WELCOME

New Online Masters Students for Fall 2012: Shevaun Adams, NE; Christopher Alberts, NE; Christy Anderson, IL; Peggy Anderson, TX; James Baker, NM; Jaime Banks, MN; Allison Bennett, MO; Julie Bolin, AZ; Robert Box, TX; Elizabeth Breeden, WI; Courtney Brown, SC; Patricia Cardwell, MO; Laurie Citino, PA; David Corley, GBR; Donald Covey, GA; Victoria Craig, FL; Victoria DiGregorio-Frist, AZ; Jason Dussault, MA; Caroline Early, AZ; Jennie Flanders, WI; Natalie Fletcher, NE; Liza Gaddy, MO; Jennifer Gonzalez, VA; Valarie Gray, OH; Michelle Hayes, AL; Vanessa Horneman, FL; Adam Huebner, NE; Kelly Ingram, VA; Benjamin James Holston, AZ; Padmini Kirpalani, AL; Susanne Klatt-Faistnauer, CA; Byron Korf, NE; Jessica Korinek, NE; Jacqueline Kragel, CA; Ryan Lemke, NE; Marta Lipowska, FL; Melissa Love, CA; Anya Mack, NE; Jessica Mack, NY; Andrew Marth, MD; Aaron Martinez, CO; Mauritian Matsuda, NE; Simon Mendoza, WA; Brittany McPherson; Patrick Miller, NE; Tara Mitchell, NE; Laura Molynieux, CA; Margaret Monzingo, NE; Bethany Munn, OH; Kirsten Mycko, MI; Kyleen Newlander, PA; Bradley Olson, PA; Daniel Ostrander, NE; Carlos Peredo, PA; Keith Payne, MI; Vicky Peterson, MN; Jacqueline Petkovic, IL; Quratullain Saadi, NY; David Satterfield, MD; Katharine Sechrest, MO; Nicole Shives, NE; April Sills, IN; Jennifer Suhr, NE; Tiffany Taylor, TX; Timothy Tisdale, AL; Holly Trimble, TX; Alison VanWyk-Irwin, CO; Brian White, CO

New Online Masters Students for Spring 2013: Edison Abeyta, CA; Deron Robert Andersen, IA; Shahadah Bailey, FL; Joy Bingaman, PA; Amanda Bolus, CO; Lindsey Bowen, FL; Amanda Breeden, GA; Alemah Butler, MS; Jessica Choi, IL; Christopher Cleghorn, AL; Jason Correll, AR; Kristy Craig, VA; Caitlin DiNallo, MA; Kim Do, CA; Anna-Maria Easley, CA; Veronica Elton, AZ; Jeffrey Fitzgerald, NE; Jackeline Flansburg-Cruz, OH; Rosemary Flynn, CA; Jasen Foster, IL; Mary Fuller, KY; Tiffany Hines, IL; Inigo Howlett, WA; Tara Kluesner, MI; Sarah Lehman, OH; David Lowrey, FL; Michael Mace, MO; Jennifer Major, MO; Tessa Mapes, TX; Kateri McKinney, CA; Marely Jensen, RI; Huong thi Nguyen, MA; Devon Niewohner, NE; Elizabeth Painter, TX; Curtis Reese, NE; Lindy Riebe, ID; Janelle Jo Roberts, PA; Todd Scripture, MN; Ryan Smith, GA; Brenda Steadham, GA; Amy Steward, LA; Jorge Joel Torres-Rivera, PR; Michael L. Witchurch, FL; Jillian Zehring, KS

We were sad to say goodbye to Elizabeth Wethington, one of our Distance Education Coordinators, but are excited to welcome two new faces to the Department, Robyn Schoenebeck and Marla Trampe. Elizabeth started a new position this past Fall as Program Administrator for the Computational Bioscience Program at the University of Colorado Denver. We wish her the best of luck!
Robyn Schoenebeck has replaced Elizabeth and just started with the Department this January. Previously, Robyn worked in the Registrar’s Office as the Graduation Coordinator. She, along with Brian Peterson, will continue to assist all the distance-learning students on their progress towards graduation. Please feel free to contact Robyn and Brian with any questions at 308-865-1589 or by email at mbsbiology@unk.edu. Robyn is married to Casey Schoenebeck, Assistant Professor in the Biology Department. They have one daughter, Ashley, and 2 dogs, Gypsy and Daisy.

