THE
BEAN IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE

AWARDS PROGRAM

Embassy Suites
Lincoln, Nebraska
November 5, 2025

THE BEAN IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE

Proudly Presents the

Frazier - Zaumeyer Distinguished Lectureship

to

James R. Myers
Professor Emeritus
Oregon State University

&

C. Robin Buell
Professor of Crop and Soil Sciences
University of Georgia

The **Frazier - Zaumeyer Distinguished Lectureship** was established in 2001 to recognize and honor a distinguished colleague who will present the keynote opening address at the biennial BIC meeting. The individual selected will have made outstanding and pioneering contributions to science that led to the advance of bean research. The Lecture will focus on current topics relevant to the BIC membership. The Lectureship is distinct from the other BIC career Awards, such as the Distinguished Achievement and Meritorious Service Awards. Holders of these awards are not excluded from being awarded the Frazier-Zaumeyer Distinguished Lectureship. The name for the Lectureship honors the original BIC founder members, the late William A. 'Tex' Frazier, distinguished bean breeder, and the late William 'Bill' Zaumeyer, an equally distinguished bean pathologist. Dr. Tex Frazier, working at Oregon State University, is recognized for his pioneering work in developing the famous Bush Blue Lake snap bean and related germplasm. Dr. Bill Zaumeyer, of USDA-ARS, is recognized for his outstanding contributions to bean pathology.

JAMES R. MYERS

Dr. Jim Myers is Professor Emeritus (previously Baggett-Frazier Endowed Chair of Vegetable Breeding and Genetics) in the Department of Horticulture at Oregon State University. He received a B.S. degree in Horticulture from Kansas State University in 1978, then obtained both M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Plant Breeding and Genetics (1981 and 1984) from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he studied male sterile sterility in peas under the direction of Dr. Earl Gritton. A course from that time that proved important to his career was "Tropical Bean Breeding" from Dr. Steve Temple, who was on sabbatical from CIAT. From 1985 to 1987, he was a postdoctoral fellow and then as a research specialist in a somatic cell genetics laboratory managed by Dr. Glenn Collins at the University of Kentucky. In 1987, Myers took over from Dr. John Kohler the University of Idaho dry bean breeding program in Kimberly. He subsequently moved to the OSU in 1996, where he remained to the present. At OSU, Myers follows two prominent snap bean breeders: Dr. William "Tex" Frazier (1949 – 1973) and Dr. Jim Baggett (1973 – 1995). As his predecessors did, one of Myers' main responsibilities was to develop improved snap bean cultivars for the processed vegetable industry of western Oregon. The breeding program included not only beans but also other vegetable crops, including edible podded peas, broccoli, winter and summer squash, table beets, peppers, and tomatoes. The major academic focuses of his program have been on breeding for disease resistance, organic agricultural production systems, human nutrition, flavor, taste, and quality. He developed the first snap bean diversity panel that was subsequently supplemented and used in his program to investigate the genetics of root rot and white mold resistance, snap bean leaf and pod color, phenolics, and flavor volatiles.

He has released 34 cultivars, including 14 dry bean cultivars and four germplasm releases, while at the University of Idaho, and 20 cultivars and one germplasm release at OSU. His OSU releases include one snap bean, six tomatoes, three edible podded peas, two table beets, two mild habanero peppers, one broccoli, and five dry bean cultivars. The OSU5630 bush blue lake snap bean, released in 2005, has been grown on about 80% of the acreage used for processing in western Oregon. He will probably be best known as the originator of high anthocyanin 'Indigo' tomatoes that are now being grown worldwide.

From 1990 to 2017, Myers provided leadership in breeding in Eastern and Southern Africa for the US-AID funded Bean/Cowpea CRSP. With Dr. Gaylord Mink, he initially studied the epidemiology of bean common mosaic necrosis virus in Eastern and Southern Africa and later developed bruchid resistant germplasm introgressed from tepary bean. This germplasm is being used in the Caribbean, Central America, and Eastern and Southern Africa to breed for bruchid resistance, with three cultivars to date deployed in Tanzania.

