

School of Integrative Biology Awards Presentation 2026

Awards for:

Undergraduates and Graduate students



SIB Undergraduate Awards



UNIVERSITY OF
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URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

Robert H. Davis Memorial Award

Sue and Kent Davis established this prize to honor and remember their son Robert. Rob had a wide variety of interests and a desire to help others. This prize is intended to recognize “a student who exhibits significant academic curiosity, is hardworking and motivated... (With) interests outside of academia, such as the arts, sports, politics, or literature and who is generally inquisitive about life. The prize allows a student a summer semester in a research lab related to fields of study in the School of Integrative Biology or organismal biology.



Robert H. Davis Memorial Award



Olivia Trublowski

Bio:

Olivia Trublowski is a transfer student from Harper College in Palatine, currently in their junior year at UIUC. She has an interest in entomology and is currently considering pursuing research in a scientific field such as agricultural or medical entomology. Olivia has been working, and is currently working with Joe Zhou's termite lab, and is currently running an experiment examining the mechanism behind the transfer of learned information between termites in a colony. The experiment is currently on track to be completed and published as an article next year. The experience has been very beneficial and eye-opening about how professional research functions, and she hopes to become involved in the lab's genetic aspects as well. Olivia intends to participate in additional research opportunities and internships to explore potential fields and develop skills in research that will help her work towards her aspirations.

Robert H. Davis Excellence Award

Sue and Kent Davis established this award to honor and remember their son Robert. This award supports a student excellence scholarship. The recipient is selected based on academic or research excellence.



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Robert H. Davis Undergraduate Excellence Award



Sonya Luebbers

Bio:

Sonya is a sophomore double majoring in Integrative Biology and Geology. Having been raised on a homestead, she grew up with many animals of many different species — cats, dogs, rabbits, budgies, cockatiels, chickens, pigs, turkeys, ducks, and geese. Even more numerous to name are all the wild things she saw while playing outside, even of the disliked, creepy crawly type. Sonya was interested in what they were called, what they ate, how they lived, and in the “why” of all those answers. She knew she wanted to do something involving the life sciences before she even had a clear understanding of what science was.

Camp Family Research Award

This award, for graduates of Illinois high schools, was made possible by Bob and Tammy Camp. They met at UIUC as first-generation college students. Bob earned a BS and an MS in Computer Science and Tammy earned a BS in General Biology. Tammy received an MS in Biochemistry at Northwestern University. They recognize that research experience and strong lab skills are important for a successful career in biology. This award helps to provide this opportunity to SIB students.



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Camp Family Undergraduate Student Research + iBio Summer Award



Alfonso Alanis

Bio:

Alfonso Alanis is a first-generation college student and a third-year transfer student at the University of Illinois, where he is currently pursuing a degree in Integrative Biology. As a new integrative biology student, he has a high ambition to create a career in research and to continue his education to the highest degree possible. The primary barrier to continuing his aspirations in his education and his research journey is financial support. This is why Alfonso is so keen to apply for SIB funding opportunities.



Elizabeth Hurley

Bio:

Research is an opportunity to explore the vast knowledge that the world has to offer: to ask, answer, and understand questions that may or may not have an evolutionary basis. This evolutionary way that life was formed has both a scientific and theoretical basis, but nobody can fully understand why. Research offers plausible explanations, backed by observation and sound intuition; however, what's wonderful about research is that there is always a window for error. Elizabeth hopes to complete research to formulate and answer the very questions the universe has to offer.

Spyros Kavouras Summer Research Award

Dr. Jerry Kavouras established this award in memory of his father. Dr. Kavouras received his BS in Biology at UIUC in 1995 and his PhD in 2002 from Marquette University. He is currently Professor and Chair of the Biology Department at Lewis University. The award helps support a full-time summer research experience in the lab of an SIB faculty member.



Spyros Kavouras Summer Research Award



Dena Sangurima

Bio:

Dena is a first-generation junior majoring in Integrative Biology, driven by a passion to study and protect the natural world. After transferring from Loyola University Chicago, she found a supportive and collaborative environment at the University of Illinois that has strengthened her commitment to sustainability and community impact. Her experience studying tropical ecosystems in Panama, along with mentorship from leading researchers, deepened her understanding of climate change, conservation, and scientific research. Through programs like SEE Fellows and hands-on lab work, Dena continues to build the skills needed to pursue a graduate degree focused on environmental sustainability. Inspired by her parents' sacrifices and her own curiosity, Dena is dedicated to using science to create meaningful solutions that protect ecosystems and uplift underserved communities.

Robert J. Graesser Summer Internship

Made possible due to the generous donation by Mr. Graesser, a 1973 graduate of Botany. He established this fund for the benefit of future generations of botanists.



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Graesser Summer Internship



Amartya Nalluri

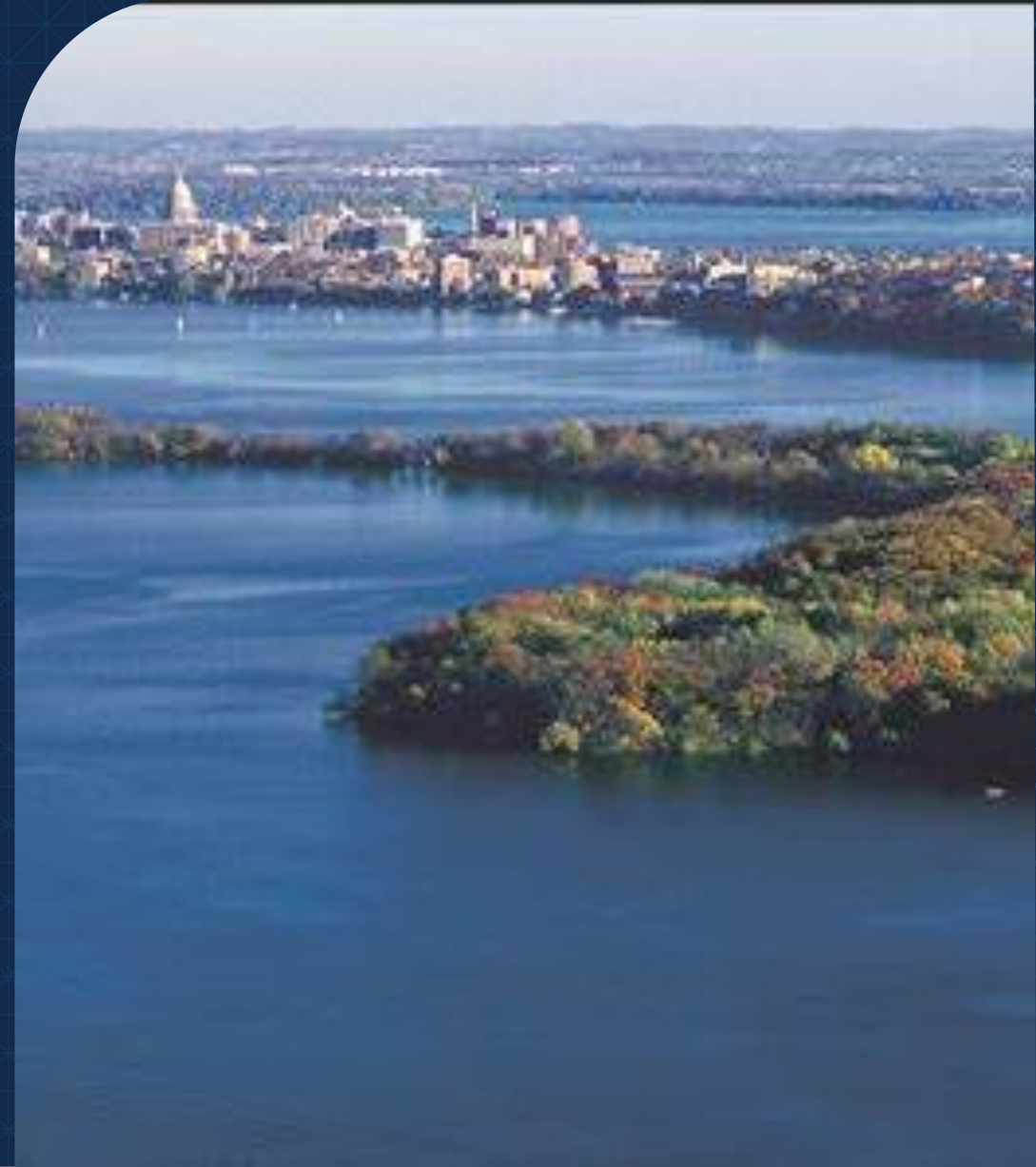
Bio:

Amartya Nalluri is a sophomore in Integrative Biology Honors, with minors in Statistics and Chemistry, and a strong interest in evolutionary biology. He conducts research in the Heath Lab for Coevolutionary Genomics, supporting graduate projects and preparing to launch an independent study on reducing biofilm production in *Sinorhizobium meliloti*. Beyond the lab, Amartya is a copy editor for *The Daily Illini* and *The Collective* art magazine, where he refines writing for clarity, conciseness, and style. He is actively engaged in academic seminars and plans to pursue graduate studies to further explore evolutionary biology and related fields. Through research experiences, conferences, and continued learning, Amartya aims to strengthen both his scientific expertise and communication skills for a future in research.

Mulroy Summer Internship

Made possible by a generous
donation from Ms. Maureen Mulroy
for undergraduate research.

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Mulroy Summer Internship



Julia Aniecko

Bio:

Julia Aniecko is a junior in Integrative Biology and a research assistant in Professor Wendy Yang's lab, where she studies plant-microbe interactions and soil nutrient cycling. She has developed strong laboratory, data analysis, and collaboration skills through hands-on research experience. Julia plans to attend Physician Assistant school with a focus on women's health and preventive care. Her research background has strengthened her critical thinking and problem-solving skills, preparing her for a career in healthcare.



Ava Daruwala

Bio:

Ava Daruwala is an undergraduate studying Integrative Biology with minors in Chemistry and Health Administration, preparing for a career in dentistry. She is building a strong foundation in science and healthcare systems while pursuing opportunities in research, volunteering, and clinical shadowing. Ava is passionate about improving oral health and providing compassionate care, especially in underserved communities. She plans to attend dental school and use her education to make a meaningful impact on patients' overall well-being.



Nathan Dowuonah

Bio:

Nathan is an Integrative Biology major with a minor in Geographic Information Science, focused on ecology and conservation research. He works in the Evangelista Lab studying Amazonian cockroach diversity and how forest environments shape species traits. His research aims to better understand biodiversity and habitat dynamics. As a first-generation student, Nathan plans to pursue graduate study and a career in conservation-focused biological research.

Mulroy Summer Internship



Crystal Luo

Bio:

Crystal is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program with a strong interest in dentistry and public health. She conducts research in the Bell Lab, studying reproductive differences in stickleback fish using histology and molecular techniques. Through her work and clinical volunteering, she has developed skills in research, communication, and patient care. Crystal plans to attend dental school and is committed to combining scientific research with compassionate healthcare.



Cassandra Morley

Bio:

Cassie is an Integrative Biology student who transitioned from architecture to pursue her passion for studying the natural world and its organisms. Her research experience in the Marks Lab sparked a strong interest in evolutionary biology, particularly how plants adapt to extreme environments. She is especially interested in conservation and plans to explore evolutionary adaptations in both plants and marine mammals in the context of climate change. Cassie also integrates artistic creativity into her scientific work, using it to enhance research design and communicate complex ideas. She aims to combine science, art, and diverse perspectives to better understand and protect life in a changing environment.

Mulroy Summer Internship



Greg Neppi

Bio:

Gregson Neppi is a fourth-year student in the BS/MS Integrative Biology program with aspirations of pursuing graduate study and a career in research and academia. After transferring to the University of Illinois as a Political Science major, he discovered his passion for biological sciences, particularly in marine and freshwater research. Greg is actively involved in research across multiple labs, including work on climate variability and genomic studies of killifish evolution in the Fuller Lab. Through these experiences, he has developed strong technical and analytical skills in genetics, data analysis, and ecological research. Driven by curiosity and a commitment to scientific discovery, Greg aims to contribute to understanding aquatic ecosystems as both a researcher and future professor



Olivia Trublowski

AAP Summer Research Fellowship

LAS in partnership with SIB to provide
summer research experience to
undergraduate students



AAP Summer Research Fellowship



Jacqueline Aparicio

Bio:

Hello, my name is Jacqueline, I'm from Chicago, and I'm a Freshman majoring in Biology. This summer, I will be a part of a research lab led by Dr. Rose Marks. Her lab focuses on looking into resuscitation plants. Understanding the biology and environmental factors may lead to their ability to survive and thrive in harsh environments. I am interested in art and enjoy reading. During my free time, I like to spend time with family and friends



Grace Arango

Bio:

I am a junior in MCB, and I am very excited to join Dr. Steven Burgess' lab. I hope to be studying how synthetic biology can be used to optimize photosynthesis!



Sarai L. Cuellar

Bio:

I am a rising junior majoring in Integrative Biology, minoring in Kinesiology and Health. This summer, I will be working in the Chen Lab, where I look forward to gaining research experience and further exploring my academic interests.

AAP Summer Research Fellowship



Jayla Lawrence

Bio:

My name is Jayla Lawrence, and I am a rising senior at the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign majoring in Human Evolutionary Biological Anthropology with a minor in Criminology. This summer I will be working in the Bell Lab, where I will be contributing to research on Threespined stickleback fish populations and focusing on why behavior varies across individuals across different environments.



Jackie Montanez

Bio:

Jackie Montanez is an Integrative Biology student with minors in Chemistry and Animal Science. This summer Jackie will be working with Dr. Philip Anderson in his biomechanics lab. In the future she is thinking of going to vet school.

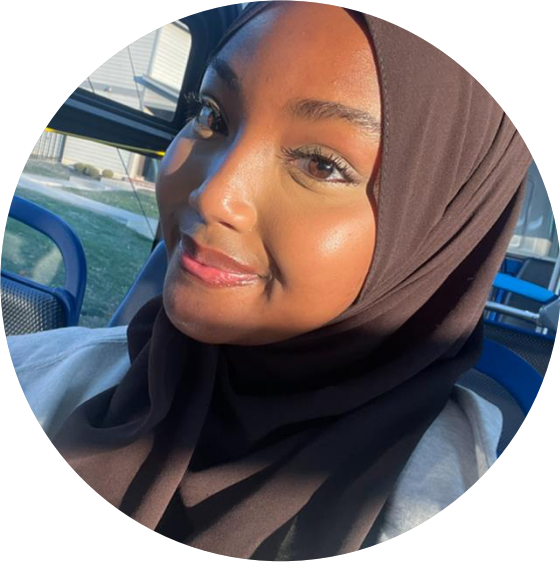


Ana Montes

Bio:

My name is Ana Montes and I'm a freshman majoring in Biology from McHenry, Illinois. This summer I am going to be working in Dr. Katy Heaths Lab

AAP Summer Research Fellowship



Ayaan Osman

Bio:

My name is Ayaan, and I am a rising junior majoring in Integrative Biology with a minor in Psychology. This summer, I will be working in Dr. Doremus's lab, where I'll be studying arthropod-microbe symbioses and how oscillating temperatures influence their transmission.



