



# Biological Sciences Newsletter

**UIC** Department of  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS  
AT CHICAGO **Biological Sciences**  
COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS & SCIENCES

Volume 3, Issue 3

Summer 2009

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## The Boss' Corner

Hi Everyone -

I am happy to report a number of positive events in the Department since I last wrote. First, Professor Terri Long (Duke University) accepted our offer, and will start as an Assistant Professor next summer. Her field of expertise is in gene expression and cellular differentiation of plants. Second, Professors Peter Okkema, Thomas Park, and Janet Richmond have all been promoted to Full Professor. Congratulations to the three of them for achieving this rank! Third, Sandra Gibbons received the 2009 Silver Circle Award; she will receive this award at commencement. Fourth, Professor Mary Ashley was named one of three Graduate Mentors of the Year on campus. Fifth, Professor Ashley has been appointed to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Executive Committee, which makes important recommendations regarding Promotions & Tenure to Dean McBride. Sixth, Professor Howard Buhse was re-elected to the UIC Senate and the Senate Executive Committee. Finally, Ms. Carrie Seltzer, a second-year doctoral student in Ecology and Evolution, has won a highly competitive National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship to study how fragmented landscapes affect Tanzanian fruit bats—important agents of pollination and seed dispersal. The NSF fellowship awards recipients \$30,000 yearly for three years and provides allowances for tuition, fees, and travel. All in all, it was a good semester for the Department.



Wishing everyone a great summer,

Brian Kay, PhD  
Professor & Head



Pictured above Professor Michael Cummings (left) and Professor Barry Ganetzky (right) at Awards Day 2009.



Pictured above Dean Dwight McBride (left) and Professor Richard Morimoto (right). Professor Morimoto is a graduate of UIC and gave the Spring 2009 LAS Dean's Lecture.

University of Illinois at  
Chicago  
College of Liberal Arts  
and Sciences  
Department of Biological  
Sciences  
(MC 066)  
845 West Taylor Street  
Chicago, Illinois 60607

## Faculty Spotlight: Professor Mary Ashley

Not sure what you want to do when you graduate?

Visit the Office of Career Services.  
1200 West Harrison Street  
Room 3050 Student Services Building (SSB)  
Chicago, Illinois 60607

Call (312) 996-2300 to schedule an appointment or consult the Office of Career Services website for drop-in advising times.

Research Library open Monday-Friday, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.

I've been a faculty member in Biology at UIC since 1992. I'm originally from a very small town in Ohio and attended a small liberal arts college, Kenyon College. I escaped rural Ohio for graduate school in San Diego, California and enjoyed postdoctoral jobs at the University of Florida and at Columbia University in New York City. I fell in love with evolutionary biology, particular the genetic aspects of evolution, as an undergraduate, and those interests have stayed with me throughout my entire career. In graduate school I worked on the evolutionary genetics of deer mice on the California Channel Islands. I became so interested in the plants and animals of these islands that I continue to work there, which gives me an excuse to get to Southern California a couple times a year.



At UIC, my research projects have involved a tremendous variety of organisms thanks to the diverse interests of my graduate students. My students and I have studied the mating systems of sharks, the migratory habits of sandhill cranes, and the pollination patterns of bur oaks, to name a few. Fortunately, all these things can be studied by using one or two types of DNA markers that are found in living organisms.

A couple of years ago I began to get more interested in interdisciplinary research in environmental sciences. I received a grant from the National Science Foundation to establish an interdisciplinary graduate program called LEAP, which stands for Landscape, Ecological, and Anthropogenic Processes. Establishing and running the LEAP program takes up a lot of my time these days. I also have been very involved in the WISEST program at UIC, which seeks to improve the prospects for women and minority faculty members in science departments.

My undergraduate teaching responsibilities in the department include Ecology and Evolution (BIOS 230) and an introductory class for K-8 education majors (NatS 103). In my spare time, I enjoy playing basketball and tennis, hanging out with my teenage daughters, and traveling.

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## Faculty News

Professor Constance Jeffrey and her students are highlighted in "UIC research on understanding proteins may lead to more effective treatment of infections." Read it here <http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/news.aspx?id=124533>

The research of Professor Jennifer Schmidt is published by United Press International in "DNA Used to Study Whales' Migration Habits." Read it here [http://www.upi.com/Science\\_News/2009/04/09/DNA-used-to-study-whales-migration-habits/UPI-67171239282030/](http://www.upi.com/Science_News/2009/04/09/DNA-used-to-study-whales-migration-habits/UPI-67171239282030/)

A paper written by Professor Dave Featherstone is listed in the Blog "Nature Journal Club." Read it here <http://blogs.nature.com/nature/journalclub/>

### **Congratulations to the following award recipients!**

Sandra Gibbons is the recipient of the Silver Circle Award.

