

Kylie Scott

September 27, 2020

Dear Intern of the Year Committee:

In a renewed age of agricultural skepticism and unequal natural resource distribution across American farms, there is little that farmers can agree on today. However, there is one subject on which every agriculturist in the Texas Panhandle can agree: the rapid depletion of usable water. Under drought conditions, farmers face challenges of dryland farming in a region of the world that only acquires an average of 22 inches of rainfall per year. As certain areas of agricultural land in the Panhandle have become nearly unusable due to a low water table, geneticists and farmers must work together to assess new opportunities in cytogenetics and breed new characteristics into crop populations that produce a satisfiable yield under extreme drought stress. I gained hands-on experience with field research techniques, witnessed challenges which threatened scientific progress, and applied knowledge of water management with an independent research project as an Integrated Field Sciences (IFS) Intern for Corteva Agriscience.

From the beginning, I knew this internship would exceed my expectations in research and development, a sector that I pursued intentionally to integrate myself into a community aimed at solving global problems. While typically I would have received training from some of the top plant geneticists in the world at headquarters in Johnston, Iowa, the company did a fantastic job of adapting the training into a virtual platform that included summer-long opportunities for mentorship and professional development. As an IFS Intern, my roles varied tremendously. I had the opportunity to walk plots daily with my mentor, Scott Adair, recording data on Seed Applied Technology trials and looking for phenotypic trends across treatments in maize. Working with regulated seed, I frequently found myself collecting leaf punch samples for lab analysis, grinding leftover seed, and taking flowering notes to track the progress of each experiment.

One of our biggest challenges at the Plainview Research Center was lack of manpower. Typically, each intern manages a field crew of at least three temporary workers to complete daily tasks. As the only intern on the premises, I was asked to assume the jobs that a team would

usually complete. Not only did I seize the opportunity to do so, I also took an additional interest in our drip irrigation system. I found a real knack for fixing the 56 two-acre zones of drip tape that irrigated the maize trials. In the unseasonable heat we received this summer, who wouldn't want to soak waist deep in a hole of muddy water? After fixing numerous leaks, Scott gave me the opportunity to program and monitor the system on my own—the only intern to ever be trusted to manage such a vital part of the precision drought phenotyping technology at Plainview.

Aside from managing field tasks, Corteva Agriscience provided me with the additional opportunity to conduct my own independent research on our Grain-Fill and Well-Watered trials. To test the effectiveness of the selected drought gene in retaining healthy leaves below the ear leaf, plots were subjected to fully irrigated and drought conditions. Each irrigation treatment contained 10 hybrids with gene positive and negative plots. After data was collected on five dates over three weeks, the gene positive plots on average “dropped” a lower number of leaves. I would typically have been asked to present my findings at the Corteva Agriscience headquarters in Iowa, but due to COVID-19, I was asked instead by the company to produce a 7-minute creative video highlighting my summer internship. Despite being unable to travel, I did not allow the pandemic to limit my success. Therefore, I developed a research poster of my project and submitted it, along with my video, as my senior capstone to complete my graduate requirements in the William H. and Joyce Attebury Honors Program.

Corteva Agriscience instilled in me the confidence and skills I need to be a successful field researcher. Following the conclusion of this internship, I made the decision to apply for a master's degree in Plant Breeding at Texas A&M University to begin a career in the selective breeding of international staple crops like rice and wheat. This internship humbled my perspective of research and development work, and I am entirely grateful for the level of trust and responsibility I was given in managing this multi-million-dollar facility.



West Texas A&M University

Department of Agricultural Science

30 September 2020

Dear Steve and selection committee,

It is my honor to write this letter of support for Ms. Kyla "Kylie" Scott for the Intern of the Year Award. I have known Kylie since the Fall 2018 semester when she was in my freshmen plant science class at West Texas A&M University. Since that time, she has been one of our plant, soil and environmental sciences majors and I have been her academic advisor and had her in many of my courses. Kylie is a smart, respectful, and impressive individual that I am proud to have as one of our students. She has performed very well in all of my classes and will continue to be a successful student if she continues to perform as she has up to this point.

