



News Release

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NPC Awards 2015-16 Academic Scholarship



Washington, D.C. – The National Potato Council (NPC) is pleased to award Shunping Ding, a PhD. student in Plant Pathology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, its 2015-16 Academic Scholarship. The \$10,000 award is provided yearly to a graduate student with a strong interest in research that can directly benefit the potato industry.

Ding is an enthusiastic researcher and dedicated student, who has proven to be a leader both inside and outside of the classroom. Her extensive research experience, combined with memberships in several professional organizations, demonstrate that Ding has invested heavily in becoming an expert in her field of study. Her current focus is on enhancing control of the potato early blight complex (EBC), which is a common fungal disease that results in significant annual loss to the potato industry. NPC anticipates that her current and future research into potato diseases will greatly benefit the industry by offering insight into this ongoing issue the industry faces.

“Shunping has genuine interest in and dedication to plant disease research in both basic and applied areas. She is driven to solve practical problems, like potato early blight, that have great implications, such as crop loss, which ultimately results in loss of income for producers, loss of stability for local and regional economies, and ultimately a loss in food supply,” said Amanda Gevens, Associate Professor and Extension Plant Pathologist of the Department of Plant Pathology with the University of Wisconsin-Madison. “She is a professional, respectful student with the capacity to make significant contributions to the scientific and agricultural community.”

“Ms. Ding brings an extraordinary level of enthusiasm to her projects and has demonstrated exceptional proficiency in both the basic and applied aspects of her research. I expect that her work will continue to provide insights into the interplay between the hosts and pathogens in this understudied disease complex, resulting in new approaches to control early blight of potato,” said Dr. Dennis Halterman, Research Geneticist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service Vegetable Crops Research Unit at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

The NPC Scholarship Committee determined that Ding was the strongest candidate for the scholarship based on both her academic record and professional recommendations. In her recommendation letters, Ding was described as having a strong work ethic and her application reflected a desire to focus on helping to improve the U.S. potato industry.

“I am very thankful for this scholarship. It is a great honor and encouragement to me, and will help provide me with training opportunities to enhance my research. My goal is to help the U.S. potato industry to mitigate loss in potato production by better managing diseases in an economically and environmentally responsible manner,” said Ding.

Ding is currently an elected member of the Plant Pathology Student Council, which is responsible for organizing student activities, coordinating seminars, and interaction between faculties and students. She has also served as a mentor for the Wisconsin Youth Apprenticeship Program (YAP). Ding is a graduate of Henan University in China and the University of Hong Kong.

The National Potato Council is the advocate for the economic well-being of U.S. potato growers on federal legislative, regulatory, environmental, and trade issues. NPC supports the U.S. potato industry by monitoring issues affecting the strength and viability of the potato industry, influencing regulators and legislators on issues crucial to the industry's long term success, ensuring fair market access for potatoes and potato products, and bringing the unique issues and interests of diverse growing regions in the U.S. together on a national level.

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