Landon Robinson

Bio:

Hello! I'm Landon Robinson, an undeclared student in LAS. I am a part of the Suarez Lab and will be studying ant ecology and behavior. Some on campus extracurricular activities I'm involved in are that I'm a member of the professional chemistry fraternity, Alpha Chi Sigma, and that I'm the vice president of the Alpha Kappa Lambda rebuilt on campus that started this spring. I am a very active person and love to do a variety of different activities!



Monye Scott

Bio:

Monye Scott is majoring Human Evolutionary Biology and double minoring in Public Health and Integrative Biology. This summer she will be studying the evolutionary loss of parental care by introducing different types of stimuli, such as sounds, visual cues, or environmental changes, and then observing how the Three-spines sticklebacks respond stimulus. She will measure these responses by looking at behaviors like movement patterns, how often certain actions occur, and how long it takes for the fish to react. This will help her understand how changes in behavior may be connected to the loss or reduction of parental care over time.

AAP Award



Lakiyah Smith

Bio:

Lakiyah Smith is a current junior majoring in Integrative Biology from the East Side of Chicago on the Pre-Nursing track. She currently serves as the Outreach and Co-marketing chair for Ma'at Black Student Union, where she fosters a safe space for black students on campus through social media engagement, as well as hosting events, one of which recently became one of the most-watched and viewed events within the black community on campus. And next semester, she will serve as vice president. She is also involved in many other organizations on campus, such as ACTS Campus Ministry, Women of Color, and the Minority Association of Pre-Health Students. In addition, this past semester, she competed in a scholarship pageant where she gained royal court status as Miss Tau of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. As a biology major, she is passionate about the planet and helping others, which is why last summer she did a CPT program where she became a certified phlebotomist technician, and this upcoming summer she has been granted the opportunity to be an AAP research fellow within the school of IB, where she will study chemical signaling between microorganisms, plants, and other life forms among other things under Dr.Ngumbi. In her free time, she loves to listen to music, enjoy nature, and spend time with her family and friends.



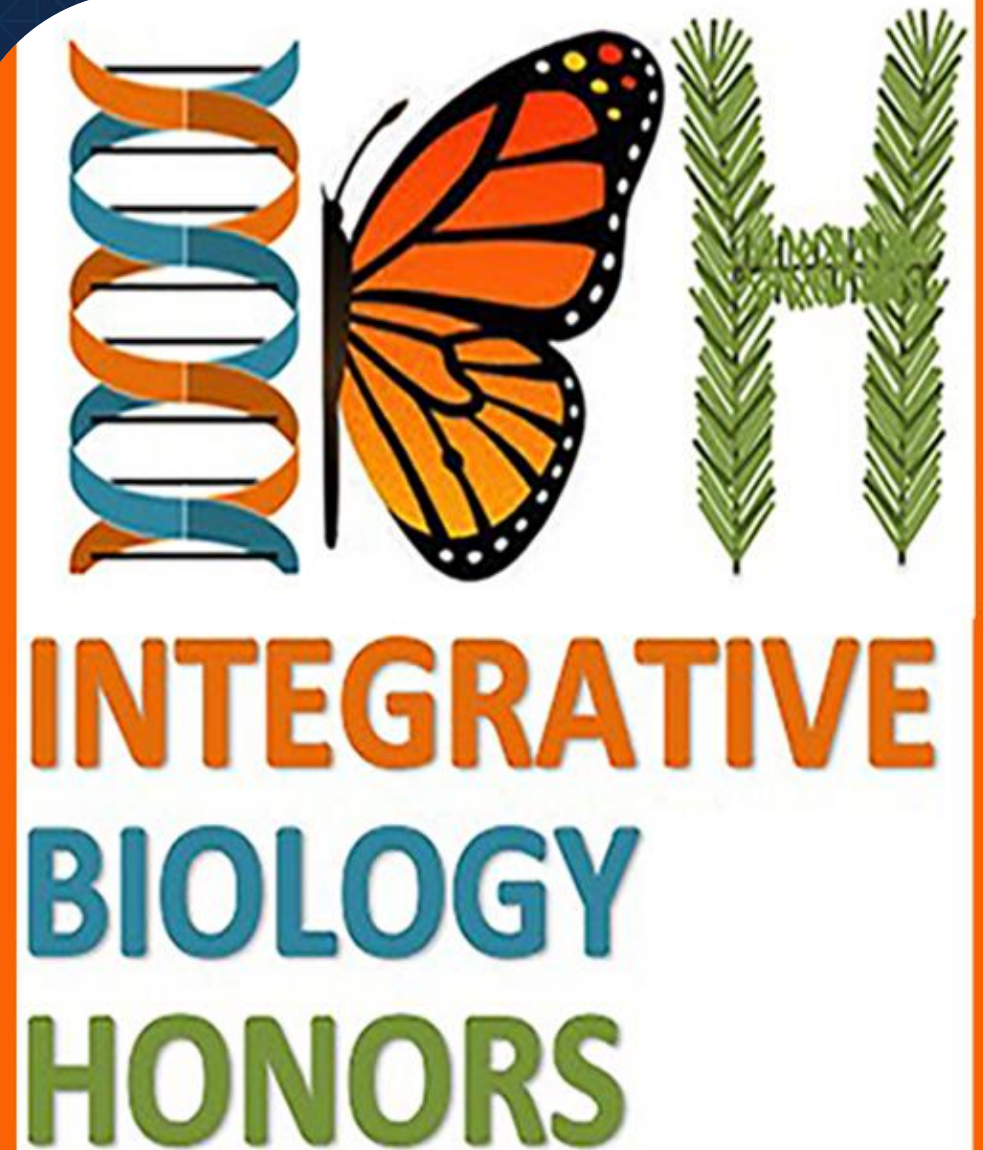
Abril Urgiles Castro

Bio:

I am currently an undeclared student planning to major in psychology with a minor in integrative biology. I will be working in the Harmon-Threatt Lab under Dr. Alexandra Harmon-Threatt. The lab focuses on understanding how environmental disturbances, such as climate change, land use change, urbanization, and pesticides, affect pollinators and the plants they depend on. My work will contribute to research on native ground nesting bees and efforts to identify landscape features that support pollinator diversity and conservation. Through this fellowship, I look forward to gaining experience in both field and lab research while supporting projects that connect to the real-world ecosystem restoration and bee conservation.

Oliver J. Bell Merit Scholarship in Integrative Biology

Oliver J. Bell graduated summa cum laude and with distinction from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1989 with concentrations in Biology Honors and chemistry. This award supports academic excellence and intellectual achievement in all its forms. The recipient is chosen on merit and must be an incoming junior in the Honors Biology Program in the fall.



Oliver J. Bell Merit Scholarship in Integrative Biology



Marilyn Fagan

Bio:

Marilyn is a sophomore in Integrative Biology Honors, with minors in Computer Science and Chemistry, and a strong passion for animal conservation. She is eager to expand her interdisciplinary skills and pursue opportunities in field research to prepare for a future career in wildlife conservation. Marilyn plans to attend graduate school to further develop her expertise and make a meaningful impact in protecting vulnerable species. A dedicated and driven student, she seeks to use scholarships to support her education, gain hands-on experience, and fully engage in opportunities at the University of Illinois. Inspired by both her academic interests and her family's support, Marilyn is committed to becoming an advocate for the environment and the species that depend on it.

Judy Willis Scholarship

This award is made possible by a generous donation by faculty in recognition of Dr. Judy Willis (currently a professor emeritus at the University of Georgia). Prior to teaching at UGA, she was a UIUC professor in the Biology Honors program for many years. This award recognizes an outstanding junior in the IB Honors program.



Judy Willis Scholarship in Integrative Biology



Sofie Van Til

Bio:

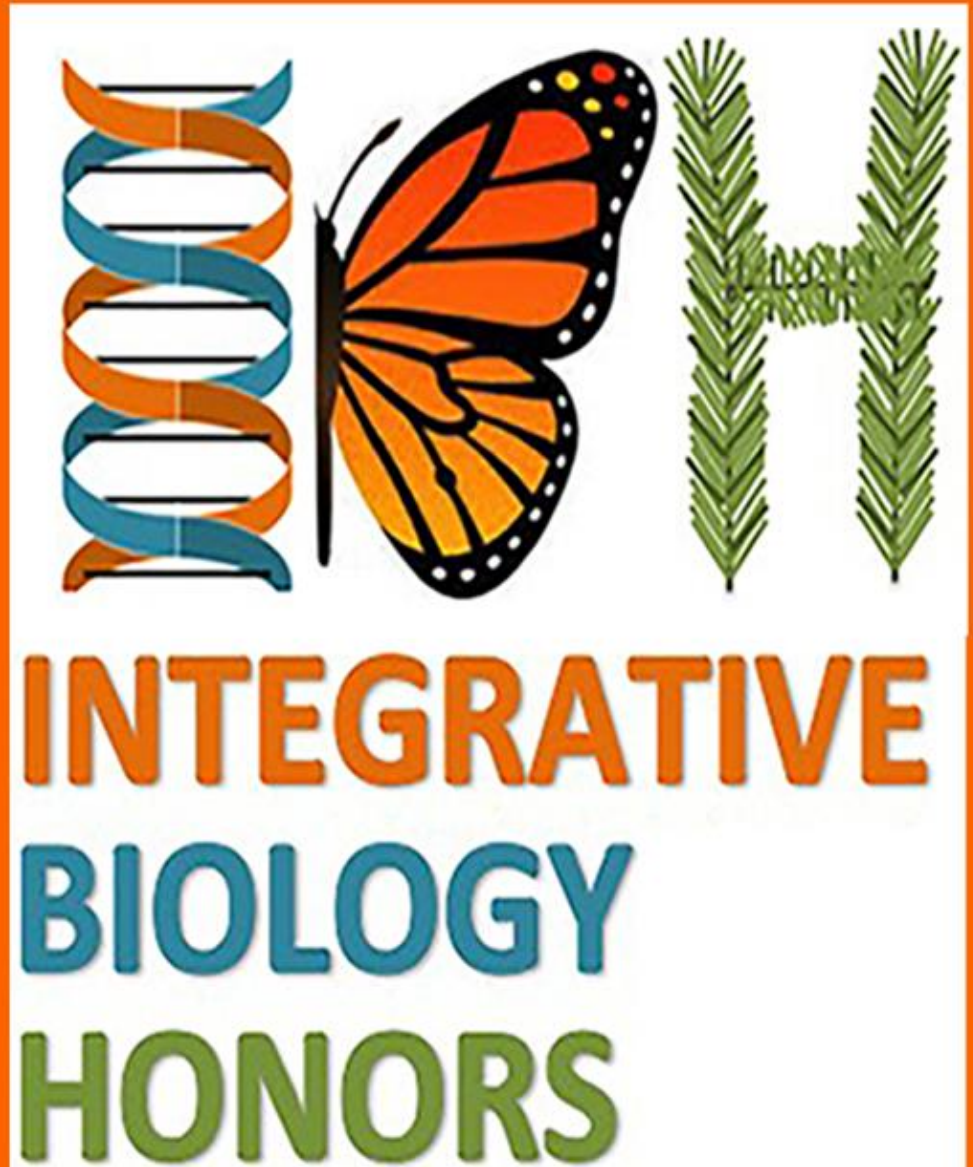
Sofie is a third-year Integrative Biology Honors student with minors in Chemistry and Public Health, preparing to apply to law school this fall. Her academic and research experiences span health communications, virology, and veterinary medicine, where she has conducted both collaborative and independent research projects. Through this work, Sofie has developed a strong interest in the intersection of science, public health, and law. She aspires to pursue a career in regulatory or public health law, using her background to support ethical research practices and improve population health outcomes. With continued support, Sofie is committed to leveraging her interdisciplinary education to address complex health challenges through a legal lens.

IBH

Sophomore & Junior Achievement Scholarships

Recognize outstanding achievement for a sophomore and junior currently enrolled in the IB Honors Program. Applications are judged on evidence of outstanding achievements in academics and leadership activities.

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IBH

Sophomore & Junior Achievement Scholarship



Saanvi Kunisetty
IBH Sophomore

Bio:

Saanvi is an interdisciplinary scholar pursuing a double major in Integrative Biology Honors and Astronomy + Data Science, with minors in Computer Science and Chemistry, driven by a passion for connecting diverse scientific fields. Her research experiences span environmental science, data analysis, and public health, including work in green stormwater infrastructure, mosquito population modeling, and cancer-related genetic studies. Through both collaborative and independent projects, she has developed strong skills in data visualization, computational modeling, and applying science to real-world challenges.



Fisher Houston
IBH Junior

Bio:

Fisher is a junior in the Integrative Biology Honors program whose research focuses on plant resilience in arid environments, particularly desiccation-tolerant “resurrection plants.”

In the Marks Lab, he leads projects exploring the structural and molecular mechanisms that allow these plants to survive extreme drought, integrating microscopy, systems biology, and machine learning approaches. His work has already revealed key adaptations in stomatal structure and leaf morphology, with broader implications for sustainability, agriculture, and environmental conservation.

Fisher is passionate about translating scientific discoveries into real-world solutions, including improving water efficiency, reducing agricultural impact, and advancing preservation technologies.

With aspirations to pursue a Ph.D. and a career in research and policy, he aims to use plant science as a tool to address global environmental challenges and inspire greater appreciation for biodiversity.

K.L. Spear Biology Honors Fund Scholarship

K.L. Spear, M.D. began his journey as an Honors Biology student at the University of Illinois in 1972, where a chance encounter with the program sparked a lifelong passion for science and discovery. He went on to earn his medical degree from the University of Illinois College of Medicine, receiving a research award in 1976, and completed his dermatology training at the Mayo Clinic in 1983.

After entering private practice, Dr. Spear recognized a critical need for more affordable dermatology medications. Taking an unconventional approach, he contacted the FDA to pursue development of a generic version of Retin-A—an effort that led to a successful clinical trial and launched his path in pharmaceutical innovation.

Despite no formal business training, Dr. Spear built his expertise through self-education and by surrounding himself with industry experts. As founder of Spear Pharmaceuticals, he led the company to develop 11 first-to-market generic dermatology products, demonstrating the power of initiative, curiosity, and collaboration.



K.L. Spear

Biology Honors Fund Scholarship



Cayden Hauswirth

Bio:

Cayden is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program with aspirations of attending medical school and becoming a healthcare provider. She has gained hands-on clinical experience as an EMT-B, where she developed strong patient care skills and a deeper understanding of healthcare disparities in underserved communities. Cayden also has research experience studying iron-induced behavioral changes in *C. elegans*, strengthening her skills in experimental design and data analysis. She plans to expand her research into women's health and fertility, with a focus on advancing equity in healthcare. Driven by compassion and scientific curiosity, Cayden aims to integrate research and medicine to make a meaningful impact.

Dr. Stewart D. Fordham Award

The award, made possible by a generous donation by Dr. Fordham, supports an undergraduate scholarship for students who are completing their undergraduate degree program and are planning on attending medical school immediately after graduation.



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Dr. Stewart D. Fordham Award



Marwan Abughazaleh

Bio:

Marwan Abughazaleh is a senior at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, majoring in Integrative Biology on the pre-medical track. This fall, he will begin medical school at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. He serves as President of the campus chapter of the Palestine Children's Relief Fund, leading fundraising and advocacy efforts to support pediatric medical care. Marwan is passionate about improving access to care for underserved communities through culturally responsive, patient-centered work.

