



DR. LARRY G. HEATHERLY **GRADUATE FELLOW IN AGRONOMY EXCELLENCE**

WITH A 30-YEAR CAREER dedicated to advancing soybean management at the USDA Agricultural Research Service in Stoneville, Dr. Larry G. Heatherly revolutionized mid-southern soybean practices. A Vietnam veteran and accomplished scholar, he earned degrees in agronomy from the University of Missouri-Columbia, University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville, and UT at Martin. Heatherly's pioneering work, including the stale seedbed concept and soybean irrigation scheduling, boosted producer income by over \$100 million annually. His innovations transformed agricultural research and production across the region.

To honor Heatherly's legacy and unwavering commitment to soybean research, the **Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board** established the Dr. Larry G. Heatherly Graduate Fellow in Agronomy Excellence in Mississippi State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The fellowship carries forward Heatherly's groundbreaking impact on soybean research in Mississippi, paving the way for future advancements. The fellowship provides critical support for graduate student research, including scholarships and stipends for fellowship recipients.



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FIRST RECIPIENT **WILLIAM PAUL O'NEAL**



WILLIAM PAUL O'NEAL, agronomy master's student, is the first recipient of the Dr. Larry G. Heatherly Graduate Fellow in Agronomy Excellence.

O'Neal is a dedicated agronomy student with a focus on soybean yield optimization and integrated pest management. Paul is engaged in innovative research, including his thesis on soybean yield potential following simulated population loss and replant strategies under the guidance of Dr. Trent Irby. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy with a concentration in Integrated Pest Management from Mississippi State, graduating summa cum laude.

O'Neal's work experience spans roles as an extension technician, graduate research assistant, and student worker at Mississippi State University, where he contributes to designing and managing small plot and on-farm experiments, focusing on fungicide application, iron deficiency chlorosis, and soybean crop management. With roots in agriculture from working at Allendale Planting Company, he gained hands-on experience in large-scale row crop management.

An active member of several professional societies, including the American Society of Agronomy, Paul has presented his findings through oral presentations, short courses, and poster sessions. Recognized for his contributions, he has received multiple honors, including the Dr. Larry G. Heatherly Fellowship and the Mississippi Agricultural Consultants Association Scholarship. Paul's dedication to advancing agricultural practices positions him as an emerging leader in plant production.



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