His efforts to breed for organic systems spanned more than two decades across several projects. He was project director (2009 – 2023) of the USDA-OREI funded Northern Organic Vegetable Improvement Collaborative, a multi-institutional effort to breed vegetables adapted to organic production systems. This project trained more than 10 graduate students and facilitated the release of at least 22 vegetable cultivars. He has published papers on the effect of selection in organic systems on snap bean microbiome and the snap bean genome. He has coedited 2 books, published 89 peer refereed publications, 16 book chapters, 107 peer reviewed papers and more than 150 invited and contributed papers. He has obtained over $12 million in competitive grants funds and another $2.8 million in commodity commission funds. He has advised 12 Ph.D., 16 M.S. and, 1 M.Ag students, and served as a committee member for another 43 students. Myers has facilitated undergraduate student directed research for 32 students. He has taught an upper-level undergraduate-graduate course in Vegetable Systematics and graduate courses in Plant Domestication, Intellectual Property and Organic Plant Breeding (online). Myers was awarded the BIC Distinguished Achievement Award in 1999 and the BIC Meritorious Service Award in 2019. He was elected a fellow of the American Society of Horticultural Science in 2022 and has been recognized with several ASHS Outstanding Publication awards in 2013, 2017, and 2022.

C. ROBIN BUELL

Dr. C. Robin Buell is the Georgia Research Alliance Eminent Scholar Chair in Crop Genomics and Professor of Crop and Soil Sciences at the University of Georgia. She currently serves as Director of The Plant Center at the University of Georgia, leading interdisciplinary efforts to advance plant science through genetics, genomics, synthetic biology, and breeding innovation. In 2025, she was elected to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences for her pioneering contributions to plant genome biology. She has authored nearly 320 publications, received over $82 million in funding directly to her lab, and given over 250 presentations to scientific and lay audiences. Dr. Buell received her Ph.D. in Biology/Molecular Biology from Utah State University (1992), M.Sc. in Plant Pathology from Washington State University (1988), and B.Sc. in Biology from the University of Maryland (1985). She completed postdoctoral fellowships at Michigan State University and the Carnegie Institution of Washington at Stanford. Her academic appointments include Louisiana State University, The Institute for Genomic Research, and Michigan State University, where she served as Director of the Plant Resilience Institute and was named University Distinguished Professor.

A leading plant genomicist, Dr. Buell's research has transformed our understanding of genome structure, evolution, and function in plants. Her work spans crop species (rice, maize, potato, wheat), model species (Arabidopsis), ornamentals (mints, dahlia), trees (poplar, pine) and medicinal plants (periwinkle, cinchona, kratom). Her first exposure to beans was as a faculty member at Michigan State University in which she taught a number of Dr. Jim Kelly's students in Plant Genomics. From these interactions and her later involvement in the Plant Resilience Institute at Michigan State University, she began research on beans, specifically tepary bean. She was a co-leader of the tepary genome project with Phil McClean, Tim Porch, and Kristen Bett publishing the results in Nature Communications in 2021. She has continued her research in bean genomics through a long-standing collaboration with Tim Porch on tepary bean genetic diversity and with the first *k*-mer-based genome-wide association study in common bean with Andrew Wiersma and Jim Kelly. Her lab has published multiple research articles in the Bean Improvement Cooperative and the Plant Genome, contributing foundational insights into gene expression, resistance traits, and genome annotation in common and tepary beans.

Dr. Buell is currently leading a USDA-NIFA-funded project in collaboration with Tim Porch and Consuelo Estevez de Jensen, focusing on leveraging the genome of the tepary bean to improve resilience to biotic stress in common bean. This research aims to identify and transfer disease resistance traits from tepary bean into common bean, addressing yield loss due to pests and pathogens. One component of this project is the construction of a Practical Haplotype Graph for tepary bean to organize the tepary bean pan-genome. A current focus in her research group is heat tolerance in common bean and the identification of adaptive alleles for accelerated breeding of heat-tolerant common bean varieties.

She has mentored over 50 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers and developed bioinformatics workshops for plant biologists. Her contributions have been recognized with the McClintock Prize (2021), USDA Honor Awards (2004, 2011), and she is a fellow of both the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the American Society of Plant Biologists. She has served on the editorial boards of GigaScience, Plant Cell, and Plant Physiology, and held advisory roles at the Salk Institute, the Department of Energy, and multiple international genomics initiatives. Dr. Buell continues to advance bean genomics through collaborative research, resource development, and mentoring the next generation of students and postdocs.

