



Harris Wins Szymoniak Award at World Food Prize Laurate Ceremony

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – Sam Harris, an agricultural business and agricultural communications major at the University of Arkansas, was presented the Elaine Szymoniak Award as the top Borlaug-Raun International Intern at the World Food Prize Laurate Award Ceremony in Des Moines, Iowa, on Oct. 15.

Harris, a freshman in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, was named the winner after completing an internship in India through the World Food Prize Foundation, submitting a research paper and making an oral presentation on his project. Criteria include thoroughness and impact in promoting education, health, economic development, equality and justice.

“I was honored to be recognized as having one of the best research reports,” said Harris, who is from Greenbrier. “Elaine Szymoniak was a fierce leader in agriculture and social justice. Being recognized with an award in her name is truly an honor.”

Harris attended the World Food Prize Foundation’s Global Youth Institute with Arkansas FFA in 2012 and continued his involvement as a GYI volunteer group leader while at Greenbrier High School until his 2014 summer internship.

“My research focused on the smallholder farmers’ perception of new agricultural technologies and how those perceptions affect the adoption rate of those new technologies,” said Harris. “Essentially, it examined how misconceptions restrict developing societies from adopting farming methods that have the potential to dramatically increase yield and alleviate food insecurity. It’s an important topic to help ensure government, non-government organizations and private sector initiatives are reaching audiences that need agricultural literacy and training the most.”

Harris, who interned at Mahyco Hybrid Seed Co. in Jalna, Maharashtra, India, was selected for the Szymoniak Award from a field of 24 other interns. He was one of only four students recognized at the ceremony with 29 states represented.

During his internship, Harris assisted the business strategies department, conducted background research and focus group discussions with farmers and extension agents, and collected data for his project. This

project aligns with his future goals of establishing a career in international rural development and agricultural public policy in Washington, D.C.

“I’m very proud of Sam and his accomplishments,” said Jill Rucker, assistant professor of agricultural education, communication and technology. “It’s a great honor to work with outstanding students who will be the difference makers in the future of agriculture.”

Previous winners of the award, established in 2001, attended Harvard, Yale, Northwestern, Iowa, Iowa State, Marquette, Nebraska and St. Olaf College.

Szymoniak is a former state senator from Iowa known for her dedicated public service and efforts to save the World Food Prize, which is an international award recognizing individuals who advance human development by improving the quality, quantity or availability of food in the world. The Borlaug-Raun International Internship gives high school students eight weeks of hands-on experience with world-renowned scientists and policymakers at research centers around the world.

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