Delcomyn International Study in Biology Award

In 2008, Dr. Fred Delcomyn and Nancy A. Delcomyn established the “Delcomyn International Study in Biology Award” to benefit undergraduate students majoring in Integrative Biology who wish to take advantage of educational opportunities in biology outside the United States and Canada. Such activities may include but are not limited to research projects, intersession courses, or courses offered by the Organization of Tropical Studies, that are held outside of the United States of America

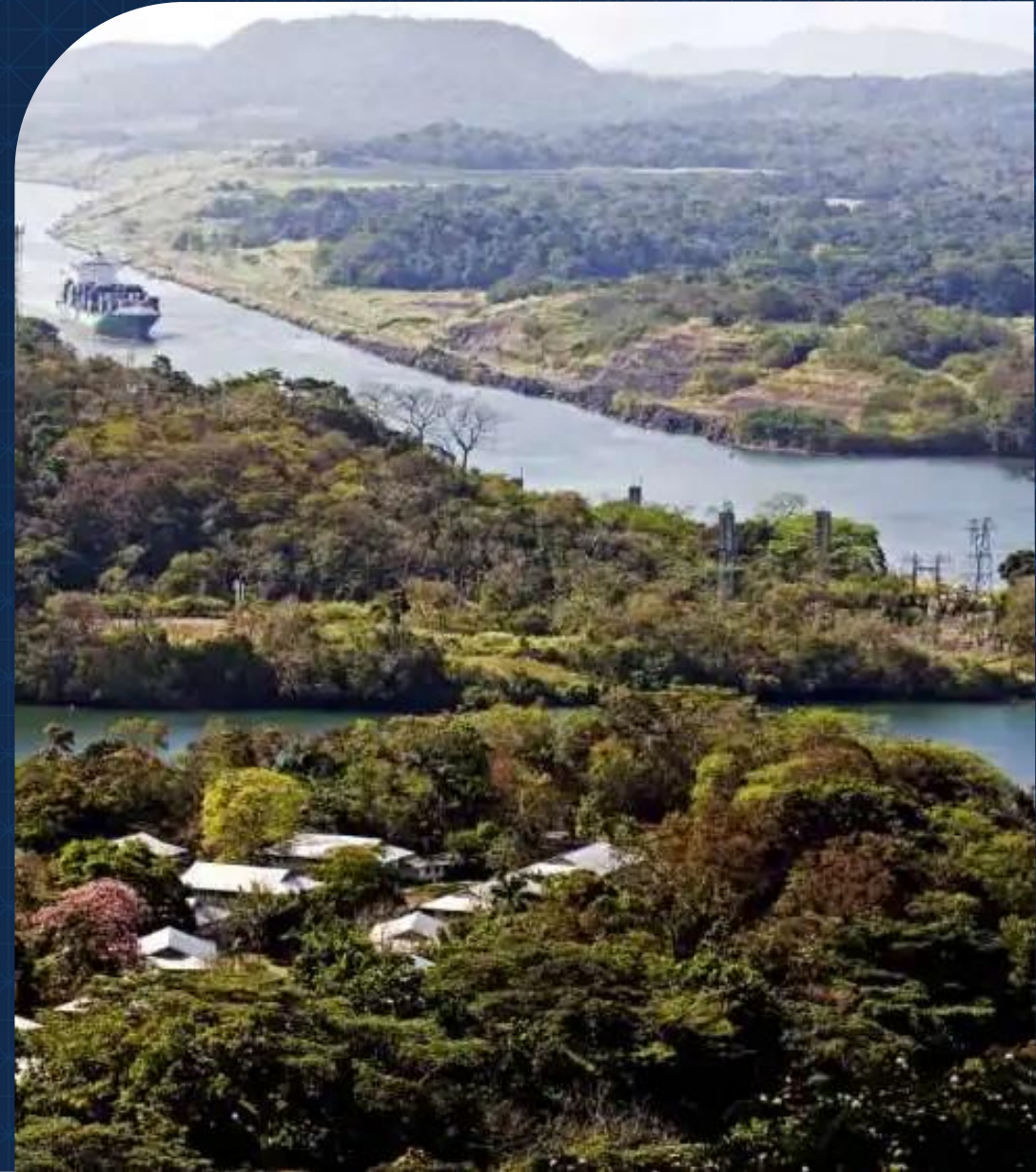


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SIB endowed enhancement scholarship

Made possible by funds given by an
anonymous donor.



Fred and Nancy Delcomyn and the donors of the endowed and SIB enhancement funds for their gifts

Delcomyn fund

Dena Sangurima
Joanna Menendie

Endowed Enhancement fund

Mallorie Pfaucht
Jordan Abenes
Julia Ciura
Zoe Zwonitzer
Meesha Patel

SIB Enhancement fund

Nathan Dowuonah



Richard Ware Endowed Scholarship Fund

Established by Vickie S. Brooks,
James R. Ware and John R. Ware,
in honor of Richard Ware.



Richard Ware Endowed Scholarship Fund



Daania Bhatti

Bio:
Daania is a junior studying Integrative Biology at the University of Illinois, with aspirations of becoming a healthcare professional and advancing research in biochemistry and neuroscience. She conducts research in the Bonthius Lab of Epigenetics, investigating dopamine and serotonin receptor expression in mice and how parental gene inheritance influences brain development and behavior. Her work contributes to a deeper understanding of maternal behavior and neurological processes, with broader implications for human health. Beyond the lab, Daania is committed to service, volunteering at Avicenna Community Healthcare Center to support uninsured and underserved populations in the Champaign-Urbana community. Driven by both scientific curiosity and compassion, she aims to integrate research and medicine to make a meaningful impact in healthcare.



Dave Li

Bio:
Qingduo Li is an undergraduate researcher in Dr. Katy Heath's lab at the Carl R. Woese Institute for Genomic Biology, where he studies plant-microbe interactions in nitrogen-fixing symbiosis. Over the past year and a half, he has contributed to large-scale greenhouse experiments, developing skills in phenotyping, DNA extraction, soil nitrogen analysis, and statistical modeling in R. His independent research explores how plant traits and carbon-nitrogen dynamics influence symbiotic efficiency in *Medicago truncatula*. Building on this work, Qingduo is designing a multi-species study to investigate how nitrogen availability and host-microbe compatibility shape nodulation responses and plant performance. With a strong interest in quantitative biology and agriculture, he aims to pursue a Ph.D. and use his research to improve environmental sustainability and crop productivity.

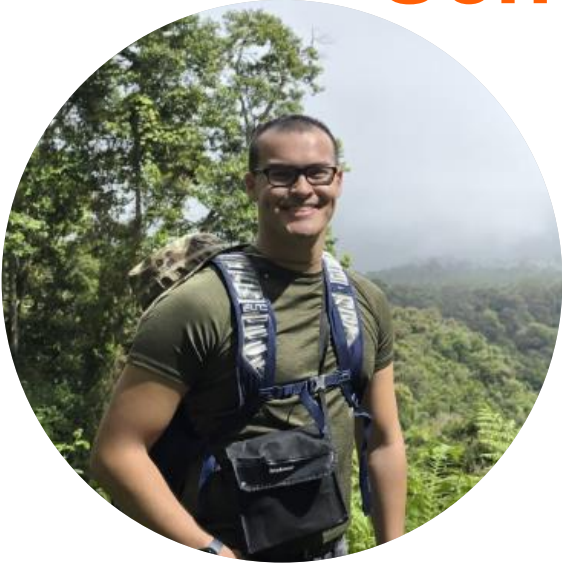
Dr. Kirk and Mrs. Shannon Moberg Scholarship in Integrative Biology

Provides a scholarship to a student
in IB who graduated from an Illinois
High School.

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Dr. Kirk and Mrs. Shannon Moberg Scholarship in Integrative Biology



Jordan Abenes

Bio:

Jordan is a senior in the Integrative Biology Honors program with plans to attend medical school and become a flight surgeon. He conducts research on environmental impacts on mosquito development and is an active member of Army ROTC. Jordan is committed to combining medicine, research, and service to make a meaningful impact.



Audry Carruth

Bio:

Audry Carruth is an Integrative Biology student from Houston, Texas, aspiring to become a Nurse Practitioner. Inspired by caring for her special needs sibling, she is passionate about providing compassionate, patient-centered care. She has gained hands-on experience administering medication and supporting daily medical needs, strengthening her commitment to healthcare. Audry plans to pursue a Master of Nursing and is dedicated to serving underserved communities.



Natalie Flemenbaum

Bio:

Natalie Flemenbaum is a junior aspiring to become a pediatrician or pediatric surgeon. She has over 600 clinical hours as an EMT-B and conducts research on microplastics in the Cáceres Lab. Passionate about working with children, she also serves as a camp health officer and school volunteer. She is committed to a career in pediatric medicine..

Chester W. & Nadine C. Houston Scholarship

Dr. Chet and Mrs. Nadine Houston provided the funds for this scholarship to recognize outstanding achievement in academics. Dr. Chet was a Professor at the University of Rhode Island and Nadine had a long career as a librarian. Their generous gift provides financial support to deserving SIB students.



Chester W. & Nadine C. Houston Scholarship



Alaina Langston

Bio:

Alaina Langston is a junior in the Integrative Biology Honors program, where she has developed a strong foundation in analyzing biological systems from molecular to ecological scales. Her academic experience has strengthened her skills in scientific writing, experimental design, and critical thinking. She conducts research in the Spinella Lab, investigating genomic mechanisms underlying recurrence in ER+ breast cancer and applying evolutionary perspectives to disease. Alaina plans to pursue graduate studies to further explore genomics and contribute to impactful biomedical research. Driven by both intellectual curiosity and determination, she is committed to advancing scientific understanding while maintaining a high level of academic excellence.



Brooke Pedersen

Bio:

Brooke is a sophomore majoring in Integrative Biology on the pre-medical track, driven by a strong commitment to both academic excellence and service to others. A former valedictorian and student-athlete, she continues to challenge herself through rigorous coursework, campus involvement, and her role as a personal assistant supporting individuals with severe disabilities. Inspired by her own experience with a congenital heart condition, Brooke aspires to become a physician who combines scientific expertise with compassion. She is actively involved in leadership and service organizations, including Phi Delta Epsilon and Kappa Delta, while maintaining a strong academic record. With determination and resilience, Brooke is dedicated to pursuing a career in medicine and making a meaningful impact on the lives of others.

Chester W. and Nadine C. Houston Scholarship



Nora Sripraram

Bio:

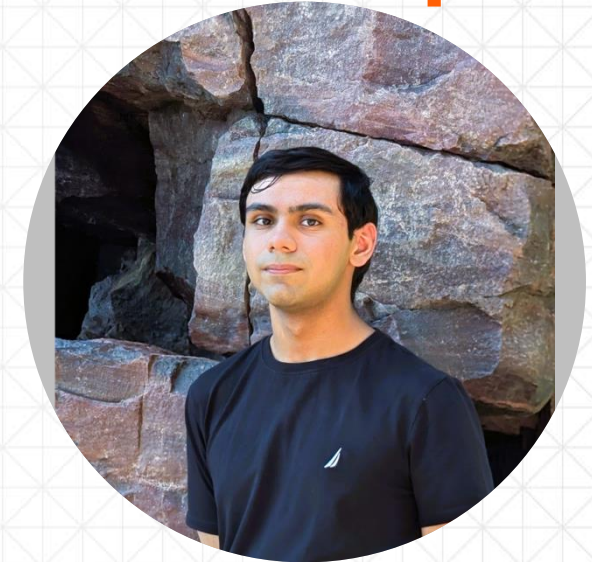
Nora is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program with aspirations of attending medical school and practicing holistic, accessible healthcare. She is actively involved in research across two labs, studying exercise-induced neurogenesis and contributing to projects that improve healthcare services for rural veterans. Outside the lab, Nora has earned her Certified Nursing Assistant certification and volunteers with organizations that provide healthcare screenings and address food insecurity. Her experiences have strengthened her commitment to serving underserved populations and addressing healthcare disparities. Driven by compassion and a patient-centered mindset, Nora aims to become a physician who considers the full context of each patient's life in delivering care.



Taryn Stoltzenburg

Bio:

Taryn is a sophomore studying Integrative Biology at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with aspirations of pursuing a Doctor of Physical Therapy degree. She is committed to building a strong academic foundation in human biology, movement, and rehabilitation science to prepare for graduate school. Taryn has gained early exposure to the healthcare field through shadowing physical and occupational therapists, reinforcing her passion for patient care. She is eager to expand her experience by engaging in research focused on human movement, injury prevention, and rehabilitation, particularly within the Health Promotion and Rehabilitation Lab. Driven and goal-oriented, Taryn is dedicated to developing the knowledge and skills needed to support individuals with disabilities and chronic conditions.



Dhruv Tomar

Bio:

Dhruv Tomar is a third-year undergraduate pursuing a dual degree in Integrative Biology and Computer Science, with a focus on applying computational methods to ecological and evolutionary research. He conducts research in the Van Doren Lab, where he uses machine learning and thermal imaging to study the effects of light pollution on bird migration behavior. Dhruv has further developed his expertise through an NSF-funded REU, building computational tools for large-scale bioacoustic data analysis using advanced unsupervised learning techniques. Beyond research, he is an active science communicator and leader, contributing to the Double Helix Digest, mentoring engineering students, and serving as Vice President of the Illini Wildlife and Conservation Club. With aspirations to pursue a Ph.D. in computational biology, Dhruv aims to bridge biology and computer science to address pressing challenges in ecology and conservation.

School of Integrative Biology Endowed Scholarship

Is made possible thanks to a
generous anonymous donation.

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School of Integrative Biology Endowed Scholarship



Lillian Jehl

Bio:

Lillian Jehl is a sophomore studying Integrative Biology with a minor in Creative Writing, with interests in zoology, marine biology, and primatology. She is exploring future career paths through internships and plans to pursue graduate study. Lillian is also passionate about science writing and hopes to combine biology with storytelling, particularly in science fiction. She aims to use her education to explore both scientific research and creative communication.



Rhea Narasimhan

Bio:

Rhea is a sophomore Integrative Biology student on the pre-veterinary track, inspired by early experiences assisting her grandfather in his clinic. She is actively building hands-on experience through volunteering with organizations such as the Wildlife Medical Clinic, Haflinger Haven, and CatSnap. Rhea is passionate about animal care and plans to attend veterinary school to pursue a career in veterinary medicine. She is dedicated to helping animals while continuing to grow through clinical and service opportunities.

School of Integrative Biology Endowed Scholarship



Angel Perez

Bio:

Angel is an undergraduate researcher in the Dalling Lab studying plant–fungal interactions, with a focus on how seed-infecting fungi impact seed survival. His work involves microscopy and analysis of fungal colonization within seeds to better understand plant–microbe dynamics. Through this research, Angel is developing technical skills and deepening his interest in ecosystem processes. He aims to continue exploring plant–fungal symbiosis and its role in nutrient cycling.



Estevan Torres

Bio:

Estevan is a junior in Integrative Biology who developed a strong interest in ecological interactions after transferring into the major. He recently joined the Cáceres Lab, where he is exploring host–pathogen dynamics in *Daphnia*, with a focus on how environmental factors influence infection. As part of the BS/MS program, he plans to continue his research and academic training beyond graduation. Estevan aspires to earn a Ph.D. and pursue a career in both research and education, sharing his passion for ecology and scientific inquiry.

