

NADEEKA, WEERASEKARA
Research Associate
Western Rural Development Center, University of Idaho-Boise
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EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Completion of Year 1 of the Northwest Community Development Institute. 2025. Boise, ID
Ph.D., Applied Economics. 2022. Oregon State University, Corvallis, OR
M.Sc., Agricultural Economics. 2017. University of Nebraska - Lincoln, NE
B.Sc., Agriculture. 2014. Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Sri Lanka

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Rural & Community Development, Food Systems & Development, Behavioral & Experimental Economics, Applied Econometrics.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Associate II - Western Rural Development Center (WRDC), University of Idaho (Since April 2025)
Postdoctoral Fellow – Western Rural Development Center (WRDC), University of Idaho (Since May 2024-April 2025)
Postdoctoral Fellow – Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, University of Idaho (since April 2023-April 2024)
Assistant Lecturer, Department of Agribusiness Management, Faculty of Agriculture and Plantation Management, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka (May 2014 to May 2015)
Internship Trainee, CIC Agri Businesses (Pvt.) Ltd., Kandy, Sri Lanka (since October 2013 to February 2014)

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Teaching:

Instructor, Oregon State University, USA
AEC 250 – Introduction to Environmental Economics and Policy (Summer 2021-Ecampus)
AEC 221 - Agricultural Marketing and Policy (Spring 2021-Ecampus)

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Oregon State University, USA

AEC 513 - Microeconomic Theory II (Fall 2019, 2020) For Dr. Nadia Streletskaya
AEC 512 - Microeconomic Theory I (Fall 2020) For Prof. Junjie Wu
AEC 221 - Agricultural Marketing and Policy (Spring 2019, 2020, 2021) For Dr. Nadia Streletskaya
AEC 311- Intermediate Applied Econ I (Winter 2019) For Dr. Nadia Streletskaya
AEC 311- Intermediate Applied Econ I (Winter 2020, 2021) For Dr. Jeff Reimer

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA

AECN 265 - Environment and Resource Economics I (Spring 2016) For Dr. Simanti Banerjee

Research:

Graduate Research Assistant, Oregon State University, USA
For Dr. Nadia Streletskaya; (Fall 2017 - Fall 2018)
For Prof. Jennifer Alix-Garcia (Summer 2019)

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA

For Dr. Simanti Banerjee (Fall 2015 - Spring 2017)

Supervisor, University of Idaho

Dr. Ahsan Kibria, Postdoctoral fellow, 2025

Student Mentor, University of Idaho

Sunita Pahari, graduate (MSc), 2023-2024

Student Mentor, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, USA

Wang Yinrou, undergraduate, summer research program 2016

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE AND PUBLICATIONS

- Soria, K. M., **Weerasekara N. D. K.**, Hallahan, K., and Moore, M. (2025). The Effects of Participation in Recreational Student Groups, Clubs, or Organizations on Undergraduates' Leadership Motivation and Efficacy. *Recreational Sports Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15588661251358163>
- Mitchell, T. D., Johnson, M. R., Parker, E., Soria, K. M., **Weerasekara, N.**, and Dann, L. (2025). The power of multicultural and identity-based student organizations in college students' prosocial leadership development. *Journal of College and Character*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2194587X.2025.2546456>
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Streletskaia, N. (2024). Tasting and consumer demand for wine: do peers and experts matter?. *Agricultural and Resource Economics Review*, 53(1), 66-86.
- Streletskaia, N., **Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Li, J. (2023). The Impact of Outside Option Saliency and Product Descriptions on Consumer Tasting Behavior. *Journal of Wine Economics*, 18(2), 139-155.
- Banerjee, S., Mukherjee, Z. and **Weerasekara, N. D. K.** (2016). Understanding the Economic Characteristics of a Developing Country Marine Fishery— A Case Study of the Digha-Shankarpur Fishery in Eastern India. *Cornhusker Economics*, Sep. 21, 2016.
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.**, Jayasinghe-Mudalige, U. K., Ikram, S. M. M., Udugama, J. M. M., Edirisinghe, J. C. and Herath, H. M. L. K. (2014). Firms' Responsive Towards Quality Management in Bottled Drinking Water Manufacturing Industry in Sri Lanka. *Sri Lanka Journal of Economic Research*, 2(1), 67 - 78.

