

# Biology Department Alumni News

Volume 32

Winter 2009 Edition

## 2007-2009 News

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Hello from the Biology Department of WPUNJ. This is a continuation of a long tradition of Biology Alumni newsletters, which started back in 1976 but has been neglected since 2003. The two faculty members who really were instrumental in this tradition were Dr. John Rosengren and Dr. Sharon Hanks. Since we haven't had a newsletter in a long time, we are concentrating on events of the past year and a half. We now hope to continue this tradition on a regular basis.

## The New Science Hall Addition

Science Hall is getting an addition and a renovation! The project will renovate our present Science Hall, which is over 30 years old. We will also get a 65,000-square-foot addition. The final building will look like the rendering on the right. It will have state-of-the-art classrooms and research facilities. The faculty helped to design laboratory spaces to support research collaboration between faculty and students. The addition and the renovated building will have new computer labs, wireless technology, as well as lots of open space to encourage gathering spaces for students. The project includes a new greenhouse as well. Work on the project



will be conducted in two phases, with completion of the new addition slated for 2010, to be followed by renovation of the existing Science Building by

2012. You will soon be able to follow the progress on our webcam. Visit the College of Science and Health website for more information.

## New Biology Department Faculty

Two new faculty members joined the department in the Fall of 2008.

Dr. JeungWoon Lee received his PhD from Boston University, then served as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Miami and Mass General Hospital. His research uses histological and sterological analysis to study the involvement of inhibitory neu-

rons in the development of nerve injury pain. He also has studied therapeutic agents for treatment of pain, including embryonic stem cells and sodium channel blockers. He has published 12 peer-reviewed papers since 1996, and has 2 in peer review. He is presently setting up his laboratory at William Paterson and is already working with students.

Dr. Joseph Spagna received his undergraduate degree from Claremont McKenna College and his Ph.D. from the University of California at Berkeley. He has had nine publications in refereed journals since 1999. He has received several fellowships and awards. He has applied as PI for an NSF research grant to support his (continued on page 2)

## ISSBB Scholars 2008-2009



These twenty Biology and Biotechnology majors are receiving ISSBB scholarships, funded by the National Science Foundation to help train future American scientists.

## ISSBB Scholars

Twenty Biology and Biotechnology majors received Success in Biology and Biotechnology) scholarships this year.

They are: Hannah Ampofu, Asiel Benitez, Christopher Berghout, Valerie Calilap, Paola Chacon, Ennid Gonzalez, Jaree Noblin, Sarah Oshman, Marie Pierre, Solomon Pressley, Tomiko Rendon, Heidi Rogers, Jonreb Rue, Justin Rue, Mushhood Sheikh,

Emna Solares, Andrew Tiernan, Gabriella Tosto, John Urban and Valbona Xhani.

These scholarships are meant to defray the cost of education for Science, Engineering and Math majors who are going into research or teaching careers, and can cover all expenses.

The application deadline for next year's awards is March 25th.

## Biology Majors' Research

*"...nine of our students or recently graduated students had their research published in refereed journals"*

The Biology majors at WPU have been busy over the past year. In the 2007-2008 year 69 students in the department participated in some type of independent study, off campus internship, research with faculty, or thesis research. This includes 46 undergraduate students doing research or independent study with our faculty, and 15 graduate students. In addition, several students pursued internships.

Last year nine of our students or recently graduated-students had their research published in refereed journals and 20 presentations

authored or coauthored by 38 past and present students.

Dr. Menon organized our second annual Undergraduate Research Day in April 2008. It was attended by almost 100 registrants from ten different institutions representing four states. Twenty nine posters

were presented. It was a great experience for all the students involved and was also excellent for the reputation of the department and university.

On April 4, 2009 we will host the Third Annual Undergraduate Research Day.



## New Faculty, cont.



Dr. Joe Spagna

research program at William Paterson. His research is on the evolution of arthropods, particularly arthropod locomotion. He has extended his research interests into arthropod-inspired robots, and the optimization of their movement. Dr. Spagna is continuing his work on jaw-jumping in trap-jaw ants, and the kinematics of fast-moving spiders with his William Paterson students, as well as with colleagues at the University of Massachusetts and the University of Illinois.



