

UAB DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY NEWSLETTER



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!



If you have suggestions for a story or would like someone in particular to be featured in a future issue, please contact us at biology@uab.edu.

FACULTY FOCUS: DR. ROSIANNA GRAY

Welcome to our newest faculty member, Dr. Rosianna Gray, who will join the department in January 2018 as a teaching Assistant Professor. Dr. Gray will teach several courses, including Biology of Microorganisms, Introductory Biology I, and Introductory Biology II.

Dr. Gray received her bachelor of science degree (2001) from Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, followed by a masters (2007) and PhD (2008) in Cell Molecular Biology at the University of Alabama. While in graduate school, her passion evolved from research to science education. As a consequence, she began teaching college level biology-related courses as she

continued to work on her PhD research. After obtaining her PhD, Dr. Gray returned to Stillman College as an Assistant Professor and Department Chair of Natural Sciences until 2013 when she accepted a position as an Assistant Professor of Biology at the University of Alabama. During her four years at UA, she has had extensive experience teaching a wide range of biology and microbiology courses. She also worked closely with UA's Center for Academic Success to help increase student success in science classes.

Over the years, Dr. Gray has also developed an interest in helping high school students transition into successful college freshmen. Her goal as a teacher is to develop and support cultivation of knowledge through innovative pedagogy,



what she calls “metacognition strategies” and first-year college prep success strategies. Dr. Gray’s methods have had a profound impact on her students. One student said, “Dr. Gray is one of the best professors I’ve had. She is always willing to help and wants to see her students succeed.” Another student said, “You can really tell she’s passionate about what she’s teaching, and she makes the material easy to understand.”

With her move to UAB, Dr. Gray is looking forward to meeting a whole new group of students and interacting with a whole new group of colleagues. She’s thrilled to share knowledge in a way that students will be able to understand and help them develop habits of life-long learning.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: AMY BONKA

Amy Bonka, a doctoral student in Dr. Thane Wibbels’ lab, received a National Geographic Early Career Grant. Bonka is studying the biology and ecology of the two most endangered sea turtles in the world — the Kemp’s ridley sea turtle in the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific leatherback sea turtle in Indonesia. Her work with the Bi-National Kemp’s Ridley Conservation



Program has included spending several nesting seasons living and conducting research at the primary nesting beach for this critically endangered sea turtle located in a remote area of Tamaulipas, Mexico. She has also been conducting research on the Pacific leatherback sea turtle in Bird’s Head, Papua Barat, Indonesia. Bird’s Head is the last remaining stronghold for the nesting of this critically endangered sea turtle in the western Pacific. The National Geographic Early Career Grant will allow Bonka to develop and implement new technologies for enhancing the recovery of critically endangered sea turtles.

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STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: KENDRA ROYSTON



Kendra Royston, a doctoral student in Dr. Trygve Tollefsbol's lab, has been named a trainee to the Susan G. Komen Graduate Training in Disparities Research (GTDR) Grant. The GTDR provides education and training for doctoral students who are seeking careers dedicated to understanding and eliminating disparities in breast cancer outcomes across population groups. With this grant, Royston will continue to research the use

of nutritive compounds in aggressive forms of breast cancer with few treatment options. Her research focuses on revealing the mechanisms behind why certain combinations of nutrients and chemotherapies are more effective than others in breast cancer treatment and prevention. This award will fully support Royston's research work within the department throughout the spring of 2018.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT: ELLE PRESNALL

Elle Presnall joined the Biology Department in February 2016 as an Office Services Specialist III. Elle has many responsibilities in our department, but her primary role is ordering the supplies for our labs, offices, and classrooms. She also maintains our office equipment, processes travel claims, and submits key requests. Elle enjoys the position because it keeps her busy and allows her to work independently while being surrounded by a collegial group of faculty, staff, and students. "Those of us



around the office really appreciate Elle's consistent good cheer and particularly dry sense of humor," says Dr. Austad. Prior to working in the Biology Department, she worked in UAB's Department of Pathology as a receptionist for 16 years. Elle has valued her time at UAB and plans to remain here until she retires to spend more time with her grandchildren and doing ministry work.

REMARKABLE GENEROSITY: DAVID AND KATHLEEN HOLLOWS



David and Kathleen Hollows have created The James McClintock Endowed Scholarship in Polar and Marine Biology to provide financial assistance to deserving students in the Department of Biology. The scholarship is named for Dr. James McClintock to honor and pay tribute to his

achievements as an expert in Antarctic marine biology and climate change science, as well as for his dedicated service to UAB.

Dr. McClintock met Mr. and Mrs. Hollows on an expedition cruise to Antarctica in January 2017. David Hollows is a native of Cheshire, England and received a bachelor's degree in chemical engineering, which he used to build a successful career in the brewery business at Whitbread Co. Ltd. and Anheuser-Busch, Inc. Kathy, a Pennsylvania native earned bachelor's degrees in psychology and nursing and worked for many years as a rehabilitation nurse.

During their travels together, Dr. McClintock and the Hollowses bonded over their shared belief that humans can influence the rate of climate change.

"What an honor and a delight it has been for me to get to know David and Kathleen," says Dr. McClintock. "Each engenders a heartfelt care for the environment and a strong commitment to support promising students of biology. I am forever grateful for their generosity and friendship." It is the couple's desire that this scholarship honor Dr. McClintock's continuing legacy by assisting worthy students as they develop the skills they need to become experts in climate change science who can present their findings to the greater public.



Morgan Burke

Editor & Contributor
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Dr. Steven Austad

Editor-in-Chief
Distinguished Professor &
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