PLANT PATHOLOGY, PH.D.

The discipline of plant pathology is directed toward understanding and solving disease problems of plants. The field is broad and complex, integrating disciplines as varied as molecular biology, genetics, cell biology, organismal biology, population and community ecology, meteorology, statistics, computer science, chemistry, and physics. Plant pathology encompasses basic and applied research, employs both model systems and economically important plants, and requires both laboratory and field experimentation. Active research programs in the department encompass this full spectrum of questions and approaches, including research on biological control, virology, nematology, fungal genetics, tissue culture, soil microbiology and ecology, forest pathology, bacterial plant pathogens, molecular biology of parasite–host interactions, microbial ecology, epidemiology, and integrated disease management strategies.

The graduate program in plant pathology educates students in the science of plant pathology and prepares them for successful careers. Students develop the following skills required to meet diverse professional situations: excellence in research, breadth and depth in plant pathology, breadth in an allied field, strong critical and analytical thinking skills, and effective communication skills. Students become sufficiently knowledgeable in all aspects of plant pathology to identify key research questions, recognize significant discoveries, and think analytically about interpretation of data.

The level of proficiency in specific areas will vary with the student’s research area and career goals, and will be appropriate to the student’s degree program (M.S. or Ph.D.). Specific areas of proficiency addressed by the Ph.D. curriculum include etiology, diagnosis, and management of plant disease; ecology and epidemiology; genetics and physiology of plant–microbe interactions; and organismal biology. Ph.D. students may elect an optional professional development experience as part of their curriculum. Graduates of the program attain positions in teaching, research in academic positions, government services, industry, extension services, and private practice.

The program is comprised of about 100 faculty members, graduate students, and research and support staff. It is housed in an eight-story wing of Russell Laboratories, a teaching and research facility on the UW–Madison campus, which is surrounded by other facilities that are also devoted to biological research. Russell Labs, together with the extensive research facilities available on the rest of the UW–Madison campus and at field research stations throughout Wisconsin, provide a rich and comprehensive environment for research and graduate studies in all branches of plant pathology.

FUNDING

The department offers stipends to the most highly qualified applicants, and in-course students are funded throughout their programs by research assistantships, fellowships, or traineeships. The department nominates outstanding students for external fellowships, and supports and assists students who apply for scholarships and other forms of financial support.

REQUIREMENTS

MINIMUM DEGREE REQUIREMENTS AND SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

To make progress toward a graduate degree, students must meet the Graduate School Minimum Degree Requirements and Satisfactory Progress (http://guide.wisc.edu/graduate/#policiesandrequirementstext) in addition to the requirements of the program.

DOCTORAL DEGREES

Ph.D.

MINIMUM GRADUATE DEGREE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

51 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE RESIDENCE CREDIT REQUIREMENT

32 credits

MINIMUM GRADUATE COURSEWORK (50%) REQUIREMENT

At least 50% of credits applied toward the graduate degree credit requirement must be in graduate-level coursework; courses with the Graduate Level Coursework attribute are identified and searchable in the university's Course Guide (http://my.wisc.edu/CourseGuideRedirect/BrowseByTitle).

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: GRADUATE WORK FROM OTHER INSTITUTIONS

For well-prepared advanced students, the program may accept prior graduate coursework from other institutions toward the minimum graduate degree credit and minimum graduate coursework (50%) requirement. The minimum graduate residence credit requirement can be satisfied only with courses taken as a graduate student at UW–Madison. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNDERGRADUATE

For well-prepared advanced students, the program may decide to accept up to 7 credits numbered 300 or above completed at UW–Madison toward fulfillment of minimum degree and minor credit requirements. This work would not be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate coursework minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.

PRIOR COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS: UW–MADISON UNIVERSITY SPECIAL

The program may decide to accept up to 15 University Special student credits as fulfillment of the minimum graduate residence, graduate degree, or minor credit requirements on occasion as an exception (on a case-by-case basis). UW–Madison coursework taken as a University Special student would not be allowed to count toward the 50% graduate coursework minimum unless taken at the 700 level or above. Coursework earned ten or more years prior to admission to a doctoral degree is not allowed to satisfy requirements.
CREDITS PER TERM ALLOWED
15 credits

PROGRAM-SPECIFIC COURSES REQUIRED
Contact the program for information on any additional required courses.