Working papers

- Weerasekara, N. D. K.**, Lewin, P. and Fisher, M. Impact of family health on the monetary success of the entrepreneur: entrepreneur-spouse-child interdependence (**accepted with revisions**: Entrepreneurship Research Journal).
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Lewin, P. Labor market marginalization: family health and access to health care (under review: Community, work, and family).
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Lewin, P. Economic resilience of businesses to uncertain shocks (under review: Regional Studies).
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Lewin, P. Do safety nets resolve poverty in the United States?.
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Lewin, P. Trapped or moving up? The dynamics of poverty in the United States.
- Soria, K. M., **Weerasekara, N.** and Inthiraratnam, N. "Can't Read my Poker Face": Student Affairs Professionals' Emotional Labor and Turnover (under review: Journal of College Student Development).
- Weerasekara, N. D. K.** and Higgins, L. Left Out or Opting Out? Unpacking Non-Participation in Rural Projects
- Soria, K. M., Kibria, A., and **Weerasekara, N.** Opportunity Gaps in Co-Curriculars at the Intersections of Geography and Parental Education: Implications for Students' Work Capital (under review: The Journal of Campus Activities Practice and Scholarship)

Conference presentations – Peer Reviewed

- *North American Regional Science Council annual conference 2025*, Nov. 12-15, Denver, Colorado. "Do safety nets resolve poverty in the United States?"- (oral presentation)
- *North American Regional Science Council annual conference 2024*, Nov. 13-16, New Orleans, Louisiana. "Economic resilience of businesses to uncertain shocks"- oral presentation
- *Southern Regional Science Association annual conference 2024*, April 4-6, Washington DC. "Marginalization of labor force with poor family health: insights from the US labor force"- oral presentation
- *Western Regional Science Association annual conference 2024*, Feb. 11-14, Monterey, California. "Family health on the monetary success of the entrepreneur: entrepreneur-spouse-child interdependence (Findings from a sensitivity analysis) - oral presentation
- *Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) Annual Meeting 2019*, July 21-23, Atlanta, Georgia. "Wine tasting: consumer preferences for wine, choice, and sensory information" – poster

- *Heartland Environmental and Resource Economics Workshop 2016*, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Illinois. “Do regulations on fishery resource management affect spatial competition among processors” – poster
- *Summer Research Symposium 2016*, University of Nebraska-Lincoln. “Economics of Fishing: An Application to Eastern India” – poster
- *2nd International Economic Research Conference 2013*, University of Peradeniya, Peradeniya. “Food Safety Responsiveness of Bottled Water Manufacturers: An Empirical Investigation” – oral presentation
- *12th Agricultural Research Symposium 2013*, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Makandura, Gonawila. “Constraints and Incentives for Bottled Drinking Water Manufacturing Firms in Sri Lanka to adopt HACCP Food Safety and Quality Metasystem-A Discriminant Analysis” – oral presentation

Articles, Abstracts & Fact Sheets

Soria, K. M., and **Weerasekara, N.** (2025). A conceptual framework for the Assessing Rural Education’s Assets & Strengths (AREAS) survey. AREAS Consortium. Link: [Conceptual Framework](#)

Soria, K. M., Kibria, A., & **Weerasekara, N.** (2025). Rural college students: Mental health and ACEs. AREAS Consortium.

Weerasekara, N. D. K. (2013). Risk Management in Agribusiness, proceedings of 8th In-Plant Training Symposium, Wayamba University of Sri Lanka, Makandura, Gonawila, 53-54.