SIB Alumni and Friends Awards

These awards have been made possible thanks to several donations from our alumni and friends. Their support has allowed SIB to offer unparalleled educational and research opportunities for our students. These scholarships have given our students access to additional resources, trainings, meetings, and more as they build their research skills and grow their careers.



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Anderson SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Audrey Liu

Audrey is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors Program pursuing a career in medicine, with interests in pathology, internal medicine, and dermatology. She is a licensed phlebotomist who volunteers at a free clinic, where working with underserved patients has shaped her patient-centered approach to care and research. Audrey conducts research in the Heath Lab and serves on the executive board of a pre-health organization focused on mental health awareness. She plans to use SIB funding to support her continued clinical, research, and academic development as she works toward becoming a compassionate physician.



Cole Manogura

Cole Manogura, a first-generation STEM student from Libertyville, Illinois, is an Integrative Biology Honors student pursuing medical school with a strong interest in radiology. He is actively involved in campus leadership as a board member for organizations including the Philippine Student Association, Phi Delta Epsilon, and Heart of Kindness. Cole conducts research on plant adaptations to low-water environments and plans to gain clinical experience through a nursing assistant certification. He aims to use scholarship support to advance his education and work toward creating a more equitable and inclusive healthcare system.



Natalia Munoz

Natalia Munoz is a sophomore majoring in Integrative Biology with minors in Animal Science and Chemistry, pursuing a pre-veterinary track. She is preparing to conduct research on comparative behavior in foxes and domestic dogs, exploring how genetics, environment, and domestication influence aggression and cognition. Natalia aims to attend veterinary school and pursue a career that integrates clinical practice with animal behavior and research. Scholarship support would help her focus on research, gain hands-on experience through internships, and continue preparing for a career in veterinary medicine.

Anderson SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Meghan O'sullivan

Megan is a junior in the Integrative Biology Honors program from Orland Park, Illinois, minoring in chemistry and statistics. She conducts microbiome research in the Gaulke Lab, where she has developed both wet lab and computational skills, including PCR, R coding, and scientific writing. Megan plans to pursue a PhD in microbiology with the goal of becoming a professor and advancing research in microbial ecology and bioremediation. She is also dedicated to making science accessible through her roles as a biostatistics course assistant and editor-in-chief of the *Double Helix Digest*.



Yvette Reyes

Yvette is an undergraduate at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign pursuing degrees in Integrative Biology and Spanish, with a strong interest in genetics, behavior, and human health. She has conducted research in both the Dolezal Bee Lab and Kukekova Lab, gaining experience in data analysis, behavioral coding, and collaborative research. Yvette plans to pursue a career in genetic counseling, combining scientific research with patient-centered care. She is also actively involved in leadership and community service, supporting education, advocacy, and inclusivity on campus and beyond.



Isabelle Saucedo

Isabelle is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program minoring in Chemistry and a first-generation Mexican-American student passionate about evolutionary biology. She conducts research with the Sperry Lab, gaining experience in fieldwork, data analysis, and behavioral studies of woodland birds. Isabelle is active in campus organizations including the Cosmetic Chemistry Club and Mexican Student Association, while also working in a chiropractic clinic. She aims to pursue a career in evolutionary biology and science outreach, using her experiences to expand access and representation in STEM.

Anderson SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Nathan Schmidt

Nathan is a junior studying Integrative Biology and an aspiring Physician Assistant, motivated by his personal experiences with severe food allergies and asthma. He aims to work in allergy and asthma care, using his background to better support and connect with patients. Nathan is gaining hands-on experience through lab prep work in the IB department and teaching with the Chem REACT program, while also pursuing clinical certifications like EMT or medical assistant. Scholarship support will help him prepare for PA school and continue building the patient care experience needed for his career.



Nicole Vozovoy

Nicole Vozovoy is an undergraduate Integrative Biology major focused on studying long-term ecological change and biodiversity loss to inform conservation efforts. She has developed strong laboratory and analytical skills through coursework, research experience, and a study abroad program in Panama that deepened her interest in tropical ecology and amphibian conservation. Nicole combines her science background with a minor in Comparative and World Literature, bringing a thoughtful, interdisciplinary perspective to environmental research. She plans to pursue graduate study in ecology or conservation biology, with the goal of contributing to research on environmental change.



Zach Winthers

Zach is an undergraduate Integrative Biology student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign pursuing a career in forensic science, with a focus on supporting homicide investigations. He has developed a strong foundation in scientific reasoning, laboratory analysis, and evidence interpretation through his coursework. As a U.S. military veteran, Zach brings discipline, attention to detail, and a commitment to ethical responsibility in his work. He aims to continue his training and pursue a role with a federal agency such as the FBI, applying biological science to support justice.

Anderson-Robertson SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



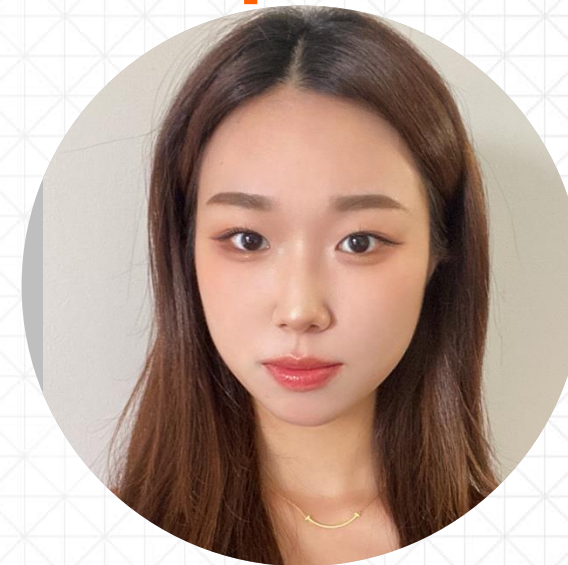
Elyssa Barba

Elyssa Barba is a first-generation sophomore studying Integrative Biology on the pre-med track at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. She aspires to attend medical school and pursue a career in neurosurgery, driven by a strong interest in the neurological aspects of medicine. Elyssa is actively building her academic and professional foundation through involvement in organizations like the American Medical Women's Association and plans to engage in research and hands-on medical experiences. As a student from a lower-income Latina background, she is deeply committed to giving back to underserved communities and improving access to healthcare. With determination and purpose, Elyssa aims to use her education to make a meaningful impact in medicine and inspire others from similar backgrounds.



Natalie Budzyna

Natalie is a first-generation sophomore pursuing Integrative Biology on the pre-physician assistant track, inspired by her experiences growing up in an immigrant family and witnessing healthcare disparities. She gained hands-on clinical experience as a patient care technician, where she supported patients and worked alongside healthcare professionals, reinforcing her commitment to patient-centered care. Academically driven, she is actively involved in organizations such as the Pre-PA Club and the Zagloba Polish Club, building both professional and cultural connections. Natalie is dedicated to developing the skills and experiences necessary to become a compassionate and effective healthcare provider. Her long-term goal is to reduce healthcare inequities and serve underserved communities as a physician assistant.



Rachel Cho

Rachel Cho is a sophomore on the pre-med track with aspirations of becoming a physician specializing in dermatology. As a first-generation college student in the United States, she is deeply motivated to honor her family's sacrifices while overcoming financial challenges tied to international tuition support. Rachel has demonstrated strong academic performance and is actively engaged in research within a vaccine development lab, building skills in experimental design and scientific analysis. She also gains clinical and service experience through volunteering in a special care facility and pursuing work as a Certified Nursing Assistant. With a commitment to combining research and patient care, Rachel aims to address healthcare disparities and improve outcomes in dermatological medicine.

Backas SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Liz George

Liz George is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program and a first-generation college student pursuing a career in pediatric orthopedics and sports medicine. She is deeply involved in clinical care, working as an EMT and medical assistant, and volunteers with pediatric patients and underserved communities. Liz also engages in research at UIUC and UIC, focusing on child development and healthcare access, while leading youth programs like Girls on the Run. She is committed to improving equity in sports medicine and empowering young athletes through both clinical care and community engagement.



Ren Horn

Ren Horn is an Integrative Biology BS+MS student conducting research in Dr. Milton Tan's lab on how mouth morphology influences body shape evolution in North American minnows. Their work combines coding in R and evolutionary modeling to study how ecological shifts between habitats drive morphological change. Ren plans to present their research and pursue a PhD focused on integrative studies of fish evolution, behavior, and physiology. Scholarship support will allow them to focus on research, mentorship, and completing their thesis.

David SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Miranda Johnson

Miranda is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program with a strong commitment to advancing eye health and improving access to care for underserved populations. She has gained clinical experience as a volunteer technician at the Eye Center in Champaign, where she has seen firsthand the impact of healthcare inequities. Miranda plans to further her clinical training through shadowing ophthalmologists and working as a certified EMT, continuing to build hands-on experience in patient care. She is preparing for medical school, with goals of taking the MCAT and pursuing a career as a physician focused on equitable, high-quality care. Driven by compassion and purpose, Miranda aims to make a meaningful impact by ensuring access to vision care for all communities.

James & Susan Hatfield SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Parker Landers

Parker is a third-year Integrative Biology student with aspirations of becoming a physician, driven by a passion for helping others and a strong interest in science. Their academic journey has been shaped by courses in physiology, genetics, and chemistry, with a particular enthusiasm for hands-on learning experiences. Parker has also gained research exposure by assisting in a lab studying diabetes in mice, developing foundational skills in data collection and laboratory techniques. With a long-term goal of becoming a surgeon, they are committed to combining scientific knowledge with patient care to make a meaningful impact. Through continued academic growth and research opportunities, Parker is preparing for the challenges of medical school and a career in healthcare.



Maxwell Linder

Maxwell Linder is a third-year Integrative Biology student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a strong interest in plant pathology and ecological research. Inspired by early exposure to science, he has developed a passion for understanding organismal interactions and their broader environmental impacts. Under the mentorship of Dr. Valeria Trivellone, Maxwell conducted research on phytoplasma–host associations, analyzing plant and insect interactions to better understand crop disease dynamics. His work incorporated data analysis, visualization, and statistical testing to identify meaningful ecological patterns. As he looks toward graduate study, Maxwell aims to expand his research into plant and aquatic disease systems, contributing to environmental conservation and sustainable agriculture.

Keppler

SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Christopher Kalendr

Christopher is a junior and first-generation BSLAS+MS student from Arlington Heights, Illinois, with a strong interest in environmental law and conservation. He is actively involved in research, including work with the Caceres Lab and field studies at Trelease Woods, and recently founded an RSO focused on financial literacy. Christopher aims to expand his experience in ecology, epidemiology, and climate-related research to support his future legal career. Scholarship support will help him pursue research opportunities and reduce financial barriers as he prepares for law school.



Link Lee

Link Lee is a sophomore in the Integrative Biology Honors program with a minor in Chemistry, conducting research in Dr. Alison Bell's lab on parental care and offspring behavior in three-spined sticklebacks. Her work examines how paternal care and phenotypic plasticity influence courtship and parenting behaviors across ecotypes. Through this research, she is gaining experience in experimental design, behavioral analysis, and statistical computing in R. Lee plans to pursue a career as a physician while continuing to engage in biomedical research.

Kucera-Hartline SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Kathleen Apaez

Kathleen Apaez is a junior majoring in Integrative Biology with a minor in Chemistry and a certificate in Forensic Science. As a first-generation student and eldest sibling, she is driven to succeed academically while supporting her family's future. She has gained research experience through an entomology internship and is seeking opportunities in forensic science fields such as DNA analysis and toxicology. Kathleen aims to build hands-on experience that will prepare her for a career as a forensic scientist.



Vincent Bonesteel

Vincent Bonesteel is an Integrative Biology Honors student on the pre-med track, aspiring to become a pediatrician. He has gained clinical experience as a CNA in an Alzheimer's unit and through international shadowing, while also building research experience in toxicology and the gut microbiome. Vincent is actively pursuing further research opportunities to strengthen his foundation in human health and prevention-focused medicine. He combines academic discipline with athletics as a member of the Illini BJJ club, and aims to use scholarship support to focus on research, coursework, and preparation for medical school.



Noah Cartwright

Noah is a transfer student from Lincoln Land Community College and a junior studying Integrative Biology with plans to attend graduate school. He is eager to gain research experience in areas such as physiology and ecological conservation to better understand human impacts on the environment. Noah is passionate about communicating scientific ideas in accessible ways to promote public understanding and engagement. He aims to use scholarship support to pursue research opportunities and continue his academic development at the University of Illinois.

Kucera-Hartline SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Gabby Fanella

Gabrielle Fanella is an undergraduate majoring in Integrative Biology with a minor in Chemistry, pursuing a career in healthcare with an interest in diagnostic medicine. She has gained laboratory experience through coursework and clinical exposure by shadowing cardiovascular perfusionists, while also working as a Certified Pharmacy Technician. Gabrielle is a Resident Advisor, where she develops leadership and community-building skills alongside her academic commitments. She aims to apply her integrative understanding of biology to improve patient care and outcomes in future clinical settings.



Luke Fernandez

Luke Fernandez is a junior majoring in Integrative Biology with a strong interest in animal behavior, conservation, and veterinary medicine. He has hands-on experience as a veterinary assistant and conducts research in the Fuller Lab, studying hybridization in killifish and developing image-based identification methods. Luke has gained skills in data analysis, image processing, and scientific collaboration through his research. He aims to apply these experiences to a career in animal welfare, conservation research, or veterinary practice.

SIB Alumni & Friends Scholarship



Julia Persak

Julia is a junior studying Integrative Biology and conducting research in the Wildlife Epidemiology Lab, focusing on fungal disease in wild turtle populations. Her work has sparked a passion for veterinary medicine and conservation, and she plans to attend veterinary school at UIUC. She is gaining hands-on experience through lab work and plans to expand her skills through animal shelter internships. Julia is committed to improving access to animal care and supporting conservation efforts in her community.

