



SUMMER 2025

From the Chair's desk

As we wrap up another remarkable Spring semester in the Department of Biological Sciences, I'm filled with pride in our community's accomplishments, including the graduation of 290 undergraduate, 39 master's and two Ph.D.s across our seven programs.

Please join me in congratulating [Rick Blob](#), named a 2024 Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science—an extraordinary lifetime honor recognizing his impactful contributions to science. We're also proud of [Matthew Koski](#), our College of Science junior faculty nominee for the 2025 Researcher of the Year.

We're welcoming [Katelyn Walzer](#), joining us August 15 as Assistant Professor and EPIC program member, and [Daniel Jones](#), a plant developmental biologist relocating his lab from Auburn to Clemson in July.

At the same time, we bid a fond farewell to Krista Rudolph and Lisa Ruggiero Wagner, who are retiring from teaching. We are deeply grateful for their many years of dedicated service and the lasting impact they've made on our department and students.

Our students continue to shine at research forums: BioSci earned 1st and 3rd place at both the 20th Annual Focus on Creative Inquiry and 8th Annual Clemson Student Research Forum—a testament to the strength of our undergraduate research and faculty mentoring.

Finally, thank you to everyone who supported us during the annual Clemson Give Day in April—your generosity fuels our mission to inspire, discover and transform.

Wishing you a restful summer,



KAROLINA MUKHTAR, Ph.D.
PROFESSOR AND CHAIR
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES



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Explorations



Rick Blob

Rick Blob receives lifetime honor as Fellow of the Association for the Advancement of Science

Blob's lab is interested in the way animals use their muscles and skeletons to perform tasks that help them to survive, how that enables some groups to thrive under different conditions and what that means for the overall patterns of biodiversity that have emerged through the history of life.

[Read more about Blob](#)

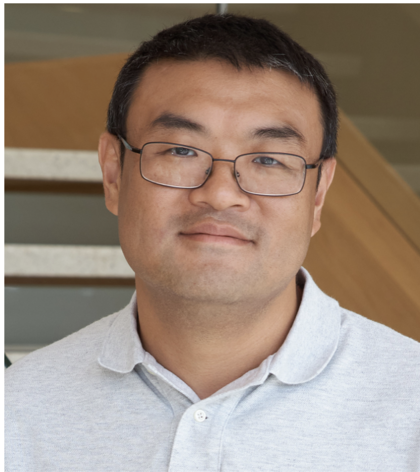


Raymond Erskine, biological sciences Ph.D. student in the Fridley lab.

Raymond Erskine receives prestigious Ecological Society of America policy award

Erskine's dissertation research on tree responses to drought will help predict forest resilience to drought and inform local forest management strategies. The Katherine S. McCarter Graduate Student Policy Award provides graduate students hands-on training and science policy experience including interacting with congressional decision-makers, federal agency officials and ecologists who work in the science and public policy arena.

[Read more about Erskine](#)



Lesly Temesvari, David Feliciano, Antonio Baeza, Zhicheng Dou, Casey Youngflesh, Matt Koski.

Faculty research targets blinding eye infections, genetics and autism, and a dangerous poultry disease

Lesly Temesvari to research treatment for a blinding eye infection that mostly effects contact lens wearers.

David Feliciano working to unlock the mystery of tuberous sclerosis complex, a rare genetic disease that can lead to autism spectrum disorder

As seen in Science, Antonio Baeza and collaborators mapped out an ancient family tree, revealing that all molluscs share a common ancestor with a hard shell, a foot for movement, a radula (a specialized feeding organ), but no eyes!

Zhicheng Dou receives grant to research a deadly disease in turkeys.

Casey Youngflesh found researchers with the same data often get different results.

Matthew Koski named the College of Science junior faculty nominee for the 2025 Researcher of the Year award.

Faculty and Staff

BioSci faculty and staff honored for excellence with College of Science awards: [Outstanding Staff Member, Annie Joye](#); [Excellence in Community Outreach, Kylie Rock](#).

[Kelly Willemsens](#) helps explain how tiger beetles survive in the harsh environment of Yellowstone National Park hot springs.

[Jason Fridley and Lorena Endara](#) featured in a Clemson Experimental Forest video.

[Susan Chapman](#) reveals what a new fossil discovery teaches us about dinosaurs flying in CNN interview.

Students

We honored and recognized [six outstanding undergraduate and three graduate students](#) with departmental awards in May.

[Chisom Emetu](#), microbiology, was part of Team RevEd that placed second in the Catalyst Competition with their digital tutoring platform for STEM students.

[Mallory Murphy](#), microbiology, wins the Blue Key Academic and Leadership Award.

[Leila Davis](#), biological sciences and political science double major, traveled abroad to study the history, economics and culture of France, Germany and the European Union as a 2025 Dixon Global Policy Scholar.

Alumni

[Londan Means Charley](#), '13 biological sciences, M'18 biological sciences, receives Roaring10 Award!

Londan previously worked for seven years as an academic advisor and then director of academic advising in the Department of Biological Sciences.



Londan Means Charley

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