Welcome to the 2021 KSRE Annual Conference!

The planning and committee and I are excited that you will be joining us for these three days on the Manhattan campus. We spent a lot of time thinking about our reasons for coming together, especially during a pandemic. Reconnecting with our colleagues was high on our list! This is why we are kicking things off with a "tailgate social" on Tuesday evening, complete with Willie the Wildcat and a purple combine! We also thought it was important to reflect on our successes and challenges since our last in-person meeting. On Wednesday, we will be celebrating members and teams within the organization but also developing a pathway to the “next big thing” during the World Cafe Refresh and Strategic Doing sessions. Thursday is the Innovation Expo and is a day to try a new approach or technology and connect with others across KSRE and our university. The Innovation Expo is like a poster session, but the intention is to not only learn something new, but to actually try it out! We have heard your suggestions from past conferences and have carved out intentional time for you to network and make new connections across the state. You will be able to learn, network and connect all in the Main Ballroom on Thursday morning. Sarah Keatley will be contacting you in a separate email with connection information for those attending any of the sessions that have virtual options (noted below). Speaking of Sarah! A HUGE thank you goes out to Sarah for helping plan this event. We could not have gotten this far without her contributions. The rest is now up to you! Reconnect. Reflect. And plan for a brilliant future.

As you prepare for next week, here are some other things to keep in mind:

- **Bring your name badge and business cards** – There will be plenty of opportunities to meet new people, so bring your cards or a way to distribute your contact information and make new connections!
- **COVID-19** – Bring your mask, or two! In compliance with Governor Laura Kelly’s announcement in August 2021, all individuals who are state employees or are on state property must wear a mask when indoors. Therefore, masks are required to be worn throughout face-to-face participation at Annual Conference in 2021 inside buildings. For more information about the Kansas State University Covid-19 policy [click here](#). We have provided extra seating throughout the sessions so that those who feel more comfortable at a distance, are able to do so.
- **Parking** – For those of you who ordered parking for the conference, you will pull into the Parking Garage ([706 N Martin Luther King Jr Drive, Manhattan, KS](#)), take your ticket and then park in the garage. When you come into register, you will then receive your QR code to exit at the end of the day. Make sure to save this QR code as it is what gets you in and out of the parking garage. If you ordered parking during registration, do not pick up your parking permit in the parking office.
- **Registration** – Registration will be on the 2nd Floor of the K-State Student Union just across from the Big 12 Room. Make sure you check in – even if you did not order any meals. For those of you who ordered boxed lunches – you will receive those tickets during registration.
- **Meals** – Unless you specifically ordered a boxed lunch during registration, lunch is on your own. There are a variety of options in the Student Union for you to enjoy.
• **KSRE Social** (no virtual option)– This year we are excited to host a social and “tailgate party” for you to enjoy on Tuesday, October 19, 2021 starting at 5:30PM ([https://youtu.be/bqYsX_k0lkw](https://youtu.be/bqYsX_k0lkw)). We will be gathering at the North Agronomy Education Center, 2200 Kimball, just across from The Bill Snyder Family Stadium, which has plenty of outdoor space. This evening is a chance for us to eat good food and socialize with each other. We will have the agronomy club parking vehicles, as they do during football season. If you would like to park closer in one of our handicap stalls, just indicate that to the student when you pull in. Please note, we have a limited number of stalls. When you arrive, you will receive two drink tickets that you can use to redeem at one of the bars inside of the Agronomy center. **Bar service will only accept tickets and you cannot purchase drinks with cash.** There will be plenty of seating, **but feel free to bring a comfortable chair to kick your feet up**! Feel free to bring some of your favorite tailgate games, or simply reconnect with colleagues. This is our chance to come back together as an organization, and we’re excited to see you all at the North Farm.

• **Awards** (virtual option) – We will announce the KSRE awards during the Wednesday morning Welcome, which starts at 8AM following the opening remarks from Dean Minton and before our keynote speaker, Dr. Wendy Powers. Immediately following the keynote address, at 10AM, award winners should stay in Forum Hall to have their photo taken with Dean Minton, just before the scheduled break. Dan Donnert will get the photos before you head to one of our Kansas Themed snack breaks.

• **Keynote** (virtual option) – Dr. Wendy Powers will be joining us in person, but she is planning to make this an engaging presentation for those online as well. You can read her bio in the Wednesday agenda.

