Department of
BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES
Clemson® University

Saara J. DeWalt, Chair

Note from the Chair

Every May I think I can't be prouder of BioSci students, and every subsequent May proves me wrong. I am incredibly proud of all of our graduates and award winners this year!

This edition of our newsletter is devoted to celebrating some of our amazing students — undergraduate and graduate. Below you will see some of the students who won BioSci, SCIENCE awards or BSGSA awards, graduated with Departmental Honors, placed in the SCIENCE Catalyst entrepreneurship program, or graduated from our on-campus or online M.S. degree programs. We are incredibly proud of all of our graduates and award winners this year!

Please help me congratulate the Class of 2023! They are 300 strong with 223 Biological Sciences B.A./B.S., 31 Microbiology B.S., six on-campus M.S. and 41 online M.S. graduates.

The next edition of our newsletter will highlight some of the faculty and staff who make the magic happen that leads to these successes.

But we need you! We are looking for ideas to name the BioSci Newsletter with something catchy, interesting and possibly punny. Submit your ideas here.

And if you are able to support BioSci to help increase opportunities for our students to conduct research, present at conferences and talk with the community, please consider donating to the Biological Sciences or Microbiology Excellence Funds.

As always, thank you for all you do to support our students and future alumni!

Best regards,
Saara

Please visit our Facebook page or follow us on Twitter or Instagram for weekly news about our students, alumni, faculty and staff. Email us with any questions/comments/suggestions at BiolSci@clemson.edu.

Give to Biological Sciences

Department of Biological Sciences Undergraduate Awards

Alyssa Ciccone, Andrew Fiorentino, Lauren Bulil, Kasey Kiser.

Robert H. Martin Award. Given to a graduating senior with the highest cumulative GPA.

- Alyssa Ciccone, Microbiology.

Outstanding Senior in Discovery. Given to a graduating senior who has performed outstanding original research in the sciences.

- Andrew Fiorentino, Biological Sciences. Faculty Mentor: Hong Luo.

Outstanding Seniors. Recognizes the best senior on the basis of scholarship and character.

- Lauren Bulik, Biological Sciences. Faculty Mentor: Michael Childress.
- Kasey Kiser, Microbiology. Faculty Mentor: Barbara Campbell.

Undergraduates Graduating with Departmental Honors

Lauren Bulik, Heather Cosh, Preston Harrison, Jayra Penaloza, Morgan Steiner.

- Lauren Bulik, Biological Sciences and Environmental and Natural Resources (Conservation Biology). Research Adviser: Michael Childress.
- Heather Cosh, Microbiology. Research Adviser: Emily Rosowski.
- Preston Harrison, Biological Sciences. Research Adviser: Antonio Baeza.
- Jayra Penaloza, Biological Sciences. Research Adviser: Antonio Baeza.
- Morgan Steiner, Biological Sciences and Chemistry. Research Adviser: Peter van den Hurk.

Microbiology major receives prestigious Goldwater Scholarship

Joshua Tucker

Junior microbiology major Joshua Tucker was among four Clemson University students who received the 2023 Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the most prestigious and highly competitive national award for sophomore and junior students with the potential to advance research in mathematics, natural sciences and engineering.

Tucker, who is also minoring in biological sciences, has been mentored by biological sciences faculty Antonio Baeza and Barbara Campbell.

After he graduates from Clemson, Tucker plans to pursue a Ph.D. and support outreach programs for STEM-minded students in rural and underrepresented communities.

A first-generation college student, Tucker grew up in rural South Carolina with few opportunities to explore science outside the classroom. He made the most of the resources available, graduating from high school with an associate degree earned through dual enrollment.

Tucker transferred to Clemson from Western Carolina University in Fall 2021. Since then, he's participated in an undergraduate research experience (REU) at Cornell University funded by the NSF and joined two research labs on campus, all while maintaining a 4.0. He's also authored his first research publication and started an Honors thesis.

Catalyst Competition Teams

Susan Davis, Sabrina Melendez-Rosales, Liza Moise.

