



## SIERRA WILLIAMSON

University of Minnesota  
Bachelor's Level Winner

I became 'Rooted in Ag' at an early age growing up in rural Minnesota. My family ingrained in me a strong appreciation for honesty, respect, responsibility, and generosity in agriculture and entrepreneurship. I watched my father and his father advance their careers in the seed industry and observed my mother's entrepreneurship efforts which resulted in the establishment of a design business. I have seen results of my parents' upbringing and college degrees in their integrity of character

and work ethic which has proved to be successful. I hope to follow their example in my future through my education, research, internship experiences and career path.

My family and geography were not the only sources of agricultural inspiration in my life. The National FFA Organization was another early source of inspiration in cultivating my passion for agriculture. I was able to integrate my small-town values into my experiences within the organization. My background in following budgets, handling money, tallying hours of work, and calculating points in contests demonstrated the fact that others recognized these core values in me and trusted that I would act with integrity when presented with opportunities. My FFA journey opened doors to volunteer opportunities, leadership positions and teamwork which has strengthened my stance in agriculture.

As I became a more mature student and FFA member, I took on leadership roles that helped me learn about the different aspects of agriculture. My officer position in the FFA led to leadership roles with 'From the Ground Up,' a local community development organization, and later within the Minnesota Pork Board. Those opportunities helped me realize that my passion was geared towards finding food security solutions. Since becoming a student at the University of Minnesota, I have focused my time and attention on joining groups and organizations that have a positive effect on food security. I am the CFANS Undergraduate Student Board President, one of ten Land O'Lakes Emerging leaders, an Agronomy Research Apprentice and a Cooking Matters Volunteer. I use these positions to promote and search for food security solutions here and around the world.

One way I want to branch out in agriculture is through my education and experiences at the University of Minnesota. A growing population will challenge the agricultural industry requiring expansion in agricultural science, technology, and agribusiness careers. This challenge excites and motivates me to be part of the solution involved in solving this global problem of feeding an expanding population. The University of Minnesota College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences provides the programs and resources I need to stretch my knowledge of agriculture and reach my goal of attaining a competitive agricultural degree.

Another way I want to branch out in agriculture is through research. Agriculture is continually evolving, which means there will be opportunities that have not yet been thought of. Agricultural research will be instrumental in providing new opportunities to the future generation of agricultural leaders. Some of the areas that agricultural research will focus on include meeting future food demands, increasing yields, making sure food supplies are safe and nutritious, conserving our resources, and creating a safe environment for everyone. As an Agronomy Research Apprentice, I strive to reach new heights focusing on increasing yields and preserving the environment by providing farmers access to geographical guidelines to assist in growing cover crops.

Finally, I hope to explore leadership opportunities and branch out into diverse areas of agriculture. I have started this journey as a Land O'Lakes Global Food Challenge Emerging Leader. I have been participating in a year-long experiential internship working along-side 10 other college sophomores from across the country on sustainable solutions for agricultural challenges. I have traveled to Washington D.C. to visit with policymakers and plan to travel to Africa this summer to meet with smallholder farmers. My team project for the internship is developing a marketing strategy for a new farming application and promoting it within the farming community. I hope to use my experiences as an Emerging Leader to better understand the challenges facing agriculture and be inspired to continue my pursuit of food security solutions.

I hope my work will benefit humanity by improving the quality and production of food, providing jobs to people who have none, and thereby boost the local and national economies. I would feel privileged to teach people of other countries who need assistance to learn how to grow and harvest their own food. I am optimistic that agriculture will continue to advance throughout the world and I look forward to branching out in agriculture and making a difference in tomorrow's world.

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