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NASDA Foundation Welcomes Premier Students into “Next Gen” 2026 Cohort

ARLINGTON, Va. — The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation is excited to host the 2026 NASDA Next Generation (Next Gen) program at the 2026 NASDA Winter Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., Feb. 1-4., 2026. This program brings together college and high school student leaders from across the country for an immersive agricultural policy and professional development experience.

“It is essential that we intentionally invest in future leaders as the industry grows to respond to economic, environmental and technological changes and demands innovation for continually supplying the U.S. and the world with the highest quality products,” NASDA Foundation Senior Director Chris Jones said. “The Next Generation Program provides students with a front-row seat to policy conversations while helping them build confidence, professional networks and a clearer understanding of how they can contribute to the future of the agriculture and food industry.”

Designed to cultivate the next generation of agricultural leaders, the NASDA Next Gen Program connects annual cohort members with senior government officials, policymakers and industry partners. Students also gain first-hand exposure to how agricultural policy is developed and advanced at the state and federal levels through direct engagement in conference sessions, networking opportunities and structured discussions with NASDA members.

The 2026 NASDA Next Generation Winter Policy Conference participants include:

- **Adam Schaik** — University of Wisconsin–Madison (Wis.)
- **Brayden Selgeby** — Missouri State University (Mo.)
- **Cami Kenny** — Oklahoma Panhandle State University (Okla.)
- **Caroline Clark** — University of Maryland (Md.)
- **Crystal Bomgardner** — Lancaster Bible College (Pa.)
- **Jasper Hartnett** — Friedman School of Nutrition, Tufts University (Mass.)
- **Jescey Thompson** — Iowa State University (Iowa)
- **Mariella Saenz** — Arizona State University (Ariz.)
- **Mary Schrieber** — Texas A&M University (Texas)
- **Michele Mickelwait** — Virginia Tech University (Va.)
- **Sydney Countryman** — West Virginia University College of Law (W. Va.)
- **Theresa Feese** — Huntington University (Ind.)

Launched in 2015, NASDA’s Next Generation Program has provided more than 200 students nationwide with meaningful opportunities to gain experience from and interact with leaders representing all regions of U.S. agriculture. The program continues to serve as a bridge between academic learning and real-world policy engagement, helping students better understand career pathways in public service, policy advocacy and the agricultural sector.

National Association of State Departments of Agriculture Foundation

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The NASDA Foundation is the only educational and research organization that directly serves the nation's state departments of agriculture. The NASDA Foundation's mission is to enhance American food and agricultural communities through education, outreach and research. The NASDA Foundation works with states to nourish people and communities while serving as the stewards of the environment and public trust. To learn more about the NASDA Foundation, please visit nasda.org/foundation.

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