• **World Café Refresh** (virtual option) – Attached is a summary of the conversation we had in roundtables in Fall 2019, our last in-person conference. A lot has happened since we sat and discussed the future of K-State Research and Extension! In this session, Drs. Gregg Hadley and Marty Draper will reflect back on the resiliency of our organization during this pandemic but will also challenge us to think about the “next big idea” that we need to tackle as an organization. The pandemic was an external disruptor that led to significant changes across programs and continues to impact our daily lives. But what’s next? What are the internal motivators? What do we need to focus on to be sure we transition from “resilience to brilliance?” Come to the session and share your thoughts, and co-create this vision of our future.

• **Strategic Doing Session** (no synchronous virtual option) – Strategic documents that sit on a shelf are not useful. And simply “dreaming about our future” does not get us there. It takes coordinated action. The Strategic Doing process itself is designed to work for any organization, as it is a planning/working tool designed to help organizations work through difficult questions/situations. The process starts by creating a question to address the situation, then work through the questions of the process. What is the issue you are facing as a PFT? Start with a framing question or the issue at hand and find a positive way to look at the situation to take steps towards what it is you envision. This is more about how to empower your existing networks and strengths than it is about creating more reports! If anything, use this a
professional development opportunity and improve upon your facilitation skills. There is not a virtual option for this session on Wednesday, but Jaime and Debbie have agreed to facilitate a follow-up virtual session with those who registered for the virtual option. Please be on the lookout for future information regarding that session!

- A little more background on this session. The idea came out of our conversations in the planning committee (https://youtu.be/a5yPzKDTpZw). Please note, this is not about your existing PFT Action Plans – as in this is not a NEW action plan nor is it adding to your workload. This is more about how your PFT will work together in the future, and Strategic Doing as a tool that can help guide the work. In 2019, the World Café was about the KSRE System. This Strategic Doing exercise is about tools and opportunities for work in the future as a PFT. It’s about empowering our existing networks, not creating new "checkboxes."

- **Innovation Expo** (no virtual option) – On Thursday morning we have a diverse lineup of topics for you to experience! See the attached program for more details. Please read through the topics and show up at 9AM on October 21, 2021 ready to innovate! Or, just come with your questions, or even your gadgets that you are still learning how to use. There will be FANCY SWAG (stuff we all get) bags upon your arrival, so you will not want to miss those goodies! This is really intended as a working session. Poster sessions can often times be a “one way” delivery of information. The intent of the Innovation Expo is to make new connections and even try out the new tool while you are in the Ballroom. See the innovator, then go be the innovator! There will be networking tables spaced throughout the Main Ballroom, so you are welcome to use the space to create, test out some new approaches, or simply network.

- **PFT Meetings** – A reminder that the PFTs will meet immediately following the Expo. *PFT leaders will be responsible for creating their own Zoom links and communicating to remote members* about how to connect to the meetings. For the most part, PFTs will be using the same rooms from the Wednesday Strategic Doing sessions. Please check the schedule for further details.

- **Programs** – We will not provide a hard copy of the program, you can find a one page PDF print out on the Annual Conference agenda page.

Thank you for being a part of this experience next week, and we look forward to interacting with you. Remember to wear your mask indoors; we all need to do our part to keep our community safe.

The 2021 Annual Conference Planning Committee

- Committee Chair - Brian McCormack, Department Head and Professor, Entomology Department
- Incoming Chair - Megan Kennelly, Department Head and Professor, Plant Pathology Department
- Past Chair - Jason Ellis, Department Head and Professor, Communications and Agricultural Education
- Jennifer Brantley, County Director, Sedgwick County
- Laurie Chandler, Associate Program Leader, Administration
- Tristen Cope, Extension Agent, Marion County
- Meg Drake, Marketing Officer, Communications and Agricultural Education
- Martin Draper, Associate Dean of Research and Graduate Programs
- Gregg Hadley, Director for Extension
- Jill Martinson, Extension Agent, Dickinson County
- Candis Meerpohl, County Director, Shawnee County
- Susan Metzger, Senior Executive Administrator, Administration
- Rick Peterson, Associate Director, Extension Programs
- Brian Rees, County Director, Lyon County
- Crystal Futrell, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent / Health and Nutrition, Johnson County
- Jennifer Wilson, Leader, Extension Operations
- Aliesa Woods, Regional Local Unit Director, Northwest and North Central Kansas