



Annual Report



2025

Building a Legacy of Agricultural Excellence Since 1932

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2025 ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Michelle Niemeyer - Administrative Director for The CAFNR Foundation

Michael Kateman - Operational Director for The CAFNR Foundation

Ashley Craft - Content and Public Relations Director for The CAFNR Foundation

Michelle Enger, ex-officio - Director of CAFNR Marketing and Communications



MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM



The CAFNR Foundation team closed out 2025 with deep gratitude for our trustees, partners, members and friends. Together, we continued to expand our reach and invest in students, research and partnerships that advance Missouri agriculture, food systems and natural resources.

How did we get here? In January and February, we identified our new 2025 committee leaders. Each volunteer served as a backbone in advancing our strategic priorities.

Building on that leadership, March brought celebrations of the MU Mobile Meat Labs' ongoing impact from our \$225,000 commitment. These units delivered another successful year of hands-on training. They empowered students, butchers and processors in the meat industry.

That same month, we held a New Board Member Orientation to welcome new volunteers. The training covered operations, communications and our strategic priorities: building capacity, maximizing partnerships and diversifying revenue.

During our late-March Executive Board meeting, we reviewed strong newsletter open rates (we appreciate your readership!), financials, land holdings supporting ag-based research and remaining commitments to students and Missourians.

April brought trustees together for two groundbreaking ceremonies. One included the Michael L. Parson Meat Science Laboratory we have supported in the past. The events were followed by a luncheon hosted by Vice Chancellor and Dean Chris Daubert. It was a great opportunity to touch base on our committee progress.

In June, we extended our Strategic Plan to 2027. This ensures committees have the time they need to set the foundation up for long-term success. The extension also provides committee members time to evaluate and set the next strategic priorities.

We reactivated business memberships in July at \$1,000 annually. This is another way to fuel scholarships, internships and faculty research alongside our \$100 individual memberships.

August took us to the Missouri State Fair, where our administrative team engaged with more than 100 Missourians on pressing challenges in agriculture. Then in September and November, we checked in with two recent scholarship recipients: environmental sciences alumna Kirsten Robinson and plant sciences and technology student Molly Peters. Spoiler: The scholarships you all have supported continue to make a huge impact on our students.

Keep reading this annual report to see how our efforts continue to leave a lasting impact on our state. Remember: Each individual has the power to make a difference, whether through time, philanthropic support or both.



11

Executive
Committee
Members

15

Additional
Volunteer
Trustees

4

Part-Time
Administrative
Staff

CAFNR FOUNDATION OVERVIEW

VISION

The mission of the CAFNR Foundation is to promote and further agricultural education and research in the State of Missouri in collaboration with the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) to accomplish goals of the College.

MISSION

The CAFNR Foundation is the statewide leader inspiring collaboration and support for Missouri agriculture, food systems and natural resources through its commitment to the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources.

THE CAFNR FOUNDATION'S 2025 CONTRIBUTIONS

Fall 2025 Student
Scholarships

\$20K

Outstanding Staff
Awards

\$12,400

Summer 2025
REEC Internships

\$14K



The Joy of Discovery
Seed Grant

\$40K

Ag-celerator for
Agricultural
Technologies
Research

\$20K

Content & Marketing
Director

\$28K



MICHELLE LI RECEIVES 2025 OUTSTANDING STAFF AWARD

* **WRITTEN BY SYDNEY WINN, APRIL 17, 2025**

Michelle Li, a business support specialist in the Division of Plant Science and Technology, is the recipient of CAFNR's 2025 Outstanding Staff Award.

Recognized for her unwavering dedication, reliability and exceptional work quality, Li is an integral part of the division, known for her willingness to assist colleagues and ensure smooth office operations.

She keeps up to date with Mizzou's fiscal policies, travel regulations and OneCard and reimbursements rules. As a trusted resource, she is often the first point of contact for questions, possessing an extensive knowledge of division processes. If she doesn't have an immediate answer, she is committed to finding one and responding promptly.

"I feel that Michelle's contributions are sometimes overlooked because they are mostly behind the scenes," says nominator Victoria Bryan. "She is so unassuming and focused on getting her work completed to her standards that it's not widely recognized how much she really does for the division.

"As her office is just inside the DPST office suite, she is frequently the first point of contact for someone seeking assistance, and I could not think of a better representative for the division or the college."