Marla Trampe was hired in September as the Office Associate for the Graduate Online Program for Biology and Computer Science & Information Systems. Previously, she worked as the Office Supervisor for the Student Life Office in the Nebraskan Student Union. Marla is pursuing a degree in Business Administration with an emphasis in Management and Marketing. Marla is married to Doug and they have been long time residents of the Kearney area. They have two sons, Heath and Matthew. Heath & Aunnee Trampe, live in Ft Wayne, IN with their sons Jonathan and Andrew. Matthew and Jade Trampe currently reside in Omaha, NE.

CONGRATULATIONS

Awards

Dr. Kim Carlson, Associate Professor of Biology at the University of Nebraska at Kearney, has been awarded the “National Faculty/Staff of the Month” by the National Residence Hall Honorary. “In her classes, Dr. Carlson challenges her students to not simply learn and regurgitate information, but rather she encourages them to dive into the material head first,” said Jordyn Duncan of Morrill. Dr. Carlson, who teaches genetics, was nominated by Duncan for her willingness to “make the class material relatable and exciting for her students.”

Dr. Carlson is the president of the UNK chapter of Sigma Xi: The Scientific Research Society. “We are incredibly excited and honored that Dr. Carlson received such a prestigious award and that it is our campus’ second National OTM this year,” said Josh Brummer of Kearney. Brummer is the vice president of recognition for NRHH. “Through all of her success, Dr. Carlson remains humble,” Brummer. “She has an open door policy and is always willing to meet with her students to help them succeed. She is an outstanding educator and deserves more recognition than she could ever possibly receive.” “Of the Month” nominations can be submitted by anyone affiliated with UNK and are selected by NRHH. The goal of NRHH is to support and help develop the aspiring leaders on campus, and to recognize individuals and groups who go above and beyond.
Stephanie Butler (Fall 2011 on-campus graduate) and Christopher Uphoff (Spring 2012 on-campus graduate) received the University of Nebraska Kearney's award for honorable mention thesis in the College of Natural & Social Science for the 2011-2012 academic year.

Summer 2012 Graduates:
Aaron Ament, Gretchen Clevenger, Kristy Conn, Scott Cunningham, Elaina (DeVera) Audette, Jeffrey Drahota (Thesis), Christopher Estling, Clayton Faivor, Nicole Fusco, Amber Haglund-Pagel, Dianne Hoellman, Colin Hubbard, Samantha Kramer, Gary Phillips (Thesis), Lucas Pignolet, Traci Raley, Heather Smith, Chad Springer.

Fall 2012 Graduates:

Two students were able to attend the UNK Fall Commencement ceremony on December 14th held in the Health and Sports Center.

Above: Mery Casady (left) and Daniel Mauck (right) get ready for ceremony

From Left: Dr. Joe Springer, Department Chair; Daniel Mauck, non-thesis graduate; Dr. Kim Carlson, Professor; and Dr. Julie Shaffer, Professor

News Feed

Another Biology Professor has been featured in New Frontiers, the Research and Creative Activity publication at the University of Nebraska Kearney. Below is an excerpt from the article on Dawn Simon, Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology, entitled “Code Breaker”. For the full article click on the link [http://unknews.unk.edu/2013/01/09/code-breaker/](http://unknews.unk.edu/2013/01/09/code-breaker/)
An assistant professor in the Department of Biology since 2009, Simon’s work revolves around genetic sequences. Small bits of DNA that have been turned into a data file, they contain thousands of lines. To even many scientists, it looks like nothing more than this:

GGCCGAUAAUCAAGGCUAAUUAUCGGUU

For Simon, however, those letters arrange themselves into patterns. A’s pair with U’s, and G’s with C’s (and sometimes U’s). They “fold” into branches, some short and some long, with loops of non-mating letters in the middle. For example the “GGCCGAUAAU” in the above sequence folds on itself to pair with the “AUUAUCGGAA,” with “CAAGGCUA” remaining unpaired. She’s looking for introns, a specific type of sequence. What Simon sees on the screen isn’t chaos, but the orderly blueprint of an organic life form.

