

BIOLOGY

DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

Fall 2015 | Issue #5



BIOLOGY

DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

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BIOLOGY
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Relay For Life of CCNY

NOVEMBER 7 @ 6PM

NAT HOLMAN GYM

FIGHT AGAINST

CANCER

JOIN US TODAY

RelayForLife.org/CCNY

Celebrate. Remember. Fight Back.

The City College
of New York

Faculty SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Yevgeniy Grigoryev



Dr. Yevgeniy Grigoryev believes the key ingredient in science education is an atmosphere where teacher and student communicate informally based on the understanding that they each have something to share. The teacher will contribute expertise and experience, while the student brings curiosity and a keen motivation for exploration.

One could imagine, then, Dr. Grigoryev's chagrin when, just after joining the Biology Department faculty, in the Fall, 2013, he was greeted by a massive, leaden grey metal desk that filled most of his office space and created a formidable distance between student and professor. "In the first few months, I didn't get a lot of students," he comments wryly. The situation was soon righted, and Dr. Grigoryev is comfortably ensconced now in his office behind a bright, new wooden desk that welcomes student visitors.

Dr. Grigoryev emigrated to New York City from Russia with his family at the age of 14. He attended Brooklyn Technical High School and was accepted to the inaugural class of the Macaulay Honors Program at Hunter College where he majored in biochemistry. He earned his doctorate in 2011 from the Scripps Institute in La Jolla, California.

After stints as a post-doctoral research fellow at Scripps and Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, he left to pursue teaching, reinforced by the firm commitment that it is how and not what one learns that best contributes to

“There’s no really wrong answer; if you say something that I’m not looking for, we use that as a learning experience.”

advances in science. Dr. Grigoryev stresses, for example, that answers have more import when perceived as open-ended, not always right or wrong, black or white. “I tell them,” he explains of his students, “there’s no really wrong answer; if you say something that I’m not looking for, we use that as a learning experience.”

Dr. Grigoryev brings innovation to the classroom. He frequently assigns, for example, “one minute papers,” an in-class exercise to minimize anxiety over test taking and to train students to clear away the “fluff” of their readings and thus attain clear and concise understandings communicable to others. To foster this clarity, he encourages students to practice explaining what they’ve learned in science to younger siblings. Instead of using fancy scientific terms, he urges students to speak plainly and informally until that spark of understanding is ignited.

Working towards his doctorate, Dr. Grigoryev admits feeling somewhat alienated from family and friends when he realized he couldn’t fully communicate his progress and concerns with them. “They care about you, but they don’t understand,” he recalls. Dr. Grigoryev believes that many advanced students face a similar estrangement, and notes the importance of taking the veil of mystery and exclusivity, even awe, from science. Ultimately, he says, “It’s very important that people are not afraid of science, and that people are not afraid or mistrustful of scientists.”

During office hours Dr. Grigoryev welcomes student visitors to have the kind of discussion that will enrich their learning, both formal and informal. For those who are shy, “Bring a buddy,” he says. His task is not complete, though, until he can release his students into the world of graduate school, career, and independence. “Like a clutch of birds, you have to make sure that they fly,” he concludes.

Publications & PRESENTATIONS

Dr. Robert Anderson

Anderson, R. P. 2015. Family Heteromyidae. Mammals of South America, Volume 2: Rodents. J. L. Patton, U. F. J. Pardifias, and G. D'Elia (editors). University of Chicago Press, Pp. 51–58.

Anderson, R.P. Crossing scales in biodiversity prediction for human-health applications. Invited presentation at the Human Health in the Face of Climate Change: Science, Medicine, and Adaptation, New York Academy of Sciences, La Caixa Foundation, and Biocat. Barcelona, Spain, May 2015.

Dr. Amy Berkov

Berkov A., Barrios H., Pinzon-Navarro S. 2015. Crepuscular wood-borers favor trees with moist wood. Botanical Society of America Annual Meeting, Edmontin, CA, July 29, 2015.

Li L., Berkov A. 2015. Host plant and forest successional status impact beetle community structure. Botanical Society of America Annual Meeting, Edmontin, CA, July 27, 2015.

Dr. Ana Carnaval

Brown J.L., Weber J.J., Alvarado-Serrano D., Hickerson M.J., Franks S.J., Carnaval A.C. Accepted. Predicting the genetic consequences of future climate change: the power of coupling demography, the coalescent, and contemporary genetic patterns. American Journal of Botany.