2025 CAFNR JOY OF DISCOVERY SEED GRANT PROGRAM WINNERS ANNOUNCED

**THE FOURTH BATCH OF PROPOSALS FUNDED BY CAFNR'S JOY OF DISCOVERY
SEED GRANT PROGRAM WAS ANNOUNCED IN SUMMER 2025**

*** WRITTEN BY GENEVIEVE HOWARD, JULY 9, 2025**

The fourth batch of proposals funded by CAFNR's Joy of Discovery Seed Grant Program was recently announced by Shibu Jose, CAFNR Associate Dean for Research. The Joy of Discovery Seed Grant Program supports nascent, multidisciplinary research with the goal of developing a competitive proposal for federal funding. The following proposals were selected (listed by the PI, Co-PI/s and title of the project):

- David Mendoza Cozatl (Plant Science and Technology); Characterization of Soil Microbial Communities Across Ecoregions as a Step Towards Improving nutrient transport efficiency and selectivity by means of continuous evolution
- Emily Althoff (Plant Science and Technology); Connor Crouch (USDA Forest Service), Lauren Pile Knapp (USDA Forest Service) and Robbie Doerhoff, (Missouri Department of Conservation); Grounded in Biodiversity: Ground Beetle Responses to Management Treatments in Reconstructed Prairies
- Katherine Nelson (School of Natural Resources); Timothy Reinbott and Steven Pryor; From page to desktop. Developing an AI-assisted data extraction workflow for long-term historic agricultural data
- Craig Schenck (Biochemistry); Adam Yokom; A Metabolic Complex Regulates Plant Defense Metabolite Production
- Zipei Zhang (Food, Nutrition and Exercise Sciences); Mengshi Lin and Changwoo Do (Oak Ridge National Laboratory); Smart Thermoresponsive Antimicrobial Coatings for Scalable and Sustainable Food
- Michael Stambaugh (School of Natural Resources); Laura A.E. Marshall; Developing novel metrics to predict fire-driven vegetation type conversion and forest loss in western U.S. wildfire crisis landscapes
- Jaime Barros (Plant Science and Technology); Dissecting the Lignin Metabolic Pathway with Cellular Resolution
- Ruojie Zhang (Food, Nutrition & Exercise Sciences); Zipei Zhang and Bongkosh Vardhanabhuti; Novel Use of Pulse Proteins to Develop and Produce Fat Replacers for Reduced-Calorie Emulsion-Based Foods



WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES FACING MISSOURI AGRICULTURE?

* **WRITTEN BY ASHLEY CRAFT, AUG. 27, 2025**

At the heart of Missouri agriculture are the voices of those who rise before dawn, work through unpredictable weather and face a multitude of challenges throughout any given year. The CAFNR Foundation believes supporting these farmers and ranchers begins not with grand solutions, but with something simpler — listening.

Thus began the CAFNR Foundation's journey to engage with those involved in Missouri agriculture by asking the question: "What are the biggest challenges facing Missouri agriculture?" To listen and learn firsthand, the Foundation set up a booth at the 2025 Missouri State Fair, offering fairgoers a welcomed break from the summer heat inside the air-conditioned Mizzou Central Building.

Among the more than 100 voices the Foundation heard from in August is Jessica Brock-Newland of Benton County, a farmer who has owned and showed horses for nearly 20 years. She has been struck by the rapid rise in hay prices, driven by various economic factors and, in some cases, tighter supply and sustained demand in her region.

"It's difficult to get hay from people when they want \$12 to \$20 for a small square bale, when bales should be going for between \$7 and \$10, depending on the type of hay," she said. "This year, we've had an abundance of rain — almost too much — so prices should be good."

Breaking this down, Brock-Newland buys 300 bales per horse each year. What cost \$2,900 per horse this past year could rise to \$5,000 or more for 300 bales in 2026 if prices continue trending upward. She worries that increasing input costs could threaten animal welfare and small-farm sustainability, underscoring the need for community cooperation in uncertain times.

“We all need to pull together,” Brock-Newland said. “Everybody needs to work together to keep our farmlands thriving.” Higher input costs and low returns were recurring concerns among Missourians who spoke with the CAFNR Foundation. Another perspective came from a post-fair follow-up discussion with Linn County livestock producers Kaci and Bryant O’Kane.

“Everyone talks about how high cattle prices are, but no one talks about what it costs to keep them, and it’s still really high,” said fourth-generation producer Bryant O’Kane. “The only thing that’s gone down right now is corn, but fertilizer prices for hay and pasture production are sky-high.”

The O’Kanes bale their own hay and, like Brock-Newland, have noticed rising prices per bale in their region. They also highlighted significant barriers for new farmers, especially soaring land prices and restrictive Farm Service Agency loan programs. In 2021, the O’Kanes purchased 120 acres of their own land, which now forms a part of the larger, multi-generational O’Kane Ranch operated alongside Bryant’s father and brother. Bryant described acquiring their own acreage as one of their toughest hurdles.

“If I wasn’t just a quarter mile from my parents’ place and didn’t have access to their equipment and cows, it would be an even bigger amount of debt we’d have to go in having to buy cows, buy hay, tractors to make hay, etc.” Bryant explained. “Their help has helped make our part of the operation possible.”

Both Bryant and Kaci said that these obstacles jeopardize the sustainability of family farms and the ability of younger generations to continue in agriculture, putting Missouri’s farming communities at risk.

