

Welcome to the 2025 PBHS Retreat!

Thank you for attending! This is a student-led professional event. This document contains information about the activities, events, and speakers attending. A booklet containing this information will be provided at the retreat.

Parking: Convenient locations for parking are highlighted on the map below. Student parking is outside the Orchard Dorm Suites (blue arrow). Speaker parking is outside the McCrary dining hall (purple arrow).

Registration: There will be a welcome table where you can pick up your name tag and room key in the McCrary Dining Hall, starred on the map below.

Social activities will generally take place at the fire pit (circled in red). In case of rain, social events will be moved to the dining hall.



Friday, October 17th

12-3:00 PM	Check-in <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
12-4:00 PM	Poster Set Up <i>Academic Building Hall and Auditorium Room 312</i>
12:00 PM	Lunch <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
2:00 PM	Icebreaker Activity <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i> Self-guided tour of the W.K. Kellogg Manor House
Session I: Welcome <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	
4:00 PM	Welcome and introduction Dr. Laura Johnson, MDARD How science is informing the future of agriculture in Michigan Meet-the-speakers: Speed networking event
5:00 PM	
6:00 PM	Dinner <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
7:00 PM	Poster Session <i>Academic Building Hall and Auditorium Room 312</i>
8:00 PM	Evening activities Bonfire, games, etc

Saturday, October 18th

8:00 AM	Breakfast <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
Session 2: Translating biology at scale <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	

9:00 AM	Dr. Laura Wayne , <i>Corteva</i> Enhancing seed composition to feed and fuel the world Dr. Allison Schwartz , <i>Pivot Bio</i> Adventures in Assay Development and Operationalization: Plant-Microbe Edition
10:35 AM	Coffee Break
10:55 AM	Christoph Benning , <i>MSU</i> Crossing the academic industrial divide without going broke
11:40 AM	Lunch <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
12:30 PM	Social Activities Bird Sanctuary or Gourd Painting
Session 3: Transition to/from academia and biotechnology <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	
1:45 PM	Dr. Nathan Springer , <i>UMN/Bayer</i> Re-imagining how new technologies will shape germplasm improvement Dr. Clair Huffine , <i>UC Boulder</i> Post-PhD Careers: Facing The First Day of the Rest of Your Life
3:20 PM	Coffee Break
Panel I: Role of government and the impact of policy in modern science <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	
3:40 PM	Panelists: Drs. Laura Johnson, Allison Schwartz, and Christoph Benning
Session 4: Coding for crop improvement <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	

4:25 PM	Dr. Christina Del Azodi , <i>Bayer</i> Becoming and Being a Data Scientist at Bayer Crop Science Dr. Jeremy Pardo , <i>Inari</i> Supporting Food System Sustainability through Technology
6:00 PM	Dinner <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
7:00 PM	Evening activity Bonfire, games, etc.

Sunday, October 19th

7:00 AM	Writing Retreat <i>Academic Building - Solarium; 2nd floor</i>
8:00 AM	Breakfast <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
Panel II: Bridging the gap between sectors <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	
9:00 AM	Panelists: Drs. Christina Del Azodi, Jeremy Pardo, Clair Huffine, Laura Wayne, and Nathan Springer
9:45 AM	CV/Resume Workshop <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>
10:30 AM	Coffee Break
Session V: Student Talks <i>Auditorium Room 312</i>	
10:50 AM	Sorghum with enhanced economic traits (SWEET) consortium Combining biotechnology with sustainability: Feasibility of bioenergy sorghum in generating high-value bioproducts Rees Rillema Carboxysome component dynamics and perspective role in the carbon concentrating mechanism

12:00 PM	Lunch <i>McCrary Dining Hall</i>
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Plant Biotechnology for Health and Sustainability

RETREAT SPEAKERS

October 17-19, 2025



Laura Johnson, Ph.D

Chief Science Officer at
MDARD



Laura Wayne, Ph.D

Gene Discovery at Corteva
Bioscience



Allison Schwartz, Ph.D

Senior Scientist at Pivot Bio



Cristoph Benning, Ph.D

Professor of Biochemistry and
Molecular Biology at MSU



Nathan Springer, Ph.D

Head of Genetic and
Genomic Innovation at Bayer



Clair Huffine, Ph.D

Science Illustrator at Insight
Illustrations LLC



**Christina Del Azodi,
Ph.D**

Senior Data Scientist at
Bayer



Jeremy Pardo, Ph.D

Computational Biologist at
Inari Agriculture



Poster Presenters

Angel Indibi	Characterizing Regulatory Elements for Targeted Production of Terpenoids in Sorghum
Luke Sharpe	Leveraging photosynthetic techniques to understand photorespiration's impact on <i>S. elongatus</i> PCC 7942
Rees Rillema	Carboxysome component dynamics and environmental responses
George Kusi-Appiah	Regulation of the CO ₂ -Concentrating Mechanism & Implications on the Zinc Economy of <i>Chlamydomonas</i>
Leah Knorr	Investigating beneficial interactions between plant coumarins and the root microbiome during alkaline stress
Asia Hawkins	Identifying Early Root Traits for Improved Fusarium Root Rot Resistance in Field Grown <i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i>
Elliot Braun	Genetic Architecture of Flavonoid Composition in Sorghum and Maize
Kevin D. Santiago-Morales	Determining the role of microbial auxin metabolism in the <i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i> phosphorus starvation response"
Imani Pascoe	Examining the impact of ACC deaminase mediated modulation of ethylene in bioenergy and model plants