Prates I., Rodrigues M.T., Melo-Sampaio P.R., Carnaval A.C. 2015. Phylogenetic relationships of Dactyloa anoles: taxonomic implications, new insights about the phenotypic evolution and timing of diversification of Amazonian taxa. Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution, 82: 258-268.

Dr. Michael Hickerson

Boehm, J. T., Waldman J., Robinson J.D., Hickerson M.J. 2015. Population genomics reveals seahorses (*Hippocampus erectus*) of the western mid-Atlantic coast to be residents rather than vagrants. PLoS One 10(1): e0116219.

Hickerson, M.J. Reconstructing community histories using comparative population genomic inference. Invited presentation at European Society Evolutionary Biology, Lausanne, Switzerland, August 2015.

Dr. Karen Hubbard

Salas-Ramirez K.Y., Bagnall C., Frias L., Abdali S.A., Ahles T.A., Hubbard K. 2015. Doxorubicin and cyclophosphamide induce cognitive dysfunction and activate the ERK and AKT signaling pathways. Behav Brain Res. 292:133-141.

Dr. David Lohman

Braby, M.F., Farias-Quipildor, G.E. Vane-Wright, R.I. & Lohman, D.J. 2015. Morphological and molecular evidence supports recognition of *Danaus petilia* (Stoll, 1790) (Lepidoptera: Nymphalidae) as a species distinct from *D. chrysippus* (Linnaeus, 1758). Systematics and Biodiversity, 13: 386-402.

Lohman, D.J. Evolution and biogeography of butterfly radiations in the Indo-Australian Archipelago. Invited presentation at the Bogor Agricultural University, Bogor, Indonesia, August 2015.

Dr. Robert Rockwell

Gormezano, L.J. and Rockwell, R.F. 2015. The energetic value of land-based foods in Western Hudson Bay and their potential to alleviate energy deficits of starving adult male polar bears. PLoS One, 10: e0128520.

Koons, D.N., Rockwell, R.F. and Aubry, L.M. 2014. Effects of exploitation on an overabundant species: the lesser snow goose predicament. Journal of Animal Ecology 83:365-374.

Dr. Tadmiri Venkatesh

Wise A., Tenezaca L., Fernandez R.W., Schatoff E., Flores J., Ueda A., Zhong X., Wu C.F., Simon A.F., Venkatesh T. 2015. Drosophila mutants of the autism candidate gene neurobeachin (*rugose*) exhibit neuro-developmental disorders, aberrant synaptic properties, altered locomotion, and impaired adult social behavior and activity patterns. Journal of Neurogenetics, 14:1-9.

Dr. Bao Vuong

Zheng S., Vuong B.Q., Vaidyanathan B., Lin J.Y., Huang F.T., Chaudhuri J. 2015. Non-coding RNA Generated following Lariat Debranching Mediates Targeting of AID to DNA. Cell, 4:762-773.

CCNY'S Got Your Back!

Almost 10% of the students from underrepresented communities accepted to US medical schools are graduates of CCNY, as the Commission on Human Resources of the National Resource Council reported. It's an achievement to make us all proud, but we would never reach such heights if it weren't for the overarching support provided by a number of CCNY programs and their dedicated personnel. Following is the first in a series of reports on the initiatives that have given our students impetus and momentum, propelling them towards the fulfillment of their dreams.

CCNY-MSKCC PARTNERSHIP

Since 2002, CCNY has collaborated with Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center (MSKCC) in the CCNY-MSKCC Partnership for Cancer Research, Training, and Community Outreach. MSKCC is one of the most highly regarded cancer care and research facilities in the nation. Biology Department Chairperson, Dr. Karen Hubbard, has served as co-principal investigator and primary liaison between CCNY and MSKCC since the partnership's inception.

Thanks to NIH funding, CCNY students from their first year to their doctoral studies are trained to perform biomedical cancer research. Using translational methodologies, the students address disparities in cancer incidence, detection, care, and outcomes between underrepresented and vested populations, sparking at the same time MSKCC's commitment to community medicine.

Every spring, the partnership convenes a symposium on translational cancer research. It is a highlight of the students' academic year, offering them the opportunity to present and defend posters of their research before a large gathering. At this past CCNY-MSKCC Partnership Translational Research Symposium, held on April 17, the focus was on health disparities manifested by a particularly resistant form of breast cancer that disproportionately affects younger African American women.

For next spring's symposium Dr. Hubbard would like to put greater emphasis on student presentations of their research and career development.

