



CHICAGO STATE
UNIVERSITY

Biological Sciences

www.csu.edu

Newsletter

Welcome
FALL 2025



Chairperson's Corner

Welcome to the Fall 2025 semester! I hope you enjoyed a productive and fulfilling summer. My goal is to foster a welcoming and inclusive environment in our department; one defined by cheerfulness, collaboration, and a strong sense of community. Our department graduated 20 students with B.S. and 1 with M.S. in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Two of our recent alumni (B.S., 2023), Korvell Russell and Alayjah Harshaw, have been admitted to medical school for Fall 2025. Korvell begins at the University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, while Alayjah will attend the Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science; Dr. William M. Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine.

During the CSU Spring Honors Convocation, many biology students were recognized for high academic achievements. Valeria Vizcaino won the President's Cup Award, the highest award given to a graduating senior.

Our dedicated faculty and staff were extremely productive, published journal articles along with published abstracts with students that lead to presentations at scientific conferences.

The Biological Society was quite active and they organized numerous activities throughout year. I encourage all students to become active members in the Biological Society and take advantage of leadership and service opportunities as skill and resume builders. Visit the department's website news and events site to learn of student leaders (<https://www.csu.edu/bioprehealth/news.htm>).

Announcements

Graduation application deadline for undergraduate and graduate students is **September 26th** for Fall 2025 degree conferral.

Apply to Scheinbuchs Scholarship: The deadline is Friday, **September 26th at 5:00PM.**

For additional information, please contact Dr. Molly McDonough, mmcdonou@csu.edu.



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Awards

Dr. Julian Scheinbuks Scholarship

Dr. Julian Scheinbuks was a part of the Department of Biological Sciences faculty at CSU from 1989-2003. His great love was teaching and working with students. He taught various biology courses for 13 years. In 2003, he was appointed the Director of Distance Learning. Under his leadership, a small and developing operation was transformed into a successful department within the Library and Instruction Services.

Upon Dr. Scheinbuks passing in 2010, he donated \$1 million dollars towards Biology student scholarships for distance learning innovation. As a memorial to Julian, the campus community has planted a native burr oak tree. A leaf from that tree is the symbol of the Scholars Program. Every year, the department gives merit-based scholarships to students through an application process. Applicants are awarded based on academics and service.



Scheinbuks Scholarship Recipients 2024-2025 \$2000/award

Angelica Bahena (Grad)
Dakota Bankole
Adaria Blackwell
Denesha Gorman
Daisy Hernandez
LaGail Jennett
Xavier Lyons
Taylor Reese
Diana Sanchez (Grad)
Trinity Thomas

All the Scheinbuks' scholars received an award at the Honors Convocation



**Keynote Lecturer: Dr. Bethany Perez,
Professor at Northwestern University**



Kovell Russell Introducing the Keynote Speaker

Awards Continued 2024 to 2025

68th Annual Honors Convocation April 17th, 2025

University-wide Awards

President's Cup Award (Outstanding Graduating Senior Award)

The President's Cup was commissioned in 1999 to recognize a graduating senior for his/her exceptional leadership, scholarship, and service. The President's Cup is presented to a graduating senior who has given outstanding service to the university, who has performed as a leader in student activities, and who has evidenced consistent superior scholastic achievement throughout his/her undergraduate career.

Valeria Vizcaino

Student Achievement Award

The student achievement award is presented to students who have shown outstanding dedication to the university and to their fellow students. Students are selected on the basis of performance in all areas of university life. Students must have demonstrated significant achievement while overcoming obstacles, challenges, or barriers or have demonstrated significant achievement with unique personal or professional experience.

Annwhar Sefah

Departmental Honor and Merit Awards

Department of Biological Sciences

Certificate of Honor

Valeria Vizcaino

Certificate of Merit

Daisy Hernandez

Annwhar Sefah

Destiny Span

Graduate Award

Angelica Bahena

Diana Sanchez

Newsletter

68th Annual Honors Convocation April 17th, 2025

Departmental Awards

Department of Biological Sciences

Earl E. Sherff Memorial Award

This award is named in honor of former Biology department chair, Earl E. Sherff, to recognize an outstanding undergraduate Biology student.

Bryonna Jackson

Deyja Jackson

Deja Louis

Valeria Vizcaino

The Edward C. Collin Memorial Award

This award is named in honor of former Biology department chair, Edward C. Collin, to recognize an outstanding undergraduate Biology student.

Lisa Daniel

Daisy Hernandez

Annwhar Sefah

Herbert E. Smith Memorial Award

The Herbert E. Smith Memorial Award was established in his memory to honor minority science majors who have demonstrated outstanding scholarships and intend to pursue graduate studies in the biological and physical sciences.

