

IETS Foundation 2026 Early Career Achievement Award (Scientist)



Dr. Sofia Ortega is originally from Honduras and earned her B.S. in Agricultural Sciences from Zamorano Agriculture University and an M.S. in Animal Sciences from the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile. She completed her Ph.D. in Animal Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Florida under Dr. Peter Hansen, followed by postdoctoral training with Dr. Tom Spencer at the University of Missouri. She later served as an Assistant Professor of Reproductive Physiology at Missouri (2019–2022) before joining the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences at the University of Wisconsin–Madison as an Assistant Professor of Reproductive Physiology.

Dr. Ortega's research program investigates the physiological, genetic, and molecular mechanisms governing early embryonic development and pregnancy establishment in cattle. By integrating multi-omics with *in vitro* and *in vivo* embryo models, her work defines maternal and paternal determinants of embryo competence, placental development, and pregnancy success. Her long-term goal is to improve reproductive efficiency and fertility prediction in cattle through mechanistic discovery, while generating translational insights for human assisted reproduction.