CCAPP

CCAPP (City College Academy for Professional Preparation--pronounced "C-Cap") is often the first program an incoming student encounters. Known in other schools as the Collegiate Science And Technology Entry Program (CSTEP), and sponsored by the New York State Department of Education, CCAPP's staff and participating faculty provide support, enrichment and counseling in academics and post-baccalaureate and career planning. Some students are guided by CCAPP all the way through their undergraduate years.

CCAPP Associate Director, Nkem Stanley, speaks glowingly of the Summer Program for Entering Students, which she leads, tasked with readying from 50 to 60 incoming

science and engineering students for the rigors of higher education. Her challenge is to cultivate in them maturity, self-reliance and self-discipline, in addition to excellent work and study habits, all traits mandatory for a successful college career.

Using a combination of psychology and intuition, Nkem and CCAPP's other staff are able to identify students' individual needs, pairing them with other CCNY programs that offer financial support, mentoring, research positions, etc. They also guide students towards the field of study that best fits their aptitude, even if their real passion or strongest potential does not ultimately lie in STEM.

MARC-RISE

The Minority Access to Research Careers (MARC) and Research Initiative for Scientific Enhancement (RISE) programs are sister NIH funded initiatives intended to support promising students from underrepresented populations on the path to a career in scientific research.

MARC and RISE differ in certain aspects: MARC is an honors program; students must show an exceptionally high GPA in order to be considered. MARC accepts only undergraduates, typically in their junior year, and support is limited to 23 months (until the student's expected graduation). RISE's academic requirements are

slightly lower. RISE now supports an equal number of undergraduate and doctoral students: 8.

All MARC-RISE students are awarded a stipend, allowing them to concentrate fully on their research training without the distraction and preoccupation of seeking and then having a job.

MARC

Dr. Jonathan Levitt is faculty advisor to the MARC program and has stories of successful MARC alumni readily at hand. Edwin Vázquez-Cintrón (class of 2005), for example, had come to CCNY from the University of Puerto Rico, where he had also been a MARC scholar. He earned his BS at CCNY, then his MS and doctorate at NYU. Dr. Vázquez-Cintrón went on to co-found the biopharmaceutical firm, CytoDel, where he is also director of research. (Dr. Vázquez-Cintrón will be featured in the Where Are They Now column of the next issue of our newsletter.)

Another exemplary former MARC student is Tai-Danae Bradley (2014). With a double major in physics and mathematics, Tai-Danae is now in the doctoral program in mathematics at CUNY Graduate Center. Tai-Danae, appreciative of the support both CCAPP and MARC-RISE have given her, returned to the college this past summer as a mentor in CCAPP's Summer Program for Entering Students.

RISE

Dr. Mark Steinberg of the Chemistry Department is Program Director of RISE and accepts undergraduates who have already declared their major and completed 2 years of instruction. Dr. Steinberg stresses that undergraduate RISE students may not consider attending medical school, as the program is not funded for such and will not support a student on an MD path. MD/PhD students are eligible, though, since the understanding is that the prospective MD will continue with his/her research.

Dr. Steinberg affirms the success of RISE by noting the number of students who go on to successful careers in science and stay in touch years after graduation.

RCMI

With funding from NIH, the mission of RCMI (National Research Center in Minority Institutions) is to strengthen the fabric of translational research in minority colleges. The U.S. is sparsely dotted with only 18 RCMI centers, but New York City is favored with 2, Hunter College and, for the last 30 years, CCNY.

RCMI institutions are committed to train more racial and ethnic minority scientists to perform mainstream research in basic science and to increase research in health issues disproportionately affecting underserved populations. RCMI at CCNY places students in research labs in molecular biology, biochemistry and biophysics.

Dr. Jerry Guyden has been at the helm as program director for 24 years, since 1991. He is passing his baton now to Dr. Mark Pezzano. Dr. Pezzano, long-standing Deputy Director of RCMI, was mentored in his doctoral studies by Dr. Guyden (1993), and he was a researcher in Dr. Guyden's lab beginning in 1988. Like Dr. Guyden, Dr. Pezzano studies the thymus and its function in immunology.

Student SPOTLIGHTS

Angela Lopez



“ Don't be shy about things; be assertive.”

The lighting in the Biology Office shines a bit more brightly and buzzes more melodically when Angela Lopez makes her frequent stops there, infecting all with her upbeat energy and sociability. Her resume reflects that vitality. Besides providing clerical and administrative assistance to the Dean's and Biology Offices, Angela has been Secretary of the Science Activities Club and President of the Biology Club, during which time she organized a number of innovative events. She was formerly a mentor for SSSP and CCAPP and is currently volunteering at Isabella Geriatric Center alongside CNAs and Registered Nurses while preparing for her GREs.