Dr. J.W. Lee

## Biology Faculty - What we're doing now

Our faculty have been very productive over the past year, with 19 articles in refereed journals, 3 in review, 6 non-refereed publications, 12 invited lectures and 20 presentations at regional, national and international meetings. The faculty have also been very active in applying for outside funding, with over 900,000 in active grants, and several pending.

**Dr. Benno** — has taken over as director of the Mouse Lab (Laboratory of Behavior Genetics). He states "It is challenging to attempt to fill the

shoes of founder and ex-director of the mouse lab, Professor Emeritus **Marty Hahn.**" Dr. Benno's current research is to develop mouse models in order to study the mechanisms responsible for the development of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

**Dr. Gardner** — is no longer chair and is enjoying getting back to teaching and research.

**Dr. Menon**— is continuing her research on amphibian metamorphosis and is planning our third annual Undergraduate Research Day.

**Dr. Onaivi** — has introduced pharmacology as an elective to our curriculum. He is the current editor for the International Drug Abuse Research Society (IDARS) and has recently published, An Endocannabinoid hypothesis of drug reward and addiction in the *Ann. NY. Acad. Sci.*,

**Dr. Risley**— continues two bat research projects. Two WPU biology majors will be research assistants on an FAA funded project assessing the impact of heavy metal pollution on bats near the Atlantic City Airport. MS Biology student

Lindsey Wight is project leader for a second US Fish and Wildlife Service funded study on the federally-endangered Indiana bat at Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. The first grad student on the project was Marilyn Kitchell (M.S. '09).

**Dr. Patnaik**—is studying the behavior of chromosomes in *Trypanosoma brucei*, a protozoan parasite responsible for sleeping sickness, which afflicts many thousands of people and cattle in sub-Saharan Africa. Dr. Patnaik, with the help of 7 undergraduates at this University, has recently published his work defining a replication control element in procyclic trypanosomes. Recent work carried out by Mark Sauchelli and John Urban in his lab shows that the element - essential in procyclics - is completely dispensable in the mammalian bloodstream form of the parasites.

**Dr. Sebetich**—with **Dr. Pardi** is conducting an ecological investigation of the Belcher Creek watershed to study the potential impacts of the stream on Greenwood Lake.

**Dr. Slaymaker**—with **Dr. Mike Peek** and his students, is establishing a method to genetically fingerprint the threatened American beach grass, which is largely responsible for stabilizing foredunes along much of the eastern US coast.

## Annual Faculty-Student Softball Game (May 2008)



Dr. Peek organized the third annual Faculty/Student Softball game in May 2008. It was a big, wet success and the faculty won again (3 to 1).

## Biology Major's Awards

At our award ceremony on May 15, 2008, thirteen students were inducted into Beta Beta Beta, the Biology honor society. We gave the Outstanding Senior Award to Juan Carlos Claros-Sorto, who also received the University's Outstanding Student award. The C. Kent Warner award went to Justin Linteris. A new undergraduate research award has been instituted and was shared by Juan Carlos Cla-

ros-Sorto, Luis Posadas and Mark Sauchelli.

We also gave an award to the students who did best overall on our assessment exam, Amanda Liggett, with 4 other students receiving honorable mention.

The Biology department also gives scholarships every year, funded by our C. Kent Warner Foundation. The awardees for this year are Mariam Ashraf, Katherine

Cano, Michelle Cilibrasi, Yelena Smirnova and John Urban.



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Visit the Alumni link on the  
Biology website:  
<http://www.wpunj.edu/biology/>

## Alumni Activities

### Faculty News

#### Retirements in the last 6 years;

Jane Voos	2003
Sharon Hanks	2004
Jean Werth	2005
Martin Hahn	2007

**Births:** Two of our faculty members, Dr. Gilley and Dr. Peek, had new additions in the past year. Flora Gilley was born January 25, 2008. Elizabeth Peek joined big brother Logan on May 8, 2008.

