

BIOLOGY BUZZ e-news



Notes From the Chair

The spring semester in Talbot Hall was busy for students and faculty. The department taught 20 courses, there were 19 students conducting senior research (15 of whom completed Senior Research with Recognition), there were 63 senior exit interviews given (this is part of our Department's curricular assessment program), and one baby was born (Dr. Lina Yoo increased her biological fitness with the arrival of daughter Elsa)!

As Biology Chair I want to highlight two events that were important to the department this semester. First was the completion of an external review, a process that occurs every 10 years for academic departments at Denison. For our review the department wrote a self-study that addressed aspects of our curriculum and major. This document was sent to two external reviewers, one from a small liberal arts college and one from a big state university, who used it as a foundation for learning more about our department prior to making a two-day evaluation & consultation visit. During the visit these reviewers were impressed the department's ability to engage students in learning in the classroom, lab, and research settings. Their final report will be submitted to the Office of the Provost this summer, and then we will use the feedback in the report to aid the department in continuing on its positive trajectory.

The second significant event I wanted to share was the department's ability to manage a challenging staffing situation this semester. After spring break two professors became ill and were unable to teach. Dr. Laura Romano, who was teaching BIOL 150, and Dr. Ebenezer Aluma, who was teaching Human Physiology, each spent a short time in the hospital (for unrelated illnesses) and then remained at home in recovery. The department met this unexpected challenge by different faculty volunteering to teach classes and labs, and to proctor and grade exams for their missing colleagues. While the absence of the original instructor in these courses was disruptive, generally the students handled the changes well and the courses did not have to be cancelled. As Chair it is heartening to work in a department where faculty are willing to step in to help each other and to foster a successful learning experience for our students.

As we transition into the summer, Talbot will continue to be busy with faculty and students working on research projects. I wish you a productive summer!

See more updates and links at the end of this Newsletter!

Featured Spring '12 Fellows

Clare Meernik

With two parents in the sciences, I grew up participating in science fairs and wondering how the world worked. It was not until I came to Denison, though, that my interest in biology really sparked. My professors allowed me to realize that the contributions biology can make are endless—whether it is ensuring the survival of an endangered species or bettering our understanding about the molecular pathways of cancer. The idea that biology has no limits simply grabbed hold of me and never let go. After a summer internship at the University of Kentucky Ovarian Cancer Screening Program, I knew how I could make my own contribution to the scientific world. I followed that passion, and next year I will be attending graduate school for public health, specifically focusing on epidemiology. This field of study is focused on analyzing patterns of disease in humans and determining why these trends occur. I will be able to use my biological background as I research areas such as cancer and infectious diseases. None of this would have been possible, however, without the opportunities available at Denison and the ability of my professors to engage me in the wonders of biology.



"THE IDEA THAT BIOLOGY HAS NO LIMITS SIMPLY GRABBED HOLD OF ME AND NEVER LET GO." CLARE MEERNIK



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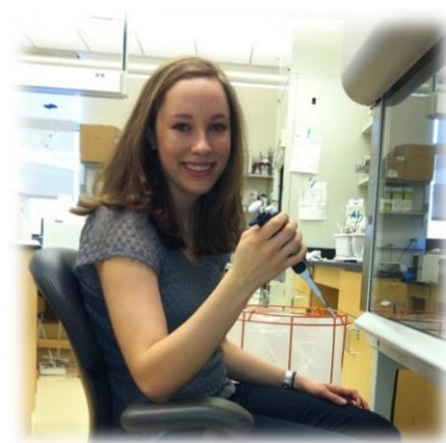
Spring Senior Fellows

*Clare Meernik '12, *Vera Staley '12

Fall Senior Fellows

*Emily Miller '12, *Hallie Singer '12, *Rachel Stevenson '12, *Jessica Wilson '12

[Click here for details on all of our '11-'12 fellows.](#)



And there were conferences!

Thirteen Biology students presented their senior research projects at the Butler Undergraduate Senior Research Conference on April 20, 2012.

The students presenting included Kayla Ako-Asare, Emily Miller and Saira Tekelenburg (mentored by Dr. Laura Romano), Vera Staley and Rachel Warwar (mentored by Dr. Lina Yoo), Thomas Bilbo (mentored by Dr. Peter Kuhlman), Eric King and Yan Zhang (mentored by Dr. Eric Liebl), Lucas Avery, Samantha Case and Clare Meernik (mentored by Dr. Andy McCall), and Mark Magnus and Eric Stachura (mentored by Dr. Rebecca Homan). Many of these students presented as part of the requirements for Senior Research Recognition in Biology.

On April 21-25th, Senior Kelly Folkers attended the American Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology conference in San Diego, California.

Kelly was awarded an honorable mention for her poster presentation. Some of Kelly's trip was funded by ASMBM & the Dr. Barbara Furin Sloat '63 Alumni Award.

Congratulations to all of our conference presenters!

Vera Staley

While I cannot pinpoint the moment when I first began to truly enjoy biology, studying it has certainly improved the way that I experience the world around me. Biology encompasses many fascinating aspects of the living world from the simple and elegant process of the central dogma in cells to the tiny details that differentiate species. During my four years at Denison, I have had the chance to try out many flavors of biology, studying and experiencing in both lecture and lab. In the last two years, I have tended to focus on biological systems at a molecular level, but the power of these studies is that they always cycle back to the big picture of why small changes can have such a powerful impact on an organism or system. My experience has culminated in a year of research on cellular signaling pathways in bladder cancer cells. Research is one of the most exciting aspects of biology because you have the opportunity to contribute to a field that is constantly changing. Supplementing my studies at Denison with internships in health both in the U.S. and abroad has drawn me toward a career in medicine. As I continue on my path toward medical school and primary care practice, my success will depend on the important skills I have developed as a biology major.

