

# MU Integrated STEM Internship Program (MU-ISIP)

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## Introduction

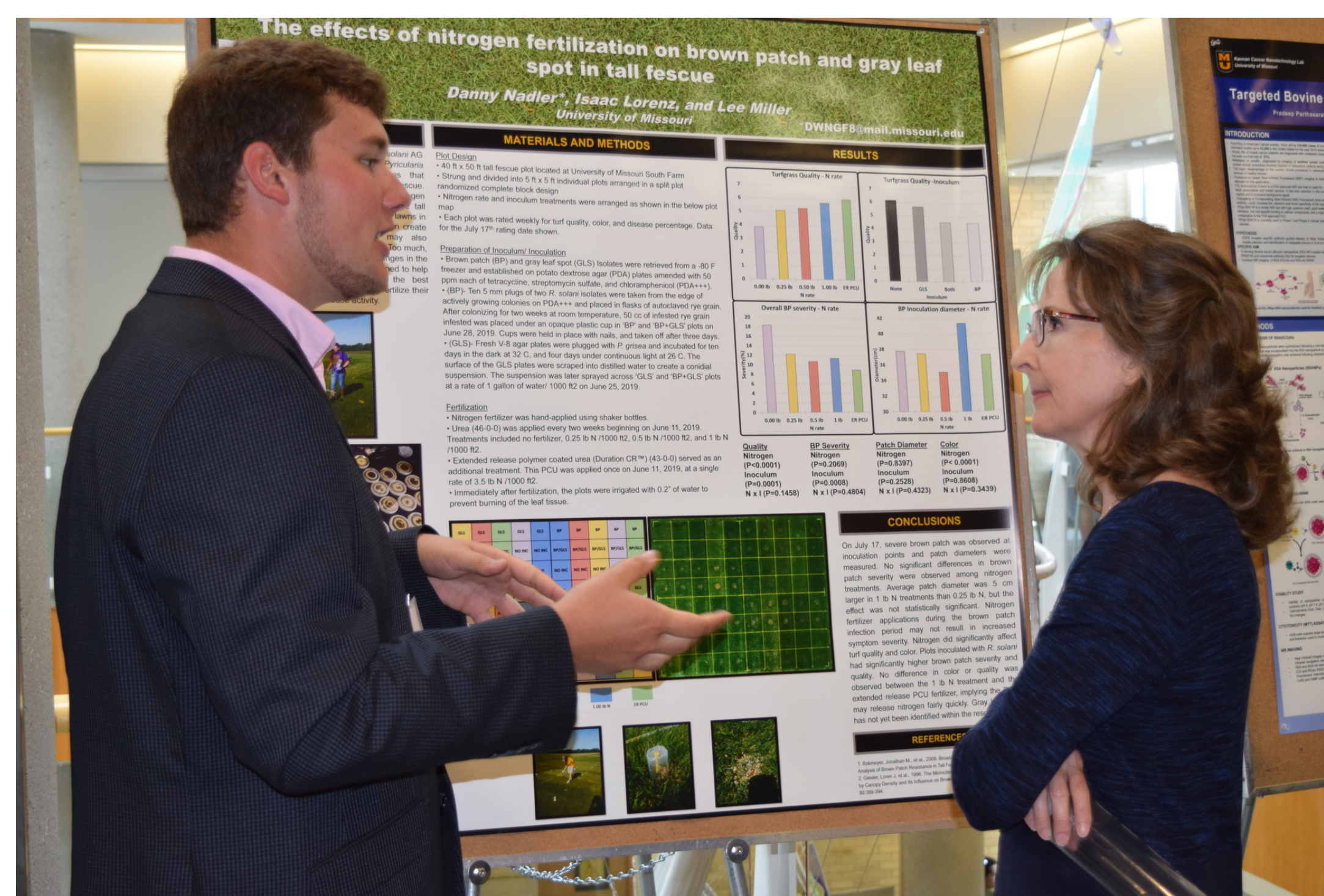
Extension has access to cutting-edge scientific knowledge generated at land-grant universities (Seevers & Graham, 2012). Additionally, Extension's connections with local communities provide an avenue for undergraduate experiential learning opportunities (Condo & Martin, 2002). Extension exposes university students to community outreach work, which sometimes has limited visibility on college campuses. Based on experiential learning (Kolb, 1984), this nine-week summer internship embeds undergraduate interns in research, Extension, and professional development experiences alongside state and regional Extension faculty.

## How It Works

- Applications for the internship are available to any Missouri resident who has completed at least one year of at a public four-year institution, community college, or private college.
- Students apply in one of these areas; Food, Nutrition & Health, Agricultural Economics and Rural Communities, Animal Science and Health, or Plant Sciences. They may also select a second choice.
- Up to 8 undergraduates are selected for the internship program each year. Students in our program receive a \$4,500 stipend, \$3500 for housing and food, one academic credit, and parking.
- The internship experience includes working on a research project alongside an Extension faculty research mentor, as well as assisting regional Extension faculty members with programming and technical assistance around the state
- Research activities and regional involvement are determined based on faculty expertise, student interests and current project opportunities.

## Results

- 37.5% of the 2019 interns indicated “large” gains in clarification of their career paths.
- 83% of the 2019 interns indicate that they are “likely” to pursue another research experience as an undergraduate student.
- 100% of 2019 interns indicate that their internship experience “exceeded their expectations”
- Applications submitted grew by 344% from 2019-2020.
- 2019 applicants represented four different colleges/universities. In 2020, nine different colleges/universities were represented in the application pool.
- To assess the longer-term impact of the project, evaluation will be conducted annually to track interns who complete the program (beginning in July of 2020). Survey questions will focus on leadership involvement, STEM involvement, connection with Extension after the conclusion of the program, graduation status, and graduate school or career information.



## Advice to Others

- Be flexible- One of the reasons many Extension professionals enjoy their work is that no day is ever the same. Days often bring unexpected visits, events, or meetings. It is important for students to see this aspect of Extension work.
- Communicate Regularly- Our intern cohort met with the program coordinator, the faculty research mentors, and a regional Extension faculty member each Monday morning.
- Be responsive- We wanted our interns learn in a context that appealed to their interests and helped them advance in their field of study. Ideally, mentors and students should work together to determine research activities and field involvement.



## References

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