New Online Masters Students for Fall 2016:
Brittany Adams, NE; Chinyere Agada, TX; Daniel Arflack, MO; Amber Armstrong, MI; Peter Bach, AZ; Cheryl Blaivas, NY; Jaclyn Brown, IL; Erin Burns, MA; Jennifer Bushing, NE; Jacey Camac, KS; Cara Campanaro, OH; Calla Canaday, WY; Aditya Charyalu, NC; Chelsea Christoffersen, NV; Robin Chung, CA; Paula Clark, FL; Nerissa Fay, NH; Kellyn Fitzgerald, SC; Amanda Foxx, ID; Brianna Geeskie, CO; Joni Giacomino, AZ; Michael Hanson, MD; Brian Heier, MO; Hilal Hoballah, TX; Adam Jones, NE; Kaleigh Kibbee, IA; Susanne Klatt-Faistnauer, CA; Terianne Knott, NE; Rachelle Kruml, NE; Benjamin Lazzari, MN; Garet Litwiler, OH; Narinedat Madramootoo, CA; Jake McBride, NM; Alexandra McCloskey, PA; Alicia McCord, AL; Adam McCormack, TN; David Mesadieu, NY; Randi Miller, PA; Seamus Moody, VA; Larry Morales, TX; Jessica Mumm, OR; Russell Namitz, OR; Brianna Neumann, FL; Edna Nieves, HI; Andrew Nowak, MA; Loren Packa, MN; David Price, TN; Melissa Sangster, FL; Alyssa Savage, MD; Casey Snead, MD; Kimberly Sparks, AR; Robert Spelman, MN; Rene Stephens-Kresse, VA; Heather Stokes, VA; Ryan Threlkel, CA; Steven Totusek, NE; Jennifer Urda, FL; Heather Webster, WA; Anna Wilkerson, NM; Therese Wood, IL; Lionel Wright, FL; Jennifer Yates, CA

New Online Faculty for Fall 2016:
Dr. Rachel Hellmann Whitaker joins the UNK Biology Department as an Assistant Professor of Biology in August 2016 after a year maternity leave. Her previous position as an Assistant Professor of Biochemistry was at Coastal Carolina University. While at Coastal Carolina University she was the award recipient for “The Most Inspiring Professor” and “The Most Involved Professor.” Additionally, she received a Fulbright Scholars award to University of Applied Sciences in Vienna, Austria. Prior to this appointment, she served as a Postdoctoral Research Associate in Dr. Scott Silverman’s laboratory at the University of Illinois, U-C. Her graduate training was also at the University of Illinois, U-C, where she worked on inhibiting bacterial growth. Her current research focus is to develop/discover novel antibiotics. She is teaching BIOL 830P-Cell Structure and Function and BIOL 846-Cancer Biology this fall.
Dr. Austin Nuxoll is new to the UNK Biology Department this fall. He will be teaching BIOL-840 Infectious Diseases, and BIOL-881 Current Issues in Biology. Dr. Nuxoll received his BS in Biology at UNK and first became interested in research after working in Dr. Twigg’s lab. Upon completion of his BS, he attended the University of Nebraska Medical Center for his PhD studies where his work focused on the metabolism of the bacterium Staphylococcus aureus and its relationship to pathogenesis in chronic infections. His postdoctoral appointment was at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. Dr. Nuxoll researched the underlying mechanism responsible for antibiotic tolerance in S. aureus. His current research focuses on work from both his graduate and postdoctoral work. His research explores the mechanism of antibiotic and antimicrobial tolerance and the importance of central metabolism in this process.

Dr. Dustin Ranglack also joins the faculty this fall. Prior to arriving to UNK, Dr. Ranglack was a post-doctoral research associate at Montana State University, where he worked on a collaborative project with the US Forest Service and Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks to evaluate and inform the management of elk and elk habitat in Montana, using spatial data from 9 different elk herds. Dr. Ranglack completed his PhD in Ecology at Utah State University, where his research focused on bison ecology and bison-cattle interactions in the Henry Mountains of Utah. Prior to his graduate studies, Dr. Ranglack was primarily focused on large predator ecology and worked on multiple research projects throughout the Rocky Mountains involving mountain lions, black bears, Canada lynx, bobcats, and coyotes. His current research is focused on applied large mammal ecology, management, and conservation. Specific interests include human-wildlife conflict, predator-prey interactions, and animal space use. He is teaching BIOL 830P–Animal Community Ecology this fall.

**NEWSFEED**

Two Biology Professors’ are taking part in a new collaborative research effort with other University of Nebraska schools, which was highlighted by the University of Nebraska Kearney news this summer. Below is an excerpt from the article on Dr. Paul Twigg, Professor in the Department of Biology, and Dr. Julie Shaffer, Graduate Program Chair and Interim Director of the Online MS Biology Program, entitled “Twigg, Shaffer involved with $20 million crop productivity research”. For the full article click on the
Two University of Nebraska at Kearney faculty are among those leading a $20 million Nebraska-based research effort to improve crop productivity.

Led by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and funded by the National Science Foundation’s Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research, the program includes scientists from UNL, UNK, University of Nebraska Medical Center and Doane University working on the new Center for Root and Rhizobiome Innovation.

UNK Biology Professors Paul Twigg and Julie Shaffer are involved with the research, which uses a holistic strategy to study root and soil microbe interactions and develop new biological tools to enhance crop performance. The award also funds a new faculty position at UNK, which will be filled later and also take part in the research.

“This research is the new frontier for plant improvement. The root is an understudied
plant organ and very important for productivity and for the ability to withstand abiotic stresses, like drought or soil salinity,” said project co-leader Edgar Cahoon, professor of biochemistry and director of UNL’s Center for Plant Science Innovation.