THE BEAN IMPROVEMENT COOPERATIVE

Proudly Presents the

Meritorious Service Award

to

in Memory of Phil McClean

North Dakota State University
Fargo, North Dakota

Ken Kmiecik

Ken Kmiecik, LLC

Rigoberto Rosales-Serna

Instituto Nacional de Investigaciones Forestales Agrícolas y Pecuarias (INIFAP)

Distinguished Achievement Award

to

Kelvin Kamfwa

University of Zambia
Lusaka, Zambia

Travis Parker

University of California
Davis, California

ProVita, Inc.

In Memory of Ron Shellenberger (1943-2015)
Kuna, Idaho

Technical Merit Award

to

Héctor Fabio Buendía

Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT
Palmira, Colombia

PHILLIP E. MCCLEAN
In Memory of Phillip McClean (1949-2005)

Phillip Edward McClean was born on November 25, 1949, in Pierce, Nebraska. Phil's father was in the US Air Force, so his family lived in many places, including Germany. He attended ~12 different schools by the time he graduated. Driven by a lifelong love of learning, he earned his Ph.D. from Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO, following studies at Denver Community College and Metropolitan State College. After postdoctoral work at the University of Virginia and the University of Missouri-Columbia, he joined North Dakota State University (NDSU) in November 1985. Dr. McClean served proudly as a faculty member at NDSU for nearly four decades, achieving the rank of Professor since 1998.

During his tenure at NDSU, Dr. McClean became a world authority in common bean genetics and genomics. His research has fundamentally advanced agricultural science and significantly improved global food security. His work, which underlies the development of genetic markers, gene mapping, and genomic tools for improving bean varieties, has touched the lives of millions, particularly in regions where food security is a critical challenge.

Dr. McClean's career is marked by extraordinary research accomplishments, including the development of the first reference genome for the common bean, a landmark achievement cited over 1,500 times. He published more than 100 refereed journal articles, in addition to five book chapters and numerous abstracts. He was a key leader in securing and managing the Common Bean Coordinated Agricultural Project (Bean CAP), the largest single investment in bean research at that time. More recently, he was a mastermind behind the scenes in planning and successfully obtaining the NSF FARMS Engine grant, the largest grant ever obtained by NDSU, which is poised to bring up to $160 million to North Dakota's agriculture sector. He served as the Director of the Genomics and Bioinformatics graduate program. Dr. McClean contributed to grants worth over $24 million, with $9.7 million directly supporting his projects.

At the international level, Dr. McClean actively collaborated with scientists across the globe and served as PI and on advisory boards for the USAID Legume Innovation Laboratory and the Canadian Common Bean Sequencing Project, among others. His work contributed to the international release of over six bean varieties and numerous genomic tools.

His excellence has been repeatedly recognized, including with the Distinguished Research Award from the Bean Improvement Cooperative (1999), the Dermot Coyne Lectureship (2012), the Frazier-Zaumeyer Lectureship (2012), and the Cargill Lectureship from Colorado State University (2014), among others.

Beyond his research, Dr. McClean was an equally exceptional educator and mentor. He embraced new technology to enhance student learning, always seeking to teach what was at the "tip of the arrow." He was a pioneering teacher who developed one of the first course websites and led the NDSU Virtual Cell Animation Project, which produced groundbreaking animations of cellular processes. He has 20 refereed publications related to the development of educational software and has received four awards for his contributions to the field of education. Dr. McClean inspired students to "think about science in a big way." His office door was always open, and he mentored many young scientists, freely giving credit and leading with humility.

Dr. McClean passed away on September 11, 2025, but his legacy and impact will continue for many years.

KEN KMIECIK

After dropping out of the University of Wisconsin Theatre Program, knocking about cooking and traveling on his motorcycle, Ken returned to school in 1975 as a Horticulture Major with the goal of becoming an Extension Specialist in vegetables. As a student, he was hired hourly by Fred Bliss and worked for Steve Beebe. Beans and breeding became woven into Ken's DNA during his long association with Dr. Bliss and his students. In 1979 as part of Fred's program Ken had his first interaction with the Bean Improvement Cooperative operating the slide projector for the BIC meeting in Madison, WI that year.