## BIOS 399

When I originally signed up for the biology Independent Research course (BIOS 399) I was intimidated by the immense responsibilities that would come my way. I did not have any prior research experience or the faintest clue of what to expect in the “fieldworks” of education. Research for me meant something beyond my usually comfort zone of learning amidst books and lecture notes. As nerve-wrecking as the initial experience was, I am proud to have engaged in research and am able to reflect back on a year’s worth of hard-work with surprising achievements along the way.

Firstly, my research background is on the study of rice and how abiotic stressors can negatively impact the growth of young, etiolated rice seedlings. Fortunately, my project is conducted under the excellent guidance of Katherine Warpeha, Ph.D and Lon Kaufman, Ph.D. Professor Warpeha was awarded an NSF grant in 2009 as Principal Investigator (Lon Kaufman co-PI) on plant stress and I will be testing certain aspects of that research with rice. research consumables will also be funded by the Caterpillar and Kabbes Award for Fall 2009 in which I was fortunate to receive in the amount of \$1000 scholarship. Such an award and likewise winning 2nd place in Life Sciences at the 2009 Undergraduate Research Symposium has led me to appreciate and understand the importance of research by it being recognized as valuable by supporting administrators.

I am thankful that the whole experience has equipped me with priceless education that cannot be found in a classroom setting. I’ve gained the valuable skills of how to read published articles, conduct protocol experiments, analyze results and do so much more. I hope to take this experience and apply it to dental school when I become a first year student in Fall 2010.

Contributed by Eun-hee Lee

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## Advisor’s Corner

The optional late drop deadline has been extended from the 6th week to the 10th week of the semester. This change is in effect for Fall 2009. October 30 is the deadline for students to use the late drop option and receive a ‘W’ on academic record.

Attention Pre-health students:

Pre-health advisors in LAS are available to help answer your questions about becoming a competitive applicant. You may start seeing a pre-health advisor upon successful completion of CHEM 112, CHEM 114, BIOS 100, and BIOS 101.

Question and Answer session are offered on Wednesday afternoons at 3 p.m. in 301 University Hall. An advisor will be there to questions and open letter of recommendation files.

If you have declared a pre-health goal, you should be receiving e-mails about workshops on personal statements, application procedures, etc. Please take advantage of these!

For more information please [click here](#).

### Academic Advisors:

Tricia Stark  
3276 SES  
Vanessa Ricker  
3266 SES

Call  
(312) 996-2211  
to make an  
appointment.

Monday,  
Wednesday,  
Thursday, and  
Friday  
from 9:30 a.m. to  
noon and from 1  
p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Walk-ins available  
Tuesday from  
9:30 a.m. to noon  
and from 1 p.m.  
to 3:30 p.m.  
Walk-ins are  
available for quick  
questions or to  
change major.

## Scholarships!!

*The Office of Special Scholarship Programs (OSSP) assists undergraduates and professional students in applying for nationally-competitive and UIC scholarships.*

*For more information on upcoming scholarships, visit them in 2506 University Hall or at their website: <http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/ssp>.*

## Students News

### Congratulations to the following recipients!

#### Mark A. Wyatt Award

This award honors the memory of Mark Wyatt, a former biology major and member of the Honors College. The award is given to a pre-medical biology junior who actively participates in the Honors College and Tri-Beta.

Honoree: Anup Reddy

#### Elmer Hadley Award

This award is given to honor the memory of Dr. Elmer Hadley, a prominent member of the Department of Biological Sciences. The award is given to a student with high academic achievement who has carried out an outstanding research project in the area of ecology, evolution, or conservation biology.

Honoree: Chris Baugher

#### Edward G. Rietz and Stanley K. Shapiro Award in Biochemistry

This award honors an outstanding graduating senior in Biochemistry and is jointly sponsored by the Departments of Biological Sciences and Chemistry. It is named in honor of Edward Reitz, a long-time faculty member of the Department of Chemistry, whose generous bequest endows various awards in the department, and Stanley Shapiro. Professor Emeritus and former head of the Department of Biological Sciences, whose tireless efforts were responsible for the development and promotion of the biochemistry major.

Honoree: Manali Patel

#### Louis Pasteur Award

this award is given to a graduating Biological Sciences major who meets the requirements for Highest Departmental Distinction. Emphasis is placed on carrying out an exceptional research project and defending it before a faculty committee.

Honoree: Ankur Patel

#### The Hirsch Family Award

This award is given to an undergraduate Biological Sciences major who shows high academic achievement.

