



UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS

**College of Engineering**  
*Biological & Agricultural Engineering*



## **Biological and Agricultural Engineering Spring 2025 Newsletter**

**From the Department Head**

FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD  
**DR. HOWELL**



The end of the spring semester is always a whirlwind of activity. As we catch our breath, I hope you enjoy the highlights of the department in this edition of the newsletter. It is great to be able to reflect on so many positive things happening in our department.

Our students had an incredible year. You will read about some of our seniors who have made an impact on us as they have pursued their degrees and are launching into their careers. You will read about our outstanding students who attended the ASABE Southeastern student rally this spring. We will host that rally next spring here in Fayetteville, led by an army of talented student leaders. I would love our alumni to consider putting that date on your calendar, March 13-14, 2026. We may have opportunities for you to mentor some of these students from around the country who are visiting that weekend. I am also extremely proud of our graduate students, and you will note the inaugural pair of awards for them. In addition to the awards that the department has bestowed, our graduate students have been winning awards all over the country as they have presented their research in different competitions.

We are thrilled to welcome five unique faculty members to the department as we move into the next year. Dr. Matthew McVey was promoted to teaching assistant professor in January after serving for two years as an instructor. Dr. Kaushik Luthra began work in April as assistant professor of post-harvest engineering, located in Harrisburg, AR, at the new Northeast Rice Research and Extension Center. Dr. Yiting Xiao will join us on July 1 as an assistant professor for wastewater and nutrient management in Fayetteville. Her appointment will be 75% extension. Dr Beatriz Moreno-Garcia has been promoted to research assistant professor, effective July 1, after six years as a postdoctoral associate and research fellow. She will continue her work on understanding the impacts of farming practices on greenhouse gas emissions. Lastly, we are pleased to announce that Dr. Kendrick Hardaway will join our faculty in January 2026 as an assistant professor for the circular bioeconomy. He is a 2018 department graduate and will have a significant impact in the classroom and research. I would be remiss if I didn't say we are excited to add a sixth new faculty member, Dr. Indrajeet Chaubey, the incoming Provost at the University of Arkansas, on July 1. Many of you will know him as either a classmate from the mid-90s or as a professor in the early 2000s. Our faculty continued to be recognized for their accomplishments through various awards; you can read about them in the newsletter. We are particularly proud to share Dr. Ben Runkle's recent promotion to professor.

Alumni continue to be a valuable part of the UofA BAEG community. The Arkansas Academy of Biological and Agricultural Engineering greatly impacted our students through a mentorship program this year. That group is also in the process of creating a scholarship endowment that will be used in perpetuity to support our outstanding students. We were excited to induct seven new Academy members this spring and to recognize Eric Boles as our early career alumni awardee and Dr. Rodney Wright as our distinguished alumni award winner.

We would love to hear from you. Please stop by the department anytime you are in town. Our faculty would welcome your presence in their classes as appropriate, your guidance for potential field trips, and your support for other initiatives within the department.

It is my great privilege and pleasure to serve this department as department head. We will have a busy summer with professional meetings and opportunities to conduct research. Our students are scattered across the US in internships and research experiences. I look forward to hearing about all the good work and can't wait to kick things back off in the fall.

Woo Pig Sooi!

Terry

## Student Updates





## Congratulations Seniors

Congratulations to our seniors who attended commencement this spring! We are incredibly proud of each of you and wish you all the best in the next phase of your lives.

View the College of Engineering commencement [photo album here.](#)

### **B.S.**

- Alexandra Anthony
- Cassidy Brown
- Lindsey Bush
- Joaquin Camacho
- Sierra Cates
- Raine Cockrell
- Janai Dominguez Gonzalez
- Alex Steven Edmiston
- Jonathan Hernandez
- Justin Kelso
- Allison Leaks Landis
- Madison Leckbee
- Emma Moore
- Mia Morrison
- Maria Vergara Murillo
- Aiden Nyhus
- Daniel Pruitt
- John Sheely
- Ally Sutherland
- Kathryn Tubbs
- Samantha Wheat
- John Williams

### **M.S.**

- Sam Carrol - Biological Engineering

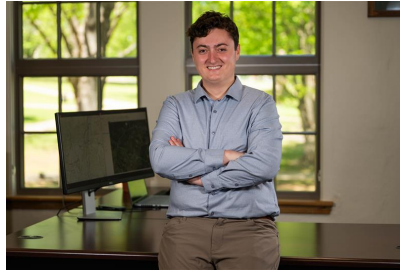
This semester, we spoke to four seniors to learn more about their inspiring journeys and the positive impact the U of A Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department has had on them.