Ken provided 19 years of professional and technical support to the UW-Madsion bean program. Lots of road time, blue slides, pollinations, along with late days in the field and lab with graduate and undergraduate students. In September of 1988 before leaving the University of Wisconsin for UC-Davis Fred Bliss wrote:

> *Ken, You are a friend and colleague … Your patience and caring about the students both grad and undergrad who have come through the program are unique. They and I have had a better time at this big University because of you ….*
> *Sincerely Fred*

Ken left the UW to join what was becoming Seminis Vegetable Seeds in April 1998. Eventually he took responsibility for garden bean breeding in the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand. What guided him then, as it does now, was the idea that he supported the needs of his colleagues. Growers, sales reps, and production staff at Seminis replaced the students and staff he had valued in his 19 years at the University. With 30 or so garden bean releases and stepping into help with dry edibles Ken found both success and satisfaction in the 16 years with Seminis. On June 25th 2014 Seminis / Monsanto informed him of his retirement. On July 5th, 2014 Wolf Bertononzi, a grower in New Jersy, wrote:

> *Hi Ken, Its Wolf, I heard the bad news, we've waited a generation for a break through variety and your the only one on the planet to create it (aph resistant snap bean). … Thanks for everything!!*

That same July a grower (John Wallendal) in Wisconsin asked Ken what he might do post Monsanto. Ken replied that he would plant some seed somewhere. John's response was, "How many acres do you need?'

The BIC and its mission of open exchange has never been far from his heart. Ken served on the coordinating committee from 2003 to 2023 and when the BIC celebrated its 50th in 2007 Ken enlisted fellow industry colleagues (Rob Gehin, Roxanne Mainz, Alyson Thorton,) and Michelle Sass of UW to bring the meeting to Madison, WI site of the first BIC meeting.

Since 2015, Ken has had a third career and has become Ken Kmiecik, LLC - breeding and developing beans independently. He also has the good fortune to be working with Professors who were the students of graduate students in the 1980's. Current UW projects include: resistance to Seed Corn Maggot, mapping Aph resistance, and white mold resistance. Ken is also an active participant in the Midwestern based Artisan Grain Collaborative working to incorporate dry edibles into the rotations of mid-sized local grain producers. In this 3rd career Ken would like to become the Mick Jagger of beans …not sex, drugs, and rock and roll, but still on tour at 80.