### Alumni News

Here is some news of what our alumni have doing. Please let us know what you're up to. You may visit our facebook (Bio William Paterson) or you may email Dr. E. Gardner at [gardnere@wpunj.edu](mailto:gardnere@wpunj.edu).

#### 1986

Louis Sayad (B.S. '86, M.S. '92) is President of Global Invest and Chief Operating Officer of Asiatic Industries. We are also fortunate that he missed Biology enough to join us again and is working as an adjunct for WPU, teaching General Biology labs.

#### 1987

John Schaffer (B.S. '87, M.A. '89) is a biologist in the firm of Tetra Tech, an environmental consulting company in New Jersey.

#### 1991

Carol-Ann Boyko Schaffer (B.S.'91, M.A.'98) is working in Roche Clinical Development as a Project Data Manager.

#### 1992

Gayle Horner (Neufeld) (BS, '92; MA, '96) is taking a break from working on her PhD at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks. She has started a GIS consulting business. She traveled to Ecuador last year and looks forward to more travels

#### 1998

Kevin Curtis (M.S. '06) has been appointed to the faculty at Mohave Community College in Arizona

#### 1999

Beth Sulner (B.S., '99) is practicing veterinary medicine in N.J.

#### 2000

Free Doecks (B.A, '00) is a D.O. specializing in Pediatric Medicine at Albert Einstein

Pat Rector (M.A., '00) is the Principal Environmental Specialist NJDEP, Division of Watershed Management Bureau of Watershed Planning

#### 2002

Hoda Bastani (B.S. '02) became the youngest ever Pennsylvania State College of Medicine graduate in 2007.

Susan Sgro (M.S.'02) is working as the Biotechnology Laboratory Technician for the Biology Department. She is also an adjunct for the department, teaching BT: Gene Expression and Scanning Electron Microscopy.

#### 2003

Patricia Vander Sande (Bush) (B.S. '03, M.S. '08) is working as the Microbiology Laboratory Technician for the Biology Department at William Paterson University. She is also an adjunct for the department, teaching Microbiology labs. She is married and has two sons.

Mario Samson (B.S. '03) is in the PharmD program at UC San Francisco.

Samira Ziaei (M.S. Biotech, 03) is in her 4th year in the Biology Ph.D. program at The City University of New York investigating how the degradation of heterogeneous nuclear ribonucleoprotein A1 (hnRNP A1) protein is regulated.

#### 2004

Josephson DeGuzman (B.S. BT '04) recently moved to the Bay Area (Emeryville, CA) and is currently working as a Quality Lab Associate (QC Microbiology) at Baxter located in Hayward, CA, and was previously employed by Novo Nordisk in Hayward, CA.

Christine Johnson (B.S. '04, M.S. '06) has been working for Garden State Cancer Center in Belleville, NJ since October 2006 as a lab/animal research technician. The lab is working on lymphoma and pancreatic cancer using pretargeting radioimmunotherapy.

#### 2005

Lester Myers (B.S., '05) is currently studying for the MCAT in California while working for Progenitor Cell Therapy, a manufacturer that specializes in cellular therapy.

**2006**

Xiao Ji Chen (B.S. '06) is taking courses to fulfill the pre-requisites for a PA program.

Tiffany Greco (B.S. '06) is half-way through her PhD at University of Maryland Baltimore, studying neuronal and astrocytic mitochondrial bioenergetics following global cerebral ischemia.

Darci Gresko (B.S. '06) is on maternity leave. She was previously working as an Embryologist, doing In Vitro Fertilization (IVF).

Bob Hopkins (M.S. '06) runs Insect Management (WNV monitoring, gypsy moths, etc.) for the Berks County (PA) Conservation District.

Paul Meozzi ('06) will be graduating from pharmacy school this spring.

Dawn Stager (B.S. '06, M.S. '08) is in the Process Development group at the company VaxInnate in Cranbury. This company performs the research and process development for making flu vaccines.

Brianne Villano (M.S. Biotech, '06) is living and working in Research Triangle Park in North Carolina. She does electron microscopy for a pathology lab. She walks trails with her pup, is involved in the HOA, an animal welfare league, and a local community theatre.