Figure 1. Answers gathered from Missouri State Fair attendees on Aug. 16, 2025. Some concerns listed above were mentioned several times.

“If younger farmers can’t get in and make their farm profitable past the first two years, they’re not going to make it,” Kaci said. “How are the next generations of family farms supposed to survive?”

Brock-Newland’s and the O’Kanes’ stories provide a small glimpse into the many Missourians the CAFNR Foundation has spoken to since mid-August. From individuals longing to enter the industry but priced out of starting costs, to seasoned producers questioning if they will survive another year amid market uncertainty, the conversations have been heartfelt, candid and eye-opening. Additional concerns brought to the CAFNR Foundation’s attention so far are listed in Figure 1.

When those working in agriculture face obstacles, the ripple effects reach all of Missouri, from rural communities to grocery store aisles in every one of the state’s 114 counties.

That is why conversations with individuals across Missouri hold such meaning. By listening closely to the concerns of those working in agriculture, the Foundation and its leaders ensure every dollar invested in research, continuing education, student opportunities and other innovative projects makes a meaningful difference where it is needed most.

CHALLENGES IMPACTING MISSOURI’S AG COMMUNITY
State and federal legislature
Rising fuel and food prices that squeeze farm budgets and family tables alike
Foreign and private land buyers monopolizing the market
The loss of small family farms to larger corporate farms
Alpha-gal Syndrome from a tick bite and its impact on ag
Climbing feed prices, machinery costs and higher labor expenses
Crop inputs like fertilizer and spray increasing
Invasive pests, from Japanese beetles to spotted wing drosophila, damaging crops
Weather extremes — drought during one part of the season, flooding in another
Confusion and frustration surrounding the Grain Belt Express — from start to its future
Tariffs and trade agreements that undercut Missouri commodities
Low prices for milk, corn and other commodities
The need for more pathways to involve youth in farming and ranching
Calls for solutions ranging from affordable country-of-origin labeling to environmentally friendly U.S. leather tanning options
Concerns that agriculture’s impact is not being understood or valued nationwide

Figure 1. Answers gathered from Missouri State Fair attendees on Aug. 16, 2025. Some concerns listed above were mentioned several times.



ALUMNA FORECASTS A BRIGHT FUTURE WITH THE U.S. AIR FORCE



WRITTEN BY ASHLEY CRAFT, AUG. 29, 2025

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY KIRSTEN ROBINSON

Since graduating from the University of Missouri's School of Natural Resources in May 2025, Kirsten Robinson has launched a career that combines her passions for atmospheric sciences and military service. Commissioned as a weather officer through the U.S. Air Force, she is now active duty and applying skills gained through her time in the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR).

"It's really cool because I'm applying what I learned right away," Robinson said. "I've already briefed pilots on the impact of upcoming weather, helping ensure their safety as they travel across the country."

In her role, Robinson and her team help support the overall safety and successful operation of the base with respect to weather hazards by providing reliable weather information, monitoring severe conditions and using radar analysis tools to assess potential weather threats. She credits many of her courses with preparing her for these responsibilities — but one class in particular plays a large role in her daily work.

"I really liked Radar, which I took in my senior year," Robinson said. "In that class, we learned GR2Analyst, a tool used to interpret radar data. Surprisingly, it was one of the first tools I used during my first month on active duty. When they asked if I knew how to use it, I said, 'Actually, yes!' It was great to go into the job already knowing something important we use to brief pilots."

Looking back, her decision to pursue a degree through the School of Natural Resources was a natural fit. Robinson said she has always been drawn to military service, coming from a family with a father who served in the Army and a brother who served in the Marines. Knowing that the University of Missouri houses the state's primary Air Force ROTC detachment, she looked up the various degree options at the university during her senior year of high school.

"I saw the environmental sciences major with an emphasis in atmospheric sciences and immediately thought, 'This is for me. I'm going to the Air Force, and there's a big need for weather officers,'" explained Robinson, a Perryville, Missouri, native. "Now I'm here doing weather for the Air Force. It's kind of crazy; it's come full circle."

Robinson credits scholarships, including one from the [CAFNR Foundation](#), with easing the financial burden of her academics. The demands of her studies and ROTC left little time for outside work to cover essentials like gas, groceries and other expenses not covered by her ROTC stipend, which only paid for her apartment, she explained.

Scholarships further afforded Robinson the opportunity to use her limited free time to engage in extracurricular activities, such as joining the Mizzou Meteorology Club.



"I didn't get to know my classmates very well until I joined the meteorology club in my senior year," Robinson said. "And it was nice because you're building these relationships with people that extend beyond the classroom. It makes the degree so much more rewarding."

Building those relationships was just as important for positive memories as it was for the support they provided during challenging times. As the courses grew more demanding throughout her studies, Robinson found comfort in leaning on her CAFNR connections for guidance.

