

# Nominations summary- 2022-2023

## Abbey Neat (Oregon State University) - Nominee for Chair



Hi! My name is Abbey Neat and I am a PhD student at Oregon State University. I spent the last year serving on the Executive Board of the Student and PostDoc Section as Vice President. I had a great time, and I am excited at the opportunity to continue serving on the board as the Chair. I have had past experience in leadership positions. After I finished undergrad, I worked as the coordinator of an environmental education program in which middle school classes would spend a week living in nature and learning about ecology. I was responsible for planning and leading staff training, so that the educators felt comfortable and confident teaching science materials to the visiting students. I also worked directly with the schools to coordinate their visit. More recently as a PhD student, I coordinated a professional development series for the REU students in our lab. This included workshops such as a faculty panel, graduate student panel, how to write a research proposal, and an end of summer symposium. I enjoy serving in this type of leadership position, and I hope to bring the ideas I

have acquired from my past experiences to the board of MSA SPS as Chair.

## Xiomy-Janiria Pinchi-Davila (University of Georgia) - Nominee for Vice chair

I'm a third-year PhD student working under the supervision of Dr. Anny Chung in the Plant Pathology Department at the University of Georgia. My project focuses on understanding the mechanisms driving sorghum root microbiome assembly under drought stress. Previous to my PhD, I received a Master's degree from Western Illinois University, where I worked with Dr. Andrea Porrás-Alfaro describing a new fungal species (paper coming soon!). I am also the founder of Hongos Peru, a juvenile Peruvian organization (yes, I am Peruvian) that aims to spread scientific information about fungi. I am passionate about plant-fungal interactions, especially in root systems (including endophytes, root-associated fungi, and mycorrhizae) and how these associations impact plant community structure and crops. During my PhD, I hope to better understand how the root microbiome assembles and how we can harness host-root microbiome interactions in sustainable agriculture. I have served as the Communication Chair for the past two years, and I am really excited to continue serving MSA. My plan is to continue the legacy of our previous chair of organizing colloquiums/other activities in Spanish to recruit more underrepresented groups.



## **Justina Martelli (University of California, Los Angeles) - Nominee for Secretary**



Hello everyone! I am an undergraduate Biology Major at the University of California, Los Angeles. When I was 10, I noticed mushrooms sprouting in the garden after rains and my wonder for them led me to the LA Mycological Society, which I have been a member of ever since. Through their identification classes and research lectures, I developed a strong passion for mycology and am on a mission to make this field more accessible. During the pandemic, I attended MSA's virtual conference and was deeply drawn by this beautifully tight web of mycologists and their interests. Volunteering for Fungal Diversity Survey during the time of their new website and social media launches and attending Sonoma County Mycological Society's mushroom camps opened my eyes to networking and spreading awareness of mycology - especially for the next generation. Most universities do not require

or include fungi in their course objectives; students thus miss a vast and fascinating branch of science that needs much investigation. In summer of 2022 I was an assistant researcher at Dr. Marcus Roper's mycofluidics lab, studying sporal and genetic behavior in the multinucleate *Neurospora crassa*. I learned what it takes to write good observations and adequately communicate with members, and now founded UCLA's first mycology student organization with the aim to spread fungal conservation awareness and teach proper documenting skills. This summer I will be using molecular techniques to study mycoheterotrophic relationships and fungal life cycles at the Naturalis Biodiversity Center in The Netherlands under Drs. Vincent Merckx and Jorinde Nuytinck. I look forward to applying the knowledge I gain wherever I go, and strengthening this organization's connections internationally. I'm an avid notetaker, love meeting and connecting people, and am determined to help MSA expand the world of mycology.

## **Rebecca Mader (Acadia University) - Nominee for Secretary and Treasurer positions**

I am a first-year MSc biology student studying old-growth forest fungi at Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Canada, and I am nominating myself for the secretary and the treasurer positions on the MSA SPS 2023–2024 Exec Board. I have always had a deep connection with the natural world—as such, I love learning about all areas of biology and enjoy sharing my passions with others. I am also deeply interested in mycology and am eager to get more involved with the MSA as a member of the Exec Board. I believe I am well suited to the secretary and treasurer position and have a lot to offer the team. I have served on several executive committees, most recently as the Vice President of Administration of the Acadia Medical Campus Response Team (2021–2023), where I organized shift schedules and ran PD sessions for the volunteer medical first responders on our team. I also served as Treasurer of Acadia Global Brigades (2019–2020), where I helped organize a student humanitarian trip to Honduras to implement sustainable infrastructure and medical care



in remote villages. Through these experiences I developed efficient communication, organization, teamwork, and problem-solving skills, all of which would help me succeed as a member of the SPS Board. If elected as secretary, I would work hard to ensure good organization and effective communication on the Exec Board. I would also offer my ideas and experiences to continue building the MSA in collaboration with my peers. Thank you for your consideration!

