



*Join us in celebrating and
congratulating all the 2020
Endowed Award Recipients*



As most of you are aware, our annual CSUS Endowed Graduate Awards ceremony, celebration, and lunch event was to have occurred on Wednesday, March 18, 2020 . . . exactly one week after we learned that all MSU courses were moving to virtual formats as a result of Covid-19, and all other events were being cancelled, postponed, or moved to virtual formats.

Everyone’s lives have been impacted, and each person has responded in different ways. Yet we remain a CSUS & MSU community, whether interacting in person or through screens. Thank you to each of you for reaching out to help and support each other in this difficult time.

Nevertheless, we did not want to miss an opportunity to celebrate all the wonderful work that our students are doing, and will be doing into the future. Our Endowed Awards celebration is only one of these. For now, spend a bit of time reflecting on all your own positive work, learning, and contributions – and take a moment to congratulate our award winners for 2020.

GVS

George & Nancy Axinn International Scholarship

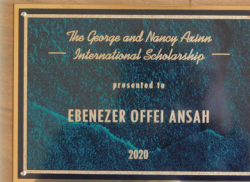
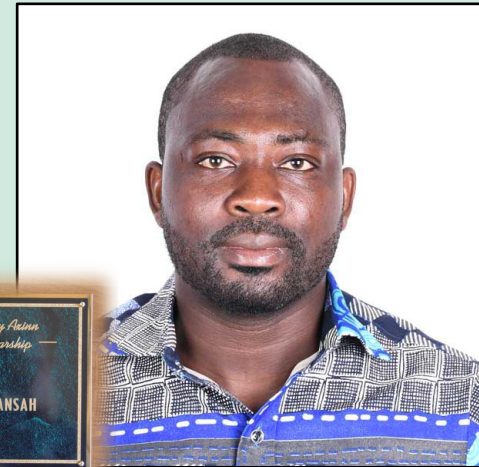


Nancy and George Axinn were committed to international development, and to improving life conditions of poor people in developing countries. Professors George and Nancy Axinn endowed this scholarship to support graduate students who are pursuing careers in international development. Recipients must be enrolled as graduate students in the Department of Community Sustainability (CSUS) and must focus their studies and careers on international development.

Eben Ansah hails from Ghana, where he is conducting his doctoral research that focuses on smallholder farmer participation in the design of sustainable cocoa certification programs. Eben was a Mastercard Foundation Scholar and received the Miriam J. Kelley African Scholarship while at MSU. The Axinn scholarship committee was particularly impressed with Eben's ongoing efforts to improve his home country and local community, including mentoring Ghanaian graduate students, and opening a book and stationary shop in his home town so that local students may buy school supplies. In the spirit of the Axinn award, Eben's application demonstrates compelling ties between his current work and planned career in development.

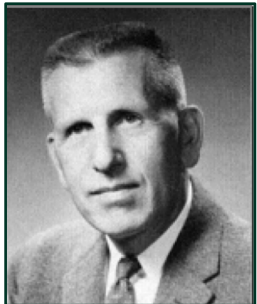
References for Eben praised his talent, insight, and commitment to work that benefits rural stakeholders in Ghana, and scholarly sophistication. Dr. Kaplowitz, his advisor, states, "It is fair to say that Mr. Ansah is a shining star. His academics are top-notch, his commitment to sustainable development is clear, and his role as a positive leader in his various communities is clear."

Eben's goal post-graduation is to build a research career in international development that integrates the needs and concerns of local stakeholders into development interventions. He has already made great strides in this direction, and we wish him every success as he embarks on his further journey.



Ebenzer Ansah (CSUS)

Gilbert W. Mouser **Scholarship: *Conservation & Environmental Education***



This award was created by Dr. John McVickar to recognize outstanding graduate students in CANR focused on the study and practice of conservation and environmental

education. Dr. McVickar received his MS in Resource Development from Michigan State College (MSC) in 1953. During this time, Dr. Mouser was one of his major professors, and had a profound impact on Dr. McVickar. Over the years, his professional relationship with Dr. Mouser formed the basis for his strong and positive memories of MSC. The excellent program that Dr. Mouser and his colleagues provided for students became the motivation for him to create this scholarship in Dr. Mouser's memory.

