

# THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

at Mississippi State University<sup>®</sup>



## Campus Tours

Need assistance with [campus tours?](#)  
Contact: [scholar@grad.msstate.edu](mailto:scholar@grad.msstate.edu)

## Upcoming Events

**GSA Food Truck Event** on December 2, from 3:00-5:30 PM (Reading Day)

**Meridian Commencement** - December 9, 2021 at the Riley Center

**Starkville Commencement** - December 10, 2021 at the Humphrey Coliseum

## Kudos

**Stephanie Jacobs**, an AMEC Graduate Student, won the **Grand Prize** in the American Anthropological Association 3 Minute Thesis competition. Check out the 3MT video submission [here!](#)

## A Note From Our Dean

Dear Colleagues and Friends of the Graduate School,

There is now a little chill in the air, and while the COVID-19 pandemic still impacts daily life to some degree, graduate enrollment at Mississippi State has reached an all-time high at 4,000+ students. Life is looking brighter in Bulldog country! On behalf of the Graduate School, I thank and commend the faculty, staff and students for their exceptional efforts and collaborative spirit in enabling Mississippi State University to continue to offer on-campus and distance educational opportunities this semester.

In spite of the challenges, the university has experienced record enrollment this fall, much due to the significant increase in graduate student enrollment across almost every academic unit that offers a graduate program. I would also like to thank the campus community for their feedback and contributions to the first ever strategic plan for the Graduate School. With the assistance of Dr. Jason Lueg, Professor in the Department of Marketing, Quantitative Analysis and Business Law, we are in the final stages of submitting a draft to Dr. David Shaw, Provost and Executive Vice President before the Thanksgiving Holiday for his review and final approval.

As we approach the final weeks of the semester, we extend our sincere congratulations to all our graduating students and wish them every success in their future career endeavors. While we have encountered many challenges, said goodbye to loved ones, and welcomed new additions into families, we are proud of the many accomplishments attained. We reflect on the previous twelve months and give thanks for the many opportunities and blessings we have received. Season's Greetings for the Christmas Holidays and safe travels. Please enjoy some quiet and relaxing time with family and friends. See you in 2022!

Best Regards,

Dr. Peter Ryan  
Executive Vice Provost and Dean - The Graduate School

## Student Spotlight:

### Taylor Agee, Chemistry

(Article by Dr. Christopher Johnson)

Taylor A. Agee has been accepted to work and train in the Vanderbilt Center for Arrhythmia Research and Therapeutics. Taylor discovered a passion for biomedical science while working with the Johnson laboratory during her senior year at Mississippi State. This past spring she officially decided to continue her scientific training at a graduate level as part of the Johnson laboratory scientific team. Dr. Christopher N. Johnson, is a recent addition to Mississippi State University (Fall 2020), and his laboratory investigates the structure and function of proteins that signal a human heart beat.

Following the completion of her B.S. in Chemistry this past spring, Taylor was "beyond thrilled" when she found out that Dr. Johnson and his collaborator Dr. Brett M. Kroncke were able to secure a visiting scholar position which opened a door for Taylor to train in both an academic (MSU) and hospital (VUMC) setting. In the fall of 2022, she will return to Starkville for further training in biophysics and electrophysiology.

Dr. Johnson notes that Taylor's strong work ethic coupled with her scientific curiosity are what allowed for this unique opportunity to come together. Taylor was the recent recipient of a Mississippi State Chemistry Department Award that highlighted her dedication to scientific discovery this past spring. For more information on the Johnson and Kroncke laboratory research interests please click [here](#).



Taylor Agee, Chemistry

### Yang Yun, Computer Science

After earning his bachelor's degree in China, Yun was determined to attend graduate school in the United States. After years of practicing his English-speaking skills and battling COVID-19 obstacles, Yun's determination has paid off. He is currently pursuing a master's degree at Mississippi State in Computer Science.

Yun describes Graduate School as having given him the perfect place to absorb more knowledge and advance his ability to think independently. He describes it as a place that provides students with innovative ways to use their skills in an effort to advance research, solve problems, and discover new technology.



Yang Yun, Computer Science

If you would like to highlight a student in our video testimonial series, please contact Natalie Parrott Coats, at [nparrott@grad.msstate.edu](mailto:nparrott@grad.msstate.edu).

## 2021-2022 GRAGS Recipients Announced

Each fall, the Graduate School accepts proposals for Graduate Recruitment Assistance Grants (GRAGS). The purpose of these grants is to jump start programs that are looking to increase enrollment. Programs can receive up to \$5,000 to assist with recruitment efforts and up to \$15,000 in fellowships to incentivize outstanding students to choose MSU. This year's recipients include:

- Agribusiness Management
- Agriculture & Biological Engineering
- Applied Anthropology
- Applied Psychology
- Biological Sciences
- Communication
- Computational Biology
- Electrical & Computer Engineering
- Elementary Education
- Elementary Education (Meridian)
- Foreign Languages
- Geosciences
- Historic Preservation
- History
- Landscape Architecture
- Music Education
- Sociology

# 2021 Three Minute Thesis

## Competition Winners:

(Article by Sasha Steinberg)

Mississippi State's Graduate School is honoring eight students for outstanding research presentations during the university's eighth annual Three Minute Thesis competition.