### **Edwin Hlangwani (University of Johannesburg) - Nominee for Secretary and Treasurer positions**



I am Edwin Hlangwani, a doctoral candidate at the University of Johannesburg, South Africa. I believe that I possess the necessary qualities and skills to effectively perform the duties of a secretary or treasurer. With my experience in communication, I have authored books (2), book chapters (4), and peer-reviewed journal articles (5), as well as spoken at prestigious events and institutions. I have developed strong organizational and time management skills through my experience in chairing meetings, managing paperwork, and maintaining accurate records. In addition, I have technical proficiency in a range of software programs and online tools, including programming, modeling, and simulation. Having served as editor-in-chief and reviewer for various organizations, I am detail-oriented and have a track record of ensuring accuracy and completeness in my work. I am also well-versed in data protection and privacy regulations and have experience in handling confidential information with discretion. Furthermore, I am a team player and have contributed to various innovative solutions teams that have addressed challenges ranging from food security to global multilateral relations. Overall, I am confident that my skills and qualities can contribute

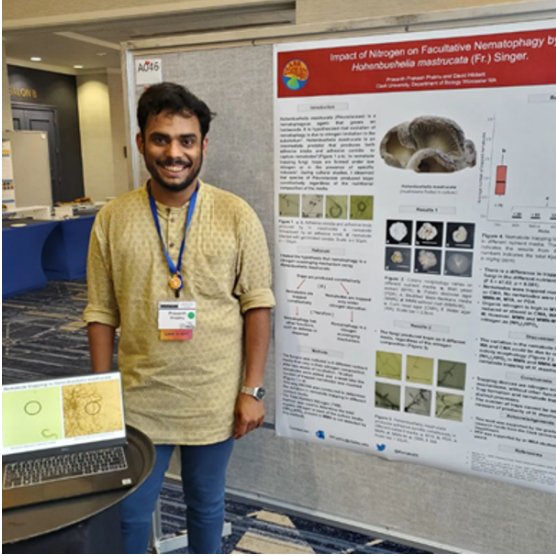
to the success of the Mycological Society of America as a secretary or treasurer.

### **Lluvia Vargas (Oregon State University) - Nominee for Merchandise Chair**

I'm a Postdoctoral scholar at Oregon State University. Prior to joining OSU, I earned my master's and Ph.D. degrees at the Centro de Investigacion Cientifica y de Educacion Superior de Ensenada (CICESE) in Baja California, Mexico. During my time at CICESE, I served on various committees dedicated to organizing both national and international meetings hosted by the institution. In these roles, I was responsible for designing promotional materials and raising awareness about the events among potential attendees. Additionally, during my undergraduate studies, I was an active member of the Student Association, where I organized symposia on a range of biotechnology-related topics.



## Prasanth Prakash Prabhu (Clark university) - Nominee for Communication Chair



I am Prasanth Prakash Prabhu, a fourth-year Ph.D. student in the Department of Biology, Clark University. Before coming to Clark, I did my bachelor's and masters in Botany where I studied different aspects of Plant biology. Currently I am studying the evolution of nematophagy in Pleurotaceae. Social media is one of the effective platforms to communicate messages to the public. As a Polyglot I feel like this can translate the message by breaking the existing language barriers. I am also part of Clark university graduate student worker union's (CUGW) multimedia team. I have also been involved in writing press releases, creating flyers and Instagram posts for CUGW. As an MSA communication chair, I would like to use this opportunity to disseminate the information to the public to create and expand the scientific temper of the society.

## Diana Vargas-Hernandez (North Dakota State University) - Nominee for Communication Chair

Hi everyone! My name is Diana Vargas-Hernandez. I'm a first-year Master's student in the Environmental and Conservation Science Program. This program belongs to the Department of Biological Sciences at North Dakota State University. I'm an enthusiastic learner of the mycology world. I'm especially interested in plant-fungi interactions. Currently, I'm working in the identification of potential synergistic effects of fungal endophytes against the coffee pathogen *Mycena citricolor*. I think getting involved in the executive board of the Student and Postdoc Section of the Mycological Society of America would be a great opportunity to connect with peers from different fields in Mycology. Networking is like mycelium, it extends to keep getting nutrients, in this case knowledge. I believe teamwork is the key to success in any organization. I would like to support MSA SPS as communication chair. Even though I don't have experience in this role, I'm excited to learn about scientific communication. Social media has a huge impact in society, so a well use of this tool would increase the interest of mycology. I consider I have the energy and motivation to assume the role and do my best to spread information about MSA SPS labor to the world. Thanks for all the support! Keep having fun with fungi!