Congratulations to our Undergraduate award winners



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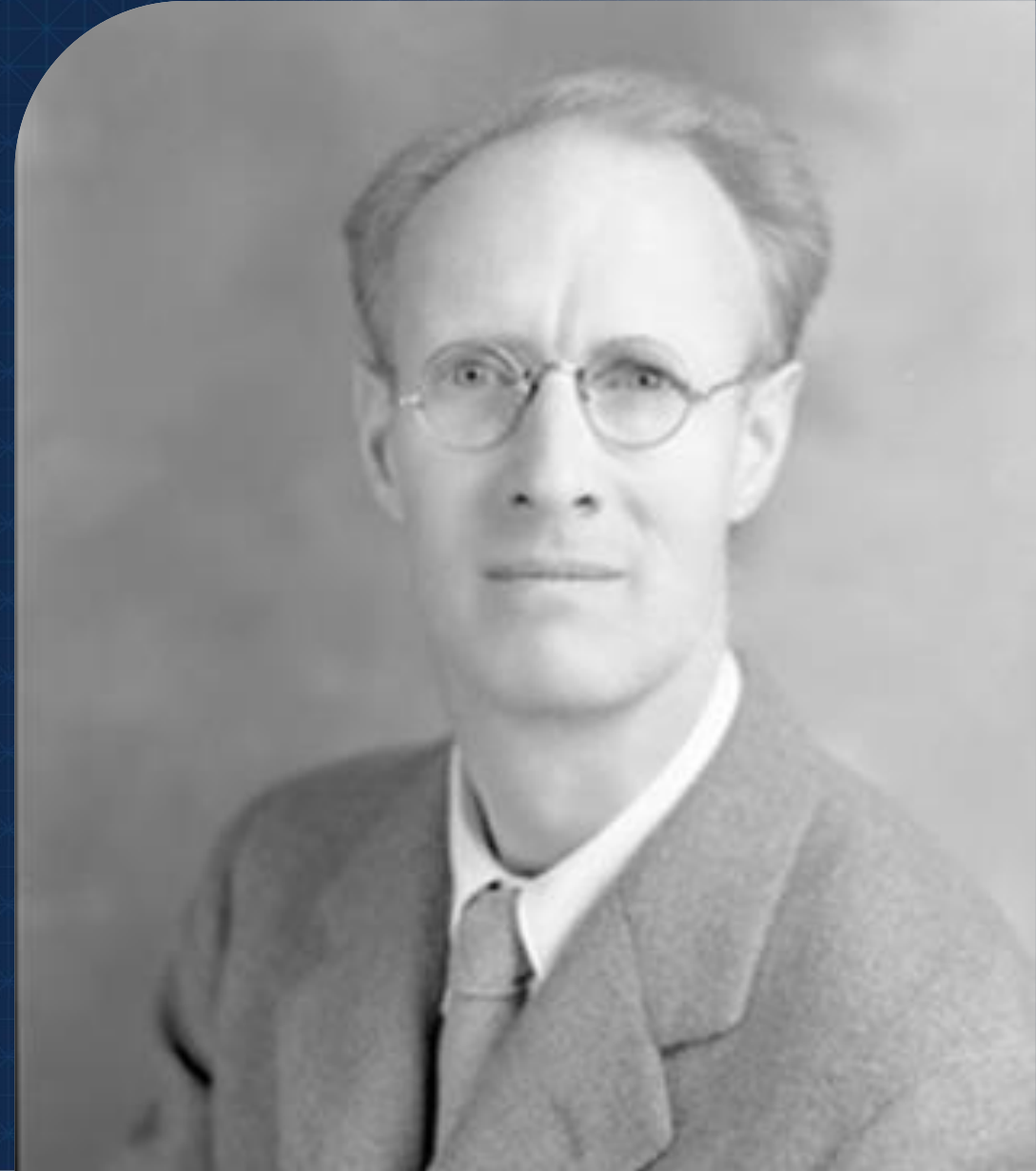
SIB Graduate Awards



UNIVERSITY OF
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Robert Emerson Memorial Award

The Emerson Award honors a former professor in the Department of Botany. Dr. Emerson was a distinguished and dedicated scientist of international stature in the field of photosynthesis. His research explored the action of pigments, including the carotenoids and phycobilins, in photosynthesis. Dr. Emerson received many honors in recognition of his scientific achievements and was a member of the National Academy of Sciences. This award was established by Dr. Emerson's family and friends in the early 1960's.



Robert Emerson Memorial Award



Siti Fauziyah

Bio:

I propose a comprehensive study of non-migratory and migratory dragonflies in the Libellulidae family by combining evolutionary and computational approaches, to help understand how wing morphology contributes to aerodynamic efficiency. My first task was to identify Libellulidae species that would be available for study (museum and/or field collection). In this study, 1) I will collect the morphological data from the fore- and hindwing and run simulation to learn how these morphological feature affect the wing's rigidity, and 2) perform the bending test to calculate the flexural stiffness of the wing.

A hand holding a lightbulb with a brain inside, surrounded by colorful doodles and the word 'IDEA'. The brain is depicted with gears and circuitry, and the lightbulb is surrounded by a vibrant, multi-colored aura. The background is filled with various hand-drawn icons and symbols, including a rocket, clouds, lightbulbs, gears, puzzle pieces, and the word 'IDEA' in large, bold letters. The overall theme is creativity and innovation.

Isabel Norton Award



Jack Calvery

Bio:

My name is Jack Calvery, and I am currently a graduate student in EEB. I study under Dr. Ripan Malhi and Dr. Julian Catchen, primarily analyzing ancient and modern salmon DNA. Our goal is to uncover population structure within these ancient and modern populations and then dive deeper to potentially uncovering the effects of their whole genome duplication events. My favorite part about EEB is the welcoming and wholesome student body. Finally, my favorite past time is eating food.



Jeannette Cullum

Bio:

I am a Ph.D. candidate and NSF Graduate Research Fellow advised by Dr. Carla Cáceres in the Program in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology. I study the impact of anthropogenic stressors on disease dynamics in freshwater ecosystems. I currently focus on the effects of pesticide runoff on a freshwater zooplankton, *Daphnia*, and its fungal pathogen. I plan to use this funding to investigate how exposure to pesticide pollution changes the microbiome of juvenile and adult *Daphnia*. This work will allow me to expand the scope of my research and explore links between host fitness and the microbiome.



Abby Weber

Bio:

I am a PhD candidate in Phil Anderson's lab studying the evolution of parasitoid wasp ovipositors!

Lebus Graduate Scholar Awards

This award was established by James Hagan to honor the memory of his aunt, Bertha Lebus. The award is to be used to support summer research for meritorious MS and PhD UIUC LAS students in the life sciences and other fields. This award is intended to recognize students with outstanding potential to succeed in their chosen academic field.



Lebus Graduate Scholar Awards



Avi Berger

Bio:

My current research investigates the material properties of avian eggshells relative to the development of the embryo during incubation. I am CT scanning developed eggs from wild birds to evaluate shell shape, structure, and embryo posture to understand the mechanics of hatching.

Harley J. Van Cleave Research Award

The fund provides research support for graduate students investigating new frontiers and demonstrating promise and high aptitude in the fields of Cell and Structural Biology, Physiology, Ecology, Microbiology, Genetics, and related fields.



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Harley J. Van Cleave Research Award



Claire Berdik

Bio: "I am a first-year Entomology PhD student, co-advised by Dr. Adam Dolezal (Entomology) and Dr. Mark Davis (Illinois Natural History Survey). This award will support my current research, which focuses on further validating the use of environmental DNA (eDNA) as a tool for monitoring moths. My long-term research goal is to implement both conventional and eDNA monitoring methods to investigate the threat statuses of local moth populations and the spatial relationship between moth persistence and anthropogenic land-use changes."



Rebecca Cloud

Bio:

I am a PhD candidate in the Cáceres lab researching *Culex* mosquito microbiomes. I plan to use this award to fund experiments evaluating the interaction of Wolbachia infection and stress on mosquito life history traits and vector competence.



Mary Heather Jingco

Bio:

Mary Heather Jingco is a first year PEEC PhD student in the Kingston Lab. Driven by a passion for bat conservation, her research focuses on the conservation ecology of the endangered Mariana Fruit Bat, *Pteropus mariannus*. This summer, Heather will be traveling across the Southern Mariana Islands to study roosting preferences of *P. mariannus*. Using field surveys, remote sensing, and land-use analyses, she aims to identify the environmental and landscape factors that influence roost site selection in the species. Her findings will form the foundation of her first dissertation chapter and contribute to guiding conservation management of the species.

Harley J. Van Cleave Research Award



Satinderpal Kaur

Bio: I am doing my Ph.D. in Entomology. My research is majorly focused on understanding the effect of flooding stress of maize on plant- insect interactions. I will be working in a field project in which we artificially flooded the maize crop and I will be analyzing the metabolomic profile changes in the maize plants in response of flooding stress, and the implications of these metabolite changes for insect feeding. I plan to use the funding to my summer research, this summer I will be conducting the second season of this field study. This scholarship will be very helpful for me in conducting my field research as well as it will motivate me to work more effectively.



Amanda Martinez

Bio:

Amanda Martinez is a Ph.D. student in the Collaborative Conservation Genomics Lab in the Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior. Her research focuses on integrating conservation genomics into recovery strategies for the Louisiana pine snake (*Pituophis ruthveni*). She uses genomic tools alongside environmental DNA (eDNA) approaches to assess genetic diversity, improve detection of rare species, and inform conservation and reintroduction efforts. Her work aims to provide actionable, data-driven insights to support long-term species recovery.



Emmy Medina Espinosa

Harley J. Van Cleave Research Award



Jenalyn Ostendorf

Bio:

Jena Ostendorf is an Entomology PhD student co-advised by Dr. Adam Dolezal and Dr. Mark Davis. Jena received her B.S. in plant science from the University of Minnesota Twin-Cities and double minored in insect science and science communications. Currently, her current research aims to determine if drone imagery is consistent with traditional plant surveys. This summer Jena will also be spending a lot of time performing field work, processing eDNA samples, and identifying bees.



Wilfred Tang

Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Summer Fellowship & Research Support Grant

These grants were established to honor Dr. Francis M. Clark and his wife, Harlie M. Clark. Dr. Clark joined the then Department of Bacteriology, later the Department of Microbiology, as an instructor in 1933, after having completed his undergraduate and graduate work here previously. He had a distinguished career, teaching microbiology and conducting research in the microbiology of foods. He was past president of the Illinois Society for Microbiology.



Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Summer Fellowship



Anna Grimes

Bio:

I study *Daphnia*, a genus of aquatic crustaceans that float through the water column and play a vital role in freshwater ecosystem function. My research focuses on how these keystone species detect and respond to predator cues, and how human impacts, like pesticide runoff, might disrupt these defenses. This award will support both fieldwork in local aquatic systems and controlled lab studies to better understand environmental stressors and predator-prey dynamics.



Luke Settles

Bio:

I seek to address methodological uncertainties within the field of pollinator eDNA, such as the poor understanding of DNA deposition rates by target species as well as detection efficiency of widely used yet novel protocols. I propose running several iterations of calibration experiments which would indicate how much DNA was recoverable under controlled lab settings before scaling up, granting us a better understanding of field-collected data and contributing significantly to a knowledge gap in the field. Additionally, I would continue an existing project in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Energy comparing the efficacy of eDNA to traditional pollinator survey methods in solar facilities.

Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Research Support Grant



Hailey Baranowski



Yangkang Chen

Bio:

Yangkang Chen is a second-year PhD student in the PEEC program, advised by Dr. Benjamin Van Doren. His research uses data science, statistics, and computation to study bird migration as a model for understanding spatiotemporal dynamics in natural systems. He is particularly interested in how organisms move across space and time, how ecological communities are structured across the annual cycle, and how large-scale biodiversity patterns can be revealed from complex datasets. His work includes population-level migration modeling across North America and research on species associations in migratory bird communities. More broadly, his research aims to link methodological innovation with ecological insight to better understand continental-scale ecological processes.



Yutao Chen

Bio:

I'm from the ABC lab. I work on micro-, nano-topographies on insect cuticles and study their multifunctionality. My main project focuses on studying antibacterial property of the nanostructures on cicada wings and mimicking these structures on engineering material surfaces. I'm also exploring the structures and chemistry of other insect cuticles.

Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Research Support Grant



Naomi Cobb

Bio: My research aims to develop a computational model of the tarsal microstructures in Madagascar hissing cockroaches, providing insight into the mechanisms by which the cockroach maximizes surface area contact across different surfaces. The study will focus on the microstructures of the attachment pads and the structural integrity of the unguis. By employing Finite Element Analysis (FEA), this work will contribute to the development of bioinspired adhesive materials and establish methodology for comparative studies on attachment structures in other insect species.



Austin Coulter

Bio:

Austin Coulter is a fourth-year PhD student in the Kukekova Lab studying the genetics and neural mechanisms of animal behavior, particularly domestication. He previously earned degrees in Biology and Zoology & Physiology, focusing on the neural basis of behavior in animals. His current research investigates differences in brain function across tame, aggressive, and conventional silver fox populations from the Farm Fox Experiment. Austin aims to uncover how neural and genetic mechanisms shape behavioral variation.



Samantha Dubbs

Bio:

I am a current third year graduate student in the Entomology Department at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and co-advised by Dr. May Berenbaum and Dr. Adam Dolezal. My current research focuses on various aspects of honey bee-derived propolis – including chemical composition, its effects on honey bee physiology, and honey bee resin foraging behavior.

Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Research Support Grant



Timothy Legare

Bio:

I am a second-year PhD student in the Fuller lab, studying drivers of speciation. I am particularly interested in hybridization and behavioral isolation's role in maintaining and degrading species complexes. I am currently investigating the *Lucania* killifish, after their recent introduction into the San Francisco Bay. This award will allow me to begin sequencing killifish from the bay, so we can begin investigating and comparing their population dynamics to what we already know from Florida, their native range.



August Lipari

Bio:

In my research I aim to explore the link between polyploidy, phenotype, and drought tolerance in resurrection grass *M. caffra* through phenotyping, transcriptomics, and genome duplication.



Blaine Martin

Bio:

Blaine Martin is a Ph.D. student in Dr. Jim Dalling's lab in the Department of Plant Biology at the University of Illinois. Blaine's dissertation focuses on the root associated fungi and population dynamics of *Podocarpus*, a genus of tropical conifers, and will continue fieldwork in Panamá this summer.

Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Research Support Grant



Hannah Murray

Bio:

I am a first-year student in Dr. Katy Heath's lab and I am studying how bacterial fitness can impact the legume-rhizobia mutualism. This award will allow me to conduct a summer field sampling trial at a LTER in Michigan to see if natural soil isolated bacterial communities impact the fitness of my bacteria strains and how that in turn impacts the plant.



Vincent Prayugo

Bio:

I'm a 3rd year PhD student at the Dolezal Lab studying the effects of stressors in honey bees, specifically pesticides and viruses. I plan to use the funding to research the potential of Israeli acute paralysis virus (IAPV) to manipulate immature honey bee cuticular hydrocarbons profile to increase its fitness within the colony.



Weiqing Qu

Bio:

I am a second-year PhD student in PEEC. I earned my Bachelor's degree from East China Normal University and my Master's degree from New York University. My research explores the mechanisms underlying species' vulnerability to climate change, examining spatial patterns, trait associations, and conservation hotspots, with the goal of informing and advancing biodiversity conservation efforts.

Francis M. & Harlie M. Clark Research Support Grant



Adrien Seabloom

Bio:
I am working towards my PhD and pursuing research about native bees, specifically the effects of agricultural fungicides on ground nesting bees. I plan to use the funding to research the effects of Pyraclostrobin on ground nesting bee larval development and nesting behaviors. This fellowship will help me complete essential pilot studies over the summer that will pave the way for the rest of my research on pollinators throughout my time here at UIUC.



Malavika Venu

Bio:
I am studying the evolutionary origins of eusocial behavior using *Drosophila melanogaster* social networks.



Allanis Vera Barron

Bio:
Hello! I am Allanis Vera Barron. Currently, I am a second-year PhD student in the department of Plant Biology. My research pursues studying and understanding the interactions between plants and microorganisms, specifically the induced immune response of seeds against the attack of fungal pathogens in tropical forest ecosystems. This study will provide us with a better understanding in how the coffee microbiome is shaped at different stages of coffee fermentation and how different microorganisms could influence coffee flavor in one of the most priced coffee variety “Geisha” in Panama. This award will help me to process my samples from Panama through DNA extraction and sequencing. I really appreciate the support that you all give, specifically, in this research field.

Graduate Research Fund

Mary Willson was one of the early architects of the field of evolutionary ecology, a discipline which examines the origin and function of traits that contribute to organismal adaptations in nature. A hallmark of Mary's contribution to the field is the union of a strong conceptual foundation with an appreciation for the natural history of organisms.