DOCTORAL MINOR/BREADTH REQUIREMENTS
Doctoral students must complete a doctoral minor.

OVERALL GRADUATE GPA REQUIREMENT
3.00

OTHER GRADE REQUIREMENTS
The Graduate School requires an average grade of B or better in all coursework (300 or above, not including research credits) taken as a graduate student unless conditions for probationary status require higher grades. Grades of Incomplete are considered to be unsatisfactory if they are not removed during the next enrolled semester.

PROBATION POLICY
The Graduate School regularly reviews the record of any student who earned grades of BC, C, D, F, or Incomplete in a graduate course (300 or above), or grade of U in research credits. This review could result in academic probation with a hold on future enrollment or in being suspended from the Graduate School.

ADVISOR
Every graduate student is required to have an advisor. An advisor is a faculty member, or sometimes a committee, from the major department responsible for providing advice regarding graduate studies. An advisor generally serves as the thesis advisor. In many cases, an advisor is assigned to incoming students. Students can be suspended from the Graduate School if they do not have an advisor.

To ensure that students are making satisfactory progress toward a degree, the Graduate School expects them to meet with their advisor on a regular basis.

A committee often accomplishes advising for the students in the early stages of their studies.

ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATIONS
Doctoral students are required to take a comprehensive preliminary/oral examination after they have cleared their record of all Incomplete and Progress grades (other than research and thesis). Deposit of the doctoral dissertation in the Graduate School is required.

TIME CONSTRAINTS
Doctoral degree students who have been absent for ten or more consecutive years lose all credits that they have earned before their absence. Individual programs may count the coursework students completed prior to their absence for meeting program requirements; that coursework may not count toward Graduate School credit requirements.

A candidate for a doctoral degree who fails to take the final oral examination and deposit the dissertation within five years after passing the preliminary examination may by require to take another preliminary examination and to be admitted to candidacy a second time.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS
Contact the program for information on any language requirements.

ADMISSIONS
Students who are admitted to the department must meet the Graduate School requirements, including completion of a bachelor’s degree which typically consists of courses in biology, chemistry, physics, and math. If foundation course requirements have not been fulfilled before matriculation, they must be completed as early as possible in the course of study. Successful applicants typically exceed the minimum requirement of a 3.0 GPA (on a 4.0 scale); exceed the minimum required Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) score of 92, or a 7 on the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exam (international applicants); perform well on the Graduate Record Exam (GRE); and articulate a strong interest in the discipline in their application. Prior research experience is an asset for any applicant, and letters of recommendation from research advisors are viewed as one of the most useful means of evaluating applications.

The application deadline for the fall semester is the preceding January 2. Applications received after that date will be reviewed, but they are disadvantaged for admission and financial support.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic processes of pathogenesis, plant defense, and defense circumvention at the molecular, genetic and physiological level for each of the major groups of plant pathogens and other plant associated microorganisms.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the basic biology of microorganisms that are symbiotic with plants including fungi, bacteria, viruses, oomycetes, and nematodes.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the etiology, ecology, and epidemiology of economically significant diseases caused by the major groups of plant pathogens.
- Construct disease management strategies for the different groups of important plant pathogens.
- Demonstrate excellent problem solving skills and a deep conceptual understanding of the science of Plant Pathology.

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT
- Convey knowledge in a variety of formats to diverse audiences including the public, students, and fellow scientists.

PEOPLE

Faculty: Professors McManus (chair), Ahlquist, Allen, Bent, Charkowski, Clayton, Havey, Jiang, Kaepler, Keller, MacGuidwin, Rouse, Yu; Associate Professors Ane, Barak, Gevens, Groves, Jansky; Assistant Professors Kabbage, Koch, Lankau, Rakotondrafara, Silva, Smith