



BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

2024-2025



A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear students, colleagues, and alumni,

It was another wonderful year of blessings in our Biology department and the fact that it was Eastern's centennial anniversary made it even more special. Students did interesting internships and many were engaged in faculty-led research projects. Many of these experiences led to several of our students presenting in the College of Health Sciences Research symposium in the spring. As always, students were challenged to think critically about science and faith in their classes. And one amazing new highlight this year was that we took a department trip to the Smithsonian Museums in DC. Due to the generosity of alums and their families, we chartered a bus to take 15 of us there and back on a beautiful Saturday in March. We hope to make a trip each year as a department "tradition."

We graduated 15 students and enjoyed a productive summer with three students engaged in research in our SOAR program under the mentorship of Dr. Brian and Dr. Rachael Alfaro, and Dr. K (Kandace Thomas). Many of those who graduated are already working or will be entering graduate programs this fall.

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



*Dr. Maria Fichera
Chair, Department of Biology*



PSALM 100:5

"For the Lord is good, and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations."



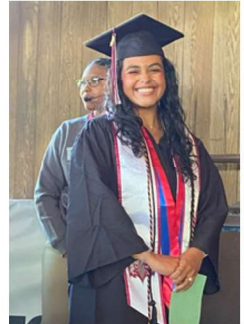
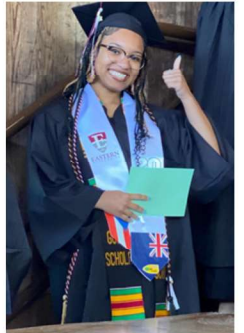
FOR I KNOW THE PLANS I HAVE FOR YOU," DECLARES THE LORD, "PLANS TO PROSPER YOU AND NOT TO HARM YOU, PLANS TO GIVE YOU HOPE AND A FUTURE.

-JEREMIAH 29:11



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2025!

The biology department celebrated the achievements of our majors as we graduated 15 students – three graduated with a BS in Environmental Science, 11 with a BS in Biology, and one with a BA in Biological Studies. Students who graduated with honors include Andrew DeStefano & Trinity Gruber who earned Summa Cum Laude, and Tyler Foote & Madeline Weeks, who graduated Cum Laude.



THE BACCALAUREATE SERVICE



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



CONGRATULATIONS

Eight of our majors were inducted into the Sigma Zeta National Science and Math Honor Society in March 2025



L to R-
Back row: Evan Cope, Damola Akinboro
Front row: Jenny Hawley, Eva Ferguson, Gianna Festino, Ethan Gwara, Dami Akinboro and Mackenzie Laub



SENIOR AWARDS



Senior awards go to:
(top row L to R) Jacinth and Madeline for being Excellent TAs
(middle) Tyler for Excellence in Internships & Trinity for Excellence in Research
(bottom row) Andrew for highest GPA

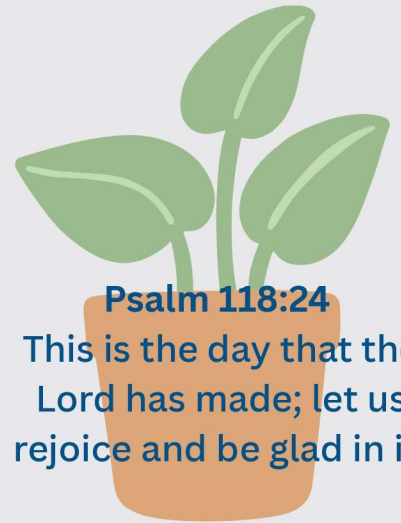
SENIOR THESIS PRESENTATIONS



**OUR
AMAZING
SENIORS**



**Great
Job**

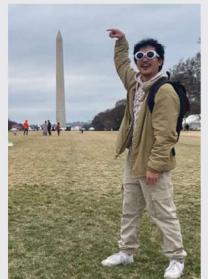


Psalm 118:24

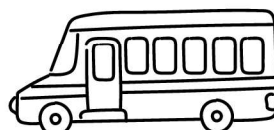
This is the day that the
Lord has made; let us
rejoice and be glad in it.



WHAT'S YOUR POINT?



**The Biology
Department
traveled to the
Smithsonian
Museums in DC!**



The Alfaros



STEM SEMINARS AND OTHER FUN

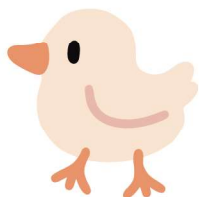


Evan Loeb (middle) told about his career as an environmental field technician



Alum Kali Hertoz (top, far left) spoke about her pathway to becoming a physician assistant

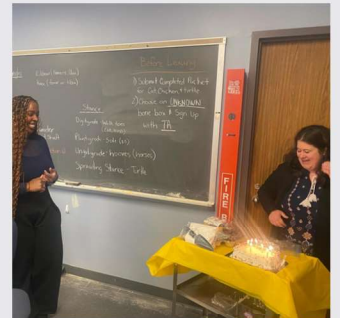
Then of course
there were the
DUCKS in the
library...



and a bunch of
BIRTHDAY
celebrations...



Happy
BIRTHDAY



SUMMER RESEARCH 2025

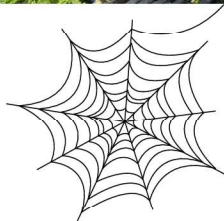


Our summer research community



The SOAR team

(L to R) Dr. K, Dami, Mackenzie, Jeanne
Dr. Rachael and Dr. Brian Alfaro



Fun in the field and lab



The white coats!



Yummy food!

Breaking News

↓ READ MORE ↓



Dr. Brian Alfaro got another paper accepted for publication: "Evaluating genetic variation of *Brassica tournefortii* Gouan collections via microsatellite marker analysis" in *Aliso: A Journal of Systematic and Floristic Botany*.



Trinity Gruber (BS Env Science) received a graduate assistantship at Bloomsburg University for the Master of Science in Biology Program. Trinity also received a Pennsylvania Academy of Science grant.

Class of 2025



Nina Palumbo (BS Biology) is going to Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine.



Andrew DeStefano (BS Biology) is pursuing the Masters of Multicultural Education at Eastern University.



Tyler Foote (BS Env Science) will be attending the Earth Science and Engineering, M. Eng. program at Cornell University.



Madeline Weeks (BS Biology) will be pursuing the Masters of Information program at Rutgers University.

What are some of our alumni up to?



Timothy Straub M.Ed.
BS Biology, 2016
Biology teacher at
Brandywine High
School in Wilmington,
DE



Kadeem Colburn, DDS
BS Biology, 2018
graduated University of
Pennsylvania School of
Dental Medicine, May
2025



Frank Deuter-BS
Environmental Science,
2020
Stewardship Coordinator at
Lower Shoreland Trust



Abigail Dockey, MBA, EU
2025
BA Biological Studies,
2022
R & D Scientist 1 at
Thermo Fisher Scientific



PHILIPPIANS 4:13
I CAN DO ALL
THINGS THROUGH
HIM WHO
STRENGTHENS ME.

Looking forward to an amazing 2025-2026 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

Find us on Facebook,
Instagram and YouTube!



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