Kansas State University took first place in both the 79th annual Kansas City and 84th annual Chicago Collegiate Crops Contests on 13 and 17 Nov. 2012, respectively. The University of Minnesota–Crookston placed second in both contests, and Oklahoma State University placed third. Fourth place went to Purdue University was fourth and Wisconsin–Platteville fifth in Chicago. Other participating schools were Fort Hays State University and Cloud County Community College. An Australian National Team, sponsored by the Grain Growers of Australia, also competed for the second consecutive year.

The top individuals were Andrew Scherrer, Kansas State, for the Kansas City contest and Neal Kaiser, Kansas State, for the Chicago contest. Scherrer placed third in Chicago and Kaiser second in Kansas City. At Kansas City, Travis Lund, Minnesota–Crookston, was third; Missy Geiszler, also from Minnesota–Crookston, was fourth; and Michael Welch, Kansas State, was second in both contests, and Oklahoma State

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the KSAs are still found in government job descriptions. If specific selection factors are listed, then applicants should address the specialized experience requirements either in their resume or in some other application document. The selection factors are found under the job qualification section and can be used to evaluate an individual candidate’s qualifications. Selection factors will differ by job announcement so a generic resume may not be adequate. The interview process for an ARS scientist position is similar to the interview process for an academic position with candidate interviews generally lasting a day along with a seminar presentation focusing on your research experience and how you can contribute to the location’s research goals.

How USDA-ARS is Different

There are a number of differences in how research is planned and implemented among ARS, academic institutions, and private industry. The primary mission of ARS is to develop and transfer basic and applied research solutions to agricultural problems of high national priority. ARS is a mission-driven organization, and research is conducted based on priority research items determined by customers, stakeholders, partners, and ARS scientists. Priority research items can be shorter-term objectives to address an immediate need or long-term objectives where societal returns can be highly beneficial. ARS units and scientists are assigned to a priority research item(s), and five-year projects are developed with clear objectives and milestones to meet these goals. The five-year projects are peer-reviewed by extramural scientists to ensure the quality and practicality of the project. All ARS scientists receive intramural funding for specific mission-driven assignments, which is sufficient to maintain permanent support staff, infrastructure, and equipment. Additional funding is available through competitive grants, other federal agencies, international collaborations, or private companies similar to other institutions. Most ARS scientists work directly with other federal agencies, companies, academic institutions, and with producers to solve current agricultural challenges. One of the key strengths of ARS is that the funding, infrastructure, and organization structure is in place to conduct long-term and coordinated research at the regional or national level.

Another important distinction between ARS and other institutions is the retention, promotion, and evaluation system for scientists. Every three to five years, the career accomplishments of an ARS scientist are reviewed by a panel of peers. Research scientists have open-ended promotion potential and are evaluated on their personal research and leadership accomplishments. A career in government provides a long-term career path to conduct quality science while providing competitive benefits and maintaining a healthy work–life balance. ARS employees generally have high satisfaction with their work and understand how their research is relevant to the organizational mission. ARS is constantly hiring new scientists, post-doctorate research associates, and technical staff to meet the agricultural challenges of the 21st century. To learn more, go to www.ars.usda.gov.

March Undergraduate Regional Meeting

Register for the 2013 Students of Agronomy, Soils, and Environmental Sciences (SASES) Regional Conference in Texas. Regionals will take place 2–3 Mar. 2013 in College Station, hosted by the Texas A&M Agronomy Club. For local agricultural tours, students will choose between (1) Soils of the Brazos Valley and Central Texas; (2) Forage Systems of Central and East Texas; (3) Urban Soil, Plant, and Environmental Sciences; and (4) Plant Breeding. Participants get to tour the Texas A&M Agricultural Research Facilities and attend an International Agriculture Symposium. In addition, there will be a Hunger Banquet, as well as a presentation on Mexican culture and economics as they relate to agronomy, crops, and soils. The weekend will also include fun social events featuring a mariachi band, laser tag, bowling, and a dance. Register early as space may be limited.

For more information and to register, contact Texas A&M Agronomy Club adviser Steve Hague at shague@tamu.edu or visit: www.agronomy.org/students, www.crops.org/students, or www.soils.org/students.