



SPRING 2026

## From the Chair

Spring has arrived in Clemson, bringing the energy of new discoveries and the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of our students and faculty. This season has included several prestigious recognitions highlighting the impact of our community across South Carolina and beyond, including honors for faculty members [Jeremy Tzeng](#) and [Kelly Willemsens](#).

At the same time, our faculty continue working to prepare the next generation of scientists by strengthening teaching and expanding experiential learning opportunities. Several BioSci faculty are also training as [TEACH-AI Champions](#), a university initiative that integrates artificial intelligence into teaching to prepare students for an increasingly data-driven scientific world.

Below you'll find more inspiring stories, from faculty discoveries and student achievements to the new colleagues who have recently joined the BioSci family. None of this progress would be possible without the support of the Clemson community. As Clemson celebrates [Give Day](#) on April 8, we invite you to join us in supporting the programs and opportunities that help BioSci thrive. Thank you for being part of our community and for the many ways you continue to support Clemson.

Go Tigers!

**KAROLINA MUKHTAR, Ph.D.**  
CHAIR  
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES



# Give Day

JOIN US IN MAKING A GIFT ON APRIL 8

[giveday.clemson.edu](http://giveday.clemson.edu)



Department of  
**BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES**



## Explorations



*Kara Powder and her Creative Inquiry students.*

## Kara Powder wins Governor's Award for expanding science access to middle schools

The BeakerBox program is a simple, student-centered approach to science education that has earned Kara Powder the 2026 South Carolina Governor's Award for Excellence in Scientific Awareness, recognizing her impact on how middle school students across the state experience and understand science.

[Read more about Powder and BeakerBox](#)



## Impressions



Catalyst Competition winners display their big checks with the College of Science Dean Cynthia Young (center) and Jeremy Tzeng (far right), who teaches the Catalyst Creative Inquiry course.

## Microbiology major Prasamsa Tatineni places first in entrepreneurship challenge

A medical product developed by two first-year students won first place in the College of Science's entrepreneurial challenge, Catalyst. Microbiology major Prasamsa Tatineni and biomedical engineering major Alejandra Rodriguez took home the prize with DermAlert, a high-tech, disposable wound dressing that can detect infection before visual symptoms start.

[Read more about Catalyst](#)



*Mel Walker and Kylie Rock.*

## EnTox graduate student Mel Walker dives into shark toxicology research

Mel Walker is a second-year master's student in [Kylie Rock's lab](#), and her research examines how pollutants like mercury and PFAS — substances often called “forever chemicals” — accumulate in coastal shark populations.

The shark project is part of a wider effort in Rock's lab to understand how chemicals affect both the environment and human biology.

[Watch the work first-hand in a video](#)

[Read more about the research](#)



## More good news from Biological Sciences

### Faculty and Staff

[Karolina Mukhtar](#) has been selected for the 2026 Atlantic Coast Conference Academic Leaders Network (ACC ALN) program.

[Kylie Rock](#) has been selected as one of the newest Clemson University School of Health Research Faculty Fellows.

Qing Liu is using the revolutionary gene-editing technology CRISPR in his research to advance human health.

Virginia Abernathy reveals the sci-fi creature in the 1979 movie “Alien” is grounded in science.

Postdoc Ben Tonelli links bird disease outbreaks to forest cycles and climate.

Registration coordinator Carla Brewer has graduated from CU Grow, Clemson’s staff development program.

## Students

Biological sciences major Elizabeth “Mercy” Crapps co-founded a nonprofit that provides interactive STEM education toolkits and experiments to schools and youth programs.

Biological sciences majors Avery Radwinsky and JD Martin have been named to Clemson’s first class of Action Scholars.

Senior biological sciences major Malia Garcia said her decision to pursue a shadowing opportunity gave her new insight about possible careers in the medical field.

## Alumni and Community



Michael Newman (microbiology, '78) realized that while he loved science, bench research was not for him. Instead, he’s spent his career as a science communicator.

There is still time to register your middle or high school student to take the 47th Annual Biology Merit Exam before the April 10 deadline.

Earn a Clemson master’s degree in biology designed specifically for teachers and science educators without ever leaving home — flexible and 100% online. Apply now and begin as early as May!

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[Give to the Department](#)

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