During her long and distinguished career on the faculty at the University of Illinois (1966-1990), she moved the field forward by not being limited to the standard approach of asking "how" organisms behave a certain way, and instead asked "why" they do so. It is this perspective that inspired her students and colleagues to pursue studies of major unresolved questions in avian ecology, plant ecology, and plant-animal interactions, while embracing the rich diversity of nature.

The Mary F. Willson Graduate Research Fund will help cover the cost of supplies and travel associated with graduate student field research.



Mary F. Willson Graduate Research Fund



Noah Volin

Bio:

I am a first-year PhD student in the Marks Lab. My broad research interests focus on the evolutionary ecology of unique plant adaptations. My research at Illinois centers on *Microchloa afra*, a desiccation-tolerant grass from southern Africa with the remarkable ability to dry out almost completely and “resurrect” upon rehydration. I study phenotypic plasticity and local adaptation in this species across its range integrating climate data with a combination of common garden experiments and preserved herbarium specimens.

Congrats SIB Grad Award winners!



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Program in Ecology, Evolution & Conservation (PEEC)

Summer Research Grant

PEEC Block Grant

Research Assistant Stipend

I ILLINOIS



PEEC Summer Research Grant



Rebecca Cloud



Naomi Cobb



Austin Coulter



Jeanette Cullum

PEEC Summer Research Grant



Katie Fitzgerald



Anna Grimes



Ezekial Herra-Bevan



Mary Heather Jingco

Bio

PEEC Summer Research Grant



Emmy Medina Espinoza



Hannah Murray



Adrien Seabloom



Malavika Venu

Bio

PEEC Summer Fellowships



Caylee Chan



Derek McFarland



Laruen Otolski



Adrien Seabloom

PEEC Summer Research Assistant



Josef Bielanski



Vivian Cheng



Austin Coulter



Hannah Murray

PEEC Summer Research Assistant



Wardah Noor Syeda



Malavika Venu



Ilana Zeitzer

Congrats PEEC Grad Award winners!



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Entomology & INHS Awards



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Entomology Undergraduate Research Award

It is a long-standing priority of the Department of Entomology to provide high-quality research experiences to undergraduates. This annual award recognizes outstanding achievement in undergraduate research.



Entomology Undergraduate Research Award



Andrew Webster

Herbert Holdsworth Ross Memorial Award

Herbert H. Ross, BS University of British Columbia 1927, MS and PhD UIUC 1929 and 1933. He married Jean Alexander in 1932, and she assisted him throughout his life with his research. Ross was at the Natural History Survey from 1931 until he retired in 1969. He was a brilliant systematist who generously shared his passion and wisdom with generations of students. Funding for this award is possible due to the generous donation of Dr. Charles Alexander Ross and his wife Dr. June Ross, son and daughter-in-law of Herbert and Jean Ross.



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Herbert Holdsworth Ross Memorial Award



Marcus Brown



Joesph Cannizzaro

Herbert Holdsworth Ross Memorial Award



Francis Dinh



Kaitlin Karl

Philip W. Smith Memorial Award

The Smith Memorial was established by Dorothy M. Smith and friends in honor of her husband. Dr. Smith was a renowned herpetologist and ichthyologist. He was intensely interested in the taxonomy, natural history, and distributions of animals. After completing his Ph.D. at the University of Illinois, he spent his entire career at the Illinois Natural History Survey, retiring in 1979. He served as curator of the fish, reptile, and amphibian collections, as a researcher, and administrator. For the last 14 years of his career, he also served as a Professor of Zoology at the University of Illinois. He produced over 100 scientific publications. He is probably best known for his two authoritative monographs, *The Amphibians and Reptiles of Illinois* (1961) and *The Fishes of Illinois* (1979).



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Philip W. Smith Memorial Award



Lily Hart

Bio:

Lily Hart, a Master's student in the DeWalt Lab, has received the INHS Smith Memorial Fund Award to support phylogenetic research related to her thesis project, titled "The stoneflies (Plecoptera) of Arkansas: museum specimen dataset to assess Species of Greatest Conservation Need". Her work has allowed the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission to expand their SGCN list of stoneflies within the state and attempts to understand the evolutionary relationships between broadly distributed and endemic *Acroneuria* species in the eastern United States.

Fred H. Schmidt Summer Scholar

The Fred H. Schmidt summer award, endowed by his niece and nephew Margaret and Ed Larsen, commemorates alumnus Fred H. Schmidt, who received a BS degree in 1957 and a master's degree in entomology here in 1959 and spent many years at the USDA Forest Service Laboratory in Corvallis, OR. In accordance with his wishes, the Schmidt Summer Award is used to support recruitment and retention of students during the summer months.



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as a Student
1957

Fred at Retirement
2012

Fred H. Schmidt Summer Scholars



Hailey Baranowski



Samantha Dubbs



Jenalyn Ostendorf

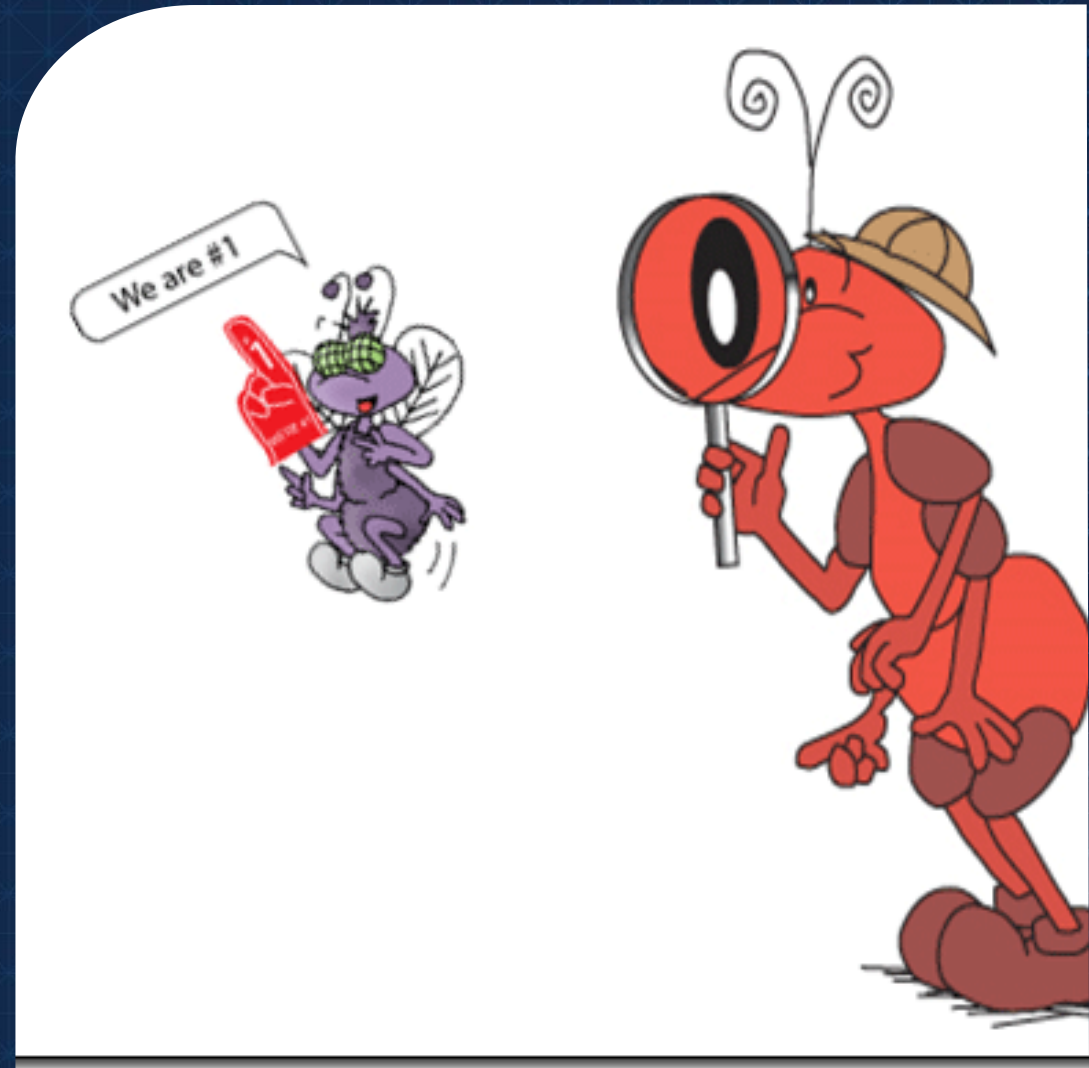
Bio:

Hailey Baranowski is a Ph.D. student co-advised by Dr. Adam Dolezal and Dr. Mark Davis. Hailey received their bachelor's degrees in environmental science and ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Connecticut. Their current research aims to understand the relationship between juvenile hormone and viral replication rates in adult honey bees. This summer, Hailey's research will focus on developing non-lethal sampling techniques to quantify viral loads in wild bees.

Entomology Summer Block Grant

The Entomology Summer Block Grant provides summer support for graduate students in Entomology to enable them to continue to make progress in their thesis research.

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Entomology Summer Block Grant



Yutao Chen

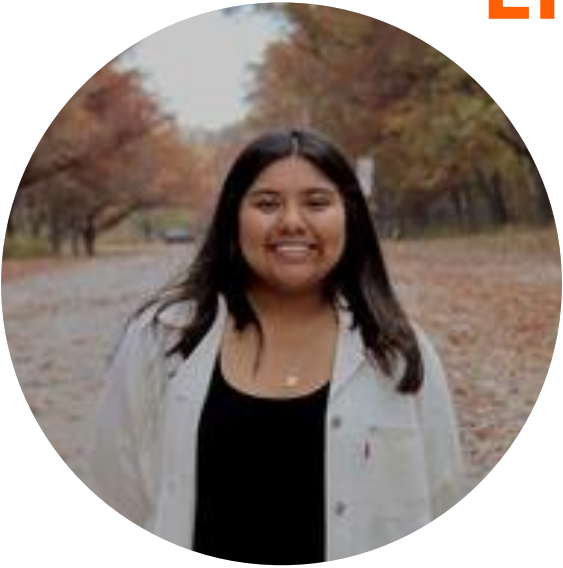


Anugerah Fajar



Siti Fauziyah

Entomology Summer Block Grant



Amy Gomez-Lopez



Satinderpal Kaur



Chan Liu

Entomology Summer Block Grant



Vincent Prayugo



Archie-Em Walker

Bio:

Archie-Em Walker is a graduate student in the Entomology Department studying cockroach evolution, with a particular focus on how morphology and biogeography. Current taxa sampling in the family Blattellidae is spotty and geographically isolated. However, their research addresses these problems by building from species discovery and description to analyses of family-level morphological variation. In other words, they look at tiny anatomical details to investigate large evolutionary questions about history and diversity. Alongside research, Archie is deeply passionate about teaching, helping students feel the excitement of discovery in the classroom and fostering an overall sense of belonging in science.

Dr. Ting H. Hsiao and Catherine T. Hsiao Fellowship Fund

Made possible by a generous donation by
Dr. Ting H. Hsiao and Catherine T. Hsiao
for graduate students.



Dr. Ting H. Hsiao and Catherine T. Hsiao Fellowship Fund



Tristan Barley



Annaliese Wargin

Bio:

I am a PhD candidate in the Harmon-Threatt Lab studying native bees and their parasites through a community lens to evaluate how species interactions are affected by anthropogenic change. I also have a strong passion for teaching here at UIUC, and it is an honor to receive the MacLeod/Metcalf Award this year. I look forward to TAing another SIB class in the Fall!

Stewart H. Berlocher

Graduate Student Research Support Award

Professor emeritus, who conducted research on speciation and evolution of insects including flies in the genus *Rhagoletis*. This award provides funding for field research in entomology.



Stewart H. Berlocher

Graduate Student Research Support Award



Luke Settles



Joseph Spina

Ellis MacLeod/Metcalf

Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Student in the Department of Entomology

Ellis G. MacLeod joined the faculty in the Department of Entomology at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in 1966, after completing his dissertation research and postdoctoral position at Harvard University. Although his own research interests were focused primarily on systematics and evolution of species in the order Neuroptera, his knowledge of Class Insecta was famously encyclopedic. His greatest contribution to the discipline of entomology was his exemplary teaching, particularly in the core course, required of all graduate students, in insect systematics. In recognition of his classroom teaching, he received the William F. Prokasy Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in 1989; his influence, however, exceeded the boundaries of the classroom and he was extraordinarily generous in sharing his wealth of knowledge with anyone who sought him out. The Department accordingly named its award for outstanding teaching by an entomology graduate student in his honor.



Ellis MacLeod/Metcalf Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Student in the Department of Entomology



Tristan Barley



Siti Fauziyah

Congrats Entomology Award winners!



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Evolution, Ecology & Behavior (EEB)



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Getz Award

The **Dr. Lowell L. Getz and Mary R. Getz Undergraduate Research Award** was established by Dr. Lowell L. Getz and his wife, Mary R. Getz. Dr. Getz was a faculty member in the Department of Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior, who provided research opportunities for hundreds of undergraduates to study the evolution of mating systems in voles. This award supports undergraduate students conducting research in any aspect of Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior.



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Getz Award



Greg Neppl



Crystal Luo

Edwin M. Banks Memorial Award

The Edwin Banks Memorial Fund was established by Dr. Banks' wife, Mrs. Hilda Banks, and family to honor his long and distinguished career as a faculty member in the Department of Ecology, Ethology and Evolution at the University of Illinois (1957-1985). Dr. Banks was a pre-eminent researcher in the areas of mammalian sociality and reproduction and this award was established to support research in Animal Behavior.