### From Panama to Fayetteville: Two Students' Journey in Biological Engineering

Maria Vergara Murillo and Janai Dominguez Gonzalez, two seniors from Panama, found expert mentorship, community, and top-notch career preparation in the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department that turned their goals into reality.

Read their [story here](#).



### From Internship to Impact—How the U of A Biological Engineering Sets Students Up For Success

For John Sheely, the road to a rewarding career didn't begin after graduation, it started in the biological and agricultural engineering department, where hands-on opportunities, expert mentorship and top-notch career preparation turned his goals into reality.

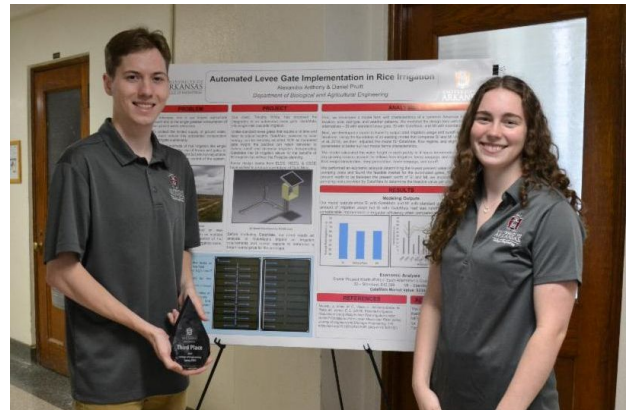
Read his [story here](#).



### Madison Leckbee: Twirling Her Way to Success in Biological Engineering

Senior Madison Leckbee is wrapping up a remarkable journey at the U of A that blends her love for twirling with her drive to solve real-world problems. She credits the biological and agricultural engineering department for supporting her dual passions and helping her thrive.

Read her [story here](#).



### BENG Students Recognized at COE Awards

Congratulations to Samantha Wheat, Alexandra Anthony, and Daniel Pruitt for their recognition at the U of A College of Engineering Student Awards.

Samantha Wheat was named the Outstanding Senior in BENG, and Alexandra Anthony and Daniel Pruitt received an award for placing third at the Spring COE Senior Design Expo.

Congratulations!





## BENG Students Attend ASABE Southeastern Student Rally

In April, the department head, Dr. Terry Howell Jr., took some of our BENG students to the ASABE Southeastern Student Rally at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX.

The group had a great time meeting students from other biological and agricultural engineering programs across the southeast and sharing about the initiatives and activities our student group is a part of.

We will be holding the next ASABE Southeastern Student Rally at the University of Arkansas in March 2026. Look for more information to come soon!



## Graduate Student Award Winners

Congratulations to the inaugural BENG Graduate Student Award winners, Siavash Mahmoudi and Will Richardson. They were honored at the 2025 Academy of Arkansas Biological and Agricultural Engineering Banquet in April.

### Siavash Mahmoudi

BAEG Outstanding Graduate Researcher

### Will Richardson

BAEG Graduate Student Leadership Award



## Graduate Professionals Scholars Association Plant Sale

The Biological and Agricultural Engineering Graduate and Professional Scholars Association hosted a plant sale on Earth Day.

The association cultivated various types of plants, including tomatoes, peppers, herbs, and Christmas cacti, to sell to students, faculty, and staff, helping to fund the association's events and activities.

In total, the group made \$462. Thank you to everyone who helped make the plant sale a success!

## Department Updates



## BENG Receives Awards at Spring COE Faculty and Staff Meeting

During the College of Engineering Spring Faculty and Staff Meeting, the BENG department faculty, staff, and an alum were honored with numerous awards. Congratulations to all!

### Department Award Winners:

- Dr. Brian Haggard - Outstanding Service to Students
- Dr. Dongyi Wang - Outstanding Researcher
- Dr. Matthew McVey - Outstanding Teacher
- Austin Blevins - Staff Excellence Award

### Dean's Award Winners:

- Dr. Dongyi Wang - Rising Star Research Award
- Leslie Massey - Biggadike Teaching Award



### Walk Across Arkansas Challenge Award Winners

COE Staff Council hosted a Walk Across Arkansas challenge during the month of April, offering a fun opportunity for employees to get active and enjoy friendly competition. Teams of up to four people joined forces to log 270 miles over the month. The BAEG All Out Team was the first in the COE to reach this milestone, earning each member on the team a one-year membership to the campus recreational center.