James Alfano, professor of plant pathology, co-leads the project.

“Our soils and the crops they produce are invaluable resources for Nebraska and those around the globe who depend on our agriculture food and natural resource system,” UNL Chancellor Ronnie Green said. “Innovative, collaborative research like this is why Nebraska is at the leading edge of science aimed at increasing productivity and protecting critical resources.”

The team initially will focus on corn, but their findings and biological tools will be applicable to studying and improving other crops, including soybeans, he said.

**CONGRATULATIONS**

**July 2016 Graduates:**
Shevaun Adams, Brittany Gabriel, Lindsay Gorman, Collin MacLeod, Andrew Perry, Nicholas Stevenson

Two graduates were able to make the journey to Kearney for the UNK Summer Commencement ceremony on July 29th held in the Health and Sports Center. A dozen guests including graduates, their families, and Biology faculty, attended the Department breakfast before the ceremony to honor our graduates.

(pictured from left to right: Dr. Janet Steele, Biology Department Chair; Andrew Perry, Shevaun Adams, and Dr. Julie Shaffer, Graduate Program Chair & Interim Director of the Online MS Biology Program)
Publications, Meetings, Grants

Meetings


Publications


Continue to send us updates on any meetings, publications, grants, or awards that you have been involved with. Please email details to msbiology@unk.edu.

Student News

Amy Gatlin (Spring 2016 graduate) has accepted adjunct faculty positions at two local community colleges. She will be teaching Clinical Microbiology beginning in January.
Jessica Jurzenski-Putney (Summer 2007 graduate) and her husband, Geoff, welcomed their first baby on June 8, 2016. Penelope Claire weighed 2 lbs 15 oz and was 16¾ in long at birth. Mom and dad were excited to bring her home at the end of July after Penelope spent 7 weeks at the NICU at St. Elizabeth's in Lincoln. (pictured right)

Natalie Mix (Summer 2015 graduate) accepted 2 part-time teaching positions; one as a part-time biology instructor at Portland Community College and one as a part-time biology instructor for Brigham Young University-Idaho.

Please let us know what is going on in your lives; email us your news at msbiology@unk.edu.

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**Director’s Desk from Dr. Julie Shaffer**

I just got back from a little summer vacation. I was able to take the horse camping for a few days at Halsey National forest. I have included a couple of pictures below; one is my glamorous accommodations and the other is an exclusive dining establishment that we patronized. Everyone has different expectations of what to do for summer vacation, but I hope everyone was able to get away and enjoy a summer vacation. As I write this school will start in a week. Everyone is scrambling to get ready, including three new faculty members that you can read about in this issue. Two of those faculty are online specialists, so we should be able to offer additional sections of required classes and new topic areas for electives. The program is growing, so the additional help is needed.

Another major program change has also been decided. Beginning Fall 2017, BIOL 831 research will change to an elective...not be required. The department decided that research should not be required for a non-thesis degree. The BIOL 831 research will not be eliminated but will move to electives. This will allow students who want research experience to take the 6 credits, but those not interested in research can take 6 hours of electives of their choice. This will not go into the catalog until Fall 2017, but at that time you can switch catalogs if you really don’t want to take BIOL 831. For those of you who have already started the research series, you have two choices. First, you could complete the 6 credits. Second, you could choose to forfeit those credits and replace them with another class. If you choose to switch catalogs, the earliest you can graduate is December 2017, and you will have to be enrolled in a class the fall 2017 semester. If you have questions or if you want to switch catalogs, let Robyn or Brian know (msbiology@unk.edu). They will have the correct form for you to fill out and will help you with the process.
I guess that’s it for another edition of the Director’s Desk. I don’t know how much longer I will be the interim Director, so I hope everyone has a successful fall semester. Let me know if you have ideas or concerns for the program (shafferjj@unk.edu).

Office Space

Fall 2016 Deadlines:
August 22\textsuperscript{nd}—Fall classes begin
August 26\textsuperscript{th}—Last day to add/drop class on MyBlue with no penalty
August 31\textsuperscript{st}—E-bill notifications sent to Lopermail account
September 5\textsuperscript{th}—Labor Day break, all classes dismissed
September 15\textsuperscript{th}—Last day to apply for December graduation
September 21\textsuperscript{st}—Tuition & Fees due in full
October 17\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th}—Fall break, all classes dismissed
October 21\textsuperscript{st}—Last day to drop a course (no refund at this time)
October 24\textsuperscript{th}—Early Registration for Spring 2017 classes begins for all currently enrolled students
November 11\textsuperscript{th}—Comprehensive Exams (for graduating students) must be returned to the Biology Dept
November 14\textsuperscript{th}—General Registration for Spring 2017 classes begins for all admitted students
November 23\textsuperscript{rd}-25\textsuperscript{th}—Thanksgiving break, all classes dismissed
December 12\textsuperscript{th}-15\textsuperscript{th}—Finals Week
December 16\textsuperscript{th}—Graduation
December 20\textsuperscript{th}—Deadline for faculty to submit final grades for fall classes
December 26\textsuperscript{th}-30\textsuperscript{th}—University is closed for the Holidays
Students planning to graduate this December 2016 must apply for graduation on MyBlue. Even if you do not plan to attend ceremony you must apply in order to receive your degree. The deadline to apply for December graduation is September 15th. There is a $25 application fee which can be paid online during the application process. Commencement ceremony will take place at 10:00 am on December 16th in the Health and Sports Center. Please consider making the trip to Kearney to walk in graduation and if you do, please let the Biology Department know so we can plan some special events for you.

Current students who want to switch to the 2017-18 catalog must contact the MS Program Coordinators at msbiology@unk.edu to complete a new Program of Study form. We will start to make a list of student names now but catalog changes will not go into effect until Fall 2017.