James Joseph

Marian Wilson-Comer Award

This award is given to an undergraduate Biology student who has demonstrated extensive departmental service and/or participation in student groups.

Gabrielle Cole

Festus Asante

Congratulations 2024 to 2025 Graduates

21 students (20 BS, 1 MS) in Fall24 and Sp25

Fall 2024

M.S. Degree

Biology - Microbial/Molecular

Sagar Natubhai Patel

B.S Degree

Biology

Adaria Blackwell

Bonita Nkemeh

Biology - Premedical/Pre-dental

Ciara Hicks

LaGail Jennett

Ciarra Lindsey

Trinity Thomas

Spring 2025

B.S Degree

Biology

Adnan Ali

Kelsey Burnett

Christopher Northington

Keia Phinn

Rebecca Solis

Destiny Span

Biology- Premedical/Pre-dental

Denesha Gorman

Dominique Joseph

Tawakalitu Kasumu

Adekunle Kuku

Adeola Ogunsanya

Annwhar Sefah

Yolanda Torres

Valeria Vizcaino

Whereabouts of Class of 2024-2025

Valeria Vizcaino, BS May 2025, Hematology/Oncology Research Technologist II, Northwestern

Adaria Blackwell, BS Dec 2024, Data Science at Maryland bank

Denesha Gorman, BS May 2025, Researcher at University of Illinois in Chicago

Destiny Span, Animal Care Specialist

Undergraduate Students Engaged in Summer 2025 Programs

1. Oluchukwu Akujieze Northwestern University and AHA
2. Daisy Hernandez University of IL in Champaign-Urbana
3. Taylor Reese CSU and University of Chicago partnership grant
4. Keenah Moncreace CSU and University of Chicago partnership grant. Brain Week.
5. Festus Asante Purdue University SROP (Sloan Cohort#2 mentee)
6. Veronica Coney Purdue University SROP (Sloan Cohort#2 mentee)
7. Joy Mayes CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
8. Jada Carvin CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
9. Dominique Moore CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
10. Danyal Akbar CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
11. Mikayla Jackson CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
12. Khalil Taylor CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
13. Deneesha Jackson CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
14. MacKenzie Hudson (Pre-Pharm) CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
15. Isabella (Biochem) CSU-Purdue Partnership Summer Program (Cohort#3)
16. Joseph James Summer Institute of Social Research Methods Uni of Chicago

Festus



Khalil



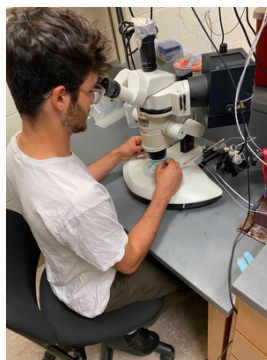
Deneesha



Mikayla



Oluchukwu



Danyal



Joy



Jada

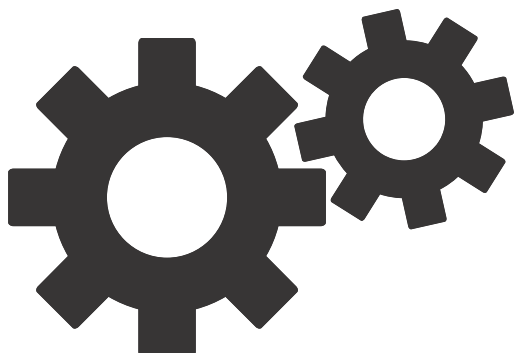
Undergraduate Students Engaged in Summer 2025 Programs



