SPLS 2026 Retreat Program

School of Plant Sciences — University of Arizona

Friday, May 8, 2026 • ENR2 S107

The SPLS 2026 Retreat brings together faculty, postdoctoral scholars, graduate students, staff, and collaborators for a day of scientific exchange, community building, and celebration of research across the School of Plant Sciences.

Morning Research Session

Session Chair: Dr. Ali Mohammed

Time	Program
8:30 – 9:00 AM	Registration, Breakfast & Poster Set Up
9:00 – 9:10 AM	**Welcome – SPLS 2026 Retreat Committee** Committee: Ali Mohammed, Ravi Palanivelu (Chair), Kelsey Pryze, Dave Romens (ex officio), Rod Wing, Zhongguo Xiong
9:10 – 9:30 AM	**Dr. Alex Bucksch** Plant Phenomics: The Unrecognized Rise of a New Discipline
9:30 – 9:50 AM	**Dr. Ravi Palanivelu** High-Throughput Phenomics of Pollen Thermotolerance in Tomato
9:50 – 10:10 AM	**Dr. Alonso Favela** Soils Get Sticky: Why Microbes Matter When Water is Scarce
10:10 – 10:30 AM	Coffee Break
10:30 – 11:00 AM	**Dr. Rebekah Waller (KAUST, Saudi Arabia)** Science, Engineering, and Extension for Hyper-Arid Agriculture
11:00 – 11:20 AM	**Dr. Sergio Alan Cervantes-Pérez (Bucksch Lab)** Hooked Hairs: The Hidden Cell Type Key for Nutrient Uptake and Drought Conditions During Early Plant Development
11:20 – 11:40 AM	**Dr. Shelley McMahon** Phylogenies, Biodiversity, and the UA Herbarium
11:40 AM – 12:30 PM	Lunch

School of Plant Sciences Updates & Community Session

Time	Program
12:30 – 1:15 PM	**Dr. Betsy Arnold (Interim Director, School of Plant Sciences)** State of the School Address
1:15 – 1:30 PM	**John Dorlon** SAPPS Presentation

Afternoon Research Session

Session Chair: Dr. Rod Wing

Time	Program
1:30 – 1:50 PM	**Dr. Sarah Hind** A Case Study for Teaching Innovations: Implementation, Results, and Lessons Learned
1:50 – 2:10 PM	**Dr. Ali Mohammed** Integrating Research and Extension to Build Resilient Agricultural Systems in Yuma, Arizona
2:10 – 2:30 PM	Coffee Break
2:30 – 3:00 PM	**Dr. Nipuna Chamara (University of Nebraska–Lincoln)** Applied AI in Agriculture: Current Progress, Challenges, and Future Directions
3:00 – 3:15 PM	**Chosen E. Obih (Melandri Lab)** HAMRLNC: A Comprehensive and Scalable Pipeline for Integrated Epitranscriptomic Analysis
3:15 – 3:30 PM	**Joshua Oyekanmi (Arnold Lab)** Bacterial Endophytes of Wild Crop Relatives: From Genome Announcement to Functional Insights
3:30 – 3:45 PM	**Md Nafis Ul Alam (Wing Lab)** Universal Orthologs for Macroevolutionary Inferences
3:45 – 4:00 PM	Coffee Break
4:00 – 4:20 PM	**Dr. Zhongguo Xiong** From PepMV Vector Engineering to HLB Detection
4:20 – 4:40 PM	**Dr. Jesse Woodson** How Do Plants Sense Their Environments? Intracellular and Long-Distance Signaling
4:40 – 5:00 PM	**Dr. Rod Wing** Adventures With Rice and Its Wild Relatives
5:00 – 5:30 PM	Presentation of Even Number Posters
5:30 – 6:00 PM	Presentation of Odd Number Posters
6:00 – 7:00 PM	Dinner
7:00 PM	Award Ceremony
7:30 PM	Program Ends