Three biological sciences students participated in the Catalyst Competition. The competition, which launched in 2021, is a two-semester program in which participating student teams receive support through entrepreneurial-related educational workshops, professional consultants and faculty advisers. As part of the program, teams received mentorship and support from working professionals and campus innovation and entrepreneurship program representatives. Following idea development, student teams pitched their innovations to a panel of judges in March 2023.

- Second place went to Susan Davis, a sophomore biological sciences student, for SafeStraws, which could detect substances in drinks, including common date rape drugs or even the amount of sugar. The straw would use litmus and pH paper and change colors if something was detected.

- Sabrina Melendez-Rosales, a senior majoring in biological sciences and genetics, won third place for Diaband, a skin-like product that would use Hirudin, a compound found in leech saliva, to promote wound healing in diabetics by helping to restore blood flow to the injured area.
- A third team involving Liza Moise, a junior biological sciences major, received an honorable mention for “College Connect,” an online platform that provides college students with a place to share their mental health challenges and emotions anonymously.

Read more about the Catalyst Competition and all the projects.

Department of Biological Sciences Graduate Awards

Kea Payton, Daniel Malagon, Mir Alvee Ahmed, Peng Zhang.

Outstanding Graduate in Engagement Award. Given to a graduate student who has excelled in strengthening and engaging with the community.

- Kea Payton, Ph.D. candidate in Biological Sciences. Faculty Adviser/Nominator: Michael Childress.

Outstanding Graduate in Learning Award. Given to a graduate student who has been exemplary in undergraduate science teaching.

- Daniel Malagon, Ph.D. candidate in Biological Sciences. Faculty Adviser/Nominator: Sharon Bewick.

- Mir Alvee Ahmed, Ph.D. candidate in Microbiology. Faculty Adviser: Barbara Campbell. Nominated by Krista Rudolph.

Outstanding Graduate in Discovery Award. Given to a graduating doctoral student who has made a distinctive and discernable contribution to their field.

- Peng Zhang, Ph.D. candidate in Biological Sciences. Faculty Adviser/Nominator: Matt Turnbull.

College of Science Award

Outstanding Graduate in Learning

This College of Science award honors graduate students who have been exemplary in undergraduate science teaching, particularly in their sincere interest in and concern for the success of undergraduate students and who went the “extra mile” in ensuring this success.

Daniel Malagon is a graduate student in the Department of Biological Sciences. He has been a teaching assistant for multiple lab sessions of functional human anatomy, biology and human physiology classes. His students describe him as an extraordinary teacher with a contagious passion for biology.

But his work as a teacher extended far beyond the classroom. He has recruited and mentored numerous undergraduates in research projects in the lab of his adviser, Sharon Bewick. He set up weekly sessions to teach these students to code, at largely no benefit to his own research.

During the pandemic, Malagon participated in Skype a Scientist, where he encouraged classrooms of underrepresented students to consider a career in the sciences.

“Daniel is a born teacher,” Bewick wrote in her nomination letter. “Daniel has an uncanny knack for making challenging concepts understandable, for setting high standards and yet being endlessly patient, and for inspiring students to push that extra mile to fully reach their potential.”

Biological Sciences Graduate Student Association Awards

Kea Payton, Prakrit Subba, Sophie Millard, Jen Apland, Keiffer Williams.

- **Commitment to Service** — Prakrit Subba and Kea Payton.
- **Commitment to Research** — Sophie Millard and Kea Payton.
- **Commitment to Graduate Student Life** — Jen Apland.
- **Alfred "Hap" Wheeler Distinguished BSGSA Member** — Keiffer Williams.

M.S. and Ph.D. Graduates

Online M.S. in Biological Sciences

After the Masters Ceremony on May 11, BioSci faculty and staff gathered to celebrate the class of May 2023 graduates from the Online M.S. in Biological Sciences. This class is 41 strong and hails from 20 different states. It was so much fun to hear the many inspirational stories, memorable moments and favorite classes and to finally meet in person!

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