Dear members of the search committee,

My name is Austin N Fife, and I believe that my experience with Entomology/Acarology, the chemical ecology of plant defenses, and plant-arthropod-pathogen-interactions makes me a suitable candidate for this position.

Over the past six years, I have designed and orchestrated multiple field trials, as well as lab experiments to protect row crops and ornamentals from psyllids, mites, and the pathogens they vector. The majority of my research focused on integrating different management methods to control vectors of plant pathogens with natural enemies, plant defenses (induced systemic acquired resistance, SAR), and sanitation measures. My PhD research was based on the early detection, chemical ecology and biocontrol of *Phllocoptes fructiphilus* and *Brevipalpus californicus*. These two mite species are vectors of economically important plant pathogens, and I was the first to detect and report on these pathosystems in northern Florida. I utilized chemical ecology methods to evaluate predator attraction to plant headspace volatiles, and the effects of inducing SAR on mite populations, hoping to improve predatory efficiency or develop chemical lures. I also studied the fecundity and behavior of *Bactericera cockerelli* to evaluate host plant resistance (putative antibiosis, antixenosis) on potato. I have created/maintained multiple insect and mite colonies, and I have grown hundreds of plants from an eclectic variety of species. I have an enthusiasm for statistical programming in R, which I have enjoyed over the past six years. I have a current pesticide applicator license, and valid drivers license for Florida.

I take a multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving, accordingly, I have collaborated as frequently as possible to learn from others. I have benefited from the combined expertise of over 15 principal investigators from regional universities, as well as state and governmental agencies. Furthermore, working at Research and Education Centers over the last six years has helped me to understand the needs of different organizations: I have spoken at 4-H and local rosarian clubs, presented to stakeholders, published technical reports, organized and led educational activities, set up information booths and participated in various other STEM events to share our research with local communities. I also speak, read, and write Spanish fluently, due to living independently in Mexico for a few years, and I appreciate interacting with diversified communities. I understand the importance of maintaining a positive and communicative lab culture: I was a visiting student researcher in Georgia for a year, so I would be gone for days working on independent projects while lab technicians back in Florida followed my protocols and standard operating procedures.

I have written extension articles, journal articles, proposals, and received a few small grants as described in my CV. I speak consistently at annual professional meetings by various scientific organizations, in person and online, including oral and poster sessions. I am first author on three publications in peer-reviewed journals, and I expect to finish 2-3 more publications in the near future.

In conclusion, I am confident that my experience with biological control, arthropod-plant-pathosystems, and chemical ecology makes me a strong candidate for your agency.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

– Austin Nathaniel Fife