The recent event challenged graduate students to present their research ideas and discoveries in three minutes or less. A panel of academic and non-academic professionals judged the presentations students gave to a general in-person and online audience.

The judges selected Laihmen Quan, a chemical engineering doctoral student in MSU's Bagley College of Engineering, as this year's 3MT Grand Champion for her presentation "Salinity effects on CO<sub>2</sub>-Sensitive polyacrylamide gels for CCS applications". In addition to a \$1,000 prize, the Honduras native receives the honor of competing at the regional level during the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools in February 2022.

Chathuranga Rathnamalala of Sri Lanka, a chemistry doctoral student in MSU's College of Arts and Sciences, earned the designation of Grand Champion Runner-Up and a \$750 prize with his presentation "Design and synthesis of near infrared probes for early detection of cancers".

Attendees voted Casey Iwamoto, a forest resources doctoral student from Seattle, Washington, for the \$750 People's Choice Award. Her presentation focused on "Enhancing shortleaf pine (*Pinus echinata*) restoration on strip-mined soils using biochar and mycorrhizal fungi".



Winners of Mississippi State's Fall 2021 Three Minute Thesis Competition are, from left to right, Casey Iwamoto, People's Choice Award; Laihmen Quan, Grand Champion; and Chathuranga Rathnamalala, Grand Champion Runner-Up. (Photo by Natalie Coats)

Finalists received \$250 awards for their presentations. They include:

—Masood Abdollahi, a civil engineering doctoral student from Iran, "Effect of wildfire on soil and sediment erosion and transport."

—Sakie Jaladha Arachchige, a mathematical sciences doctoral student from Sri Lanka, "Risk prediction of premature menopause before 25 years old."

—Courtney K. Mason, a psychology doctoral student from Oklahoma, "Negative thoughts and thought control strategies within Borderline Personality Disorder."

—Meena Raju, a civil engineering doctoral student from India, "Impact of global climate oscillations on hydrological variables in Mississippi River Valley Alluvial Aquifer (MRVAA)."

—Katelin S. Waldrep, an agriculture/engineering technology master's student from Cherokee, Alabama, "Beyond Variety Selection: Do cropping systems have an impact on iron deficiency chlorosis (IDC) in soybeans?"



Finalists of Mississippi State's Fall 2021 Three Minute Thesis Competition are, from left to right, Meena Raju, Laihmen Quan, Katelin Waldrep, Chathuranga Rathnamalala, Masood Abdollahi, Casey Iwamoto, Courtney Mason, and Sakie Arachchige. (Photo by Natalie Coats)

Help us congratulate all of these outstanding graduate students! Additional information about the Three Minute Thesis Competition can be found on our website [here](#).

If you have any questions about the 3MT or Graduate Student Development Opportunities, please contact Mrs. Lilli Harris, at [lharris@grad.msstate.edu](mailto:lharris@grad.msstate.edu).

# Mitigating Undue Foreign Influence

## Concerns:

(Article by Alyssa McKinley)

In recent years, improper interference by some foreign governments has become a high-risk compliance issue for American universities. Graduate students are a strategic target for interference and, therefore, a critical component in the mitigation of these risks. Because of the open and accessible academic system in the US, some foreign governments have initiated systematic programs to capitalize on and misappropriate our Intellectual Property (IP).

Examples include enlisting students to divert IP from grant applications or research projects. Protecting the success of American institutions starts with transparency in disclosing all outside sources of support and managing conflicts of commitment and conflicts of interest. If you are supported by an external entity or foreign government as a student and are working on a federally funded research project, it is important to know that such support may need to be disclosed, depending on the requirements of the sponsor.

Additionally, if a solicitor contacts you with an inappropriate or questionable request, please reach out to Chris Jenkins or Kacey Strickland. The Office of Research Compliance & Security is a resource that can help. We want to allow researchers the flexibility to pursue outside activities but we must also be transparent about those activities with MSU and our research sponsors.

MSU is committed to international collaboration, a diverse workforce, and maintaining our open academic system while ensuring compliance with foreign component regulations. For more information regarding undue foreign influence and reporting checklists for federal sponsors, please contact us or visit our website [here](#).



Alyssa McKinley, Compliance Administrator



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# The Graduate School Halloween Party

The Graduate School (TGS) hosted their second annual Halloween event October 25th-29th. This year's event included a Chilling Costume Contest and Spooky Scavenger Hunt. Participants in the scavenger hunt followed QR codes that led them to clues around campus and ultimately to the spooky-themed Graduate School on the sixth floor of Allen Hall. Participants in both the costume contest and the scavenger hunt were entered into a drawing for a chance to win TGS t-shirts and ghoulish goodie bags.



The Graduate School Staff

## December 2021: Events/Dates

**December 1:** Last day to apply online via myState for December graduation; \$50 fee plus \$100 late fee.

**December 1:** Last day to submit Library-approved thesis/dissertation to the Library for December graduation.

**December 7:** Last say to register for The GTA Workshop

**December 9:** Last day for non-thesis comprehensive exam for December graduation.

**December 22:** Deadline to pass thesis/dissertation defense after all other requirements are met except thesis/dissertation submission to Library, allowing student to enroll in GRD 9011 in Spring semester and apply for May graduation - 10:00 a.m.