Edwin M. Banks Memorial Award



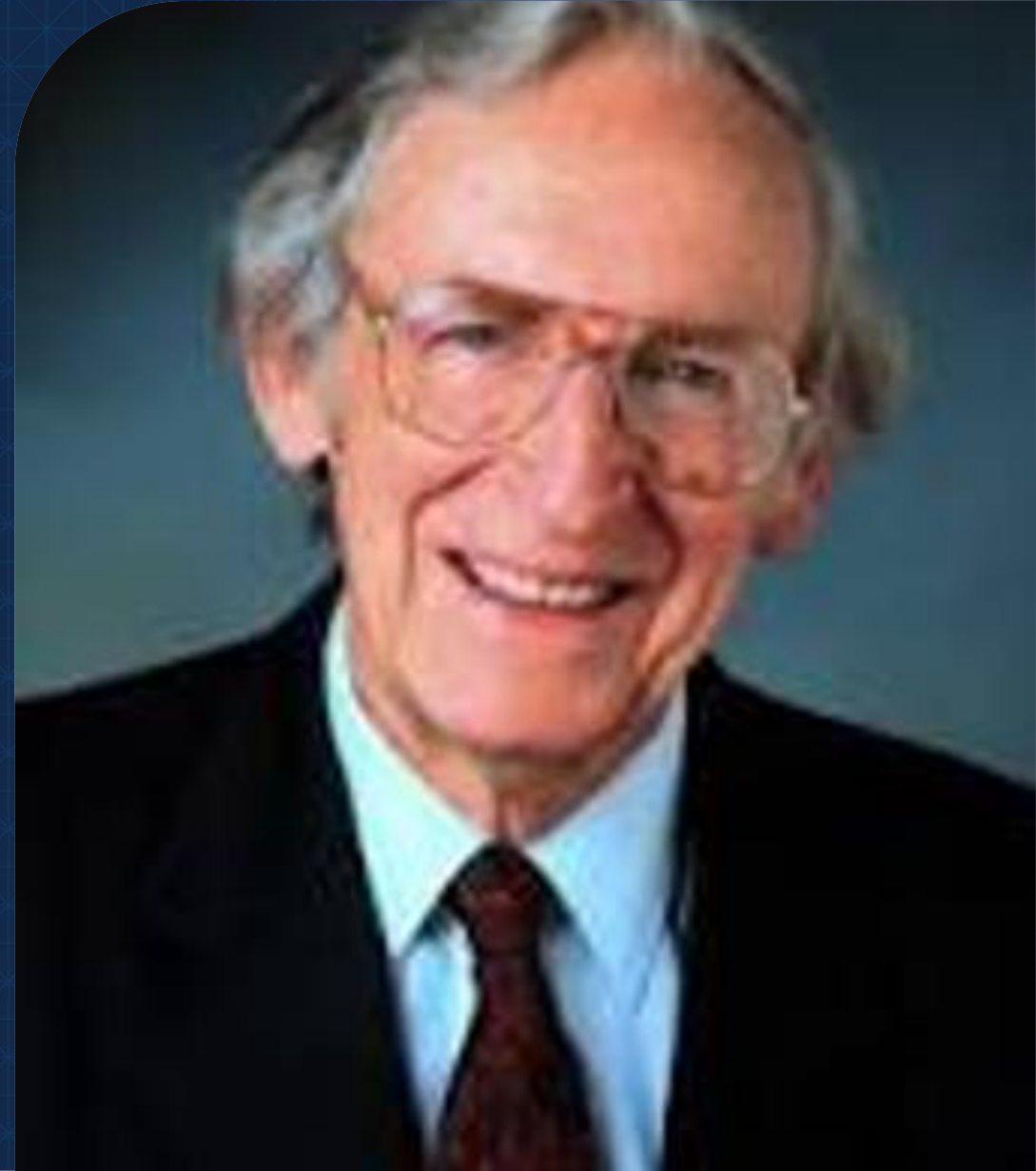
Rebecca Carranza

Bio:

Rebecca Carranza is a third-year PhD candidate in the Suarez Lab, where she studies ant-treehopper mutualisms. She is deeply committed to mentorship across all academic levels. As a research group leader for the Summer Pre-Doctoral Institute (SPI), she has mentored incoming PhD students, and she currently serves as the Illinois Summer Research Program (ISRP) Coordinator, supporting undergraduate research among underserved student populations. In addition, Rebecca mentors a team of undergraduate researchers in her lab, many of whom have gone on to present their work at scientific conferences. She is proud of her mentees' accomplishments and looks forward to continuing her mentorship in the lab.

Odum-Kendeigh Research Award

Dr. Eugene Odum is considered to be one of the fathers of modern ecology and published an influential textbook, *Fundamentals of Ecology* in 1953. Dr. Odum established the Odum-Kendeigh fund for graduate research in the fields of ecology, behavior and evolution in the Department of Animal Biology in honor of his major professor, Dr. Charles Kendeigh and the Department of Zoology from which he received his Ph.D in 1939.



Odum-Kendeigh Research Award



Avi Berger



Kaitlin Karl



Amanda Martinez

Odum-Kendeigh Research Award



Abby Weber



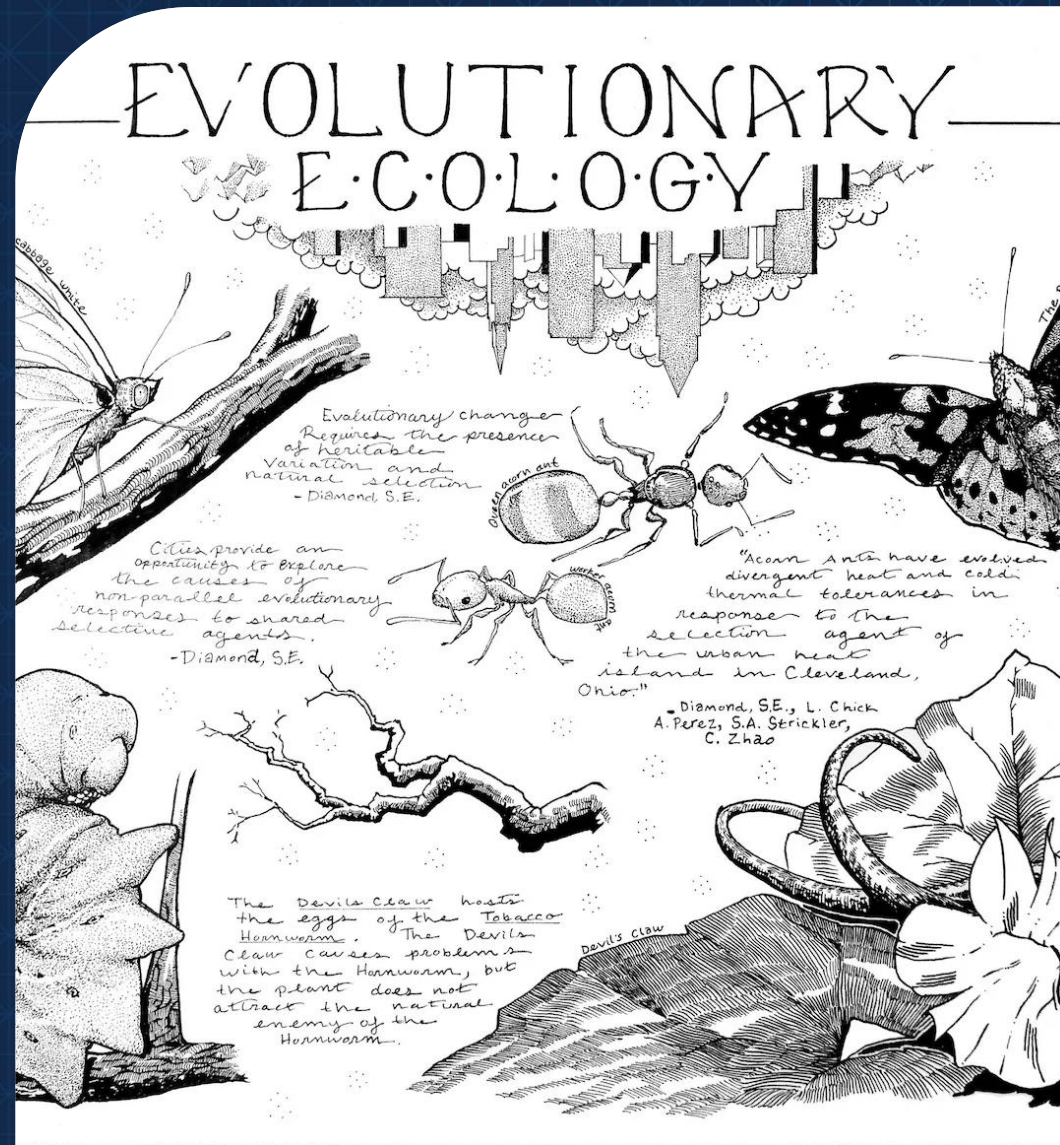
Wilfred Tang

Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior Summer Stipend Award

The EEB Summer Stipends are made possible with support from Block Grant Funds from the Graduate College.



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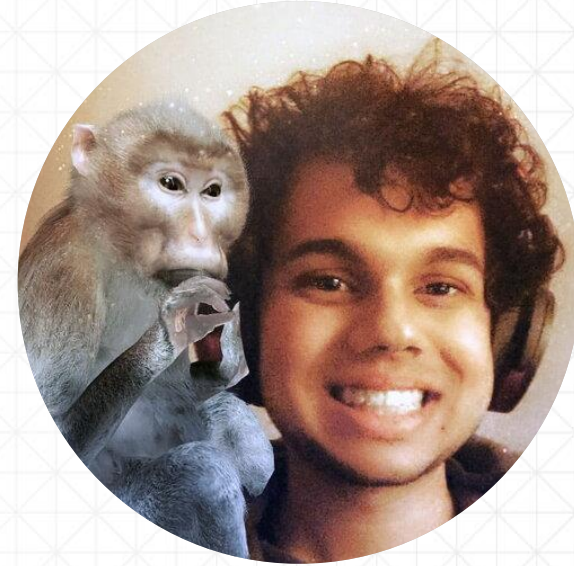
EEB Stipend Award



Anne- Danielle Aka



Annika Bagazinski



Shriram Bhat

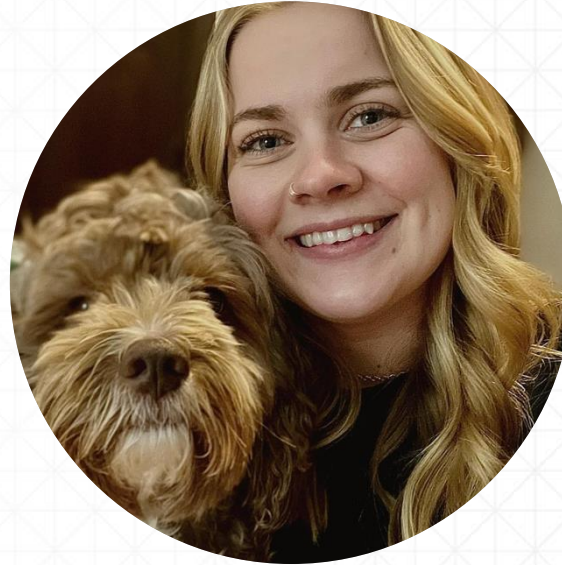
EEB Stipend Award



Jack Calvery



Francis Dinh



Julia Jehn



Tim Legare

Thomas Frazzetta Award for Outstanding Teaching in Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior Biology

This award was established in honor of Dr. Frazzetta who was a passionate teacher at Illinois for 50 years. It is given to a current Evolution, Ecology, and Behavioral graduate student in recognition of their sustained excellence in teaching.

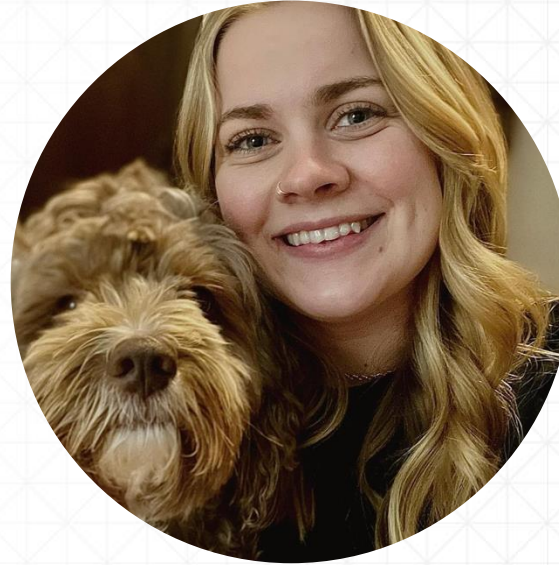


Thomas Frazzetta

Award for Outstanding Teaching in Evolution, Ecology, and Behavior Biology



Shriram Bhat



Julia Jehn

Congrats EEB Award winners!



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Plant Biology



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Harold C. and Sonja L. Labinsky Award

This fund was established in 1999 by Harold C. and Sonja L. Labinsky in memory of Harold Labinsky's father, Carl H. Labinsky, and in honor of Katherine M. Labinsky, Harold Labinsky's mother. The award is to be used to provide an annual financial gift to one or more students enrolled in the Department of Plant Biology in the College of LAS.



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Harold C. and Sonja L. Labinsky Award



Angelique Acevedo



Meghan Blaszyński



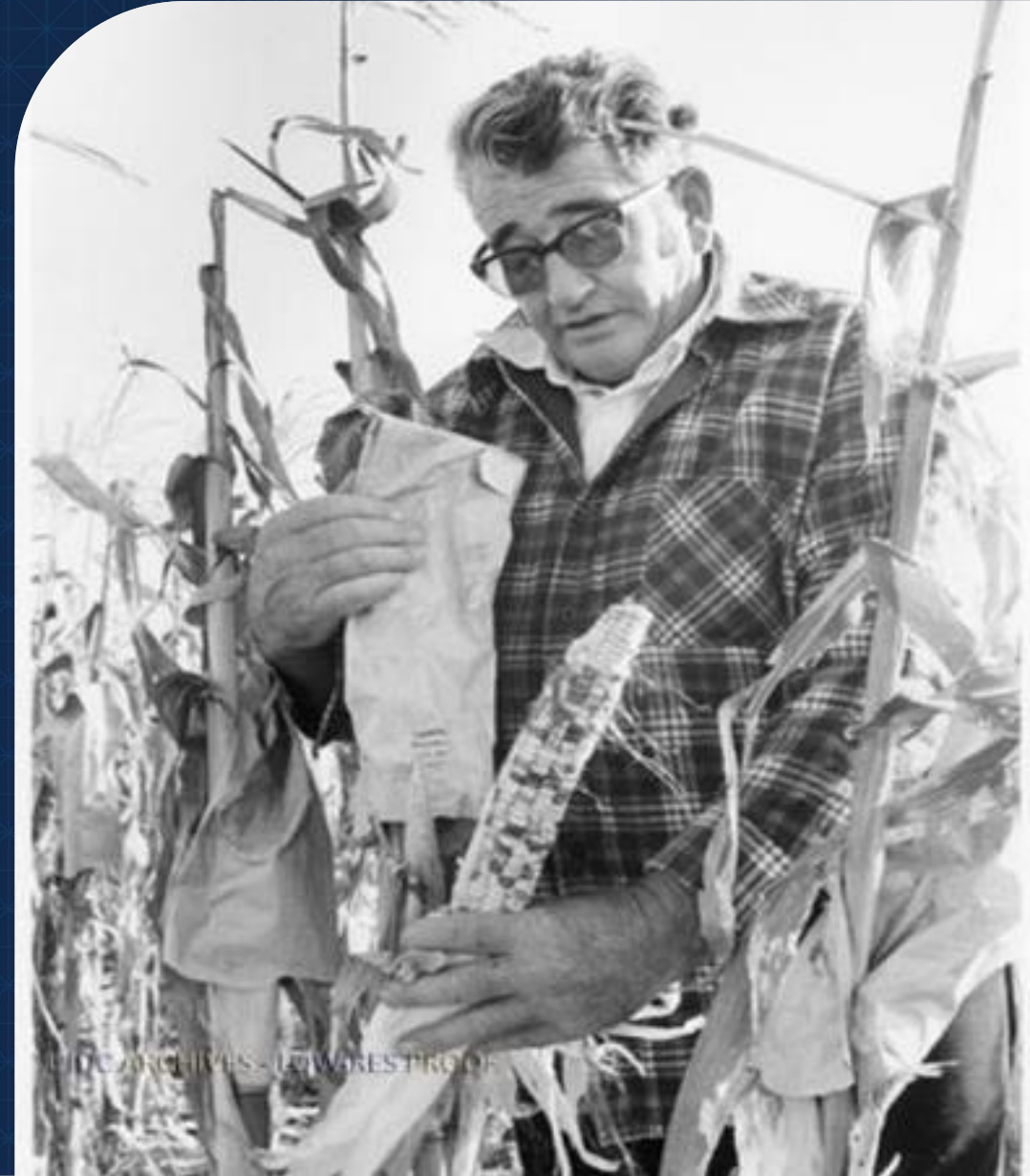
Sarah Chung

John R. Laughnan Award

These awards were endowed by John's wife and longtime collaborator, Susan Gabay-Laughnan and his fellow geneticists, friends, and colleagues in part in recognition of John's co-founding and support of the Annual Maize Meetings. John Laughnan was a member of the faculty of the University of Illinois for most of his career. He was a member of the Department of Botany and served as both its chairman and later its head. He joined the new Department of Genetics and Development but later returned to his previous department, by then called Plant Biology. He developed the original *shrunkn-2* hybrids responsible for stable sweetness of popular Super-Sweet corn.



