

**ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT  
TO  
NORTH CAROLINA SMALL GRAIN GROWERS ASSOCIATION, INC.**

**TITLE:** Partial Technical Salary Support

**LEADER(S):** J. Paul Murphy

**DEPARTMENT(S):** Crop and Soil Sciences

**REPORT:**

During the 2022-23 North Carolina budget year, the NC Small Grain Growers provided \$21,600 of support for the salary and benefits for my technician, Mr. Justin Page. Mr. Page is a 2016 graduate of the Crop and Soil Sciences Department and was raised on a tobacco farm in Wake County, NC. Thus, he brings many valuable skills and expertise to the program. Our program was greatly scaled down this season in preparation for my retirement at the end of 2023, thus the money requested for Mr. Page was half of what was requested in previous years. During the year, he also worked for the Peanut Breeding and Organic Agriculture programs and that is where the remainder of his salary originated.

Mr. Page's primary responsibilities with small grains were to run the day-to-day operations of all field and greenhouse research at four locations across North Carolina. In addition, he had special responsibilities to conduct our scab screening in the misted / inoculated nurseries at Lake Wheeler Road in Raleigh. This work extended from inoculum preparation beginning in January, through intensive fieldwork in March to June, and post-harvest estimations of *Fusarium* damaged kernels, and preparing and shipping samples for DON analysis. He supervised up to four part-time workers during the summer and one part-time worker during the remainder of the year. He was the primary person responsible for equipment upkeep and maintenance.

Mr. Page is particularly strong in agronomic production practices, having a keen eye with respect to plant growth and detecting field problems. He conducted soil sampling at the Kinston station and works with Nutrien to solve fertility problems when they arise. He does a significant amount of plant selection in the field, more than any other technician or graduate student I have employed to date.

Mr. Page led the rye cover crop breeding effort. He conducted trials at Kinston, Rowan and Lewiston to evaluate allelopathy in three rye experimental lines, utilizing specialized field equipment he built and a novel protocol. His approach was the best I have observed in this type of evaluation to date.

Justin is always eager to answer any request from the NC Small Grain Growers Association for assistance working to set up displays and staff the booth at the Commodity Conference and Farm Show.

In summary, Justin has been vital to the operation of my program for the past six years. He is planning to return to work with his father's farming operation in Wake County this fall. His absence will be a serious loss to my successor.

**Budget / Financial Status Update:**

By the end of June 2023, nearly all awarded funds have been expended.

**IMPACT STATEMENT**

Support of the salary of Mr. Justin Page permitted us to conduct research on variety development in wheat, oats, triticale and rye, research on Hessian fly and scab resistance in wheat and allelopathy in rye. Mr. Page's contributions ensured the success of numerous cooperative studies with other small grains researchers in the US.