RIGOBERTO ROSALES-SERNA

Dr. Rigoberto Rosales-Serna was born in Las Mercedes, Durango, México, on April 4th, 1967. He received his B. S. degree of Ingeniero Agrónomo Fitotecnista (Engineer on Agronomy and Plant Breeding) in 1989 from the Instituto Tecnológico Agropecuario Núm. 1 (ITA # 1), at Villa Montemorelos, Durango, Méx. He earned his MSc degree in Plant Breeding and Genetics in 1996 and his PhD in Botany in 2005, both from the Colegio de Postgraduados in Montecillo, Mexico. The professional activity of Dr. Rosales-Serna began in 1988, when he joined the Edible Legumes Program of the National Institute of Forestry, Agricultural and Livestock Research (INIFAP) as a field assistant. In 1991, he was invited to a Postgraduate Specialization Program in Common Bean, held at the International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) in Palmira, Colombia. In 2012-2013, occupied a postdoctoral position at Escuela de Biotecnología of Instituto Tecnológico de Monterrey (ITESM), and a sabbatical leave (2023-2024) at CIIDIR-Instituto Politécnico Nacional. In his early career, Dr. Rosales-Serna developed fieldwork to release the Pinto Villa common bean drought-tolerant cultivar, resulting in significant increases in seed yield under drought conditions. Dr. Rosales-Serna has developed 26 common bean varieties in several market classes, such as pinto, bayo, flor de mayo, black, and azufrado. He participated in the development, registration, and technology transfer of the slow darkening Pinto Saltillo cultivar, encouraging the adoption process among farmers in several states (11) of the Mexican Highlands. Pinto Saltillo has been considered an important scientific, productive, and market success, growing on more than 4.6 million hectares from 2014 to 2023 in the Highlands of Mexico, producing over 2.6 million tons of grain. In several countries, Pinto Saltillo has been recognized as a significant gene source for slow darkening seed coats and has been utilized as a donor parent in common bean breeding programs in the USA and Canada. Pinto Saltillo and other varieties developed by Dr. Rosales-Serna reduced cooking time and gas consumption in Mexican homes by 20%, also having a positive impact on the home economy and reducing pollution. Common bean varieties released by Dr. Rosales-Serna also increased seed yield, improving the economic benefits obtained by farmers and the commercial quality of the seeds, thereby alleviating hunger in Mexico and other countries. He collaborated for more than five years as a researcher in México with the Bean/Cowpea Collaborative Research Support Program (CRSP), developing important common bean lines and cultivars with enhanced adaptation under drought conditions (Pinto Mestizo, Pinto Bayacora). Dr. Rosales-Serna published 119 scientific peer-reviewed papers, 310 articles in national and international congresses, 82 research notes, four books, 13 chapters in scientific books, and 119 technological publications, resulting in important advances in common bean knowledge. He advised 29 BS, 4 MSc, and 3 PhD theses, and attended 46 residency stays for undergraduate students. Dr. Rosales-Serna participated in multiple technology transfer and field training events for producers, students, technicians, and government employees. He also participated in organizing scientific proceedings and compiling memories, and was invited as a reviewer-editor for several research journals, including Revista Fitotecnia Mexicana, Agronomía Mesoamericana, Polibotánica, American Journal of Experimental Agriculture, and Journal of Agricultural Science. Currently, Dr. Rosales-Serna is working on developing agronomic solutions to enhance soil fertility and structure by producing biomass that can be used as organic amendments. Achievements have allowed him to obtain several awards, including two Durango State Awards for Science, Technology, and Innovation in 2009 and 2014, and a second place in the award given by the Mexican Association of Directors in Applied Research and Technological Development (ADIAT, 2010; Mexican Association of Directors in Applied Research and Technological Development). Dr. Rosales-Serna was also awarded as a Distinguished Agronomist by the Colegio de Postgraduados and recognized by the Government of the State of Durango for his “Valuable contribution to the productivity of the state agriculture with his participation in the research of new common bean varieties”. Dr. Rigoberto Rosales-Serna's hard work, dedication, and friendly support inspire his colleagues and friends.

KELVIN KAMFWA

Kelvin Kamfwa is a Senior Lecturer and leader of the Legume Breeding Program at the University of Zambia (UNZA), the largest public university in Zambia. He also serves as the Assistant Dean for Research in the School of Agricultural Sciences at the UNZA.

Kelvin was born and raised in the rural part of Northern Zambia. His early experiences in rural agriculture inspired a lifelong commitment to improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers through science and innovation. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Crop Science from the UNZA, a Master of Science in Plant Breeding from Makerere University in Uganda, and a PhD in Plant Breeding, Genetics, and Biotechnology from Michigan State University (MSU), where he worked on symbiotic nitrogen fixation under the mentorship of Drs. Jim Kelly and Karen Cichy.

After graduating from MSU, he returned to Zambia in 2016 to take up a position as a lecturer at the University of Zambia, convinced that the skills he had acquired in the US would have the greatest impact in his native country, Zambia, where over 70% of the population depends on agriculture, and access to improved varieties for legume crops is limited.

Kelvin established the first Legume Breeding Program at the University of Zambia in the same year he returned. This program is externally funded, with the overall breeding objective of delivering high-yielding varieties of common bean, cowpea, and soybean to smallholder farmers in Zambia and the southern African region. Kelvin has developed and released varieties that are currently being grown by smallholder farmers in Zambia.

Despite the various challenges of running a public breeding program in a developing country like Zambia, where there is limited research support, Kelvin has successfully established an impactful breeding program that has attracted approximately $600,000 in research funding since 2016, primarily from external partners.

Kelvin's breeding program has graduated 14 MSc students in Plant Breeding and Seed Systems from the University of Zambia, with students from various southern African countries. Currently, he supervises eight MSc and four PhD students working on various topics related to common bean, cowpea, and soybeans.

