



BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

2022-2023

McINNIS HALL

A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear students, colleagues, and alumni,

This was a wonderful year for the Biology Department which is now complete with amazing new faculty- our married professor duo (Dr. Brian and Dr. Rachael Alfaro), and our two Eastern alums- Dr. Kandace Thomas (Dr. K) and Prof. Rachael Loeb. I am thankful to have just celebrated 25 years at Eastern. Plus we have great adjuncts (Prof. Ferry, Prof. Nicol, and Dr. Garcia). These faculty are so committed to Eastern and to our amazing students who make us proud everyday by their hard work, kind hearts, and dedication to their goals. After a bittersweet graduation in May where we sent off seven terrific grads, we began our SOAR program (SOAR- Summer of Academic Research in Biology and Environmental Science) as part of the summer research program with our colleagues in Chemistry. Our SOAR researchers, Kaela Miles and Nina Palumbo, did a fantastic job under the mentorship of Dr. Brian Alfaro and Dr. K, respectively and are looking forward to continuing their work in the fall. Furthermore, the success of our alumni reminds us that we are preparing our students well and brings to mind the following verse:

Philippians 1:6

“And so I am sure confident that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.”

Please enjoy this newsletter as it gives a glimpse of the special people I am blessed to encounter every day!



Dr. Maria Fichera
Chair, Department of Biology



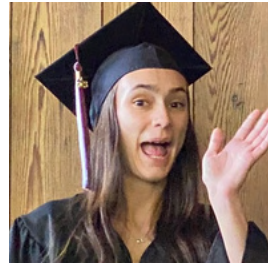
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2023!

The biology department celebrated the achievements of our majors as we graduated seven students – five graduated with a BS in Environmental Science, and two with a BS in Biology. Students who graduated with honors include Kaitlyn Blankley who earned Summa Cum Laude and the University Alumni Award; and Riley Porter who graduated Cum Laude.

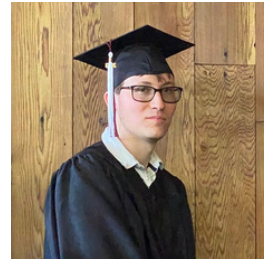
BS Environmental Science



Benjamin Chung



Lauren Howard



Daniel Kapner



Aleeyah Hawkins



Riley Porter



Kaitlyn Blankley



Alejandro Martinez

BS Biology

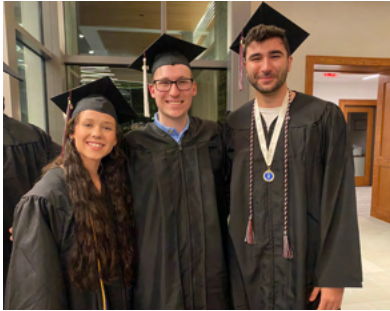
FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE.

-JEREMIAH 29:11



The whole crew

THE BACCALAUREATE SERVICE



Katie, Dan, and Alejandro



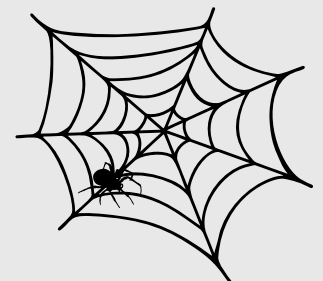
CONGRATULATIONS

Biology majors were inducted into the Sigma Zeta National Science and Math Honor Society (see picture above): Caroline Herring (forth from the R, first row) and Alejandro Martinez (behind Caroline).

Dr. Rachael Alfaro was the invited speaker and shared cool research about her spiders (see photo below). Congrats to all!



Fun with some of our seniors at the Fichera house for the annual biology department senior party!



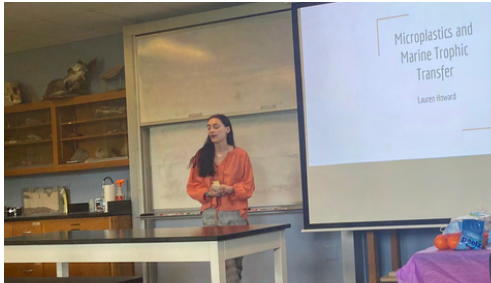
SENIOR THESIS PRESENTATIONS



Spotted Lanternfly Management in the US: Testing Efficacy of Treatments in Vineyards
- D. Kapner



The Impact of Creatine Monohydrate Supplementation and Timing on Planaria Regeneration
- K. Blankley



Microplastics and Marine Trophic Transfer
-L. Howard



The Digestion of Plastics by Superworms
- A. Hawkins



Importance of Isopods in Breakdown of Detritus in Temperate Environments- B. Chung