"There were times I had to go into professors' offices and simply say I was struggling," she said. "They really helped me through those moments. Knowing they were experts in their fields and genuinely wanted to support me was incredibly reassuring."

Throughout her time at CAFNR, Robinson grew not only as a student but also as a leader and professional. Before graduation, she oversaw several cadets as a Mission Support Group Commander through the ROTC program at Mizzou. She embraced the challenging courses and enjoyed various CAFNR-specific opportunities, from maple tree tapping to learning from guest speakers in meteorology club.

"Looking back, I'm so glad I don't have the regret of saying I never did something because I was scared," Robinson said. "I learned if there's something you feel like you want to pursue, even if you think you might hate it or love it, trying it means you don't have that regret of 'what if.'"





SCHOLARSHIP FUELS INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH GOALS

**CAFNR FOUNDATION PROVIDES ASSISTANCE FOR
STUDENTS PURSUING THEIR DREAM CAREERS**



WRITTEN BY ASHLEY CRAFT, NOV. 18, 2025

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY MOLLY PETERS

Growing up in a small farming community in Illinois, CAFNR sophomore Molly Peters was always near county fairs and harvest festivals. Her passion for plant science began in the family garden in Petone, where sweet peas, her favorite crop, captivated her.

“I love sweet peas because they grow quickly, and have so much genetic variation,” said Peters, a 2025-26 CAFNR Foundation Endowment scholarship recipient.

Peters is studying plant sciences through the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, with plans to graduate in May 2028.

However, it wasn’t until she was standing amid the rolling fields of Germany during her two-week study abroad trip this past May that Peters realized just how vast the opportunities could be with her degree.



“My study abroad opportunity really solidified my career goals,” said Peters, who is also minoring in German and serves as an active member of Mizzou German Club. “In the future, I have plans to move abroad to Germany and work in field research. I have an interest in the Germans’ use of cover crops and their creative methods of warding off weeds and insects.”

Although the U.S. and Germany have contrasting regulatory and policy environments, both countries face unique challenges and opportunities as they adapt to shifting market demands, sustainability priorities and climate goals.

Peters and her classmates participated in hands-on activities such as making cheese and bread on alpine farms, visiting wineries and breweries and seeing agricultural technology in action. She is also quick to mention an unforgettable visit to an ice cave — a memory she refers back to when encouraging others to “seek adventure outside of what they’d normally do.”

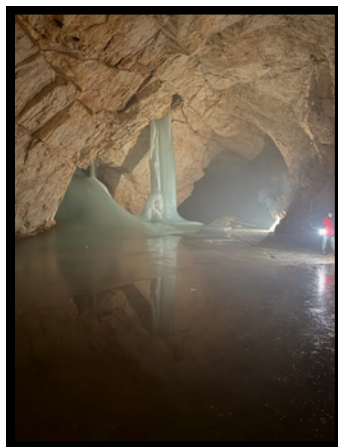
“This ice cave we went to was discovered in the mid-1800s and back then, they didn’t really have lamps that would work very well in such cold temperatures,” Peters said. “So, they would burn magnesium strips (as a light source). And that’s how we explored the ice cave. Our tour guide lit magnesium strips and then we would light them. It was interesting getting to step into that historical perspective.”

While Peters looks forward to making her grand return to Germany, she is currently focused on her studies as well as maize genetics research in Columbia, Missouri, under the guidance of Paula McSteen, Ph.D. and professor of biological sciences at Mizzou. Peters’ work centers on a mutant corn variety called LRS2, or lateral rootless 2. Unlike most research that concentrates on the plant’s missing roots, Peters and her colleagues are investigating its unusual leaf formation. Using starch staining and vascular analysis, they aim to understand how genetic changes help crops resist environmental stress.

Her research journey was shaped early on by former research specialist Emma Klaas. “Emma got me started in research and made the lab feel like a place where I belonged. I couldn’t have done it without her and Dr. McSteen’s encouragement,” Peters added.

The CAFNR Foundation Endowment scholarship, awarded to 12 students a year, supports Peters by giving her the freedom to focus on her studies and her research without financial stress. Peters sees scholarships as a way to provide opportunities for those who might not have access to higher education otherwise.

“Scholarships open a lot of doors for people,” Peters said. “I think that it shows students that someone really cares about their interests. It shows them that the work that they want to do really does have a place in this world.”



2025-2026 Scholarship Recipients

HOW IS THIS SCHOLARSHIP IMPACTING YOUR EXPERIENCE IN CAFNR AND AT MIZZOU?



ALLISON COLLIER

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES, EMPHASIS IN ATMOSPHERE SCIENCES

My parents are not able to pay for my tuition or housing, so I have been paying my way through school on my own. Any scholarship helps me to avoid taking on student debt. This helps my peace of mind while I am working to try and afford everything up front.

