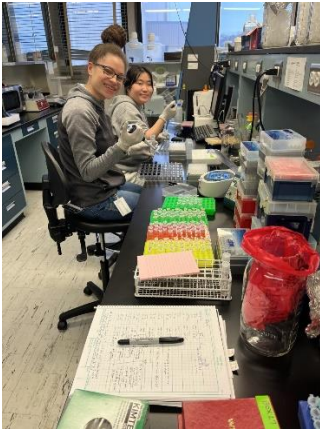


## 2023 Kenneth E. Papa and Cedric Kuhn Outstanding Graduate Student Awards Department of Plant Pathology, University of Georgia

The Kenneth E. Papa and Cedric Kuhn Awards recognize the scholarship, professionalism, and excellence in research of two graduate students in the Department of Plant Pathology each year. The 2023 awards were presented during the annual meeting of the Georgia Association of Plant Pathologists (GAPP) in Savannah, GA, on March 8th.

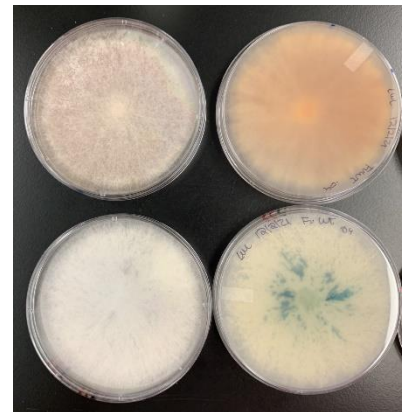
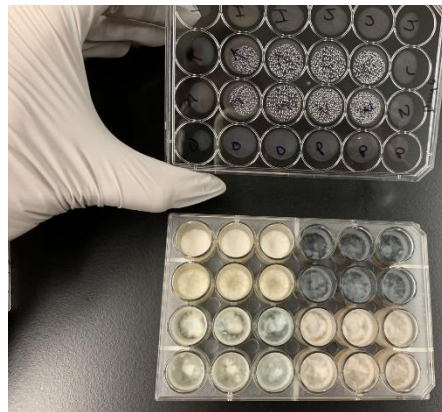
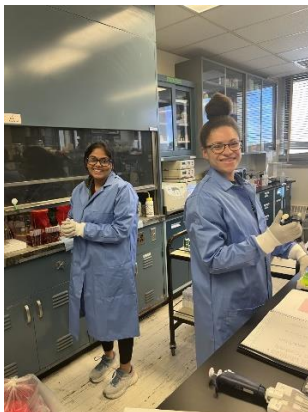


Lily Lofton (Kuhn awardee) in the lab with her mentee (Hailey Hamilton.)

The Kenneth E. Papa Outstanding Graduate Student Award is presented in honor of Ken Papa (1931-1986), a former professor in the Department of Plant Pathology, who was a renowned fungal geneticist and one of the first geneticists at the University of Georgia. He played a major role in the Plant Pathology graduate program through his service as Graduate Coordinator, and was elected Fellow of the Georgia Academy of Science in 1977. The 2023 Kenneth E. Papa Award was presented to Lily Lofton, a Ph.D. candidate working under the direction of Drs. Scott Gold and Anthony Glenn of the USDA-ARS Toxicology and Mycotoxin Research Unit. Lily investigates competitive fungal relationships occurring in the maize kernel, between *Fusarium verticillioides*, a mycotoxigenic fungus and food safety threat, and *Sarocladium zeae*, a protective endophyte. *S. zeae* produces secondary metabolites of interest, pyrrocidines A and B, which inhibit *F.*

*verticillioides* fumonisin biosynthesis. Lily uses fungal biology, transcriptomic, proteomic, and metabolomic techniques to elucidate the molecular mechanisms by which pyrrocidine, through gene *FvZBD1*, abolishes fumonisin biosynthesis in *F. verticillioides*. Ultimately, Lily's work aims to inform the development of a powerful biological control strain of *S. zeae*, optimized to eliminate fumonisin contamination in maize across conventional, organic, and subsistence agriculture.

Lily has been awarded an NSF Graduate Research Fellowship along with a UGA Dept. Plant Pathology Presidential Fellowship to fund her graduate studies. Lily has further been recognized by the 2023 Georgia Association of Plant Pathologists annual meeting for an oral presentation, receiving 1st place, as well as induction into the Blue Key Honor Society.



Lily Lofton's research area (left) and her lab work (middle and right.)

The Cedric Kuhn Outstanding M.S. Student Award is presented in honor of Cedric Kuhn (1930-2000), who in the late 1950s became Georgia's first plant virologist. Kuhn was first located at the Georgia Experiment Station in Griffin, later transferring to the Athens campus. He served as the first Graduate Coordinator in the Department of Plant Pathology, playing an instrumental role in the development of the doctoral program. Kuhn was named a Fellow of the American Phytopathological Society (APS) in 1987 and was awarded the D.W. Brooks Excellence in Research Award in 1989. The 2023 Cedric Kuhn Outstanding M.S. Student awardee is **Ismaila Adeleke**, who is working under the direction of Dr. Sudeep Bag. His research is focused on the use of molecular diagnostic approaches to understanding the spread and diversity of whitefly-transmitted viruses in vegetables in Georgia. In addition to this, part of his research also involves the greenhouse screening of yellow squash (*Cucurbita pepo*) for resistance against cucurbit chlorotic yellows virus (CCYV) and cucurbit leaf crumple virus (CuLCrV.)

Ismaila Adeleke also received the MS-level Graduate Student Publication of the Year Award for his publication "Persistent, and Asymptomatic Viral Infections and Whitefly-Transmitted Viruses Impacting Cantaloupe and Watermelon in Georgia, USA" published in *Viruses*.



*Ismaila Adeleke in the lab (left) and his observations in the field (right.)*