“I don’t even see the letters,” she explained. “I just see ‘Oh, there’s a Group I intron,’ or ‘There’s a Group II.’”

Simon’s field, molecular evolution, has exploded since the 1990s, when technology advanced enough to make genome sequencing efficient and relatively cheap. When she was an undergraduate at the University of Iowa, Simon said, the graduate students who worked in the laboratory would sequence a handful of genes per year. Now, there are thousands of sequences available to scientists.

Sequence analysis remains a highly specialized field, however, and even fewer scientists share Simon’s focus on a particular type of sequence, called an intron. From that group, perhaps only a handful of scientists share her specialty—Group I and Group II intron evolution.

Her intense focus has led Simon to publish 10 articles on intron-related research, including the results of a 2009 broad-scale study of Group II introns in bacteria that is the most comprehensive treatment of the subject to date. Since coming to UNK, Simon has participated in projects funded by almost $1.5 million in grants and has collaborated with specialists in many other subfields of biology. As colleague Kim Carlson explained, Simon’s expertise and passion for bioinformatics put her in high demand.

“She brings a very unique part of biology that (UNK) hadn’t had, and many other places have started to have, and we needed to have,” said Carlson, who was also on the search committee for Simon’s position.

Carlson explained bioinformatics as “the marriage of computer science and biology,” which happens after a biological sample is collected, and DNA is extracted. With the help of computer programs, the material is then broken down into sequences of letters that represent its components. By studying those sequences, scientists can identify genetic characteristics. They can also form ideas about how those characteristics developed, and how they may continue to evolve.

“(Simon) can come up with a story (about the evolution of a DNA sequence) and put numbers to it,” Carlson said. That’s an element that improves any research project and makes the results more readily accepted.

“We all collaborate with her, because she has that unique background,” Carlson said, noting that adding Simon to the faculty broadened research possibilities for the entire department. “It’s just opened up our entire research perspective,” she said.
Grants, Meetings, Publications

Meetings


Publications
Schoenebeck, C. W., B. C. Peterson, and J. A. Obermiller. In press. Accuracy of predicting white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) and mule deer (Odocoileus hemionus) age using antler metrics. Great Plains Research.


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.
I have two topics I need to address: Deadlines and communication. First, deadlines. We all have them. Some of us work hard to get materials finished well ahead of a deadline while others like the adrenaline rush of barely finishing in time, but I need to discuss the importance of deadlines in the MS Biology program. This fall the faculty as a whole expressed general frustration with the lack of attention to due dates and deadlines by online students. Yes, we all have hectic lives but deadlines must still be met, and too many students are not paying attention to deadlines or act as though the deadlines are trivial. One habit all distance students must get into is checking your Lopermail account daily. If you don’t like checking your Lopermail account, set your Lopermail account to automatically forward to an e-mail account that you do check daily. This is our only way to contact you. Many faculty send the entire class e-mail reminders of due dates and deadlines only to have students contact them a day or two after the deadline has passed stating they “didn’t know” the take-home exam was due yesterday or the online portion of an exam was only available through last Friday evening. This kind of behavior simply has to stop and this spring the faculty are not going to be lenient about students “forgetting” deadlines or getting deadlines and due dates for different classes “mixed up.”