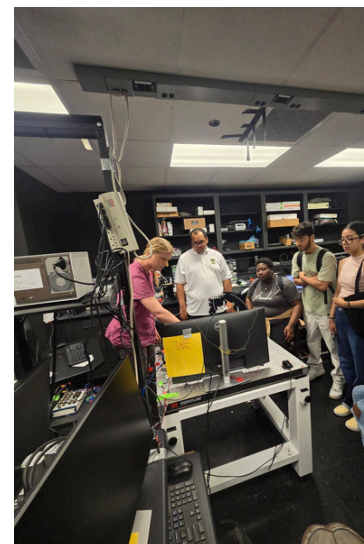
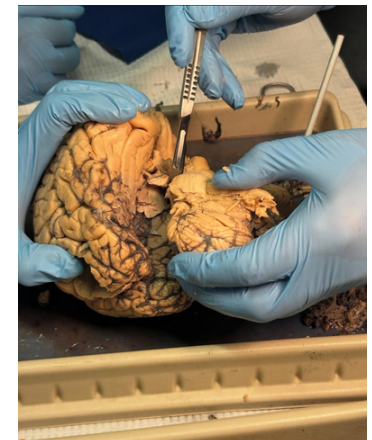
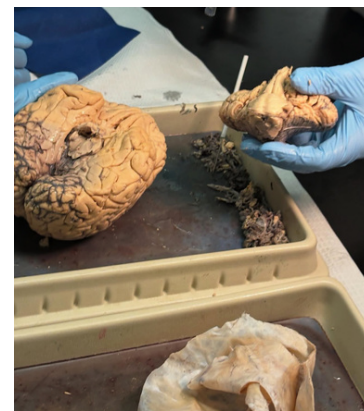
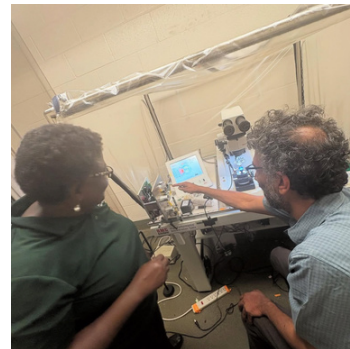
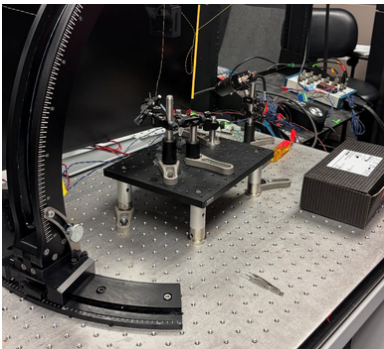
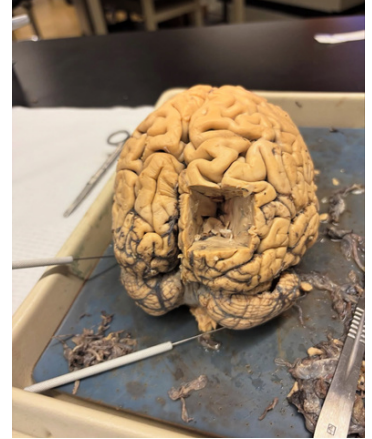
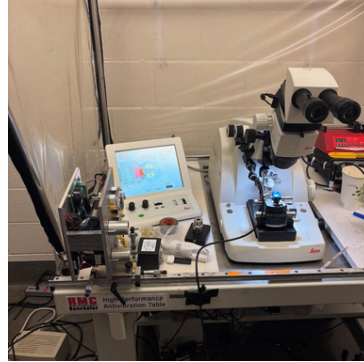
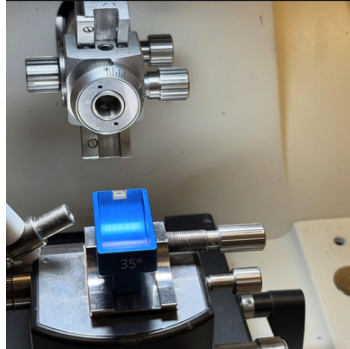
Summer Brain Week

In June students from the CSU and Purdue University Partnership Bridge Summer Program for CSU undergraduates, PReMMiSS, participated in a weeklong Neuroscience workshop. Students spent two days studying the anatomy of the human brain with Dr. Christian Hansel from the University of Chicago. A day-long field trip to the University of Chicago included tours of the Advanced Electron Microscopy Facility led by Dr. Jotham Austin and a tour of Dr. Sarah King's lab to learn about developing imaging techniques. Students had the opportunity to join University of Chicago Graduate students for a networking lunch sponsored by University of Chicago's Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for Basic Science. The week was capped off by a two-day workshop with Dr. Bobby Kasthuri and Dr. Briana Carroll from the University of Chicago exploring big ideas in Neuroscience. Students learned about the emerging field of connectomics and then experienced the tools that allow brain mapping using three-dimensional volume electron microscopy data sets. The goal was to give students a brief exposure to the army of disciplines that contribute to cutting edge neuroscience research. The brain immersion activities were supported by an NIH Brain Connects research grant that includes labs from University of Chicago, Chicago State University and University of Illinois Chicago.

-Contributed by Dr. Andrew Maselli

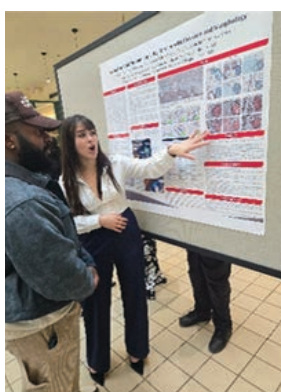


Summer Brain Week Continued

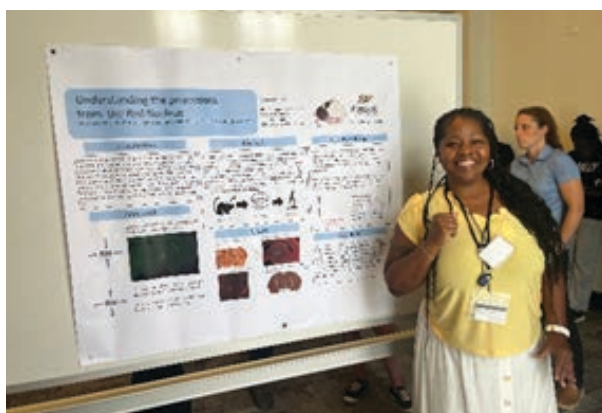


Newsletter

CSU Research Day (April 9, 2025)