### Congratulations to the BAEG All Out Team members:

- Reti Ranniku
- Austin Blevins
- Dr. Terry Howell Jr.
- Ting Liu (not pictured above)

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## **BENG Faculty Promotions and New Additions**

We are thrilled to celebrate our new department faculty members and those recently promoted.

### **Promotions:**

Congratulations to our faculty members who received recent promotions!



**Dr. Beatriz Moreno Garcia**  
Research Assistant Professor



**Dr. Matthew McVey**  
Teaching Assistant Professor



**Dr. Ben Runkle**  
Professor

### **New Faculty:**

We are excited to welcome several new faculty members to our department!



**Dr. Kendrick Hardaway**  
Assistant Professor for the  
Circular Bioeconomy  
January 2026



**Dr. Kaushik Luthra**  
Assistant Professor of Post-  
Harvest Processing



**Dr. Yiting Xiao**  
Extension Assistant Professor  
of Wastewater and Nutrient  
Management  
July 2025

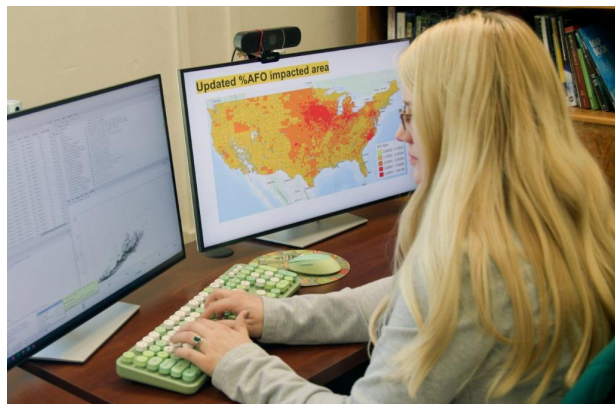


### **Dr. Haggard Is One of The Top-Cited Scientists Worldwide**

Congratulations, Dr. Brian Haggard, on being one of the top-cited scientists worldwide according to a database developed by a Stanford University professor using citation information from Scopus.

The database classifies scientists in 22 scientific fields and 174 subfields based on research impact measures such as citations, h-index, co-authorship adjusted hm-index, citations to papers in different authorship positions, and a composite indicator known as a c-score.

Learn more [here.](#)



### **Dr. Muenich Uses Machine Learning to Map Animal Feeding Operations to Improve Sustainability**

Understanding where farm animals are raised is crucial for managing their environmental impacts and developing technological solutions, but gaps in data often make it challenging to get the full picture.

Dr. Rebecca Muenich, biological and agricultural engineering researcher, set out to fill the gap with a new technique for mapping animal feeding operations.

Learn more [here.](#)



### **Dr. Matlock Named 2025 Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science**

Congratulations to Dr. Marty Matlock on being named a 2025 Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

This honor recognizes his contributions to agricultural sustainability standards and expanding Indigenous STEM participation.

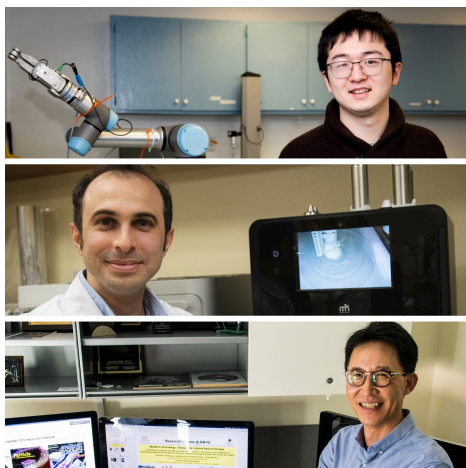


### **Dr. Runkle Named Outstanding Faculty Mentor**

Congratulations to Dr. Ben Runkle on being named the Outstanding Faculty Mentor by the University!