I suggest that every student get a calendar just for distance course work, write all due dates for your different assignments in the calendar at the start of the term (perhaps in different colors for different classes), and place this calendar by your computer so you have to look at it every time you work at your computer. By doing this you will notice one thing: different faculty members have different deadlines. One comment we see frequently on the comprehensive exam (where you are given space to write comments about and suggestions for the program) is that students want all faculty members to have the same due dates and times. Simply put, this is not going to happen. Each faculty member has the freedom to set up his or her course the way that works best for that individual instructor. If you were on campus, you would think nothing of having different deadlines and due dates for different classes, so you should not expect any sort of uniformity in a distance program. Most of us have to schedule distance teaching and assignments due dates around our on-campus responsibilities. Make it your resolution for 2013 to get all your work turned in on time this year. If not, you are likely to be penalized a significant percentage of the value of the assignment.

Next, communication. This fall faculty also expressed frustration with students who did not communicate with them in a timely fashion so that a problem could be resolved. If you have a serious issue arise in your life that prevents you from participating in the class, you should let your instructor know about it right away. Contacting the instructor during finals week to tell him or her why you haven’t participated in the class since week 6 is too late for anything to be done and you will be assigned a failing grade. If you contact your instructor immediately, your instructor can advise you of the options available to you, especially regarding withdrawing from the class or the university. Following the official withdrawal date but prior to the opening of the grading period, there is still an opportunity to apply for what is called a “hardship” withdraw. There is paperwork that must be completed and a committee reviews these applications, and you must withdraw from all your classes, but it is an option should something truly significant happen in your life. Grades of “incomplete” may be an option in some classes, and this is why it is imperative that you contact your instructor immediately. If your class has a significant amount of the grade based on active participation in discussions, for example, this is not something you make up on your own and a grade of “incomplete” is not an option for that class.
**Student News**

**Wendi Middleton (Summer 2005 on-campus graduate),** began a new teaching position this past Fall. She is a Lecturer/Clinical Assistant in the Allied Health Department at Southern Illinois University Carbondale. She is teaching *Anatomy & Physiology* and *Medical Terminology*.

**Jennifer Wawrzonek (current distance student),** won a gold medal in the Rocky Mountain State Games karate competition in the Female Kata Women 35+ (Beginner) division. She had only been taking lessons for about a month when her sensei suggested she compete. She is now eligible to compete in the State Games of America next summer; for now she is enjoying her medal (pictured left).

**Todd Gowing (Fall 2012 distance graduate),** along with his wife Steph, are the proud parents of a baby boy. Trey Jackson Gowing, was born August 22, 2012 at 12:31 pm. Trey weighed in at 10 lbs. 1 oz. and was 22 inches (pictured right).

**James Hobbs (current distance student),** welcomed Reagan Michelle Hobbs on December 11, 2012 at 12:32 pm. Reagan was born via C-section and weighed 7 lbs. 11 oz. and was 18.5 inches long (pictured left).

Please let us know what is going on in your lives; email us your news at [msbiology@unk.edu](mailto:msbiology@unk.edu).
Looking for an elective to take this Summer 2013? Dr. Frank Kovac, Associate Professor in the Chemistry Department, will be teaching CHEM 855-Biochemistry for High School Teachers (3 credit hours) on-line. This class can count as one of your electives; students must complete 18 hours of electives as part of their degree requirements. See the course description below.

Biochemistry is the study of the chemistry of living organisms. This chemistry is water based and involves biopolymers like proteins and nucleic acids (DNA and RNA) and other biologically relevant molecules like lipids, carbohydrates, hormones, and vitamins. This course begins with a review of the foundations of biochemistry and the chemistry of water. It then moves on to address various aspects of the structure, function and metabolism of the range of biomolecules mentioned above. The course closes with a discussion of the basics of metabolism and metabolic pathways.

Students planning to graduate this May 2013 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 May graduation is February 1st. There is a $25 application fee which can be paid on-line during the application process. Commencement ceremony will take place at 10:00 am on May 3rd 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.

The last day to drop a full semester course is March 8th; there is no refund available at that time. It is the student’s responsibility to drop the course on MyBlue; if the course is not dropped, the student will receive whatever grade they have earned in the course.

Registration for both Summer 2013 and Fall 2013 classes, for currently enrolled students, begins April 1st. Check your MyBlue account in late March to see when you are allowed to register. We encourage you to register early for your courses.