Summer Interns Festus and Veronica at Purdue University SROP Presentations



Biological Sciences - Workshops and Bootcamps

Cold Spring Harbor DNA Learning Center NanoPore Sequencing Workshop at *Kennedy-King College - June 2025*

*In the photo, Dr. Mark Erhart, Prof of Molecular Biology, Chair of IACUC along
with CSU alumni and Biological Sciences Faculty Members
Clifford Wilson (MS, Biology 1994) and Taneka Douglas (MS, Biology 2008)*



Drosophila Neuroscience Bootcamp *Participants were from CSU and Morton College*



Dr. Sumit Saurabh (Organizer of Bootcamp)

*Participants: Dr. Yukto Tsang (Prof. Morton College), Mia Martinez, Lisa Daniel,
Keenah Moncreae, Dominique Vaughn, Kaii Komakono (Morton College)*

Biological Society: Biological Society Organized Events 2024 to 2025

This past year, the CSU Biological Society brought science to life with a vibrant calendar of events that blended education, environmental action, and fun. From launching spring with an Ice Cream Social that mixed molecular bonds with sweet treats, to empowering students through a Resume/CV Workshop and celebrating Women's History Month with a powerful screening of Hidden Figures, the Biological Society stayed active and engaging. Earth Week was especially impactful featuring a Prairie Cleanup, an Earth Day Art Activity, and an inspiring advocacy session with the Illinois Environmental Council. The Arbor Day Tree Planting honored sustainability and the legacy of our beloved grounds keeper, Mr. William "Bill" Dooley, while the Chili Planting Workshop reminded us that growing your own food can be both spicy and sustainable. Whether getting hands dirty or resumes polished, the Bio Society made every event a meaningful experience.

(Contributed by Gabrielle Cole, Current President of Biological Society)



Ice creaming making and social: applying chemistry concepts to creating sweet treats (February 26th 2025)



Women's month movie night Featuring "Hidden Figures" learning about trailblazing STEM impactful women in the past (March 26, 2025)

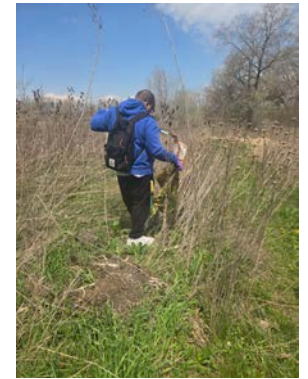
Elections of new officers for 2025 to 2026

Faculty Advisor:	Dr. Megan Garfinkel
President:	Gabrielle Cole
Vice President:	Kaylynn Wilson
Zyra Clark:	Secretary
Dominique Moore:	Media
Mackenzie Hudson:	Treasurer
Mikayla Jackson:	Outreach
Ashley Gorris:	Event Planner (Graduate Student)
Zoe Leone:	Event Planner (Graduate Student)

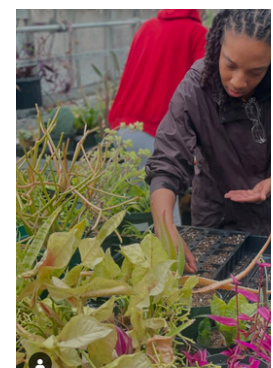
Biological Society: Earth Week Activities

During Earth Week, the Biological Society organized many events aimed at broadening awareness of the impact of the environment to healthy living.

CSU Prairie Cleanup



Growing food from seeds



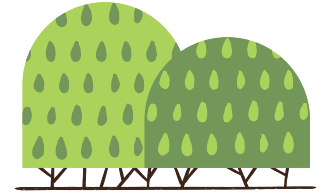
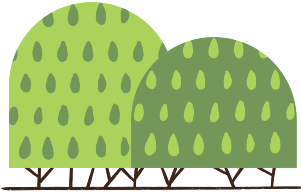
Learning about Environmental Advocacy



Environmental advocacy in action event facilitated by the Illinois Environmental Council (IEC) sharing policy making strategies for improving the health of our local and global environment. (April 23, 2025)

