

My passion for science started when I was awarded a scholarship by the Nicaraguan government to pursue a Bachelor of Science degree at Zamorano University in Honduras. I realized that the most realistic way to solve agricultural problems is through research. Unfortunately, at the time there were no research centers in Central America investigating the molecular aspects of crop diseases. This led me to explore a scientific path in the USA from an internship as an undergraduate student to my current postdoctoral position. I am fascinated with the molecular interactions between plants and pathogens. My work has been published in prestigious journals such as *The Plant Cell* and *Cell Host & Microbe*. I have written two invited review articles in the *Annual Review of Phytopathology* and the Special Issue of *Molecular Plant-Microbe Interactions* journals. I have been invited to present my Ph.D. work at the American Society for Microbiology-Missouri Valley Branch Meeting and recently, at the Keystone Symposia on Plant Signaling about my postdoctoral research.

My journey as a plant scientist began when I was accepted in an exchange program at The Ohio State University and the John Innes Center in England where I worked in the laboratory of Dr. Saskia Hogenhout studying phytoplasmas, insect-transmitted bacterial pathogens. We investigated phytoplasma virulence proteins, discovering that these proteins are differentially expressed in insects and plants, can move away from the site of primary infection, and alter insect behavior and plant development for disease spread.

For my Ph.D. degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the laboratory of Dr. Jim Alfano, I investigated two virulence proteins of the leaf pathogen *Pseudomonas syringae*. I identified their host targets and demonstrated their ability to suppress plant defense responses. To gain insight into the molecular interactions between plants and pathogens from the plant perspective, I joined the laboratory of Dr. Gitta Coaker at the University of California, Davis. I am investigating plant immune signaling to understand how plants perceive pathogens and activate defense responses. I am using a combination of genetics, cell biology, and biochemical approaches to investigate key regulators of immunity. This can lead to the identification of critical genes for use in crop improvement.

I am committed to promoting science to young generations and contributing to the higher education of underrepresented minorities in STEM fields. During my Ph.D. and postdoctoral programs, I have mentored high school students and participated in outreach programs such as Women in Science Conferences and Plant Science Workshops. Recently, I was selected a fellow of the 2018-2019 Professors for the Future Program (PFTP), a very competitive fellowship program designed to recognize and develop leadership skills of outstanding graduate students and postdoctoral scholars. As part of the PFTP I will organize a Women in STEM symposium to promote careers in STEM, especially Latinas. As a scientist from Nicaragua, I am committed to promote science in my country. Recently I joined the 500 Women Scientists movement and created a local chapter for Nicaragua. The goal of the Nicaragua chapter is to build a network of Nicaraguan women scientists working in the country and abroad and to help young students, as I once was, to fulfill their dreams and pursue scientific careers.