In recognition of his impact on smallholder farmers through breeding, the Legume Innovation Lab awarded Kelvin the Early Career Grain Legume Scientist award in 2017 at a ceremony held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The award recognized his early career achievements in grain legume research and his commitment to improving the livelihoods of smallholder farmers in developing countries.

Working with collaborators, Kelvin led the breeding efforts to deploy weevil resistance in breeding lines across various market classes. These lines are currently being tested in Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia for agronomic performance and could potentially be released as new varieties, another demonstration of the international impact of his breeding program. His team has also accelerated the deployment of resistance genes against major pathogens affecting common bean by integrating molecular tools into conventional breeding.

Kelvin has published 46 peer-reviewed research articles on common bean, demonstrating the impact and contribution of his work in this field. Kelvin's lab has also hosted graduate students from the region, including those from South Africa, Malawi, and Mozambique, to conduct research on the common bean.

TRAVIS PARKER

Dr. Travis Parker is an assistant professional researcher at the University of California Davis, where he specializes in the genetics and breeding of *Phaseolus*. Dr Parker is a native of San Diego County and completed his bachelor's degree in Biology at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo on California's Central Coast. In 2020, he completed a PhD in Plant Biology at UC Davis, where he also finished a postdoc in 2022. His PhD and post-doctoral fellowship were both completed in Professor Paul Gepts' lab.

Dr. Parker's research includes 14 first-author peer-reviewed publications in high-impact journals such as Plant Cell, New Phytologist, Remote Sensing, and The Plant Journal, as well as 3 first-author book chapters. His projects span from genomics and phenomics to plant developmental biology and applied breeding. His work has characterized the genetic basis of traits ranging from seed color to pod shattering and early-season growth vigor. He has also published on novel drone data pipelines, key traits differentiating snap and dry beans, and the development of numerous markers and breeding resources.

As a plant breeder, he has developed and released six common bean cultivars specifically bred for organic systems. These were selected for yield and BCMV resistance on organic farms in the Western United States. In 2024, his variety UC Southwest Gold was awarded a Good Food Award for combining environmental sustainability with high culinary quality. He continues to select breeding lines adapted for sustainable production in regions such as the western United States and Africa.

Dr. Parker is also passionate about teaching. At UC Davis, he designed and taught a course titled "Drones in Agriculture", exploring the integration of aerial imaging technologies into crop science. In 2023, he developed and delivered a workshop series at UC Davis on video editing for scientists. He has given 22 guest lectures and labs, on topics ranging from intellectual property protections to plant reproductive biology. He has given 41 conference presentations across 10 countries and earned first place for the Early Career Poster Award at the National Association of Plant Breeders meeting in 2025.

He has a YouTube channel with educational plant science content in four languages.

He greatly values international and intercultural partnerships, collaborating broadly with researchers across Africa, Europe, North and South America. He is committed to the reciprocal exchange of skills and knowledge, believing that communities are strongest when united and advancing together in pursuit of common goals.

Since 2022, Dr. Parker has been the lead scientific advisor for the Kirkhouse Trust's African Bean Consortium and also advises the Trust's cowpea breeding projects. In this capacity, he has made six advisory visits to the continent and has also welcomed four African researchers at UC Davis for extended training visits. In this time, the funded African teams have publicly released four new varieties of common bean, with many more in trials for future release.

PROVITA, INC
In Memory of Ron Shellenberger (1943-2015)

ProVita Inc. was started in 1997 as the dream and passion of Ron Shellenberger. Ron was already an accomplished dry bean breeder from his employment with Rogers Brothers Seed company (later Syngenta) throughout the 70's and 80's; when he decided to start his own plant breeding business in Kuna, Idaho. ProVita started like many American dreams do from scratch in a house and garage, but with the support of some incredible key industry members many of which are still investing and supporting the program to this day. Ron's legacy and foundation for success lives on through his sons and owners of ProVita (Matt, Luke, and Brian Shellenberger).

ProVita, Inc. started its breeding program with a focus on Pintos, Navies, and Great Northerns from 1997-2003; with the addition of Light Red Kidneys in 2003. In 2009 support for Small Reds, Blacks, Pinks, Yellows, Dark Red and White Kidneys, and Cranberries was established.