Projects

Researcher for the consortium of “Assessing Rural Education Assets and Strengths (AREAS)” based at the University of Idaho and funded by the Ascendium Education Group in partnership with the American Institutes for Research.

Link: [AREAS – Western Rural Development Center](#)

Experimenter for the project “Towards Successful Fundraising Campaigns: Social Networks and their Role in Threshold Public Goods Games” under the supervision of Dr. Simanti Banerjee, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ajac/aax066>

Researcher for the project “Western Community Assessment Network (WeCAN)” funded by the United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Program.

Link: [Home | Western Community As](#)

Grants

PI: Lewin, P. Co-PIs: **Weerasekara, N.**; Mindes, S.; Jimber, J.; and Smyer, A. “Ensuring Digital Access for Rural Residents and Underserved Populations”, United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Program. 01/01/2024 - 12/31/2028. \$650,000

PI: Wornell, E. Co-PIs: Lewin, P.; Fisher, M.; Weber, B.; **Weerasekara, N.** Making ends meet: The role of community assets in the livelihood strategies of low-income rural households. United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Program. 05/15/2019 - 05/14/2025. \$500,000.

PI: Lewin, P. Co-PIs: Saul, D.; Fisher, M.; Newman, S.; Rumel, J.; **Weerasekara, N.** “Understanding and Supporting Entrepreneurism among Rural Minority Women”, United States Department of Agriculture, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Agriculture and Food Research Initiative Program. 05/15/2019 - 05/14/2022. \$500,000.

OUTREACH

Policy Briefs:

Soria, K. M., Weerasekara, N., Dann, L., Hastings, L., & Krusko, J. (2025). *Rural college students’ loneliness: Disparities and strategies to strengthen students’ belonging*. AREAS Consortium.

Weerasekara, N. (2025). “Conflict in Family Health, Employment Choices, & Eligibility to Healthcare” – to be published on the WRDC’s website

Resource guides: “Grant Writing - Tips for Success”- developing for the WRDC’s website

AFFILIATIONS

- Lab manager, Applied Experimental Economics Lab (AEELab), Oregon State University (since August 2018-June 2022)
- Treasurer, Agri Econ Graduate Student Association, Department of Agricultural Economics, University of Nebraska-Lincoln (since 2016-2017)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES AND SERVICE

- Session organizer for the 72nd North American Regional Science Council annual conference 2025, November 12-15, Denver, CO.
- Grant program manager for the Western Rural Development Center's Multi-state, Fellow, Graduate Assistance, and Leadership Mini-grant programs (2024-present).
- Speaker at the Idaho Rural Success Summit representing the Western Rural Development Center (May, 2024; Fort Hall, Idaho)
- Reviewer for: Journal of Agricultural & Resource Economics (2025)
- Reviewer for: Journal of Business Economics (2023)
- Reviewer for: AAEA annual meeting abstracts (2022, 2023, 2024)
- Member of: Agricultural & Applied Economics Association (AAEA)
- Member of North American Regional Science Council (NARSC)
- Co-coordinator, 9th In-Plant Training Symposium (2014), Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
- Member, logistic committee, Agriculture Research Symposium (2013), Wayamba University of Sri Lanka
- Member, publication committee, In-plant Training Symposium (2013), Wayamba University of Sri Lanka

SCHOLARSHIPS AND AWARDS

- International Student Continuation Scholarship by the Oregon State University for the 21-22 academic year
- Graduate research/teaching assistantship awarded by the Oregon State University, USA, 2017 Fall
- Graduate research assistantship awarded by the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA, 2015 Fall
- Excellence at G.C.E. Advanced level examination (2008) – Swarnamali Girls' School, Sri Lanka
- Best project award at the competition organized by the Sri Lanka Environment conservation organization (2001)

OTHER

Computer skills: STATA, Qualtrics, working knowledge of Z-Tree, Mouse-tracker

Other Skills: Econometric Modelling, Experimental design and conducting, Survey design, Choice experiments