Biological sciences junior Shaoni Dasgupta is a 2020 Goldwater Scholarship winner!

Since her sophomore year, Dasgupta has been conducting research in the lab of Genetics and Professor Michael Childress, whose research focuses on understanding the impact of habitat and conservation on genetic diversity and systematics. They spent a week on a research adventure in the Florida Keys. They interacted with Clemson University Creative Inquiry students who shared stories of their research adventures in the Florida Keys. They also met biological sciences associate professor Saara J. DeWalt and Qanungo, a lecturer in the College of Science’s department of biological sciences. They also met local biologists like live animal touch tanks, did a virtual dive to a coral reef, and simulated coral transplantation.

After a one-hour show held on Feb. 29, 2020, audience members experienced marine exhibits hovering on the surface, Boss the Great White Shark and his friends are wondering why marine life is disappearing and curious objects keep arriving. Something Very Fishy follows the lives of Sandy Carson, a young science major conducting coral transplanting research, and Mr. Stu Pidder, a local fisherman just trying to get by. Below the surface, the audience discovered the impact of overfishing and pollution on coral reefs and the importance of conservation of marine communities.

With catchy musical numbers, colorful sets and characters, and interactive marine exhibits, the audience gained awareness of marine conservation and learned about local efforts to create marine reserves and increase penalties on poaching. Through these joint efforts, we have 261 new undergraduate alumni who now hold BA and BS degrees from Clemson University Biological Sciences.

Science and theatrical production ignite awareness of marine conservation

We not only adapted our teaching and learning to online, but we also transitioned to online our annual Biology Merit Exam (BME) for middle and high school students and our Graduate Student Research Symposium. We held our first ever virtual BME in May, attracting 100 students from across the state and featuring local Clemson University students and alumni as presenters. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, I am proud of our faculty and students for their resilience and creativity. We continued our commitment to excellence in research, teaching, and learning, and we continued to be there for our students—whether online or in person.

We held our first ever virtual Graduate Student Research Symposium, attended by more than 1,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the nation. Students presented their research through posters and oral presentations. The symposium featured three plenary talks and 86 student presenters from the departments of Biological Sciences, Environmental Toxicology, and Microbiology.

And we continue to excel in research, with several of our junior faculty recently being awarded prestigious grants from NIH, NSF, SC Sea Grant Consortium and publishing in prestigious journals. And we continue to excel in research, with several of our junior faculty recently being awarded prestigious grants from NIH, NSF, SC Sea Grant Consortium and publishing in prestigious journals. Biological Sciences Assistant Professors Kara Powder, Zhicheng Dou and Matt Koski. Matt Koski received a grant to investigate gene regulatory elements that determine craniofacial development and evolution. Kara Powder received a CAREER award from the National Science Foundation. Zhicheng Dou received a grant for a project on the development and evolution of craniofacial features in extinct conodonts. And we continue to excel in research, with several of our junior faculty recently being awarded prestigious grants from NIH, NSF, SC Sea Grant Consortium and publishing in prestigious journals.

Biological Sciences, Environmental Toxicology, and Microbiology) and 3 MS in Biological Sciences graduates from the online MS program. These events were incredibly touching and helped us connect with our students and alumni during these trying times. We continue to be committed to excellence in research, teaching, and learning, and we continue to be there for our students—whether online or in person.