Arbor Day Tree Planting Ceremony

Honoring CSU's Own William "Bill" Dooley



Arbor Day was sentimental this year. We planted a yellow birch tree (*Betula Alleghaniensis*), the first of this specific variety, on campus close to the red boxcar. The tree was dedicated to William (Bill) Dooley, who retired from CSU in 2025. Bill was a long-time grounds keeper who assisted in our Arbor Day Tree planting event for more than a decade. Bill's emotional expression of gratitude to his tree dedication was heartwarming. Students (Zoe Leone and Festus Asante) presented information on the significance of Arbor Day. Bill's colleagues from the grounds crew were on hand to help plant the tree and celebrate Bill as he retired. Prof. Gayle Porter, Chairperson of the Faculty Senate Building and Grounds Committee, read the dedication honoring Mr. Dooley's long service to CSU. We thank the Chicago State Foundation for sponsoring the purchase of the yellow birch tree. The Department of Biological Sciences is grateful for the collaborative efforts of the Biological Society, the Faculty Senate, the grounds crew and the CSU Foundation in this year's Arbor Day Tree Planting.

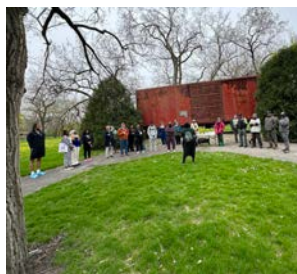


Arbor Day Tree Planting Ceremony

"Team Work Makes the Dream Work"



Arbor Day



Graduate Student Corner

MSc Thesis Defenses

Sagar N. Patel

Thesis Defense: Fall 2024

Thesis Title: *Role of Alloantibodies in Transplantation Rejection*

Thesis Committee: Walid Al-Ghoul (Chair), Nadeem Fazal, and J. Ache Gana.

Angelica Bahena

Thesis Defense: Spring 2025

Thesis Title: *Population Structure and Dynamics of the white-footed mouse on the South Side of Chicago*

Thesis Committee: Molly McDonough (Chair), Megan Garfinkel, Adam Ferguson (Field Museum)

MSc Thesis Proposal Defenses

Zoe Leone

Date: Summer 2025

Title: *Analyzing Urban Deer Mouse (Peromyscus maniculatus bairdii) Diets in Chicago's Slag Dump Sites*

Committee: Molly McDonough (Chair), Megan Garfinkel, Sophie Picq (Field Museum)

Ashley Gorris

Date: Summer 2025

Title: *The Ghost in the Snow: Investigating the Spatio-Temporal Distribution of Borealex Virus in the Boreal Realm*

Committee: Molly McDonough (Chair), Mark Erhart, Chris Botanga, Jeff Doty (CDC), Yoshinori Nakazawa (CDC)

Saige Thor

Date: Summer 2025

Title: *Forever Chemicals: Investigation and Remediation*

Committee: Rob Richter (Chair), Sumit Saurabh, Mark Erhart, Andrew Maselli

Faculty Accomplishments

Published Articles

Cargill T., Hutton E., Acheson K., **Gana J.A.**, Lhota R., Mardis K., Thomas-Miller J., Gardner S. M. (2025). Centering Student Voices: A case study of an evolving culturally and structurally responsive undergraduate STEM mentorship and skills development program. *Perspectives on Undergraduate Research and Mentoring*, 13 (1).

Hosler, S.C., **Garfinkel, M.B.**, Roberts, M. et al. 2025. Management scale drives bee and forb biodiversity patterns in suburban green spaces. *Biodiversity and Conservation*. 34, 67–84.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10531-024-02954-2>

Marquis, R.J., Whelan, C.J. and **Garfinkel, M.B.** (2025), Avian top-down effects on insects and their host plants under human-driven global change. *Ibis*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ibi.13419>

Paul, D.L., C.W. Thompson, L. Arroyo, G.B. Nuñez, I. Castro-Arellano, J.P. Colella, J.A. Cook, M.V. Cove, J. Dearborn, N.U. de la Sancha, K. Derieg, J.L. Dunnum, A.W. Ferguson, K. Fitzgerald, C. Foat, L.E. Frank, K. Galbreath, D.F. Gonzalez, R.K. Hawkins, T. Herrera, A. Hey, A.G. Hope, A.D. Hornsby, D. Ibanez, O. Keller, D. Krejsa, K. Mahoney, J. Malaney, **M.M. McDonough**, T.C. McElrath, V. Mathis, T. Mayfield-Meyer, I. Mosley, N. Ordóñez-Garza, K. Phelps, R.N. Platt, J. Pletcher, H.H. Rinsland, C.E. Rupprecht, K.A. Speer, L. Steger, N. Upham, R.A. White, B.J. Wiens, L. Wooten, P.S. Soltis. (2025). Harnessing natural history collections for collaborative pandemic preparedness, *BioScience*, <https://doi.org/10.1093/biosci/biaf035>