ARTHUR ERB

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, EMPHASIS IN TEACHER CERTIFICATION

This scholarship is allowing me to focus more on my student life at Mizzou without having to worry nearly as much about expenses. It has also made a positive impact on my academic career as I can spend more time studying as opposed to having to work as much. This scholarship has made a very positive impact on my college experience.



BRODY ORF

BIOCHEMISTRY, NUTRITION AND EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY

This scholarship has allowed me to pursue my interests and have more free time during my undergraduate experience. Because of your contributions, I have been able to continue my education with less worry about student debt and working on top of my classes. This has enabled me to excel in my work and has made me a strong candidate in my medical school applications.

CONNOR HENDERSON

NUTRITION AND EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY

This scholarship has made a major impact on my experience at Mizzou. I am fortunate enough to get help from my mother with tuition, and this significantly reduces the financial burden on her while trying to get 2 kids through college.



DAVIS SALLEE

ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

This scholarship allows me to pursue not only my degree of choice, but also research along with it. Because of this scholarship, I am able to direct my focus towards these scholarly efforts rather than working full-time on top of school. While I do still have a job outside of school, this scholarship has brought me financial security that I would not have had without it.

2025-2026 Scholarship Recipients

HOW IS THIS SCHOLARSHIP IMPACTING YOUR EXPERIENCE IN CAFNR AND AT MIZZOU?



ELLISON CLARK

PERSONAL FINANCIAL PLANNING

This scholarship is impacting my college experience by letting me not have to use student loans to pay for school, as well as giving me more time to be more involved on campus. It is also letting me be able to use the extra money towards my sorority payments and rent.

KAILY DOWLING

BIOCHEMISTRY

This scholarship has greatly impacted my experience at Mizzou and within CAFNR by easing the financial stress of college. It allows me to focus more on my academics, extracurricular activities, and preparing for medical school rather than worrying about expenses. With this support, I am able to take advantage of the opportunities CAFNR offers, such as hands-on learning and involvement in student organizations. Overall, this scholarship has helped me feel more confident and motivated to succeed in my studies and future career.



MOLLY PETERS

PLANT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

As a current undergraduate researcher, this scholarship gives me the privilege to take what I have learned from my mentors and supplement that knowledge with ideas of my own. This scholarship has opened a door for me to learn about and use methods that were unfamiliar to me before, like starch staining. Additionally, this scholarship is giving me the opportunity to focus on what aspects of my work I really like and would like to do more of going forward. After all, there are a variety of jobs and career fields that I can go into with research, and it can be overwhelming to think about making a decision when I've seen only a small fraction of them.



PAULY LENTZ

PLANT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, PRE-LAW

This scholarship helps me out very much, and I am very grateful for it. It has allowed me to be less stressed about the financial side of college, and as part of my work each week, to be something actually related to my major and career goals. And the research may be helpful to others later when deciding on city planning techniques that benefit pollinators.



2025-2026 Scholarship Recipients

HOW IS THIS SCHOLARSHIP IMPACTING YOUR EXPERIENCE IN CAFNR AND AT MIZZOU?

SAM TUMMONS

AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, EMPHASIS IN TEACHING CERTIFICATION

From this scholarship, I am able to spend more time involved in things like my undergraduate research project because I am able to spend less time working. I am extremely grateful for the chance to be able to take part in this research because of this scholarship.



SYERRA SORBER

NUTRITION AND EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY

This scholarship is further connecting me to Mizzou's College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources. It is supporting my ability to explore what I'm passionate about within the field of Exercise Physiology, enabling me to pursue research opportunities, internships, and networking events that are a major part of exploring my interests. Additionally, this award has further facilitated my ability to focus on becoming someone who can give back to my community through the skills and knowledge I am learning in the College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources.

TYLER STEINBRUEK

NATURAL RESOURCES SCIENCE AND MANAGEMENT, EMPHASIS IN FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

This scholarship has given me more financial freedom and taken a slight load off the last semester of my college career. I am thankful for the funding and opportunity presented to me through the lab that I work in. I hope more students can benefit from the experience gained through leading a research project..



REMEMBERING WILLIAM “BILL” WIEBOLD

* **WRITTEN BY ASHLEY CRAFT, OCT. 29, 2025**
Photos provided by CAFNR Communications



During the summer of 2025, the University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR) lost a colleague, friend and respected agronomy expert who left a lasting impact on the university and farmers across the state. William “Bill” Wiebold passed away on June 11, 2025, in Columbia, after a lengthy battle with cancer.

“Bill was just the kind of guy that he always wanted to go to lunch with somebody, and often did with a lot of people,” recalled Kevin Bradley, Professor and State Extension Specialist, Weed Science. “And he would often turn that into, ‘Let’s go talk about such and such to do with research,’ or ‘What are we going to do about this and all that?’”