"RESEARCH IS ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING ASPECTS OF BIOLOGY BECAUSE YOU HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO A FIELD THAT IS CONSTANTLY CHANGING."
- VERA STALEY



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WHAT OUR ALUMS ARE UP TO! SOME COMMENTS GENERATED FROM OUR FALL NEWSLETTER

I recently became board certified in OB/GYN and am finishing Reproductive, Endocrinology and Infertility fellowship this June at the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at the National Institutes of Health. I will be staying here at NIH as an Assistant Clinical Investigator looking at endometrial stem cell engraftment in a hematology lab in the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. I will also be working one day per week at Shady Grove Fertility Center as an infertility specialist. ~ Erin Wolff '98

A surprise Denison biology reunion.

I am a fourth year medical student at Jefferson Medical College (almost done!), and I was doing an elective rotation in family medicine with the Indian Health Service last month in Shiprock, New Mexico to learn more about cross-cultural medicine in resource-poor areas. I was very surprised to find that one of the four women also living in my Indian Health Service Quarters (housing) was Alexa Lindley '07-- another Denison biology major! Alexa is also a fourth year medical student, and attends Michigan State. We had many biology classes together in Talbot, but hadn't been in contact since she graduated. The Northern Navajo Medical Center in Shiprock is a very small hospital, and I certainly didn't expect to run into anyone I knew. We had a wonderful time in New Mexico. ~ Bridget Peterson '08 Jefferson Medical College '12 (P.S. Follow up: Bridget has received her M.D.!)

R. Grant Rowe '03 recently finished his Ph.D. and M.D. from the University of Michigan's Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP). Grant has had several first-author papers, and was recognized with both the Rackham Distinguished Dissertation Award and the MSTP George DeMuth Award, given to the one graduating student who best exemplifies all of the attributes desired in the complete physician scientist. Grant is currently starting residency in Pediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital.

I am currently pursuing my PhD in Ecology, Evolution, and Environmental Biology at Miami University in Michelle Boone's amphibian conservation lab. I am studying how environmental factors like temperature and pesticides may increase susceptibility to disease. I presented a poster entitled "The Interactive Effects of *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis*, Pesticides, and Temperature on Pacific Treefrog (*Pseudacris regilla*) Metamorphosis" at the Joint Meeting of Herpetologists and Ichthyologists held summer '10 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. ~ Samantha Rumschlag '10

Congratulations on the great newsletter. It is fantastic to hear from students, former students and faculty. When I see student's year of graduation as '12, it seems like '70 was a long time ago. I am glad to update you all on my progress through the years...you might want to check out a story that Heifer Foundation did on us. Check out www.heiferfoundation.org and go to donor stories on Rich and Susan Eyre. I have been busy in those 41 years! I remember my days at the biology building and all those wonderful labs. All the best to everyone at Denison University. ~ Susan Taliak Eyre '70



I'm currently in my 16th year of teaching Science at the middle school level. I will be presenting for the 6th time at a National Science Teachers Conference this year in Indianapolis, Indiana. I love teaching because I get to use my background in Science every day, while at the same time continuing to learn new information. My goal is to become an Ohio or national teacher of the year. I currently love traveling with my two young children and my wife who is also a teacher. Good luck to everyone entering the teaching field. Teaching is challenging, but also very rewarding. ~ Dave Murduck '83

I wanted to thank you for my experiences at Denison specifically in the biology department and to let you all know that I got a job at the new Greater Cleveland Aquarium as the Dive Safety Coordinator. This job is amazing! I love it! I am responsible for all diving activities that occur in the aquarium and for assisting the aquarists. My research experiences during my junior and senior years especially during the summer with Dr. Kristina Mead at Woods Hole are what really prepared me for it. I am so glad I was afforded those and other experiences at Denison such as writing and receiving grants, TA'ing, presenting my research at a professional conference, critical thinking, and being all around knowledgeable in biology. You guys are doing a really good job in providing determined students the tools they need. Thank You ~ Halle Minshall '11

Christopher Anderson, PhD and Bio Alum '02, has a one year teaching position at Oberlin College next year.

Jason A Hoppe DO '97, Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado, Department of Emergency Medicine completed his residency in Emergency Medicine at Brooklyn's SUNY Downstate/Kings County Hospital Center, and moved to Denver to complete a two year fellowship in Medical Toxicology at the Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Center (RMPDC). He is currently board certified in both Emergency Medicine and Medical Toxicology and serves as a consultant at the RMPDC. His primary research is in prescription drug abuse and prescription drug abuse monitoring. Secondary research interests include alcohol withdrawal and medical education. He is the Director of the 4th year medical student Emergency Medicine elective course at the School of Medicine and is involved with medical student, pharmacist, resident and fellow education both in the Emergency Department and at the RMPDC.

John Hess '98, a conservation geneticist, received his Ph.D. in Population Biology, Washington University in Saint Louis and monitors salmon population dynamics for the Inter-tribal Fish Commission in the Columbia River basin.

Follow the links to more fun news!!

- [Pres. Medalist, Jessica Wilson '12](#)
- [Distinguished Leader Awards](#)

(Read about our majors Elizabeth Emhardt, Becky Fink & Jessica Wilson)

- [Departmental Awards:
Research, Academic, Service, Margaret Ann Watkin](#)
- [Lina Yoo received tenure!](#)