Patterson, B.D., Demos, T.C., Torrent, L., Grunwald, A.L., Montauban, C., Kerbis Peterhans, J.C., **McDonough, M.M.**, Dick, C.W., Bartonjo, M., Schoeman, M.C. and Ruedas, L.A. (2025). Systematics of the *Rhinolophus landeri* complex, with evidence for three additional Afrotropical bat species, *Journal of Mammalogy*, 106(1) 187–201, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jmammal/gyae085>

Riddell, B., **McDonough, M.M.**, Ferguson, A., Kimani, J.M., Gawriluk, T.R., Peng, C., Kiama, S.G., Ezenwa, V.O. and Seifert, A.W. (2025). Complex tissue regeneration in *Lophuromys* reveals a phylogenetic signal for enhanced regenerative ability in deomyine rodents, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*. U.S.A. 122(1) e2420726122, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2420726122>

Stiegler, J., Gallagher, C. A., Hering, R., Müller, T., Tucker, M., Apollonio, M., ...**McDonough, M.M.**,... & Blaum, N. (2024). Mammals show faster recovery from capture and tagging in human-disturbed landscapes. *Nature Communications*, 15(1), 8079.

Faculty Accomplishments

Grants Awarded and Submitted

Sumit Saurabh - CTRE Office New Lab Funding \$12,000

Sumit Saurabh – CSER Environmental Sustainability Walder Foundation \$3,000

Sumit Saurabh – Secured \$1,000 towards Molecular Biology Kits for CAPSTONE from NEB

Molly McDonough (PI), NSF Career Award

Start Date: 05/15/2023 End Date: 04/30/2028

Project Title: CAREER: Museomic approach for exploring the evolution of past, persistent, and emerging orthopoxvirus outbreaks

Grant status: Renewed for Third Year 2025 to 2026

Total Intended Award Amount: \$1,031,852

Andrew Maselli and collaborators at the University of Chicago received an NIH grant

Title: NIH "BRAIN CONNECTS: Photoemission Electron Microscopy for Connectomics"

Start Date: 2024 to 2027

Total Intended Amount: \$1,609, 558

Grant Status: Renewed for Second Year 2025 to 2026

Sumit Saurabh (PI)– NIH-S10

Title: Acquire the Evident Scientific FLUOVIEW FV4000 Inverted Confocal Laser Scanning Microscope

Amount: \$249,987.93

Grant Status: Submitted July 03, 2025; Pending

Faculty Accomplishments

Published Abstracts and Presentations

Quiana Smith, Walid M Al-Ghoul, LaGail Jennett, LM Kaste. Proteins, Biology, and Circadian Clock Potential in Oral Health Diseases. UIC-COD Clinic and Research Day 2024

Vizcaino V, Gorman D, Wildendbery G, Kasthuri NB, Maselli A, (2024) Comparing the nuclear volume of dark and healthy neurons in Fentanyl exposed mice. Poster Presentation. The Annual Society of Neuroscience Conference. October 5-9th, Chicago, IL

Gardner S. M., Acheson-Clair K., Mardis K, Gana J.A., Lhota R., Patton Kelsey, Thomas-Miller J., Paschou P. (2024) Professional Development in Inclusive Mentorship for Minoritized STEM Student Success. 49th Annual Professional and Organizational Development (POD) Network Conference. November, 10-14, 2024, Chicago, IL

Gana J.A. & Lhota R. 2025. How do you see mentoring? Spring Faculty Institute Day. Chicago State University. January 9, 2025

Gana J.A, Gardner S. M., Lhota R., Thomas-Miller J., Mardis K, Equitable recommendation letter writing. Spring Faculty Institute Day. Chicago State University. January 9, 2025

Martinez M, Thor S, Jackson B, Richter R, Saurabh S. (2025). The Effects of Forever Chemicals on the Physiology and Behavior of *Drosophila melanogaster*. CSU Research Day. April 09

Jackson ,B, Thor S, Martinez M, Richter R, Saurabh S. (2025) The Acute Effects of Forever Chemicals on the Sleep Behavior of *Drosophila melanogaster*. Chicago Society for Neuroscience, Northwestern University

Cole G, Wilson K, Clark Z, Asante F, Gana, J.A. (2025). Leaf type structural and dimensional diversity across different lateral branches of cannabis plant. CSU Research Day. April 09.

Hernandez D, Gorris A, Ferguson AW, McDonough M. 2025. Investigating Bacterial Pathogens in Rodent Blood from Southeast Chicago. CSU Research Day. April 09.

Hernandez D, Gorris A, Ferguson AW, McDonough M. 2025. Investigating Bacterial Pathogens in Rodent Blood from Southeast Chicago. 2025 Illinois LSAMP STEM Symposium. Lisle, IL, February 28.