Connection was a running theme of Wiebold’s more than 30-year career at the University of Missouri. Throughout his time at the university, he

served as professor of agronomy, MU Extension soybean specialist, director of the Missouri Soybean Center and, during his partial retirement, director of the Missouri Grape and Wine Institute. He also held the titles of council member and, later, chair of the university’s Faculty Council. In these capacities, he helped develop research that shaped best practices for producers, taught the next generation of plant sciences experts, listened to the challenges facing farmers across the state and took part in shaping policies to protect faculty governance.

“Everybody knew Bill Wiebold,” said Stephan Sommer, Extension Specialist for Enology at MU. “It’s not like he just focused on extension education for a few people; he was really out there. One of my neighbors, one of the bigger farmers in Callaway County, Missouri, told me all his sons studied with Bill Wiebold. So, he basically educated generations of farmers before he even went into the wine industry.”

Wiebold’s passion for agriculture stemmed from his upbringing on a family farm in Benton County, Iowa, during the 1950s and ‘60s. Those who knew him saw this lifelong enthusiasm reflected in his professional commitment and mentorship.

“A year or two after I arrived, we took a trip through northern Missouri and into Iowa,” Bradley shared. “Bill, who was born and raised in Iowa, always spoke fondly of his home state. We all even visited the Field of Dreams [movie site] before it became famous, and Bill joked, quoting the movie, ‘Is this heaven? No, this is Iowa.’ He loved the rolling crops of northwest Missouri because they reminded him of where he grew up.”

Similarly, Wiebold left a lasting impression on Sommer from the very first time they met. Sommer recalls his initial interview to become an extension specialist for enology — a role in which he now makes wine, conducts research and supports all 130 wineries across the state of Missouri.

“If it wasn’t for Bill, I might not even be here,” Sommer said. “The very first time I met him, we spent two days together, essentially driving around, talking about wine. They were trying to convince me that Missouri was the place to be. I was in California before. Initially, it was like, okay, all the wine is in California. Give me a reason why I should come to Missouri. And he did. He was a mentor in the first year and a half that I spent on campus, before he kind of slowly transitioned out of his role.”



After more than three decades at MU, Wiebold's legacy continues to flourish through his agronomy articles, MU Extension publications and in the stories colleagues, students and farmers share about his generosity and dedication to helping, connecting and educating others.

"Bill was a very warm person," Sommer noted. "He always made sure to connect with people on a personal level, because he probably understood that this would make work easier. It was a very different experience working for him than all my previous bosses I ever had."

His dedication and scholarship earned him numerous accolades, including:

- J.W. Burch State Specialist Agricultural Extension Award (1995)
- The Donald W. Fancher Provost Award for Outstanding Achievement in Extension and Continuing Education (2003)
- President's Award for University Citizenship — Service Award (2018)
- Missouri Soybean Hall of Fame Inductee (2020)

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Wiebold treasured time with his wife, children and grandchildren. Sommer recalled Wiebold explaining that his passion for traveling to wineries and really learning about the many vineyards across the state with his wife is what led to him becoming director of the Wine and Grape Institute. Bradley also shared Wiebold loved The Beatles, doing research and visiting with farmers across the state.

Bill Wiebold, professor, plant sciences, University of Missouri, spoke at a 2016 Missouri Soybean Center Symposium. "He was a good citizen of the university," Bradley said. "He cared about everything, not just plant sciences and not just soybean. But he interacted a lot with other divisions, especially when he became chair of the Faculty Council."

The CAFNR Foundation is honored to be one of the memorials designated by Wiebold's loved ones. Gifts made in his memory will continue the work he championed throughout his career — advancing Missouri agriculture, food systems and natural resources. Donations on Wiebold's behalf may be made at cafnrfoundation.org/give-now.

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS



2025 MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Honoring William “Bill” Wiebold

Julie Schmitz

Mark Licht

Richard Lange

Kimberly Allen

David Pace

Mitzi Clayton

William Kenworthy

Pamela Lucken

Chrissy Kintner

Dave Baker

Jina & Shane McClintic

Marily & Charles Ferguson

Linda Ann Geist

Thomas & Rebecca Stovall

Missouri Soybean
Association

THANK YOU TO OUR COMMUNITY OF SUPPORTERS



2025 MEMBERSHIPS

\$100 - Individual Membership (1 Year)

\$1,000 - Business Membership (1 Year)

\$10,000 - Lifetime Membership

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

Tracey Mershon	Robert Brundage	Meagan Kaiser	Lucinda McRoberts
Bruce Mershon	Caleb Jones	Jon Ihler	Peter Hoffherr
Steven Taylor	Anita Vanderwert	Ernie Verslues	Robert Guinn
Derek Coats	Donald Borgman	Mike Kateman	Bradley Schad
Amy Lehenbauer	Beau Hepler	Kenny Hulshof	Chris Chinn
Don Steen	Scott Hays	Garrett Hawkins	Brett Wessler

BUSINESS MEMBERS

Missouri Corn Growers Association

Missouri Electric Cooperatives

LIFETIME MEMBERS

Robin Wenneker	Bill Jackson	Carolyn Wenneker	Bill Streeter
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THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEER TRUSTEES

2025 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Robert Brundage - **President**

Caleb Jones - **1st Vice President**

Tracey Mershon - **2nd Vice President**

Ernie Verslues - **Past President**

Lucinda McRoberts - **Treasurer**

Shawn Poore, ex-officio - **Secretary**

Bruce Mershon

Jon Ihler

Scott Hays

Chris Daubert - Permanent Trustee

2025 TRUSTEES

Don Borgman

John Deere
Owner D&C Farms

Peter Hofherr, CFA, MBA, Ph.D.