**2007**

Michelle Christ (B.S., '07) is enrolled in the Certification Program at WPUNJ, for teacher's certification in Biology.

Marilyn Kitchell (M.S., '07) is working at the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Dante Descalzi Montoya (M.S., '07) is a Ph.D. student in the Molecular Pathology and Immunology Program of the Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine at the Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences-NJMS-UMDNJ.

David Macharia (B.S., '07) is a second year PharmD student at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy.

Japheth Mwangangi (B.S. Chem, Minor Bio, '07) is a first year PharmD student at the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy.

Brij Patel (M.S., BT, '07) is working for Chromocell Corp. as a Research Associate for the Molecular Biology division. He works on RNA/DNA extractions, PCR, primer construction and many other molecular biology assays & techniques.

Shweta Pandya (M.S., BT, '07) is working for Chromocell Corp. in North Brunswick as an Asst. Research Associate for the Cell Culture Core department. She maintains cell lines, does assay plating, works with robotics and is currently helping to develop a new cell line with the  $\alpha\beta\beta$  gene (pain receptor cell line).

Ruchi Sharma (M.S., BT, '07) is at the Novartis Pharmaceuticals Oncology business unit at Florham Park, NJ.

**2008**

Josaih Adaelu (M.S. BT, '08) is in R&D at ImClone Systems, a Subsidiary of Eli Lilly and Company, developing new methods to screen, evaluate, and release several drug candidates. Josaih and his wife are expecting their first child in June 09.

Jennifer Cagiao (B.S. '08) is currently enrolled in UMDNJ's Doctorate of Physical Therapy program, and set to graduate in May 2011. She begins her first internship this summer at JFK Medical Center.

Juan Carlos Claros-Sorto (B.S. '08) is attending Meharry Medical College in Tennessee.

Michelle DeMartino (B.S. '08) is working as an Admissions Counselor here at WPUNJ. She also created and writes a Health column for the Pioneer Times

Dimitrios Doris (M.S. '08) is at the University of Bridgeport Chiropractic School.

Maja Drozd (B.S. '08) is at the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine.

Seth Eberhardt (B.S., '08) is working on his Master's of Biomedical Science at Midwestern University in Glendale, AZ. His research is on spinal cord injuries and the use of pharmacological therapeutic techniques to reduce damage-causing inflammation. He is still working with Habitat for Humanity and is applying for dental schools as well

Jeremiah Lacsina (B.S., '08) is working for a contract research company called PsychoGenics Inc., in Tarrytown NY. He runs behavioral tests and doses mice, testing compounds for treatment of Huntington's Disease.

Amanda Liggett (B.S. '08) is down in the Caribbean at Ross University School of Medicine, in the middle of her first semester and doing very well.

Shweta Mehta ('08) is married to Jayesh Topiwala and living in Hamilton, Ontario

Nirav Modha (M.S., BT '08) currently works as a member of research team at Tepnel Lifecodes, Stamford, CT facility. Nirav is a Research Associate II, R&D Tepnel Lifecodes is an international molecular diagnostics company.

Luis Posadas (B.S. '08) is attending the University of Nebraska- Lincoln- PhD. Program in Molecular Plant Breeding & Genetics

Trunita Shackelford (B.S., '08) is working at Menu Foods and living down in Wil-lingboro, NJ.

Marlayna Sosna (B.S. '08) is attending the Tufts University School of Dental Medicine.

Chandrika Tadiyiyasas (M.S., BT '08) is working at Johnson and Johnson-Ortho Clinical Diagnostics

Peter Vazquez (B.S. '08) is currently a First-Year Medical Student at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in the Bronx, NY. He will be participating in a volunteer program in Peru over the Summer called Amazon Promise.

## Want to be listed in the next Alumni Newsletter?

Email me at [gardnere@wpunj.edu](mailto:gardnere@wpunj.edu) and let me know what you're doing! Include your name, your graduation date, and any personal and/or professional information you would like us to print. We'd love to hear from you!

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