



# News Release

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## **NPC Awards 2014-15 Academic Scholarship to Cornell Grad Student**



**Washington, D.C.** – The National Potato Council (NPC) is pleased to award Washington Luis da Silva, a plant pathology Ph.D. student at Cornell University in Ithaca, N.Y., its 2014-15 Academic Scholarship.

Da Silva is an enthusiastic researcher and dedicated student, who has proven to be a leader both inside and outside of the classroom. His extensive research experience, combined with memberships in several professional organizations, demonstrate that da Silva has invested heavily in becoming an expert in his field of study. NPC anticipates that his current and future research into potato diseases will greatly benefit the industry.

His current research into Potato Tuber Necrotic Ringspot Disease (PTNRD), a tuber deformity, will offer insight into the ongoing issues the industry faces related to infections from Potato virus Y (PVY) necrotic strains. His goal to improve the screening process for this particular issue would have a direct economic benefit for potato breeders and for the potato industry as a whole.

The NPC Scholarship Committee determined that da Silva was the strongest candidate for the scholarship based on both his academic record and his professional recommendations. In his recommendation letters, he was described as "ambitious," and his application reflected a desire to focus this drive on helping to improve the U.S. potato industry.

Though he is early in his graduate career, da Silva "has already proven himself to be a leader and a quick study," said Stewart Gray, Director of Plant Pathology Graduate Studies at Cornell University. "He is able to develop and execute well designed experiments that should provide valuable data to better understand and help manage PVY in potato."

"He is very dedicated and conscientious in his work and has shown great initiative and creativeness in pursuit of his studies," said Christopher Clark, professor at Louisiana State University's Department of Plant Pathology and Crop Physiology. In addition, he noted da Silva's impressive scholarly ability paired with a strong devotion to public service.

Each year, NPC awards one \$10,000 scholarship to a graduate student pursuing advanced studies that will improve the future of the potato industry. Final scholarship selection is based on academic achievement, leadership abilities, and the potential commercial value of the applicant's academic work.

“This scholarship will help tremendously with the cost of the robust technology necessary to complete my research, affording me the opportunity to be well trained in the pursuit of my future plans in helping the U.S. potato industry to move forward in the fight against current and prospective diseases,” said da Silva.

Da Silva currently serves as the vice president of the Plant Pathology Graduate Student Association at Cornell University and previously served as the treasurer. He is a peer reviewer for several scientific journals and member of professional societies including the American Phytopathological Society, the International Union for the Study of Social Insects, and the Sociedade Brasileira de Fitopatologia (Brazilian Phytopathological Society). Da Silva has also volunteered his time and skills for several charitable organizations. He is a graduate of Louisiana State University and the Universidade Federal de Viçosa in Brazil.

*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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