St. James Winery and Public
House Brewing Co., CEO

Meagan Kaiser

Perry Agricultural Laboratory,
Inc., Chief Operating Officer

Chris Chinn

Missouri Department of Ag,
Director

Kenny Hulshof

KBS Group, Partner & Chairman

Gary Wheeler

The Magnus Group, Co-
Founder

Honorable Don Steen

River Ridge Farms, Owner
Missouri Department of Ag, Former
Director

Former Member, Missouri House of
Representatives, District 115

Derek Coats

Citizens to Elect Mike Kehoe,
Campaign Manager

Rob Guinn

FCS Financial, Chief Executive
Officer

Garrett Hawkins

Missouri Farm Bureau Federation,
President

Beau Hepler

Ray-Carroll County Grain Growers,
Inc., General Manager

Chris Chinn

Director, Missouri Department of
Agriculture

Bradley Schad

Missouri Corn, Chief Executive
Officer

Anita Vanderwert

Agricultural Leadership of Tomorrow
(ALOT), Executive Director

Casey Wasser

Missouri Soybean Merchandising
Council & Missouri Soybean
Association, Executive Director and
CEO

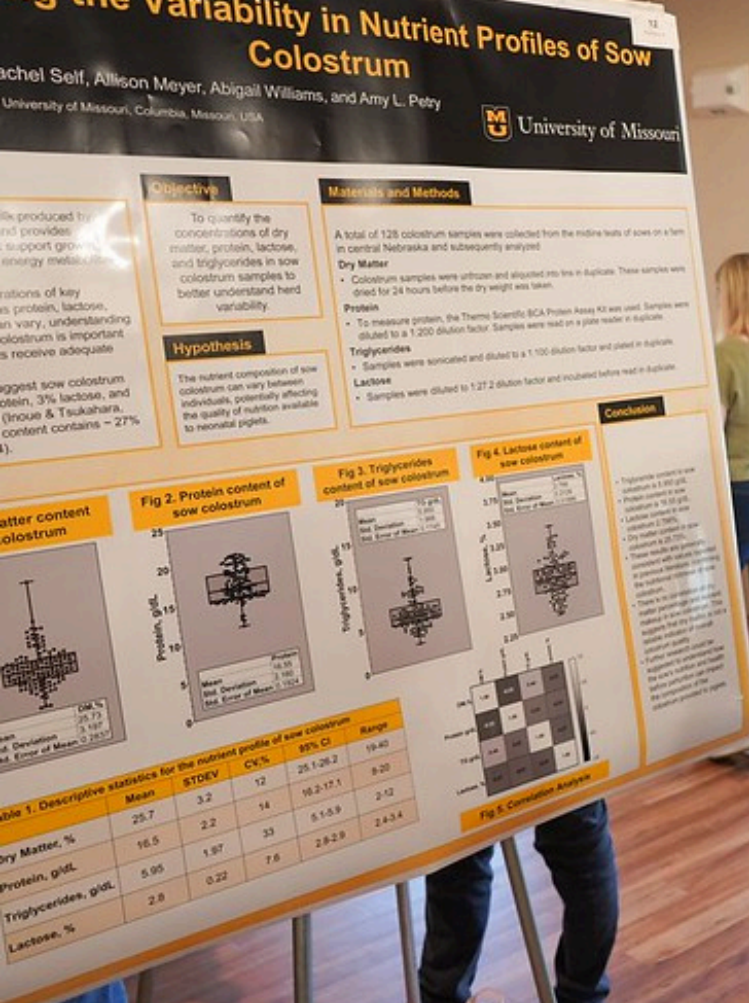
Amy Lehenbauer

Owner, Lehenbauer Farms

CAFNR Alumni Association

Brett Wessler

AgCall Inc., Sr. Account Manager



RECENT CAFNR MOMENTUM SETS STAGE FOR 2026

A YEAR OF WINS, PARTNERSHIPS AND STRENGTHENING AGRICULTURE



WRITTEN BY ASHLEY CRAFT, DEC. 18, 2025

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CAFNR COMMUNICATIONS

CAFNR Foundation trustees and members closed out 2025 with a year-in-review from Chris Daubert, vice chancellor and dean of the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources (CAFNR). The update was part of the CAFNR Foundation's Annual December Trustees and Members meeting.