Much of ProVita's early success on pintos was through improved direct harvestable architecture and yield. There was an acknowledgment early in the program that upright pintos would be the way of the future even if direct harvest wasn't adopted. The improved disease avoidance, quality, and ease of growing were program objectives with the overall hope that direct harvest would be adopted as well. The pinto variety La Paz was instrumental in achieving these goals and helped growers with the widespread adoption of direct harvest of dry beans. La Paz and upright pintos expanded the use of Pintos to areas of North Dakota and US that didn't have dry beans as an option before direct harvest. HMS Medalist was the early successful variety in the navy beans and improved the archetype and yield for growers. Additionally it achieved the difficult task of being broadly adapted and preferred for growers in Michigan, Minnesota, and North Dakota. Objectives and improvements to Great Northerns were around seed quality, upright architecture, and yield. Orion was ProVita's early success in the great northern market class which achieved many of the goals set out to achieve.

ProVita set out to improve the Light Red Kidney genetics with a focus on disease resistance, yield, architecture, and seed quality. Early successes were with the varieties Big Red and Ronnie's Red (which was named by a client in honor of Ron Shellenberger). Big Red brought higher yields and stress/disease tolerances to the early maturing light red kidneys; while Ronnie's Red brought improved direct harvestable architecture and good stress/disease tolerance to the full season maturing segment of the market class.

ProVita has contributed the following varieties for use by the dry bean industry (varieties in bold still being used today): 19 pinto and slow darkening pinto varieties, 9 navy bean varieties, 9 great northern varieties, 6 light red kidney varieties, 7 black bean varieties, 5 dark red kidney varieties, 1 pink variety, 2 small red varieties, and 1 cranberry variety. Use of some of the varieties above have expanded beyond the U.S. to Canada and the European Union.

It has been the great privilege and honor for everyone at ProVita to work with such a great industry. The support from dealers, growers, other private breeders, universities, USDA, and this BIC community have all contributed in the success of our company and for that we are grateful. Private breeders, the USDA, universities and the BIC have been important resources for germplasm exchange as well as knowledge advancement. We look forward to continuing to serve and hopefully improve this dry bean industry we are a part of for many years to come.

HÈCTOR FABIO BUENDIA

Mr. Héctor Fabio Buendía has been a cornerstone of the Bean Program at the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT in Colombia since 2000. Originally from Ibagué, Colombia, Héctor earned his degree in Agricultural Engineering from the University of Tolima. He began his career at CIAT as an intern in the molecular lab under Dr. Matthew Blair, where he mastered advanced laboratory techniques, including marker-assisted selection, mapping populations, and QTL identification for both quantitative and qualitative traits. Notably, he contributed to the development of microsatellite markers, which proved instrumental in early studies on population and race structure in common beans.

After eleven years in the lab, Héctor transitioned to the field breeding team led by Dr. Steve Beebe, focusing on agronomic management. Over time, he advanced through various roles to his current position as operations manager. In this capacity, Héctor has consistently demonstrated exceptional leadership, technical expertise, and a remarkable ability to collaborate across disciplines. His contributions have been both strategic and transformative. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he led a major restructuring of the program to improve operational efficiency. He also designed a training program in plant breeding fundamentals for field staff in Colombia and actively participated in CIAT's committee on regenerative agriculture. His training efforts extended beyond Colombia, reaching molecular biologists in Africa, both within the Alliance and in the NARs.

Héctor's deep knowledge of the crop has enabled him to make strategic selections of advanced breeding lines and provide expert guidance on parental combinations. He introduced index selection into the breeding process and routinely applied complex crossing strategies—including simple, double, and triple crosses, as well as advanced backcrosses—to integrate key traits. Under the guidance of Dr. Bodo Raatz and Dr. Karen Cichy (MSU), he has also explored phenotyping for consumer traits such as cooking time and canning quality, helping to establish these platforms in Kawanda, Uganda.

Throughout his career, Héctor has played a key role in developing dry bean varieties at CIAT, including drought-tolerant Andean lines, heat-tolerant interspecific lines, and biofortified types—three of which were recently released in Colombia. He has also contributed significantly to the development of market-specific bean types for Africa, including yellow beans for Tanzania, climbing beans for Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, and numerous red-mottled and red lines (DAB, NUA) released across Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi. Additionally, he has played a key role in selecting small red and small white beans now released in Rwanda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and Burundi.