Julie Markiewicz is a Master's Plan A student in the Department of Community Sustainability, with a focus on place-based, environmental education. Julie has a background in the natural sciences with a BS in Environmental Biology and Zoology from MSU. Her interests shifted, however, during a job at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, during which she discovered the importance of education in preserving natural habitats.

Since this transformative experience, Julie has seized numerous opportunities to explore environmental education at MSU and beyond. Julie's Master's work focuses on a place-based forest ecology art and humanities field trip offered for students in Oregon, and the impact of technology integration on this field trip experience. Julie has been conducting this work with her advisor, Dr. Goralnik, who remarked, "Julie is curious, extraordinarily organized and hard working, and enthusiastic in an honest, sincere way." Another letter writer remarked, "[Julie] is just exactly the sort of educator that Dr. Mouser valued and supported." In the future, Julie looks forward to impactful education work with the Land Conservancy, MSU Extension, or other relevant organization.

Thus, Julie epitomizes the spirit and memory of Gilbert W. Mouser as well as his commitment to conservation and environmental education.



Julie Markiewicz (FW)

Harriette B. Sherman Fellowship: *Recreation & Tourism Systems*



The Sherman Fellowship was created, with a founding contribution by Robert Ruigh, to support non-traditional students enrolled in the Dept. of Community Sustainability and who are pursuing

a degree in Sustainable Tourism & Protected Areas Management. Applicants meet ≥ 2 of the following criteria, all indicators of the determination for non-traditional students to pursue advanced degree work:

- be 35 years or older;
- be employed >30 hours/week while enrolled (excluding assistantships);
- have returned to school >10 years after enrollment in a degree program; and/or
- be a single parent or supporting/caring for dependents other than a spouse.

Tatiana Iretskaia, a first-year doctoral student in Sustainable Tourism and Protected Area Management, meets both the criteria and the spirit of this award. As Harriette Sherman, Tanya is an adventurer at heart, and led travel groups in Russia, Mongolia and China through the company *Intrepid Travel*. She has conducted reef research in Madagascar, worked with Adventure Scientists for Conservation in Montana, and spent time in Costa Rica, Argentina, the Galapagos and Iceland. She deeply believes “in the immense power and potential of international and community-based tourism.” Her experiences represent the spirit she shares with Harriette Sherman and her desire to learn in non-traditional ways throughout a lifetime. Tanya’s career goal is to work within the realm of sustainable tourism and protected area management.

Her advisor, Dr. McCole writes, “Tanya is a lifelong learner with a passion for the outdoors, the natural environment, and the arts. Moreover, she has studied other areas before coming to CSUS later in life to pursue a graduate degree in tourism.”

Dr. McCole notes other inspiring characteristics of Tanya’s career, including more than 10 years within the tourism sector. Highly selective experiences include experience in the Open World Program via the US Library of Congress, facilitating professional development trips by Russians to the US, to promote mutual understanding and cooperation. The experiences Tanya has cultivated in international travel, adventure leadership, tourism, outdoors, and the arts are exemplary for any PhD student, and especially worthy of recognition for the Sherman award.



Tatiana Iretskaia (CSUS)

Milton H. Steinmueller Fellowship: *Natural Resources & Environmental Policy*



The M.H. Steinmueller Fellowship was established with gifts from alumni, colleagues, and friends wishing to honor the career of Dr. Steinmueller, who served for over 30 years

as Professor in the Department of Resource Development (now within the Department of Community Sustainability). The long-term goals of this fellowship are two-fold: **First**, it intends to create a living memorial in honor of Professor Steinmueller, who devoted his career to being a caring teacher of undergraduate and graduate students. **Second**, the fellowship aims to recruit and retain highly qualified graduate students to the Department who intend to emulate the career of Professor Steinmueller.

Laura Castro Diaz, from Bogota, MS Colombia, has a degree in CSUS (MSU) and a BS in ecology from the School of Environmental and Rural Studies at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana. She is a third-year doctoral student whose academic journey has been motivated by social-ecological complexities and injustices related to natural resources and environmental issues in Latin America, and the need for research to inform policy to address these issues. She also desires to be a role model for the next generation of women scholars in Latin America. These interests and her expressed commitment to teaching are consistent with the Steinmueller Fellowship.