Jackson, D, Maselli A, Gana JA. (2025). Rooting hormone influence cannabis development of shoot clones in a greenhouse environment. 2025 Illinois LSAMP STEM Symposium. Lisle, IL, February 28.

Jackson, D, Maselli A, Gana JA. (2025). Rooting hormone influence cannabis development of shoot clones in a greenhouse environment. CSU Research Day. April 09.

Sanchez, D, Adeniji, O, Juarez, M, McKinney, C, Erhart, MA. (2025). A targeted linkage analysis strategy for identifying the mutation responsible for a spastic paraplegia in mice. 2025 Illinois LSAMP Symposium. Lisle, IL, February 28.

Sefah, A, Torres Y, Lindsey C, Swier K. (2025). A role of the folic acid receptor (Far1) in early development of *Dictyostelium discoideum*. CSU Research Day. April 09.

Vizcaino V, Wildenberg G, Kasthuri N, Garcia A, Maselli A. 2025. "Fentanyl and Dark Neurons: Exploring Mitochondrial Volume and Morphology. CSU Research Day. April 09.

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Faculty Accomplishments Other Activities

Gana, JA, attended the AAAS SEA CHANGE and Equitable Pathway Partners (EPP) Program Joint Conference on October 7-9th in Los Angeles, CA.

Saurabh, SF attended the Annual Society for Neuroscience Conference on October 5-9th, Chicago, IL

Maselli, A attended the Annual Society for Neuroscience Conference on October 5-9th, Chicago, IL

Botanga, C and his team organized and hosted the NSF sponsored LSAMP PD/PI meeting on October 24-26th, 2024 in Washington D.C.

Testimonial:

"I am receiving very excellent reviews for the just concluded 2024 NSF LSAMP PI/PD Meeting organized and hosted in Washington DC, Oct. 24-26, under the theme, Enhancing Social Mobility Through STEM: The CHIPS & Science Act. We had speakers from the White House (Policy Advisor to the President) and the NSF Leadership." by Dr. Botanga.

Gana JA served on the GenED ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE Life Sciences Panel on November 15 from 9 AM to 3 PM.

Botanga, C and partners organized the 2025 Illinois LSAMP Spring Symposium & Research Conferences in STEM from February 28th to March 1st, 2025. Lisle, IL.

Maselli, A served as the moderator for the General Biology Oral Student Presentations at the 2025 Spring Symposium & Research Conferences in STEM from February 28th to March 1st, 2025. Lisle, IL.

McDonough, M served on the National Science Foundation Review panel for Systematics and Biodiversity Science from May 14-16, 2025.

McDonough, M participated in the Polar Adventure Day at Big Marsh Park on Saturday, 22 February 2025 from 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. Her table displayed local wildlife in the Calumet Region. Two transfer students were recruited at this event. These students visited CSU campus on student research day to meet faculty and students.

McDonough, M presented on a Panel "Leveraging Learning Assistant (LA) Voice and Perspectives to Impact Instructional Delivery. 2025 Spring Symposium & Research Conferences in STEM from February 28th to March 1st, 2025. Lisle, IL.

Erhart, M served as the moderator for the Molecular Biology Oral Student Presentations at the 2025 Spring Symposium & Research Conferences in STEM from February 28th to March 1st, 2025. Lisle, IL.

Erhart, M participated in the Summer of Nanopore Sequencing 2025 workshop, offered by the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory DNA Learning Center, and held at Kennedy – King College on June 2 – 4, 2025. In the 20-hour workshop, participants (1) identified their own plant sample at the genus / species level by sequencing a chloroplast gene segment, (2) identified the 20% most abundant bacteria in their skin microbiome by 16S rRNA sequencing, and (3) learned how to use bioinformatics tools and databases to analyze sequencing data. "The DNA Learning Center and Oxford Nanopore are working together to adapt nanopore sequencing for use in education—including improved chemistry, workflows, directions, and packaging/pricing attractive to high school and college faculty. Workshop participants will be the first to test this streamlined approach for combining MinION sequence data with the DNA Subway pipeline—providing DNA sequencing and analysis any time, any place, by anyone."

Gana, JA and Saurabh SF visited Morton College on April 09, 2025 for a Recruitment Event.

Gana, JA served on the GenED ILLINOIS ARTICULATION INITIATIVE Life Sciences Panel on March 28, 2025 from 9 AM to 3 PM.

Gana, JA served on the leadership team and as a faculty mentor for the CSU and Purdue University Partnership Summer Program for CSU undergraduates, PReMMiSS. June 02 to July 18th, 2025.

Gana, JA Co-facilitated an open forum discussion “Navigating Difficult Conversations” at the Chairs and Deans Development Day on June 18, 2025.