In addition to his breeding work, Héctor has co-authored several peer-reviewed publications spanning diverse research areas such as genomic prediction, heat stress physiology and genetics, symbiotic nitrogen fixation, disease resistance, and variety development. His contributions have had a lasting impact on the Bean Program and the broader research community, making him a truly deserving recipient of the BIC Technical Merit Award.

2025

THE NORTH AMERICAN PULSE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Proudly Presents the

AWARDS PROGRAM

Embassy Suites,
Lincoln, Nebraska
November 5, 2025

2025

THE NORTH AMERICAN PULSE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Proudly Presents the

Pulse Promoter Award

to

Kurt Braunwart

ProGene Plant Research LLC

In Recognition of Outstanding Scientific Accomplishments Relating to Pulse Crop Improvement

Kurt Braunwart

Nominators: Eliane Bodah, Bert Brocke, Jessica Anderson Emtman, Marty Anderson, Brett Melvin, Nancy Powell, Ken Fuchs, Shansie Brown and Patrick Dailey

Kurt's career in the seed business began in 1974 with Rogers Brothers Seed Company in Twin Falls, Idaho. He quickly advanced from fieldman to field and quality control manager, plant manager in Colfax, Washington and ultimately into international business development. His work in this period included expanding dry bean and dry pea research and production into Eastern Europe, and the Pacific Northwest, as well as participating in the introduction of Sugar Snap Peas into both fresh and frozen processed markets.

By 1995, recognizing both the need and the opportunity for dedicated private pulse breeding, Kurt and his wife Chris purchased the dormant dry pea breeding program from Rogers and founded ProGene Plant Research in Othello, Washington. What began as a small family-owned business has since grown into one of the most respected private breeding programs in North America. Today, ProGene is recognized as the leading supplier of dry pea varieties in the Pacific Northwest, and a top supplier in Central Montana, regions that form the backbone of the U.S. pulse industry.

Under Kurt's leadership, ProGene Plant Research has bred, developed, and released over twenty new dry pea varieties that have improved yield, disease resistance, and marketability for growers. Kurt pioneered research into winter peas. Kurt has worked closely with international partners such as Crop & Food Research of New Zealand, Plant Research NZ, and Resource Seed, extending ProGene's reach and ensuring that North American growers benefit from the best genetics available globally.

Kurt has also been an active and engaged leader in pulse industry organizations. Since 1981, he has been a member of the U.S. Dry Pea & Lentil Council (USADPLC), contributing to both the Research Committee and the Domestic Marketing Committee. He has participated in NAPIA activities since 2004, supporting the mission of improving peas through research and development. In addition, he has long-standing involvement in the Washington State Crop Improvement Association and has served as a licensed agricultural consultant, providing trusted guidance to growers for decades.

2025

THE NORTH AMERICAN PULSE IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Proudly Presents the

Technical Merit Award

to

Jaret Horner

Crop Development Centre, University of Saskatchewan

In Recognition of Dedicated Service Relating to
Pulse Crop Improvement

Jaret Horner

Nominator: Dr. Tom Warkentin, University of Saskatchewan

Jaret Horner is a senior technician in the pulse crop breeding program at the Crop Development Centre (CDC), University of Saskatchewan. Jaret has served in this role for 20+ years. Jaret efficiently plans field trials for four pulse crop breeders at the CDC covering six pulse crop species, i.e., pea, lentil, chickpea, common bean, faba bean, and soybean. Jaret leads a team of junior and senior technicians to manage these trials including site selection, planting, weed/disease/insect control, and harvesting. Jaret drafts the detailed annual reports for the registration trials of these crops in collaboration with the breeders.

Jaret has a strong attention to detail and produces high quality work. He has skilled judgment and decision making abilities. He maintains excellent communications with technicians and breeders.

Jaret is respected in the pulse crop breeding community of western Canada, interacting regularly with breeders and technicians from all the key breeding organizations. Jaret is a voting member of the Prairie Recommending Committee for Pulse and Special Crops and his insights are valued by that community.

In summary, I highly recommend Jaret Horner for a NAPIA Technical Merit Award.

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