Angela's commitment to join in and help out began when she was Class President during her sophomore and junior years at Grace Dodge High School in the Bronx. Assessing that experience, she recalls, "It felt good! So I said, 'Why don't you just do this all the way through!'" Angela's "all the way through" pledge has lasted for six years so far.

Angela's drive comes as a result of personal choice. With her mother a single mom and herself the oldest of three siblings, she reasoned that passivity would not make life easier for her family, but positive thinking and doing would. Angela has demonstrated her loyalty to her family throughout her schooling, both at Mercy College, in Dobbs Ferry, where she studied for two years, and at CCNY,

from which she just graduated (May, 2015), by winning a number of scholarships and awards, including several United Federation of Teachers' Scholarships and the Rebecca S. & W. J. Horvath Scholarship.

As the most academically successful of her siblings, she has created a career goal she's bound to achieve that will be both gratifying and helpful to her family: Angela is on target to become a physician's assistant. She is already being mentored by a contented PA and alumnus of CCNY, Jason Lewis, and a nurse practitioner with whom Angela worked closely when volunteering at Montefiore Hospital.

Angela considers her tutelage by Biology Department Administrative Coordinator, Christine Klusko, formative. "She's given me strength to go out there and do things," she observes. "She says, 'Don't be shy about things; be assertive.'" In a pledge of gratitude to those at CCNY who have supported her, Angela has returned to the college to resume mentoring with CCAPP and the CCNY Biology Club.

Ciara Bagnall-Moreau



“ I met some really good people and decided, ‘Research is pretty cool!’”

“Just keep swimming,” said Ciara Bagnall-Moreau during a conversation in which she divulged that the phrase from “Finding Nemo” is her motto. She might as well have added, “upstream.” Although she’s not at the shore just yet, where relief will come from the rapids, the current is becoming more navigable as her greatest challenges are met, and as she comes ever closer to her Ph.D. and a career in research, teaching or policy.

Although she has had strong support from her family in her life choices, Ciara has made a number of tough decisions on her own. The first was not whether to carry to term her pregnancy, which surprised her during her senior year of college (she had no second thoughts about bearing her child) but more importantly, how she would manage as a young mother in a household where her own mother suffered from a debilitating heart condition and a terminally-ill grandmother with cancer. Ciara and her partner, who would eventually become her husband, decided marriage was not a viable option at that time. She was also facing the challenge of deciding whether and how to further her education.

She applied and was accepted into the M.S. program in Biology in 2009, with no way to pay the bills, though. Suddenly Dr. Levitt appeared and offered Ciara the chance to TA Organismic Biology, Biology 20700. “Great,” reflects Ciara, “I [now] had some sort of income. From there it just took off. I met some really good people and decided, ‘Research is pretty cool!’” Ciara subsequently applied and

continued her studies through the PhD. program under Dr. Karen Hubbard’s mentorship to examine the mechanisms underlying chemotherapy related cognitive impairment.

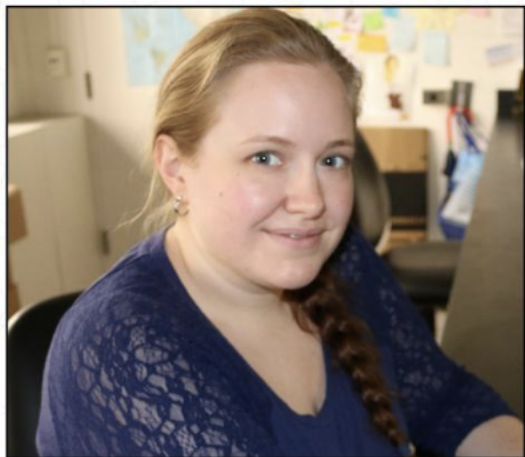
Introspective Ciara speaks of other rapids she’s had to forge through, like conquering her shyness, which she did in a systematic way when still an undergraduate. First she entered and won a beauty pageant, and then she joined the student government. In 2007, she was a recipient of a fellowship for study in Lille, France, augmenting her credentials and her enjoyment of research. Her stay gave her self-confidence an additional boost and enhanced her life experience as she traveled to Paris and other destinations in Europe.

Ciara’s horizons continue to expand. She recently took a science diplomacy course at Rockefeller University where she was captivated by issues of science policy and intercultural and international ethics.

Once she has completed her degree, this accomplished worldly-wise scientist and mother will make an informed career choice about deciding whether to pursue research, teaching or science policy; Ciara has been thinking even of combining all three.