Laura's dissertation research will focus on sustainable energy and the impacts of hydroelectric dams on rural communities. Her professional objective is to become a scholar engaged in practical research & teaching, and who can positively impact lives of students & communities.

Her advisor, Dr. Lopez, highlighted the timeliness and relevance of Laura's research to inform policy discourse, noting how her adaption of the energy justice framework will include aspects previously overlooked, e.g., gender issues, downstream communities, and compensation mechanisms. Dr. Hodbod wrote that Laura demonstrates clarity in her contributions to discussions, which will translate so well in Laura's future teaching career. She continued, Laura "is both eager and effective with respect to sharing knowledge, but also compassionate in the time and attention she gives to her fellow students to help them with their understanding."



Laura Castro Diaz (CSUS)

Milton H. Steinmueller Fellowship: *Natural Resources & Environmental Policy*



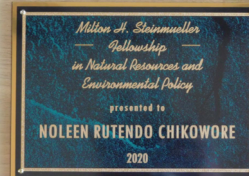
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Noleen Chikowore, from Harare, Zimbabwe, holds a MS in Environmental Policy & Planning from the University of Zimbabwe, and a dual BA with honors in Geography and Literature from Catholic University in Zimbabwe. Her doctoral work builds on nearly ten years of teaching in higher education in Zimbabwe. This and her experiences as a learner in graduate school have shaped her passion for teaching and her desire to influence the lives of students as a caring, compassionate, and encouraging teacher. She sees her role as teacher and mentor as not only about helping students complete their degrees, but also about taking an active role in academic lives of students, with the aim of enhancing fulfillment of their aspirations and self-awareness. In her academic career, she hopes to continue providing guidance and counsel to students to support them reaching their academic and professional goals.

Dr. Kerr describes Noleen as “very people-focused,” noting that she is confident *and* humble. He described her teaching as emphasizing active, student-centered learning, and that she is “an excellent student who matches the criteria for the fellowship both in her demonstrated devotion to teaching and her focus on natural resources and the environment,” domestically and internationally.

Dr. Chung described her as “exceptionally well organized,” “self-motivated,” and “an excellent match for the Steinmueller Award.” Noleen has “a wisdom and calm about her that other students value and she has made our graduate community stronger by always being there to support other students.”



Noleen Chikowore (CSUS)

Jon F. Bartholic Fund: *for Ensuring the Future of Michigan's Water Resources*



Dr. Jon Bartholic created this award to support graduate students who identify and study water and land resource problems and work toward

their solutions through cooperative efforts with partners outside the University. When he created the award endowment, Jon indicated that he hopes this award will help the Department of Community Sustainability continue its role as a boundary organization connecting new knowledge with end users who identify needs and contribute critically important practical knowledge for implementing new applications in the field.

Brocton Feltman, who previously earned his MS in the Community Sustainability Department, exploring the ability of local government officials and large-quantity water users to work collaboratively to govern Michigan's water resources. Prior to returning to CSUS to pursue his PhD, he worked as a legislative aide for the Michigan House of Representatives. All this prior experience has created a strong foundation for him to continue exploring issues and processes for successful water governance.

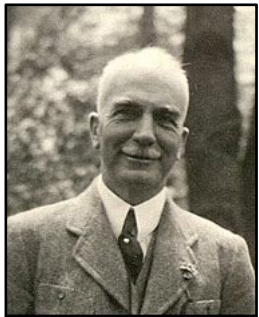
Brockton currently is pursuing work in the spirit of the Bartholic Award on two fronts. Working closely with Jon Bartholic, Brockton is laying the groundwork for creation of an interdisciplinary think tank focused on water resources in Michigan that will connect professionals from a variety of fields to work on water issues, especially as they relate to agriculture. Brockton also plans to engage stakeholders in a series of conversations about the role of hydrogeological modeling in water management and decisions about water use. More generally, Brockton is interested in water governance and stakeholder engagement — with the goal of promoting healthy, happy and prosperous individuals and communities. He plans to accomplish this by delving into and integrating political science, environmental economics, and sociology to address water and other issues in a holistic way.