Gana, JA, Maselli A, Byeong Park, Laurie Walter Co-engaged 42 Health Professions Explorers Summer Camp Students with activities at the Department Co-Facilities including Cadaver, Microscopy, SEM, and Greenhouse on July 03, 2025

Gana, JA and Leone L Co-engaged 36 STEAM Summer Camp Students with greenhouse activities on June 27, 2025.

Megan Garfinkel served as a faculty mentor for the CSU and Purdue University Partnership Summer Program for CSU undergraduates, PReMMiSS. Dates – July 01-02 (2025)

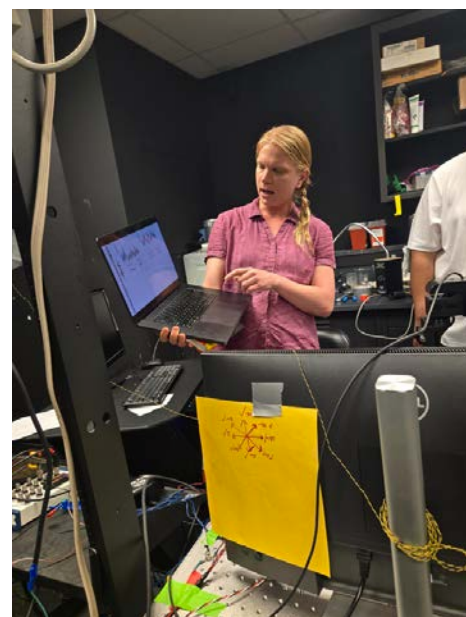
Maselli, A served as a faculty for the CSU and Purdue University Partnership Summer Program for CSU undergraduates, PReMMiSS Dates – June 23 to 27 (2025)

Saurabh, SF served as a faculty mentor for the CSU and Purdue University Partnership Summer Program for CSU undergraduates, PReMMiSS. Dates - June 6, 12, 13, 17 (2025)

Saurabh, SF organized a 5-Day Neuroscience Bootcamp introducing fruit fly as a powerful genetics system to investigate Sleep and Circadian abnormalities in Neurodegenerative Studies, Dates Jun 9-13, 2025. Attended by students from CSU and Morton College

Appointments:

Dr. Briana Carroll was appointed as a tenure track assistant professor of Human Physiology starting on August 16, 2025.



Retirements

Honoring Dr. Devi Potluri



Dr. Devi Potluri retired from the University on June 30th, 2025, after 23 years of service to CSU in various roles. As a faculty member, Dr. Potluri brought with him deep expertise from his years at the University of the West Indies and used it to transform how we teach plant biology-related courses. He revised the Botany course. He also developed engaging courses for both non-majors and graduate students. Prof. Potluri established a plant science research program that gave undergraduates hands-on research experience. He mentored a graduate student's thesis work. His collaborative research was published in a high impact journal, PNAS.

Dr. Potluri's service extended beyond the department; he chaired the University wide General Education Committee, helping to lead the 2012 HLC Steering Committee. He also served as CSU's representative to the IBHE Faculty Advisory Board and as Chair of the Public University Caucus.

As administrator, he served six years as our department chair, sharing his extensive organizational experience and institutional knowledge.

In 2019 Dr. Potluri took on a series of leadership roles in Graduate and Professional Studies where he is currently retiring as Associate Provost. In this role, he worked to streamline and modernize processes to improve the student experience, including bringing the admissions process into the modern era. He has been an unflinching champion for graduate programs and increased scholarships for students.

At his retirement celebration, Dr. Potluri made the exciting announcement that he is establishing a \$10,000 scholarship fund with the Chicago State Foundation to make an annual award of \$500 to the best undergraduate biology student. The award will be announced during the Honor's convocation. This monetary award will honor excellence and help students as they move from CSU on to the next stage in their journey.

Retirements Honoring Dr. Walid Al-Ghoul



Dr. Walid Al-Ghoul retired from the University on August 15, 2025, after 23 years of service to CSU. Dr. Al-Ghoul taught Human Physiology courses passionately, with compassion, and empathy. He sparked curiosity among students that they carry beyond his courses.

Beyond teaching, Professor Al-Ghoul led impactful extramurally funded biomedical research with his army of graduate and undergraduate students. Their work resulted in presentations at major STEM conferences and publications in respected journals—with students often as co-authors. Many of these students have gone on to become PharmDs, PhDs, MDs and so on.

Prof Al-Ghoul's served the department and CSU in many committees including mentoring a truckload of master's thesis students, representative to the Faculty Senate, and many more. Dr. Gana likes to call him "crisis master's thesis mentor" wise and going to battle for student success. Dr. Al-Ghoul was awarded the status of Faculty Emeritus.

Alumni News

Korvell Russell's White Coat Ceremony on August 6th 2025



STEAM Summer Camp 2025



STEAM Summer Camp 2025 continued



Health Professions Explorers Summer Camp 2025