Student SPOTLIGHTS

Danielle Rivera



“Field biologists are totally different. We are okay with being dirty all the time!”

“Field biologists are totally different,” suggests Danielle Rivera, continuing, “We are okay with being dirty all the time!” Danielle was referring to time spent in 2012 and 2014, deep in the Atlantic rainforest of Brazil, where hot water, hair dryers and water picks are forsworn in favor of climbing trees or digging down into the earth to experience Nature’s infinite life forms. “It’s fantastic!” she enthuses, referring now to the conviviality and cooperation she finds among her fellow researchers. When she emphasizes, “It’s hard work,” she speaks with gratification for the non-stop hours foraging for specimen, combing with her team the primordial peace of the day and night forest for creatures vital to the group’s studies.

Danielle is a Master’s student working in Dr. Ana Carolina Carnaval’s Ecology and Evolutionary biology lab. She participates in Dr. Carnaval’s bi-national Dimensions of Biodiversity project, studying the past, present and future of biodiversity in the Atlantic rainforest. Her niche is “herps,” reptiles and amphibians most specifically skinks, lizards with stubby legs and a snakelike body.

The familial feel of the field station reminds Danielle of how her biological family has been supportive of her ambitions, while making sure there were enough resources available to pursue higher education. She recalls how she and her grandfather would play “sciencey” games or

improvise science projects out of mundane activities like pouring boiling water over tea leaves. It was he, too, who prodded her curiosity, often times not satisfying her with answers, encouraging her instead to explore life’s mysteries more deeply.

Danielle’s love of animals was engendered early on when she and her older brother would explore the woods of upstate New York. After a spell as a Zookeeper Intern at the Bear Mountain Zoo, she planned on becoming a veterinarian. Dr. Ofer Tchernichovski, her first mentor (now at Hunter College), suggested she investigate a career in research before committing to a degree in medicine. Secure in her decision to pursue research, Danielle has accepted admission this fall to the University of Texas, Arlington’s Ph.D. in Quantitative Biology program, aided by the prestige and financial support of the NSF Graduate Research Fellowships Program (GRFP).

Danielle’s sociability extends to other commitments involving cooperation and collaboration. She has been a spearhead in City College’s Women in Science initiative (WinS), supporting and promoting the advancement of women in science. She serves on WinS’ steering committee and as webmaster. Danielle’s countless achievements confirm she is an icon of women in science.

Johnny Ramroop



Johnny Ramroop came to academia after a brief but gratifying career in private industry. He was a chemist in his native Trinidad, entrusted with the quality assurance of hydro chemical products, and is contemplating returning to the corporate world once his PhD is in hand, in May, 2016.

A student in New York since 2002, Johnny made his first academic stop at BMCC, where he earned his associate degree. Since then, mentoring and studying have been inextricable endeavors for Johnny, as his own mentors encouraged him early on to take fledglings under his wing. Before completing his AA degree, Johnny mentored fellow BMCC students in the sciences. He also tutored sections and gave guest lectures.

The next stop for Johnny was Hunter College, where he completed his BS/MS in 2009, having changed his area of concentration from chemistry to biology. While completing his master's, Johnny worked at Rockefeller University in the laboratory of Dr. Bruce McEwen. There, under Dr. Lisa Eiland, he tested the effects of adverse childhood experiences on emotional behavior, showing that premature offspring having to develop outside the womb with little contact with their mothers demonstrate a higher likelihood of delinquency than full-term neonatals. Also during this time, Johnny worked at SUNY Downstate Medical Center in the departments of Physiology and Pharmacology.

“Just as I lean to Dr. Govind sometimes for more advice, my student also leans to me for advice. Not just academic advice, but also life questions.”

These were assignments of import to his professional development, but he knew his next move was upon him; in 2010 he found CCNY, and soon after, Dr. Shubha Govind, her biodiversity lab, and the road to his PhD. He is preparing his dissertation on how certain wasp species can disrupt the immune response of *Drosophila* and how the findings may be applied to agriculture and cancer research.

Like the links in a chain of hydrocarbons, so Johnny has become a link in the very neat chain of mentoring, thanks to a Palefsky Fellowship. Dr. Govind is at the top of the chain as his mentor; for his part, Johnny is mentoring Olusola Adeonigbagbe, “Sola,” and Sola, in turn, mentors incoming CCNY freshmen.

“Dr. Govind has helped me to grow and I’ve helped her [Sola] to grow,” Johnny reflects and continues, “Just as I lean to Dr. Govind sometimes for more advice, my student also leans to me for advice. Not just academic advice, but also life questions.”

