

PURDUE

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS REPORT

State of the Agricultural Economics Graduate Program in 2024

Carson Reeling, Interim Graduate Program Chair of Agricultural Economics & Brady Brewer, MS-MBA Director

The 2023/24 academic year saw a significant change to the graduate program. Dr. Nicole Widmar left the positions of Graduate Program Head and MS-MBA Director when she assumed the role of Interim Department Head. Dr. Widmar served as the Graduate Program Head since 2018. During that time, she oversaw significant innovations in graduate student recruitment and mentoring, all while ensuring the smooth functioning and financial stability of one of the country's largest graduate programs in agricultural economics. Thankfully, she hasn't gone far—her new office is two doors down from her old one—and she continues to mentor her own graduate students in her new role.

Drs. Brady Brewer and Carson Reeling are honored to have been chosen to take the reins in Dr. Widmar's stead. Dr. Reeling returned to Purdue in 2018 as an assistant professor, having received an MS from this department in 2011. He has been active in the graduate program since returning, both in terms of mentoring graduate students (six and counting!) and serving on the graduate committee for the past four years. Dr. Brewer started at Purdue in 2018 as an assistant professor. Dr. Brewer's main appointment is in extension, working with agricultural lenders and agribusinesses. Drs. Brewer and Reeling are enthusiastic about their new roles and plan to uphold Dr. Widmar's legacy of responsible and effective management of the graduate programs.

Despite this change in leadership, the department's commitment to developing and training the next wave of agricultural economists and agribusiness professionals remains unchanged. To this end, the department welcomed eight new PhD students and nine MS students for our residential programs in 2023/24, bringing our total to 58 students in our residential programs. [The MS-MBA program](#) welcomed 18 new students to the distance-delivered program.

Our students have been successful on the biggest stages in 2023/24. Haden Comstock won the [2023 Outstanding Master's Thesis Award](#) from the [Agricultural and Applied Economics Association \(AAEA\)](#)—our discipline's flagship organization. Doctoral students Elizabeth Fraysse, Fei

Qin, and Yi Wang took first place in the [USDA AMS-GSS Competition Local Food Economics Data Visualization Challenge](#) at the AAEA Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., while Eugene Nuworsu was part of a multi-institution group that took first prize in the virtual USDA AMS-GSS Competition Local Food Economics Data Visualization Challenge. Abbey Lopp won the Founders Cup for best capstone project in the MS-MBA program.

The past year also featured strong placements of our graduating students. The MS-MBA graduated the largest class in the history of the program—40 students! From our residential programs, eight of our 13 graduating doctoral students took positions in academia (including tenure-track positions at Clemson University, Murray State, and Purdue), four took positions in NGOs or government, and one went to the private sector. Half of our graduating MS students went on to continue their studies in PhD programs—most of them right here at Purdue. That so many of our graduates continue on at Purdue is a testament to the experience and abundance of opportunities they see for themselves here.

Of course, a significant source of these opportunities is the generous support our students receive in the form of fellowships and grants available through our department. In 2023/24, seven of our students received nearly \$25,000 in funding to support research and professional development from the Jim and Neta Hicks Graduate Student Small Grant Program, the Dr. Wally Tyner Graduate Student Grants Program, and the Agribusiness-Related Travel and Development Grants Program. These funds support opportunities that would otherwise go unrealized for our students. To our donors: thank you for your invaluable support.

The research you see in this special issue of PAER reflects the breadth and depth of the work being done by our graduate students and is a testament to the rigorous training they receive in our programs. As a faculty, we are immensely proud of our graduate students and look forward to the impact they will have on the profession and the world more broadly.