This award honors his exceptional dedication to mentoring, guidance, and support. It is a testament to his meaningful and lasting impact on the professional and personal growth of





### Three BENG Faculty members with the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station received Arkansas Research Alliance Impact Grants

The BENG Faculty and their projects include:

- Dr. Jin-Woo Kim - Advanced Probiotic Delivery Systems for Animal Health
- Dr. Dongyi Wang - Smart Cameras for Healthier Arkansas Swine Farms
- Dr. Ali Ubeyitogullari - Upcycling Arkansas Rice Waste into Sustainable Packaging

Learn more about their projects and how they are working to improve Arkansas food and agriculture [here](#).



### Dr. Muenich Named Purdue University Agricultural & Biological Engineering Outstanding Alumni

Congratulations, Dr. Becca Muenich, for being named the Purdue University Agricultural & Biological Engineering Outstanding Alumni.

This honor recognizes her exceptional contributions to the field, academic leadership, and enduring impact as a Purdue alumna. She was honored at an awards ceremony held by Purdue University on April 25, along with the other honorees.

## Academy and Alumni News



### Doss Elected as ASABE Trustee

Congratulations to Anthony Doss, PE, a BENG alum and member of the Arkansas Academy of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, for his election as an American Society of Agricultural



### Dr. Indrajeet Chaubey Named U of A Provost

Congratulations to Dr. Indrajeet Chaubey, a '94 M.S. BENG alum, on being named the next U of A Provost.

He will start on July 1 as the university's seventh

and Biological Engineers (ASABE) Trustee.

See all the ASABE 2025 leadership election results [here.](#)

provost, succeeding Terry Martin, who will return to a full-time faculty position in the College of Engineering.

Learn more [here.](#)

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## New AABAE LinkedIn Page

Exciting news! The Arkansas Academy of Biological and Agricultural Engineering has a new LinkedIn page.

We invite all BENG students, alumni, and AABAE members to follow along for updates on member career milestones, department highlights, and Academy news. Join us in celebrating our community's achievements!

Follow the new [AABAE LinkedIn page here.](#)



## AABAE Banquet

Our annual Arkansas Academy of Biological and Agricultural Engineering Banquet was a great night celebrating new Academy Inductees, scholarship winners, seniors, and graduate student award winners. Thank you to all who attended and made the evening so special!

See all the photographer's photos from the event and download your [favorites here.](#)

### 2025 AABAE Inductees:

- **Kelvin Bennett** - Senior Vice President of Engineering for AGCO Corporation
- **Steve Caver** - Vice President of Operations at Producers Rice Mill, Inc.
- **Aaron Hilborn** - Senior Project Manager at Fisher and Arnold
- **Katie Hollingshead** - Senior Project Manager at the City of Springdale Engineering Department
- **Ali Karr** - Vice President of Civil Engineering at Crafton Tull
- **Jacob Post** - Managing Consultant at Alliance Technical Group
- **William Richardson** - Associate Professor in Chemical Engineering at the University of Arkansas

Congratulations to our new AABAE Members!



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## Update Academy Member Info on Website

We are working to update the Arkansas Academy of Biological and Agricultural Engineering website. Currently, member profiles on the Academy website only go up to the 2016 induction. As a part of this update, we would like to add profiles for Academy members from 2017 to present and update other member biographies and professional headshots.



If you would like to update your Academy profile photo and biography, or have become a member since 2016, please [fill out this short form](#).

These photos and biographies will be used to update the Academy website and add information about members to our department hallway's digital screens and social media.



### COE Honors BENG Early Career and Distinguished Alumni Award Winners

At the College of Engineering Alumni Awards Banquet in April, Eric Boles of the U of A Sustainability office was named the BENG Early Career Alumni award winner, and Dr. Rodney Wright of the state NRCS office was named the BENG Distinguished Alumni award winner.

Congratulations to you both! Read more about the awards [here](#).

### Support BENG



The pace of change in engineering requires continual investment to provide exceptional professors and students, laboratory space, and state-of-the-art equipment.

Private support plays a vital role in the future of the Biological and Agricultural Engineering department. It provides necessary funding that allows us to strive for excellence in our students, faculty, and facilities.

You can give outright gifts to our department or the College of Engineering through cash, securities, corporate matching gifts, real estate, and personal property. Gifts of all kinds may be designated for immediate or current use or as a long-term investment through an endowment.

Learn more about giving and make your gift by clicking the button below.

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The BENG email newsletter is published after the fall and spring semesters and contains feature stories about department happenings, students, faculty, and staff.

After publication, newsletters can be found in the [online archives](#).



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