For Sola, Johnny has been more than a beacon lighting her path down a darkened road. He offers her constant, more diffused illumination, giving her the light to explore and find her career goals. With his help Sola has realized her calling to become a physical therapist, “especially with kids.” After a year and a half of mentoring, Sola observes with gratitude to Johnny, “Instead of being mentors and mentees, we’re more like friends or colleagues.”

Awards, Scholarships & Recognitions

Maria Strangas

Maria Strangas received a Graduate Research Opportunities Worldwide (GROW) Award from the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program (NSF GRFP) to strengthen her international research collaborations. She was awarded a \$5000 travel award in addition to nine months of support in Australia.

Mary Ellen Heavner

Mary Ellen Heavner was awarded a three-year National Institute of Health Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Predoctoral Fellowship Award for her thesis work under the guidance of Dr. Shubha Govind.

Avaje Jackson

The August Anthony Gavasci Award

Benjamin Souferi

*Olivia McKenna Award
The Sharon D. Cosloy Award in Biology*

David Zakay

The August Anthony Gavasci Award

Geoffrey Russell

The Edmund Baermann Scholarship in Natural Sciences

Kai Farje-Van Vlack

The Professor Paul L. Krupa Award in Excellence in Research

Lin Li

The Professor Martin Sacks/Sylvia F. Rubin Award

Maria Gavrutenko

*The Ward Medal
The Professor William Stratford Prize*

Michelle Almeida

Olivia McKenna Award

Ricci Kalyanamitra

The Professor Paul L. Krupa Award in Excellence in Research

Y-Lan Nguyen

The Professor Joseph Grossfield Award

Fall 2015 Colloquia

All meet in The Marshak Science Building, room 801 at 1pm

8/31

Fall Colloquium Orientation
The City College of New York, CUNY

9/10

Thursday runs on Monday schedule
Dr. Kevin Ryan
The City College of New York, CUNY

9/21

Dr. Oliver Hobert
Columbia University

9/28

Dr. Ana Carnaval
The City College of New York, CUNY

10/5

Dr. Thomas Albright
University of Nevada, Reno

10/19

Dr. Volker Vogt
Cornell University

10/26

Dr. Alicia Mendez
Queens College, CUNY

11/2

Dr. Leslie Ries
University of Maryland

11/9

Dr. Matt Rockman
New York University

11/16

Dr. Shannon LaDeau
Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

11/23

Dr. Christopher Hammell
Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory

11/30

Dr. Timothy Doyle
US Geological Survey

12/7

Dr. Chris Blare
New York College of Technology, CUNY

12/14

Dr. Jessica Ware
AMNH

Biology Club Calendar

If you want to become a member of the club, have any questions or suggestions, please contact us at Biologyclub@gtest.cuny.cuny.edu or visit us at, ccnybiologyclub.wix.com/ccny-biology-club

Welcome Back Party

Aug. 27 @ 12:30pm in MR 502

Celebrate the return of the fall semester. Get to know faculty, staff and students. This is also a good chance to get involved with the Biology Club & meet the new E- Board!

Information Session

Sep. 17 @ 12:30pm in MR 2

Learn about various biology programs and degrees offered at CCNY; including the Biotechnology program, getting internship advice, and how to join Premed.

Information Session

Sep. 24 @ 12:30pm in MR 2

Learn about various biology programs & degrees offered at CCNY! Get information about our Masters in Transitional Medicine also.

Faculty Talks

Oct. 1 @ 12:30pm in MR 801

Listen to Dr. Oviedo and Dr. Carnaval talk about their research and learn about opportunities to work with them.

Converting your Resume to a CV Workshop

Oct. 15 @ 12:30pm in MR 801

Come and listen to Theresa Duello talk about how you can improve your curriculum vitae. This event will greatly help you improve your resume, and do better in future interviews for jobs and research opportunities that may arise.

Halloween Party

Oct. 29 @ 5-8pm in NAC Ballroom

Relay For Life Event

Nov. 7 6pm - Nov.8 6am in Nat Holman Gymnasium

Participate in this special overnight event! Games and activities for all to help fundraise for cancer awareness!

90 Second Pitch Workshop

Nov. 19 @ 12:30pm in MR 502

Prepare your elevator speech and answer, "tell me about yourself." This workshop helps you become a more competitive candidate when applying for jobs, grad school and research opportunities.

End of Semester Stress Free Event

Dec. 10 @ 12:30pm in MR 502

Take some time to relax before finals!