Brock's work certainly contributes to the long-term protection of Michigan's water resource, as intended by Dr. Bartholic.



Brockton Feltman (CSUS)

C.S. Mott Pre-doctoral Fellowships: *Sustainable Agriculture*



Charles S. Mott, one of the most influential characters in Flint, MI. Begun in 1916, his charitable foundation now provides strong support for education, the environment, and health. In line with this

Credit: CS Mott Foundation

support are the C.S. Mott Pre-doctoral Fellowships offered at MSU and affiliated with the Center for Regional Food Systems. These fellowships are for students beginning a PhD program at MSU. They are intended to encourage research and training in those areas of agriculture and food systems critical for enhancing sustainability while increasing the pool of future researchers in this arena.

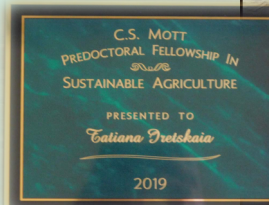
Tatiana Iretskaia, from Russia, is working with Dr. Dan McCole in the Department of Community Sustainability. She received a BA degree in Management from St. Petersburg State University, an MS in Development and Acceleration Management from University Pierre Mendès-France (Grenoble II), and a BS in Geoecology from Russian State HydroMeteorological University.

A former professor wrote: “Whenever learning new concepts, Tatiana would try to connect them to the already familiar ones, and it was a genuine pleasure watching a bright mind appropriate new ideas.”

A former supervisor wrote: “I have been impressed by her work ethic, curiosity, steady attitude, and commitment to personal and professional growth. She brings a mature and worldly perspective to her work, reflecting her broad experience and background.”

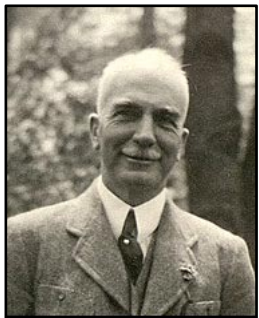
For her PhD work, Tatiana will be studying Sustainable Tourism and Protected Areas Management. In her first year she has had the opportunity to explore on-water recreation in marine protected areas and get involved with research on US camping offerings. She delved into food and farming by taking two EFFF classes and attending the Great Lakes Regional Dairy Conference.

She wants to combine these interests, and explore tourism in relation to farms and farming, specifically animals-related tourism. Another interest is with visitors seeking to experience transhumance events (seasonal movement of livestock) in different locations.”



Tatiana Iretskaia (CSUS)

C.S. Mott Pre-doctoral Fellowships: *Sustainable Agriculture*



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Ian Kropp works with Dr. Nejadhashemi in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering. Ian received his BS in Computer Science and Engineering from Ohio State University, and his MS in Biosystems Engineering from the Michigan State University.

A former supervisor wrote: “He is honest, dependable, and incredibly hard-working. Beyond that, he is an impressive problem solver who is always finding ways to improve systems and their efficiencies.”

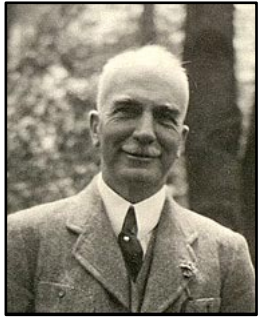
A former colleague wrote: “One of the greatest qualities about Ian is his tenacity for problem solving. He is a person that will consistently approach problems with a sense of strategy and tact, always trying to think of solutions from a new angle.”

For his PhD work, Ian’s overall focus is in applying evolutionary multi-objective optimization toward sustainable agricultural intensification. His current project aims to find more robust solutions to agricultural management practices by incorporating weather uncertainty into multi-objective optimization.



Ian Kropp (BAE)

C.S. Mott Pre-doctoral Fellowships: *Sustainable Agriculture*



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Alyssa Tarrant works with Dr. Zachary Hayden in the Department of Horticulture. She received her BS degree in Biology from Saginaw Valley University, and her MS in Horticulture from the Michigan State University. She also served as an Agriculture and Environmental Education Facilitator in the Peace Corps for two years in Gambia.

