



Caryopsis

Cereals & Grains Student Association Newsletter



Hello! I am Ravinder Kumar, pursuing a Ph.D. in Food Science at the University of Missouri. My academic journey started with a Bachelor's in Agricultural Sciences from Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University in India, followed by a master's in food science, which I completed in July 2023 from University of Missouri.

I am honored to serve as the Chair of the Cereals & Grains Student Association, following my previous role as Vice-Chair. This leadership opportunity, alongside my involvement in various extracurricular activities, has provided me with invaluable experience in engaging and inspiring fellow students. I am excited to continue leading an ambitious and passionate group of students who are committed to advancing the cereal and grains industry.

As a Graduate Researcher at the University of Missouri, my research focuses on sustainable food preservation and the extraction of bioactive compounds from crops, such as purple corn. I have also explored innovative uses of biodegradable packaging materials, milling characteristics of corn varieties, and advanced extraction techniques.

As Committee Chair, my goal is to continue fostering collaboration and professional growth within our community. I look forward to hosting events that will connect students, promote innovation, and advance our field. I encourage you all to invite your colleagues and peers to join the Student Association. Feel free to connect with me – whether you are passionate about food science, sustainability, or just looking to learn more about the grains and cereals industry!

Student Association Chair 2024–2025

Ravinder Kumar

Ravinder Kumar is a food science PhD student at the University of Missouri at Columbia. He comes from Haryana, India where he completed his bachelor's in agricultural sciences in 2021. He came to the USA in 2021 and pursued a master's in food science at the University of Missouri, graduated in 2023 under Dr. Pavel Somavat. He was a summer research and development intern in Bunge Milling at Chesterfield. His research involves coproduct evaluation of colored corn varieties and valorization of purple corn pericarp for its anthocyanin content and functional properties.

“At its core, research is about discovery and communication. Events like the Cereals & Grains Conference help ensure that the knowledge we generate doesn't stay in the lab—it reaches those who can apply it.”



Immediate Past Chair Edil Vidal Torres

Edil is a Food Technologist-Scientist at Northern Crops Institute (NCI) and a Ph.D. student in the Cereal Science Program at North Dakota State University, mentored by Dr. Frank Manthey. Originally from the Dominican Republic, she completed her Master's degree in Food Science and Technology at the University of Puerto Rico Mayaguez Campus. Her research focuses on the characterization of two alternative crops, Quinoa and Amaranth. She gained valuable experience as an intern in Dr. Simsek's lab during the summer of 2018 and presented two posters at the 2019 Cereals & Grains annual meeting in Denver, Colorado.

“Being part of the Cereals & Grains Student Association has provided me with opportunities to establish new professional connections, broaden my knowledge across diverse topics, and access invaluable resources and information. It has been an honor to collaborate with the association and work together towards our shared goals.”



Committee Vice Chair Ruchi Chauhan

Ruchi Chauhan is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Food Science program at Kansas State University working under the guidance of Dr. Scott Smith. She earned her undergraduate and master's degree in Chemistry from the University of Delhi, India. Her current research focuses on exploring the potential uses of low falling number wheat in food applications. She attended her first Cereals & Grains Conference in 2024, where she presented a research poster and won first place in the Best Student Research Paper Competition (BSRPC). She is excited to serve as the Vice-Chair of the Cereals & Grains Student Association and looks forward to contributing to the Cereals & Grains community. When she is not working in the lab, she loves spending time with her cats.



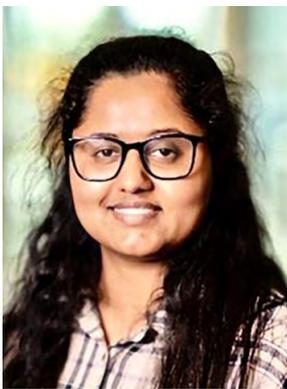
Engagement Chair Maria Robles

Maria Robles is a Ph.D. candidate in Food Science and Technology at the University of Alberta in Canada. Maria holds a bachelor's degree in biotechnology engineering from her home country, Mexico. Her research interests include cereal fermentation, clean label and alternative flours for baked goods, and up-cycled ingredients. Her research project focuses on the use of *Bacillus* spp. ferments as a novel ingredient to improve bread quality. She participated in the Student Product Development Competition at Cereals & Grains 2023, and her team was awarded first place. She is excited to be part of the student association for the second year as Engagement Chair.



Immediate Past Engagement Chair Vimukthi Molligoda

Vimukthi Molligoda, is the past engagement chair and a Ph.D. student at the North Dakota State University, Department of Plant Sciences, working under Dr. Frank Manthey. His current research project is on the characterization of starch in durum wheat grown in North Dakota. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree in Food Science and Nutrition from Wayamba University of Sri Lanka in 2017 and a Master of Science in Cereal Science from North Dakota State University in 2023. Since 2022, he has been an active member of the Cereals & Grains Association. In 2023, he served as the Engagement Co-Chair, where he successfully collaborated in organizing and executing annual Student Association competitions, including the 2023 Product Development Competition. In 2024, as the engagement chair, he managed the planning and execution of the Best Student Research Paper Competition (BSRPC). He is excited to continue his involvement with the Cereals & Grains Student Association in 2025



Engagement Vice Chair Chamali Kodikara

Chamali Kodikara is a PhD student in the Department of Food and Human Nutritional Sciences at the University of Manitoba and a Graduate Research Affiliate at the Canadian Grain Commission. Her research focuses on the development and comparison of innovative analytical methods for detecting ergot alkaloids in wheat and exploring cold plasma processing as a novel technique to mitigate mycotoxins. As Engagement Vice-Chair of the Cereals & Grains Students Association Committee, Chamali is committed to leveraging her leadership experience and passion to enhance student involvement, foster meaningful connections, and promote innovative initiatives that align with the association's mission.



Secretary Shikhadri Mahanta

Shikhadri Mahanta is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering at Texas A&M University, with a research focus on post-harvest engineering. Her work centers on applying atmospheric cold plasma technology to enhance the quality and safety of wheat while reducing post-harvest losses—advancing sustainable solutions in grain processing. She currently serves as Secretary of the Cereals & Grains Student Association, where she supports member engagement and fosters collaboration across the grains research community. Since 2021, Shikhadri has held multiple leadership roles within her department's Graduate Student Association, including serving as Secretary in 2022. In these roles, she has organized academic workshops, professional development events, and social initiatives to strengthen student involvement. A strong advocate for women in STEM, she also served as a departmental senator, working to address academic concerns and expand access to inclusive programming for graduate students.



Online Communicator Melissa Rodríguez-España

Melissa Rodríguez-España serves as the Online Communicator for the Cereals & Grains Student Association. In this role, she is responsible for disseminating announcements, maintaining records, and engaging with the student community to support the association's mission of fostering professional development and collaboration among its members.

Currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Food Science at Tecnológico Nacional de México, campus Veracruz, Melissa's research focuses on optimizing sorghum flour formulations for gluten-free bread production. She also holds an MSc and BSc in Biochemical Sciences from the same institution, with research experience in DHA extraction and food production feasibility studies.

Melissa brings additional expertise in social media management through her role as Social Media Assistant at Unidad de Investigación y Desarrollo en Alimentos (UNIDA), where she creates and manages content across multiple platforms to enhance engagement and visibility. Her combined experience in food science and communication makes her a valuable contributor to the Cereals & Grains Association's initiatives.

Questions? Contact us at:
cgastudents@scisoc.org



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