Daubert highlighted how CAFNR's people and resources continue to evolve to serve Missouri's land-grant mission: "to improve lives, communities and economies by producing relevant, reliable and responsive educational strategies that enhance access to the resources and research of the University of Missouri."

As Daubert explained, over the past decade, the college has added more faculty, postdocs and research associates than ever before. Financially, CAFNR's general revenue budget now stands near \$45.7 million, with another \$5.2 million supporting agriculture and environment programs through MU Extension.



Record Research and Student Success

CAFNR research expenditures reached a record \$88.2 million this past year, doubling totals from just a few years ago. Faculty are also publishing more than 900 peer-reviewed articles annually with over 100,000 citations, Daubert added. The CAFNR Foundation continues to play a vital role in ensuring CAFNR researchers have the facilities, seed funding and support needed to thrive.

Student momentum remains strong, too, Daubert said. In fall 2025, CAFNR welcomed 2,841 undergraduates to campus — that includes back-to-back record freshman classes. Along with that, Daubert said, “about 53% of students that I shake hands with at graduation shake my hands with no debt.” CAFNR currently distributes \$2.17 million in scholarships annually through partnerships with the alumni association, donors and the Foundation. Those scholarships have also played a part in raising the college’s four-year graduation rate to nearly 70%.

Impact Across Missouri

CAFNR’s statewide impact continues to grow, serving more than 300,000 Missourians each year through MU Extension programs such as the Show-Me-Select Replacement Heifer Program, which alone generated more than \$2.3 million in sales across regional auctions this past year.

At the same time, notable facility upgrades and additions are reshaping CAFNR’s research and teaching landscape across Missouri. These include:

- The upcoming Michael L. Parson Beef Science Education and Training Laboratory in Columbia, which will welcome students next fall.
- The Roy Blunt Soil Testing and Research Laboratory, which will strengthen soil testing and agronomic support for producers.
- A new fermentation center is currently under construction to further viticulture research and provide the public with another venue to gather in Central Missouri.
- A new education center at the Central Missouri Research, Extension and Education Center near New Franklin, so the team can host indoor events.
- A planned land grant center at the Northern Missouri Research, Extension and Education Center to serve Missourians in that region.
- The new Eldon Cole Livestock Facility in Mt. Vernon and previously completed education facilities in southwest Missouri.

Together, these facilities will modernize how CAFNR teaches students, conducts research and delivers extension programming in every portion of the state.

Looking Ahead

For the CAFNR Foundation, this momentum underscores why 2026 will be a year to build on success, expanding scholarships, endowments and support that fuel CAFNR’s statewide mission.

CAFNR’s current strategic plan, Drive to Distinction, concludes at the end of December. Rather than slowing down, Daubert made it clear the college is preparing to launch its next strategic plan in spring 2026, with a continued focus to serve Missouri agriculture.

The CAFNR Foundation team looks forward to supporting the plan as well as CAFNR’s continued efforts in 2026. Those inspired to be part of that progress can get involved with the CAFNR Foundation — by volunteering, becoming a member or financially supporting students and CAFNR research. Learn more or give at www.CAFNRfoundation.org.

“We (CAFNR leadership and trustees) are all working together to create a better future for people, our state and the industries we serve,” said 2026 CAFNR Foundation President, Caleb Jones in the Foundation’s January newsletter. “That is the mindset to carry into 2026 as we strive for another year of growth for the CAFNR Foundation, pursuing ambitious fundraising goals.”

Foundation FAQs



WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GIVING TO CAFNR VERSUS GIVING TO THE FOUNDATION?

The CAFNR Foundation plays a unique and complementary role in advancing the mission of CAFNR. While the College leads the way in world-class research, student education and Extension programming, the Foundation is positioned to amplify that work through broader outreach, innovative partnerships and flexible support.

DOES THE CAFNR FOUNDATION OFFER CORPORATE MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITIES?

Yes! If your employer offers a matching gift program, simply follow their process, which may involve completing a form or an online application. Then, when you make your donation on our website, check the “My employer will match my gift” box. Together, we can amplify the impact of your contribution!



WHO DETERMINES THE CAFNR FOUNDATION'S FUNDRAISING PRIORITIES?

The University of Missouri College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources administration and The CAFNR Foundation's board of trustees work closely together to determine the Foundation's priorities and needs. Needs are assessed every quarter to ensure we evolve alongside the industry's shifts and changes.

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DONATING AND BECOMING A MEMBER?

In short, donations help fuel our work; membership brings you into the heart of it. A donation can be any amount and goes directly toward funding student scholarships and internships, as well as faculty research. Membership, on the other hand, is a more engaged way to support the Foundation. For \$100 as an individual or \$1,000 as a business, you join a network of ag leaders, stay connected to groundbreaking research and gain access to exclusive CAFNR Foundation events.





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