Kylie is a dedicated student and is involved in multiple organizations and activities across campus – from student government, to president of the Agronomy Club, to other activities with youth, community service, etc. I often have to tell her to cut back to keep up with her school work, but she has done extremely well in her coursework too. I think this is a great indication of the type of student and person she is. She wants to learn as much as she can, serve and be involved and help promote agriculture. Last spring she was nominated as the Agronomy Club president and led the club to a third place finish in the Aggies Online Ag advocacy and promotion initiative. This involved a high number of activities on campus, online and one-on-one in the community that promoted agriculture, and I am confident that the club's success was only possible because of her leadership and drive.

Kylie interned with Corteva Agriscience in Plainview during the summer of 2020. She was part of a unique internship where this global company only selects a few students each year to work for them. I expect her internship supervisor will speak to her performance for Corteva, but I can also add from my own observation. Corteva Agriscience is one of the leading companies in the crop production industry and to land this internship with the company is already a significant accomplishment. Kylie received some great exposure to the plant breeding industry, but more importantly, she took initiative to help the company when they were shorthanded due to COVID restrictions/limitations. She went above and beyond the internship expectations to ask questions and propose solutions. I know she performed extremely well in this internship and it strengthened her desire to move on to graduate school.

I highly recommend Kylie Scott for Intern of the Year. She is exactly the type of person, and her internship was one of complexity and challenge, to qualify her for this award and to represent WT at the national intern of the year competition. Of the several thousand students I have taught in my career, and the few hundred I have personally advised, I do not hesitate to say

that Kylie is in the top 1%! She is the type of person that people want to be around, work with, and have on their team. She is extremely respectful, mature, professional, and hardworking. I would hire her in a heartbeat! I am confident that she will continue to make a great name for herself, her family, her profession and her alma mater of WT.

If you have questions or need know more information, please let me know!



Dr. Brock Blaser
Associate Professor of Plant Science
Department of Agricultural Sciences

Discover the **BUFF** in You.

WTAMU Box 60998 • Canyon, Texas 79016-0001 • 806-651-2555 • Fax 806-651-2938 • e-mail: bblaser@wtamu.edu



18 September 2020

Dear Intern of the Year Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Kylie Scott, who served as the Integrated Field Science Intern at the Plainview, Texas research center during the 2020 field season.

During my time at Corteva I have employed nine interns and had the opportunity to work briefly with at least twice that number. I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly. From the initial contact with a prospective intern, you begin thinking about their potential and what they might be able to handle in terms of workload and responsibility. As a manager you begin to rate employees subconsciously and quickly assess their skills and capabilities relative to one another. You start to develop a sixth sense when it comes to people. I had a feeling about Kylie, and I was not disappointed.

Kylie showed up ready to learn and get her hands dirty; and I quickly began assigning her more challenging tasks. She did the things a normal intern does here at Plainview. She planted, looked for drip leaks, took meter reads and flowering notes, put out field stakes and row tags. She sharpened hoes for our field crew. She walked with me to assess the timing and severity of drought stress treatments. She helped collect data on Seed Applied Technology trials. These are all things I expect from each intern. So, what sets her apart?

Kylie showed an interest in fixing drip leaks. This is not something we usually entrust to interns as incorrectly repaired leaks will inevitably need to be revisited, and no one likes repairing a leak a second time. Leak repair involves being down on your knees in the mud with your arms elbow deep in a hole that usually has water seeping into it. You often end up covered in mud from head to



toe. Kylie never flinched about getting down in the dirt to get the job done. I lost count of the number of drip leaks she excavated and repaired; and I can recall only one other intern who repaired leaks.

Normally, an intern leads a field crew of three or more people for staking and row tagging. Our station was short on manpower this season so I asked Kylie if she could undertake these tasks alone. She rose to the occasion and completed both tasks on her own.

Our ability to conduct precision drought phenotyping in maize is made possible by our irrigation system. Correct programming and operation of our drip system is imperative for our research. There are only a select few employees who operate the system. I had shown Kylie how to program and monitor the system; and one day I gave her an irrigation request and asked if she would program the system and monitor it to ensure it started up correctly. This is something no intern has ever done, and I would not have entrusted this task to her had I not been completely confident in her abilities. She executed this task flawlessly and operated the system on several other occasions.

What can I say to impress upon you the impact she had on my research program? I've thought about this quite a bit. In the end, I treated her like a full-time employee, and she performed better than some full-time employees I have encountered. I would hire her without hesitation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott Adair".

Scott Adair

Field Scientist

Corteva Agriscience

806.292.2930