Women in Science Calendar

For more information, please contact WinS at ccnywins@gmail.com
ccnywins.wix.com/womeninscience

Dr. Shirley Malcom Visits Campus

Sep. 28-29

Grant Writing Workshop

Oct. 5 @ 2:30pm in MR 819

Malala's Room

Oct. 8 in MR 502

Celebrate, explore & share your own cultures with other women

Malala's Room

Nov. 12 in MR 502

Celebrate, explore & share your own cultures with other women

Dr. Sonia Wallman Visits Campus

Nov. 18-19

Malala's Room

Dec. 3 in MR 502

Celebrate, explore & share your own cultures with other women

WinS Social Event

Dec. TBA

Celebrating the end of the semester!

Where Are They Now?

The CCNY Biology Department Newsletter inaugurates its “Where Are They Now?” feature this issue by proudly reporting on Antonia Florio, Class of 2008.

Antonia Florio



Antonia Florio’s passport is as crammed full as the A Train tumbling students towards a 9 a.m. class. It boasts visas from countries as far flung as the Dominican Republic, Madagascar, French Guiana and South Africa. Each stamp locates a field assignment for her research in Evolutionary and Environmental Biology, with a specialty in reptiles and amphibians.

Antonia entered CCNY in 2004, a product of the New York City Catholic schools, with her sights set on becoming a veterinarian. She pondered her decision to attend CCNY, her hesitation instigated in part by friends encouraging her to seek a higher profile school or the Ivy League. However, having been accepted into the Macaulay Honors College, which would give her the opportunity to travel, and faced with limited funding, reason won out easily over glamour, and she came to City. It was a wise decision: Antonia would become the Valedictorian of the 2008 class and admits she may not have pursued a graduate degree at the American Museum of Natural History, “without the preparation, both research and coursework, I gained through CCNY”.

During her travels, in 2006, Antonia found herself in the Galapagos Islands in the midst of what she terms a coming of age crisis; while there and fascinated by the flora and fauna, she’d begun to consider pursuing biology as a career, though she knew she needed guidance. Back at school, she “just wandered” into Professor Amy Berkov’s Ecology and Evolution lab seeking information about the possible switch; she was immediately captured by Dr.

Berkov’s accounts of field studies in French Guiana, and decided to pursue biology. “Then she sent me out to collect beetles in St. Nicholas Park,” Antonia adds dryly.

“She was a very fundamental mentor for me,” she reflects, about her two years at Dr. Berkov’s lab, “I wouldn’t really have ever thought about pursuing research; it never even occurred to me before I started talking with her.”

If Antonia speaks glowingly of Dr. Berkov, her former mentor beams equally brightly about her. She recalls Antonia needing little initial guidance, as she was gifted with the many work, study and social skills needed in a successful researcher. “She arrived at the lab already responsible, well-organized, communicative, and an analytical thinker!” Dr. Berkov enthuses. “This made Antonia unusually easy to work with.”

After graduating as Valedictorian of the class of 2008, Antonia went on to earn her Ph.D. in Comparative Biology at CUNY/American Museum of Natural History, in 2013.

She then stated working at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory to head the Urban Barcode Project. She works with NYC high school students using a process likened to supermarket barcoding as a way to identify plant and animal species, especially those faced with extinction. Some of her students investigate food fraud, or whether what they’re eating is what they’ve been made to think they’re eating by labeling and advertising. Others pursue topics including biodiversity, invasive species, and evolution.

As much as she enjoyed her work at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory and learned to value science education—“it’s really important, and it makes me feel good”—she has moved on to a position at St. Francis College where she will be teaching undergraduates and pursuing her own research. She hopes to one day be able to combine all three of the skills she has gained through her education and jobs: science education, research and administration.

Traveling will continue to feature on her career roadmap. Currently she finds herself shuttling mostly to Florida for field research, but would like to take that passport out again to add new, promising and exciting locations to challenge her inquisitive mind.

Biology

RECOGNIZES

Department of Biology Chair, Dr. Karen Hubbard



Dr. Karen Hubbard, the new Chairperson of CCNY's Department of Biology is a woman with a dizzying number of responsibilities. On any one day she might be dashing off to the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, where she is a P. I. in the CCNY-MSKCC Partnership promoting

more participation by the cancer research institution in minority communities. At the same time, she could be attending one of numerous conferences concerned with health disparities in underserved populations; or, she

might be found in her molecular biology lab, investigating the relationship between cell death, cancer and aging. She might be in our lecture halls teaching undergraduate as well as graduate courses; and finally, she could be at her desk to administer the myriad responsibilities of a department Chairperson. If those tasks seem daunting, Dr. Hubbard has still another, perhaps even more consuming: she is facilitating the relocation to South Campus of a number of research faculty to the Center for Discovery and Innovation, and she has dedicated herself to ensure the cohesiveness of the department in the face and aftermath of the change. "It's been a learning experience," says Dr. Hubbard, of the first months of her 3-year tenure, in her characteristically understated yet confident tone.

