If this deadline is not met, the Graduate School will not approve the final examination date.

# BENEFITS AND GRANTS

## Graduate Student Benefits

Purdue University offers health insurance options for students in graduate staff appointments (i.e., assistantships) as well as for students receiving fellowships and others not employed by the University. Graduate students have the option of adding children and spouses to insurance plans. <https://www.purdue.edu/gradschool/student/families/insurance.html>

Complete details about graduate student staff benefits including eligibility guidelines, insurance, and paid leave is available in the **Graduate Student Employment Manual**.

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# Graduate Student Travel Award

The department, within budgetary limits, will award funds to selected graduate students to help offset travel expenses. The following guidelines and eligibility rules apply:

1. All full-time, enrolled graduate students in good standing in the department are eligible to apply for the award. A student in “good standing” is defined as one with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative and semester GPA in the previous semester, who is current on all program deadlines, and who is making satisfactory progress toward the completion of research each semester as determined by the student’s grade in BTNY 69800 or 69900.
2. Priority will be given to students making an oral presentation in a mini-symposium or similar session, followed by those presenting a poster. Simply attending a meeting for networking opportunities is unlikely to garner support from the review committee.

A call for applications will be announced 2 times per calendar year. The applicants will submit the following:

1. A cover letter from the student that includes description of your proposed travel activity and how it will be beneficial to your professional development. If appropriate, please include the abstract for your presentation (a draft would be sufficient).
  2. A brief statement from your major professor that he/she supports your attendance at the meeting/conference/workshop and indicating that sufficient lab funds exist to cover additional costs over \$500.
  3. A short (one page max.) letter of support from a member of your thesis committee (not your major professor).
- A faculty committee will review all applications and results will be announced as quickly as possible.

The departmental Graduate Student Organization also has travel awards available in increments of \$100. For domestic travel, applications must be turned in at least two weeks before the date of travel. For international travel, applications must be turned in at least three months before the date of travel. Students should contact the current Graduate Student Organization treasurer for travel applications.

## Student Resources

**[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)**

**[Disability Resource Center](#)**

**[Graduate Parent Support Network](#)**

**[Graduate Staff Employment Manual](#)**

**[ITaP](#)**

**[Off Campus Student Housing](#)**

**[Purdue One Campus Portal](#)**

**[Purdue Online Writing Lab](#)**

**[Purdue Printing Services](#)**

**[PSSP Safe Walk Program](#)**

**[Protect Purdue](#)**

**[Purdue Recreation and Wellness](#)**

**[Purdue University Pharmacy](#)**

**[Purdue University Student Health \(PUSH\)](#)**

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