Graduate Research Assistant

An M.S. or Ph.D. research assistantship is available in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln for a student interested in sustainable specialty crop production. The graduate research assistant will work as part of Dr. Sam Wortman’s research team to develop bio-based, renewable management tactics for local, urban, and organic specialty crop farmers that increase crop yield and quality, and reduce labor without jeopardizing environmental quality. The graduate research assistant will have the opportunity to provide leadership for and conduct thesis or dissertation research on either the Grafted Heirloom Tomato Project or the Bio-Based Weed Control Project. The goal for the Grafted Heirloom Tomato Project is to improve nutrient uptake and heirloom tomato quality in low fertility soils by grafting heirloom scions onto vigorous rootstocks. Our aim in the Bio-Based Weed Control Project is to add value to Nebraska’s agricultural and biofuel processing byproducts (e.g., chicken feathers and corn gluten meal) through the development of multifunctional, bio-based herbicides and fertilizers. Both projects are externally funded and objectives are well-defined, but the graduate research assistant will have opportunities for creative research contributions within and beyond these projects.

Position responsibilities will include: 1) scientific literature review, 2) designing and executing research protocols, 3) managing specialty crops, including grafting tomato plants, and maintaining research plots, 4) collaboration with chemists in the Industrial Agricultural Products Center to develop bio-based mulch films and herbicides, 5) collecting, analyzing, and interpreting field and lab data, and 6) preparing results for publication in refereed journals. This is a field-based research team, but there will be opportunities to develop laboratory skills in the areas of chemistry, soil microbial ecology, crop physiology and quality, and soil nutrient cycling.

Qualifications:
- 1) Bachelor’s degree in horticulture, agronomy, crop sciences, agroecology, soil science, biology, chemistry, biochemistry, ecology, environmental sciences, or a related field; 2) excellent written and oral communication skills; 3) self-motivated and ability to work independently and as part of a team; 4) previous research experience is preferred.

Graduate Research Assistantship annual stipends:
- Ph.D. student: $26,496
- M.S. student: $24,600

Tuition waiver: A tuition waiver of up to 12 credit hours per semester and 12 credit hours during summer sessions is provided with the graduate research assistantship.

Health insurance: Students on assistantships are provided health insurance at a reduced rate.

Applications: Review of applications will begin March 1, 2018 and continue until the position is filled. Interested students should send the following application materials to Dr. Sam Wortman (swortman@unl.edu): 1) one-page statement of interest that includes qualifications and career goals, 2) most recent academic transcripts (unofficial), 3) resume or C.V., 4) contact information for three professional references, and 5) GRE scores (preferred, but not required for consideration). Successful applicant will be contacted and encouraged to formally apply for graduate studies in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture. Admission instructions can be found at: http://agronomy.unl.edu/futuregraduate

Questions about graduate studies in the department or the admissions process can be directed to Dr. Rhae Drijber, the Graduate Chair in the Department of Agronomy and Horticulture (E-mail: AGRO_HORT_GradChair@unl.edu).

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