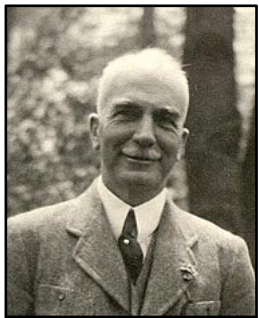
A former advisor wrote: “Since arriving at MSU, Alyssa has demonstrated a clear ability to pursue original research and has distinguished herself in nearly all the core areas of academic life. Alyssa is a natural and dependable leader, who actively seeks opportunities to help her colleagues achieve common goals. She operates well in collaborative and demanding environments, and leads by example through hard and thoughtful work. I have no doubt that she will be successful in her doctoral program and make important scientific contributions to society.”

For her PhD work, Alyssa will be investigating soil organic matter dynamics in intensive vegetable production systems on sandy soils. She is also interested in understanding how cover crops can be integrated into vegetable rotations in Michigan and how they can be best managed to deliver desired ecosystem services. Currently she is investigating the interactive effect of tillage and organic matter inputs on soil organic matter accrual and stabilization on sandy soils. In fall 2019, she established a trial to determine the impacts of organic fertility additions on cover crop biomass production, weed dynamics, and subsequent cash crop yields.



Alyssa Tarrant (HRT)

C.S. Mott Pre-doctoral Fellowships: *Sustainable Agriculture*



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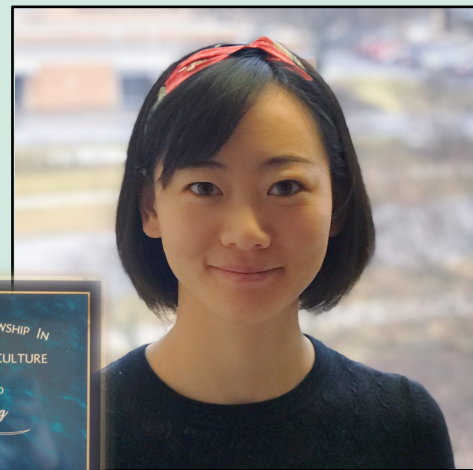
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Weijia Wang, from China, works with Dr. Karen Cichy in the Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences. She received her BS in Turfgrass Management from both Beijing Forestry University and Michigan State University, and received her MS in Plant Breeding Genetics and Biotechnology from Michigan State University.

A former research supervisor wrote: “Interacting with Weijia has improved the outcome of my science. She is one of the most impressive researchers I have had the privilege of working with. Weijia pays close attention to detail, learns quickly, and troubleshoots problems with ease. She is insightful and provides a unique voice and motivation that everyone working with her benefits from.”

Her PhD program will focus on the improvement of seed quality of organic dry beans to meet producers’ and consumers’ expectations. Objectives are to improve end use quality of organic dry beans through breeding programs; to improve organic bean packaging quality by testing retortable pouch processing method; and to have outreach and extension to communicate research results to organic dry beans producers. Her current project is evaluating the mechanical damage on seed coat of seeds being harvested from their fields in the past two years. She is also creating a bulletin for bean growers about mechanical seed damage, and recently has made an educational infographic that teaches kids the farm-to-fork story of beans.



Weijia Wang (PSM)



Thank you to all who served on award review committees and wrote letters of recommendations for the nominees.

Axinn Review Committee

Wynne Wright, Laura Schmitt Olabisi

Mouser Review Committee

Aaron McKim, Dan McCole, Dan Hayes (FW)

Sherman Review Committee

Shari Dann, Crystal Eustice

Steinmueller Review Committee

Robby Richardson, Doug Bessette, Mike Hamm

Kerr Review Committee

Wenda Bauchspies, Jenny Hodbod,
Maria Claudia Lopez

Bartholic Fund Award

Pat Norris, Rebecca Jordan, Gail Vander Stoep

C.S. Mott Pre-doctoral Awards

Center for Regional Food Systems,
Mike Hamm, Rich Pirog, Emma McNabb

Thank you to Marsha Edington for all her behind-the-scenes work to collect, process, track, and distribute all nomination packets.