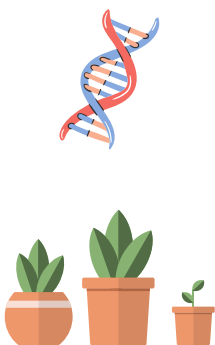
Microclimate Effect on Spider Population and Distribution-R. Porter



Genetic Population Study and Epigenetic Analysis of Pholcus phalangoides-A. Martinez



Entomopathogenic Fungal Control of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid- J. Bletsch



LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL



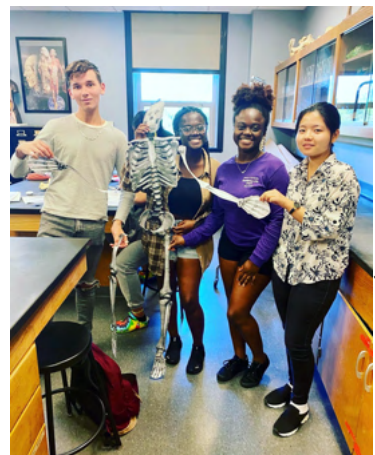
Lots of measuring



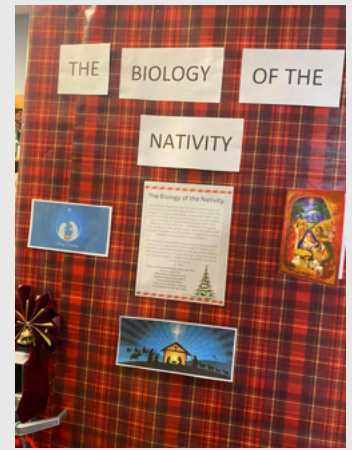
Who's the new student?



It's an animal party



No bones about it- anatomy is cool!



“EDUCATING THE MIND WITHOUT EDUCATING THE HEART IS NO EDUCATION AT ALL.”

ARISTOTLE



“TELL ME AND I FORGET, TEACH ME AND I MAY REMEMBER, INVOLVE ME AND I LEARN.”
— BENJAMIN FRANKLIN



SUMMER RESEARCH 2023



Biology, chemistry and biochemistry researchers



Day 1 with Kaela Miles and Nina Palumbo



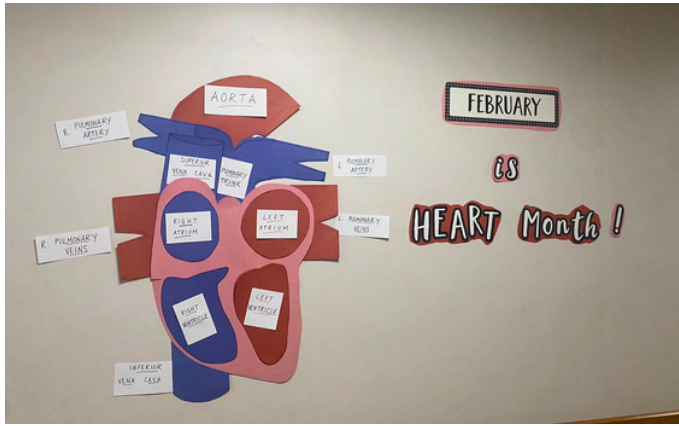
Last day!



The SOAR team



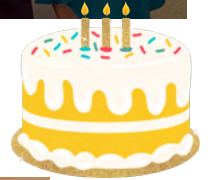
above two photos courtesy of Holly Scoffone



Prof. Loeb uses creativity to decorate our halls and educate us!



In the biology department, everyday is cake-day!



Scholarship

Dr. Brian Alfaro's was invited by a colleague at Minnesota State University to give a virtual seminar on global climate and Brassica plants - Oct. 2022



Dr. Maria Fichera was a panel speaker at the Science and Religion Symposium sponsored by Palmer Seminary where she spoke about the ethics of CRISPR gene editing - Sept. 2022

Bumped into these alums on campus...



Steve Sampurna, Class of 2014
Senior Analytical Scientist at GSK



Paul Lilley, Class of 1999
Certified Industrial Hygienist at
the US Army Public Health Center



Summer Winston
Class of 2020,
2021 (MBA)
Realtor



Awesome brothers-
Kenny Samuel, Class of 2021 (left), is in a
PhD program at University of Illinois -
Urbana Champaign

Bryan Levi, Class of 2022 (right)- is in a
Masters program in Johns Hopkins



**Find us on Facebook, Instagram and
YouTube!**



Looking forward to an amazing 2023-2024 academic year!

Dr. Maria Fichera, Professor and Chair of Biology
Dr. Rachael Alfaro, Assistant Professor of Biology
Dr. Brian Alfaro, Assistant Professor of Biology
Dr. Kandace Thomas, Assistant Professor of Biology and Eastern alum
Prof. Rachael Loeb, Affiliate Professor and Eastern alum

Questions? Contact Dr. Maria Fichera -- mfichera@eastern.edu or 610-341-1779