CUNY Office Assistant, Yolanda Pitt



Upon entering the Bio office, you'll be welcomed by the broad smile of Yolanda Pitt, the official meeter and greeter for almost 10 years. She'll immediately engage you, offering her help for whatever is your concern. Make a remark or two in reply, and you may hear

her pronounce, "You're so grown." Not to worry, though; no matter your age nor size, it's Yolanda's coloration of "clever," or "complex." Yolanda's irony and sense of humor get her through many a trying day when she has to deal with a broken copy machine or two, find Buildings and Grounds to open a locked lecture hall or empty the trash that looks and smells by now like it was left over from the earliest hominids' first picnic. Yolanda also helps supervise many federal work-study students; mollify disgruntled

or over-exercised faculty; and filter visitors to the inner sanctums of office manager Christine Klusko and Bio Department Chairperson Dr. Karen Hubbard.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, where she still lives, Yolanda's pride in the "People's Republic of..." runs fierce. She's used her mettle and her winning ways to overcome being a single mother, high school drop-out, and then enduring a factory job, needed while raising her two boys and earning her GED. After a stint in HR at CUNY she landed at the desk she's colorfully personalized in 526 Marshak. Take a peek around the bend of her monitor during a rare minute of down time, saving her screen you'll find a glorious snapshot of her 3 year-old grandson, Dante, Jr.

Yolanda is hoping to complete the 17 credits needed for her bachelor's from New York Technical College; but this advance won't lure her away from Biology. "It's my family," she whispers confidentially, as if we all didn't already know.

Biology

RECOGNIZES

Distinguished Professor, Dr. John Lee



One summer afternoon in the Catskill Mountains during World War II would change forever the life of young John Lee. His discovery of “beautiful fossils” beside a creek led him and his father to the American Museum of Natural History where his find was graciously

accepted, authenticated, and displayed. This led him to a life-long love for the visible and invisible world.

A few short years later with a PhD in hand, Dr. Lee returned to AMNH, where he set up electron microscopes and became the museum’s radiation safety officer. Fresh from training at Oakridge National Laboratory, he noticed a stand-alone display of a large, luminous rock that

immediately signaled to his trained eye “radioactive”. Dr. Lee embarked on his first major challenge: to deliver this very live uranium crystal to the safety of the Oakridge Laboratory.

Dr. Lee came to CCNY in 1967, where, despite lucrative offers to leave, he has remained. He is committed to the college’s principals, especially its mission to give students of modest background a first-class education. For him, the greatest change in the school came with the opening of the Marshak Science Building; converting what had been paltry facilities into a burgeoning center fostering cutting edge research in science. Dr. Lee’s main research interests include the symbiosis of algae in Foraminifera and in mariculture.

Dr. Lee plans to retire in two years to complete the first English text on symbiosis and an innovative workbook on microbiology. Dr. Lee will also be able to resume his interest in model rocketry and making stained glass.

Chief CLT, Carmine Mastropolo



As a kid, Carmine Mastropaolo, the Bio Dept.’s Chief Laboratory Technician, lived near a beaver pond and beside “sheep and dogs, ducks and all kinds of animals” spending idyllic summers at his parents’ cottage in New Jersey, and at his aunt’s farm on Staten Island. Those experiences

awakened in him an enduring fascination with animal and plant life.

He’s been plying his curiosity here at CCNY for the last 41 years as an undergraduate student, then research assistant, and finally as a technician, moving up the ranks until today.

Carmine has seen myriad students and staff come and go, tucking away recollections of CCNY back to the 1960s when it was a hotbed of activism, and when tuition was free. Especially vivid are his memories of 12 years with Professor John Lee probing the salt marshes of Jamaica Bay, South Hampton, and Woods Hole, Massachusetts. “Doing the salt marsh research was similar to what I was doing as a kid,” he recalls.

Carmine will be retiring soon. Aside from spending time with his grandkids, he has a dream to fulfill: to work on the restoration of the John. J. Harvey fireboat in New York Harbor. Working on the boat will allow him to commemorate his father, a firefighter stationed there in the days when Carmine was a curious kid cultivating the groundwork for a life of exploration close to Nature.