



PURDUE

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Title: Award Winning Graduate Student Research at Purdue Ag Econ
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The year of 2020 was a fruitful year for the Department of Agricultural Economics here at Purdue University and we look forward to 2021 with great excitement. The fruits can be seen in the flourishing of our Doctoral and Master's Graduate students, which in an important way is exemplified in their research endeavors. We, the Purdue Agricultural Economics Report (PAER) editorial board, are pleased to recognize outstanding graduate research at the three levels of degrees that the Department grants, Doctor of Philosophy in Agricultural Economics (PhD), Master of Science in Agricultural Economics (MS) and our MS-MBA in Food and Agribusiness Management hybrid program in collaboration with the Kelly School of Business at Indiana University

The first award-winning graduate that we recognize is Dr. Travis Atkinson, from the Doctoral program. The Department of Agricultural Economics currently has 40 Doctoral Students in residence and 5 completed their program with a successful dissertation defense in 2020. The following summary is for Dr. Atkinson's dissertation titled "*Long-term Infrastructure Investment Planning and Policy Analysis for the Electricity Sector in Small Island Developing States: Case for Jamaica*". A faculty committee selected this as the outstanding Doctoral dissertation in our Department in 2020 and it will compete for the Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA) recognition later this summer. Dr. Atkinson's dissertation contributes to our understanding of efficient planning methods for new infrastructure investments as well as energy policies appropriate for small, isolated and often heavily indebted nations, effectively proposing a way to improve long-term planning in the electricity sector in the context of Small Islands Developing States.

The second award-winning graduate that we recognize is Natalie Loduca, from the Master's program. The Department of Agricultural Economics currently has 15 Master's students in residence and 9 completed their program with a successful dissertation defense in 2020. The following summary is Natalie's dissertation titled "*How Scale and Scope of Ecosystem Markets Impacts Permit Trading: Evidence from Partial Equilibrium Modeling in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*". A faculty committee selected this as the outstanding Master's Thesis in our Department in 2020 and it will compete for the AAEA recognition later this summer. Natalie's dissertation not only utilized but also extended cutting

edge techniques in Agricultural Economics to better understand farm level production decisions in the context of a market for environmental quality permit trading. Her research effectively engages and contributes to the ongoing policy discussions regarding ecosystem markets.

The next award-winning graduate that we recognize is Cain Thurmond, from the MS-MBA program. The Department currently has 50 MS-MBA students spread in the two-year program. The following summary is Cain's capstone research titled "*Strategically Positioning CSX Corn Supply Pricing for Profitable Sustainable Growth*". A faculty committee selected this as the outstanding capstone project in the MS-MBA in Food and Agribusiness Management program in 2020. Cain's capstone noted the geographical disparity between corn unit train shippers (located in the Midwest) and feed mill receivers (located in Southern states) and utilized a model to estimate the impact of corn basis prices and freight rates on train traffic flows in the Eastern part of the U.S. Cain's methodological approach contributes to the strategic analysis of the grain sourcing and logistics industry in the U.S.

All in all, we are extremely proud our graduates from this past year and the formation that they received here at Purdue during their graduate studies. We very much appreciate the opportunity that we have in this issue to highlight some of their achievements and how they are contributing to important conversations of different aspects of the Agricultural world, which honors the spirit of our Land-Grant mission here at Purdue.