Honoree: Noa Kerugliak

#### The Hodgkin and Huxley Neuroscience Award

This award is given to an outstanding graduating Neuroscience major with a GPA above 3.9 and who performed an exceptional research project.

Honoree: Nilay Shah

#### Biology Colloquium Awards

Best Professor: Alan Molumby

Best Teaching Assistant: David Zaya

Best Student Leader: Paul Green

#### Outstanding Scholarship

Biology of Cells and Organisms: Alla Shelip, Michelle Apple, Andrew Skoirchet, Tracie Sheppard, Anton Grasch, and Benjamin Pomper

Biology of Populations and Communities: Samantha Tasic, Luiz Soliz, and Ryan Nolan

Mendelian and Molecular Genetics: Michel Hasegawa, Weronika Flis, and Anup Kotadia

## In Memory of John Lussenhop

One of our recently retired faculty members, John Lussenhop, passed away on March 13 after a long illness. John spent his entire career of 34 years as a professor in our department, and before he died he chose the following words to describe himself:

*"I am an ecologist who did research on how fungi, minute soil animals, and roots interacted in soil. I believe in research; making research not only my profession, but my hobby and aesthetic enjoyment as well. For this reason, I have been delighted in friends who also devote their lives to research."*



John was truly in love with the sciences in general, and soil ecology in particular. His illustrious career resulted in nearly one hundred peer reviewed articles, book chapters and many successful federal grants. He served as an editor to a number of high ranking journals such as Ecology and Oecologia as well as being the Chief Editor of Pedobiologia. Since his passing, there has been a tremendous outpouring of regrets from nationally and internationally recognized soil ecologists who attest to the loss of a gentle giant in the field. His commitment to teaching either in the classroom setting, graduate advising, and mentoring younger faculty will definitely be missed at UIC. Personally, I feel extremely fortunate to have benefited and been mentored by his wisdom between 1996 until he passed away. Most of all, however, I will miss his friendship.

There will be a Memorial Symposium later this summer to honor John's scientific accomplishments and his love of soil ecology. Donations can be sent to: Thomas Lagen, 845 West Taylor Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607. Please mention "Lussenhop Memorial Symposium." Donations will be directed toward establishing a soil ecology symposium in memory of John. The date for the memorial has not been set yet. Inquiry about the memorial symposium can be sent to [hormoz@uic.edu](mailto:hormoz@uic.edu).

Contributed by Hormoz BassiriRad

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## Important Dates to Remember

August 6-7: Final examinations for 8-week summer session

August 8: 8-week summer session ends

August 24: Instruction begins

September 4: Last day to complete late registration. Last day to add a course. Last day to drop a course without receiving a 'W.'

October 30: Last day to use optional late drop and receive a grade of 'W' on academic record.

November 26-27: Thanksgiving holiday. No classes.

Graduate  
Office:

Director of Graduate  
Studies:

Roberta Mason-  
Gamer  
(312) 996-4537  
[robi@uic.edu](mailto:robi@uic.edu)

Admissions:  
Margaret Kleist  
3250 SES  
(312) 996-2955  
[Kleist@uic.edu](mailto:Kleist@uic.edu)

Continuing Students:

Beth Brand  
3248 SES  
(312) 996-2955

## Make a Gift to Biology

We are committed to developing support for our Biology students. We have a number of scholarships to fund students and their research. We are focused on increasing the scholarship opportunities provided to them, and enhancing the classroom experience by acquiring up to date technology for our laboratories. Making a gift is easy and tax-deductible, and it has an immediate impact on the experience of Biology students.

To make a gift, simply write a check payable to :

The University of Illinois at Chicago

In the Memo section write Unrestricted Biology

University of Illinois at Chicago  
 College of Liberal Arts and Sciences  
 Department of Biological Sciences (MC 066)  
 845 West Taylor Street  
 Chicago, Illinois 60607

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 Vanessa Ricker  
 Tricia Stark

<http://www.uic.edu/depts/bios/ungradstudy.shtml>

**Keep in Touch!**  
 Alumni Questionnaire

Please send me more information on:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributing to an article in the newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Upcoming seminars       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Department needs for private support         | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer opportunities |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Other please specify    |

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Address \_\_\_\_\_  
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E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_



Fluorescence micrograph of actin filaments in *C. elegans* pharyngeal muscles take by students in BIOS 321: Developmental Biology Lab.

CUT OUT, COMPLETE AND MAIL FORM TO:

VANESSA RICKER  
 DEPARTMENT OF  
 BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES (MC 066)  
 845 WEST TAYLOR STREET  
 CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60607-7060

-OR-

E-MAIL US THE INFORMATION AT [RICKERVK@UIC.EDU](mailto:rickervk@uic.edu)