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### Thomas Roehl (Clark University) - Nominee for Webmaster



I am a second year PhD student at Clark University, where I study mushroom evo-devo in David Hibbett's lab. This is my 13th year of studying fungi, after being introduced to mycology as an undergraduate. I graduated from the University of Virginia in 2013 with a B.S. in Biology. After that, I spent several years out of academia. During that time, I joined my local mushroom club and served as their newsletter editor. Additionally, I began publishing my own blog, [www.fungusfactfriday.com](http://www.fungusfactfriday.com). I started a master's degree in 2019 and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in early 2022 before enrolling at Clark.

During the 2022-23 academic year, I served as SPS Webmaster and I hope to continue in this role in the upcoming year. Thanks to my experience publishing a blog and editing club newsletters, I was already familiar with how to operate a website and create newsletters. I hope to continue improving the website to foster engagement within the SPS and provide more resources for future and current students/postdocs.

### Terry Torres Cruz (Purdue University) - Nominee for Postdoc Representative

Terry recently completed her PhD in Plant Pathology and Biogeochemistry in the Geiser Lab at Penn State working on *Fusarium xyrophilum* interactions with other organisms in a potential mimicry system. She is currently a postdoc in the Aime Lab at Purdue University studying coffee leaf rust. Terry has ample experience in leadership roles Terry has served MSA on various positions since joining the society in 2015. Terry has served as webmaster, vice-chair and chair of the MSA SPS Exec Board between 2015-2018 and has volunteered as a student representative on MSA Committees for the past 8 years, including the Nomenclature, Nominations, and International Committees. She is interested in now serving the society with a focus on engaging the MSA postdoctoral community and implementing professional development activities.



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**Sandhya Dhiman (National Institute of TB & Respiratory Diseases) - Nominee for Postdoc Representative**



I would like to introduce myself as Sandhya Dhiman, Ph.D. in Microbiology. I would like to apply for Post-Doc Representative and I am very much excited to work with the MSA executive board. During Ph.D., I worked on plant-microbe interaction and biocontrol against soil borne pathogenic fungi by extracting bacterial metabolites and studying their chemistry. Currently I am working as research associate at National Institute of TB & Respiratory Diseases, New Delhi, India where my research area is identifying non-sporulating moulds from respiratory infected patients. I have identified diversity of important pathogenic moulds showed huge impact on human health. I found that a sporulating mould could be a non-sporulating in unfavorable conditions which deliberately affect human respiratory tract.

**Praveen Thangaraj (Tamil Nadu Agricultural University) - Nominee for Postdoc Representative**

Dr. Praveen T., working as a Post-Doctoral Innovation Fellow at the Department of Plant Pathology, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India. He received the B.Sc., Agriculture from the College of Agricultural Science, Theni, Tamil Nadu, India in 2015; PG and Ph.D. in Plant Pathology from the Department of Plant Pathology, Centre for Plant Protection Studies, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University, Coimbatore, India. I am the recipient of ICAR NET (2017, 2018). His research interest includes Mycology, Mushroom biotechnology, Biocontrol of Plant diseases, and Volatilomics studies. I will work to the fullest satisfaction as an MSA Post-Doctoral Representative by conducting interactive meetings among Post-doctoral members by sharing innovative ideas through offline and online modes, communicating post-doctoral opportunities to the early career faculty members, encouraging the members to participate in National and International conferences and meeting the Emeritus Scientist at International Universities to gather Innovative technologies. This position will greatly help me to bring early career members to the best and I have experienced the same as a member of different organizations (Indian Phytopathological Society, Indian Society of Plant Pathology, and Indian Society of Mycology and Plant Pathology). Dr. TP has been conferred with Prof. M J Narasimha Award from the Indian Phytopathological Society, New Delhi., Best Ph.D. Thesis Award from Agro-Environmental Education and Farmers Welfare Society, Punjab, India, Young Scientist Award from Vigyan Varta, New Delhi. I also obtained 3 best oral presentations and 8 best poster presentation awards from International and National Conferences for excellent work in the field of Plant Pathology. I strongly believe that my experience in my current position could help me to meet your requirements for the MSA Post Doc Representative.