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John R. Laughnan Award



Meghan Blaszyński



Marcus Brown



Grace Magavern

Govindjee and Rajni Govindjee Award for Excellence in Biological Research

This award was established by Dr. Govindjee and Dr. Rajni Govindjee. Govindjee and Rajni were both UIUC PhD students of Robert Emerson. Govindjee taught at UIUC from 1961-1999 and is known as a pioneer in the area of photosynthesis research. He is currently a Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry, Biophysics, and Plant Biology. Dr. Rajni Govindjee is recognized as a distinguished photobiologist, credited with pioneering research in photosynthesis and photobiology.



Govindjee and Rajni Govindjee Award for Excellence in Biological Research



Amanda Griffin



Lijia Guo



August Lipari

Govindjee and Rajni Govindjee Award for Excellence in Biological Research



Blaine Martin



Ignacio Sparrow Munoz

Dr. Fakhri and Dr. Maarib Bazzaz Plant Biology Fund

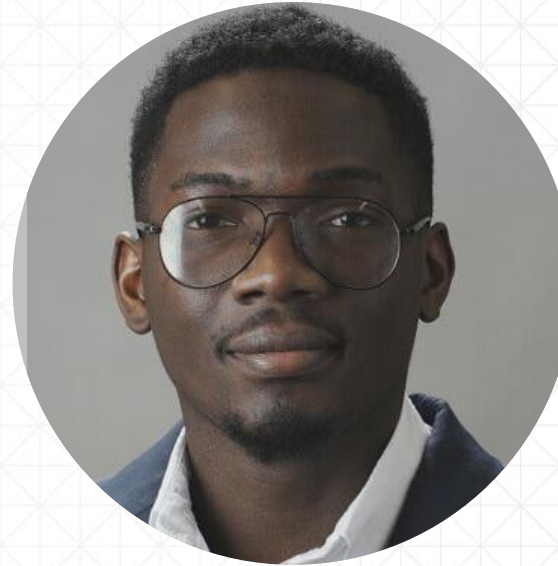
This award was established to honor Dr. Fakhri and Dr. Maarib Bazzaz as academics, mentors, and cherished friends by supporting students in the Department of Plant Biology at the University of Illinois. Department of Plant Biology in at the University of Illinois.



Dr. Fakhri and Dr. Maarib Bazzaz Plant Biology Fund



Hridi Prova Saha



Daniel Eneji Sani

Plant Biology Award for Outstanding Teaching in Plant Biology



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Plant Biology Award for Outstanding Teaching in Plant Biology



Kithmee De Silva

Bio:

I am a graduate student in the Brooks Lab in the Department of Plant Biology. My research focuses on untangling gene regulatory networks to understand how plants integrate environmental signals to coordinate photosynthesis and nitrogen use. This funding will support the addition of an epigenetics component, enabling me to explore deeper layers of genetic regulation.

Teaching & Mentoring Awards



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John G. & Evelyn Hartman

Heiligenstein Award

These awards, made possible by a gift from John H. Heiligenstein, M.D. '67, in memory of his parents, honors teaching assistants, recognizing their outstanding contributions in the SIB. Dr. Heiligenstein, a pediatrician and psychiatrist, had three careers in medicine: clinician, academic pediatrician/psychiatrist, and as a pharmaceutical research physician at Eli Lilly and Company.



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John G. & Evelyn Hartman Heiligenstein Award



Archie-Em Walker



Grace Magavern



Annika Bagazinski

Sharon Gray Memorial Award

Dr. Sharon Gray received her BS in Integrative Biology in 2006 and her PhD in Plant Biology at UIUC in 2013. In addition to her outstanding science, she was an exceptional teacher and mentor for undergraduates. The award, established by her husband, Dr. RJ Cody Markelz (BS Integrative Biology 2007, PhD Plant Biology, UIUC, 2012), honors Sharon's passion for and commitment to mentoring women in science.

The Sharon Gray Memorial Award supports a post-doctoral researcher or graduate student and their undergraduate mentee.



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Sharon Gray Memorial Award



Lizzie Bello & Bolade Abiola-Fagba

Sharon Gray Memorial Award



Rebecca Carranza & Susanna Martin

Sharon Gray Memorial Award



Maria Munoz & Samantha Sanford

Faculty Awards



Gene Robinson

Campus Executive Officer

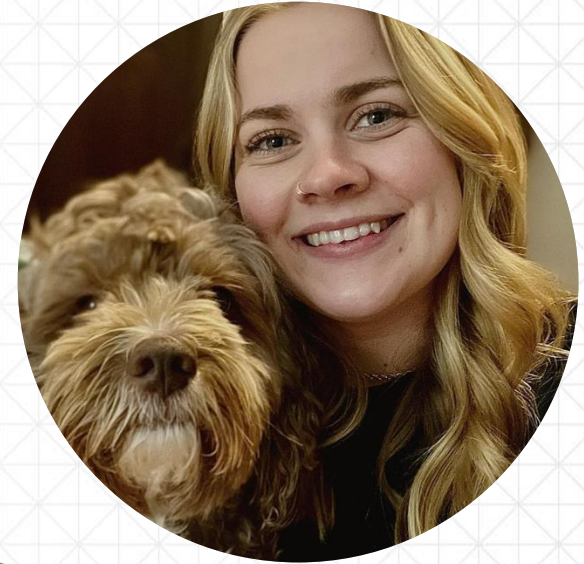
ISRP Research Team Leaders



Sam Pring



Michelle Zambrano



Julia Jehn



Marcus Brown

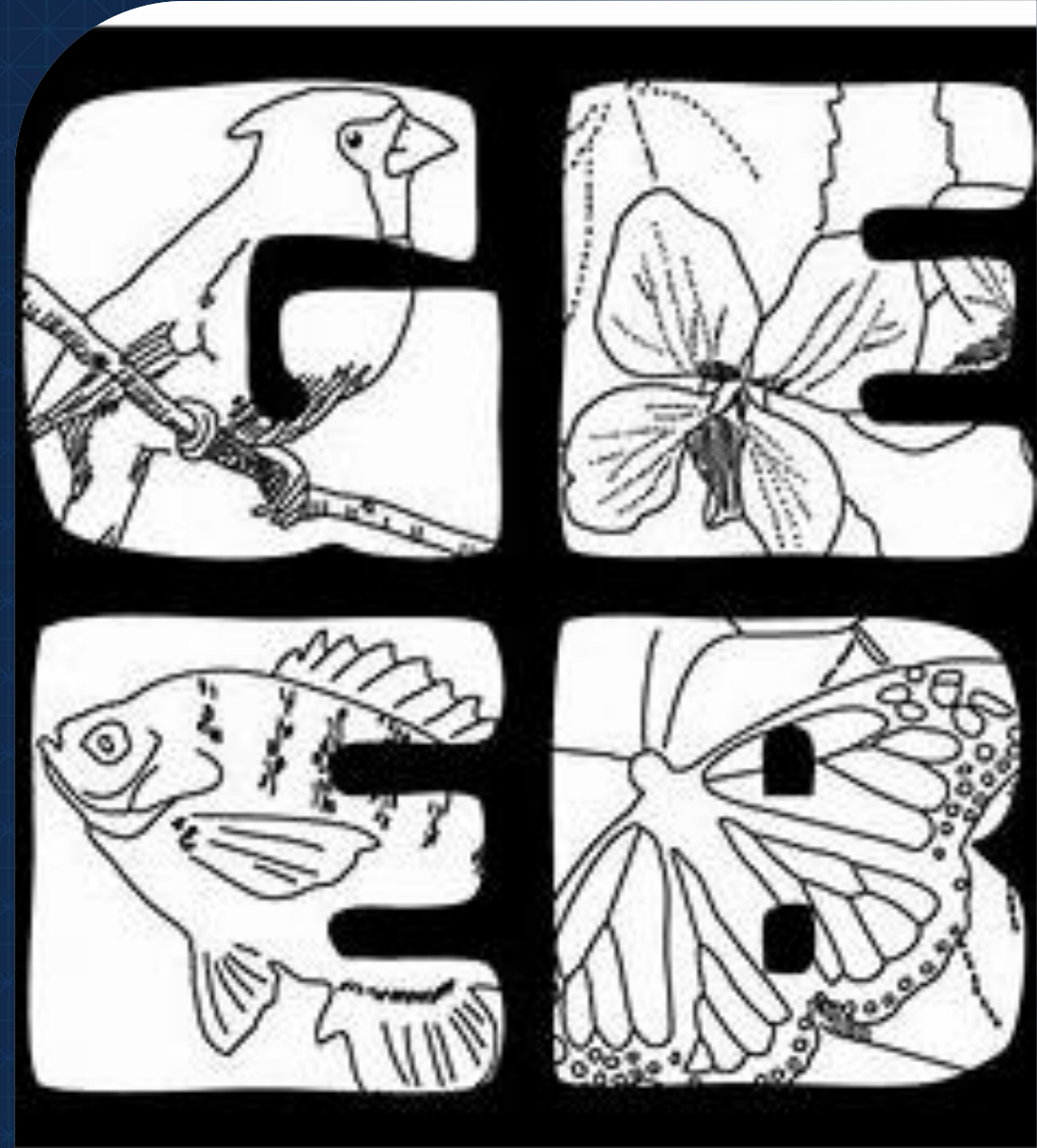


Archie-Em Walker

GEEB Symposium Awards



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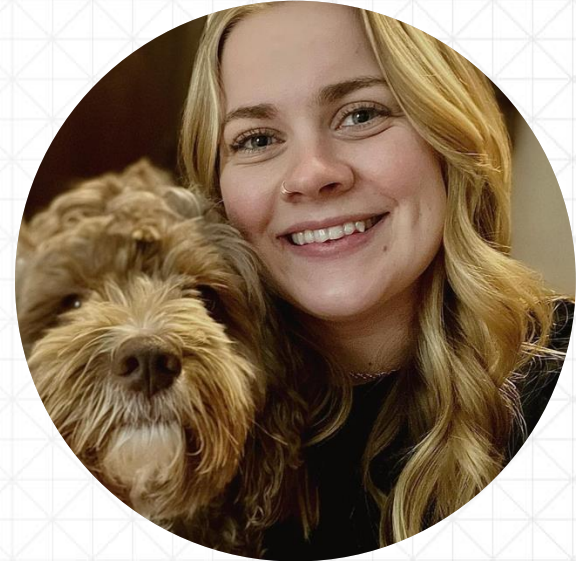
GEEB Symposium



Anna Grimes
5 Minute Lightning talk
Runner up



Kelly Campbell
Poster Runner up



Julia Jehn
8 Minute talk Runner up

GEEB Symposium



Abby Weber

8-minute talk winner

August Lipari

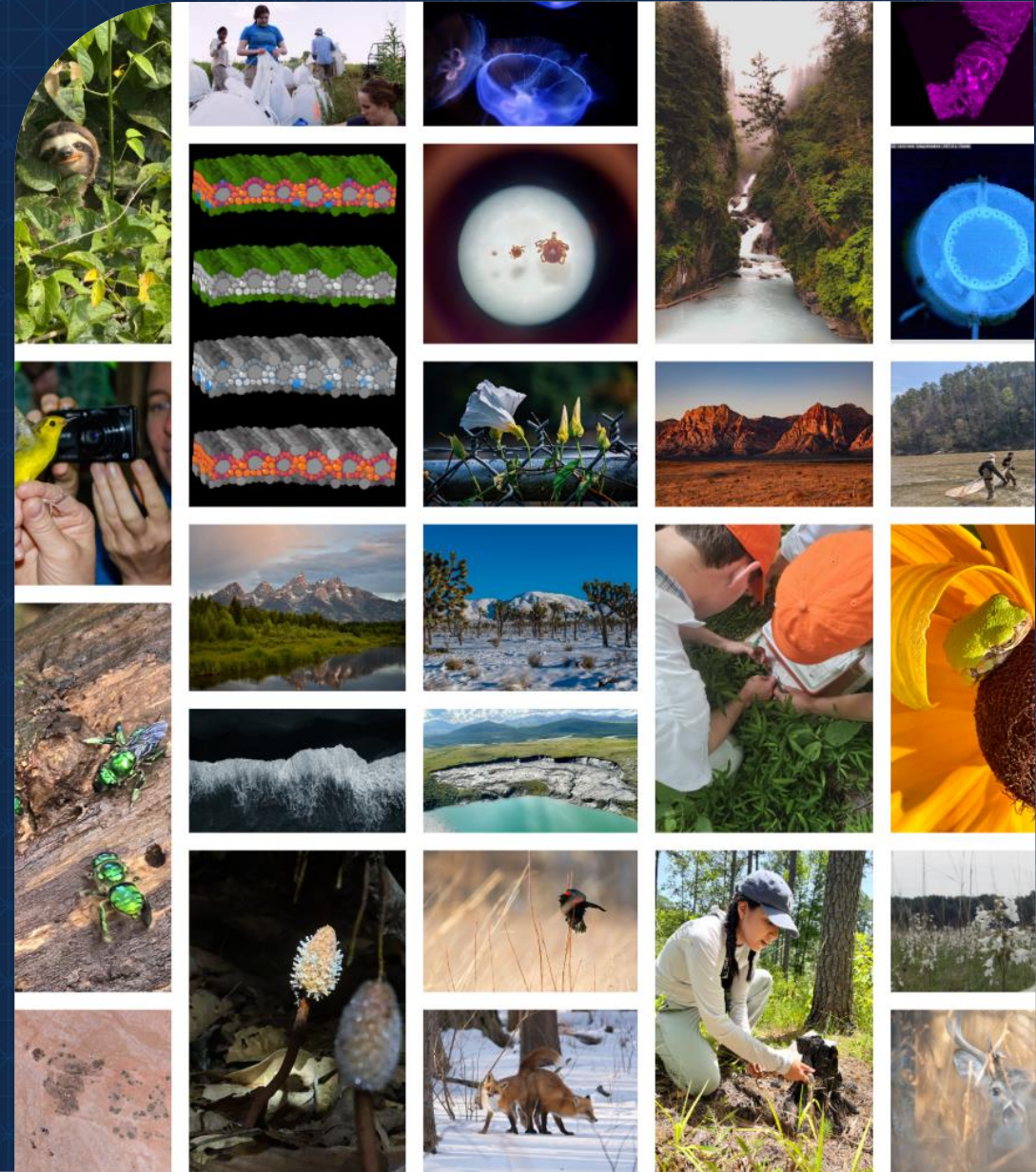
Poster Session winner

Michell Villalobos

5-Minute lighting talk winner

World of Biology

SIB Photo competition 2026



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Landscapes

First Place

Diya Parikh



SIB

Second Place

Lucas Sun



SIB

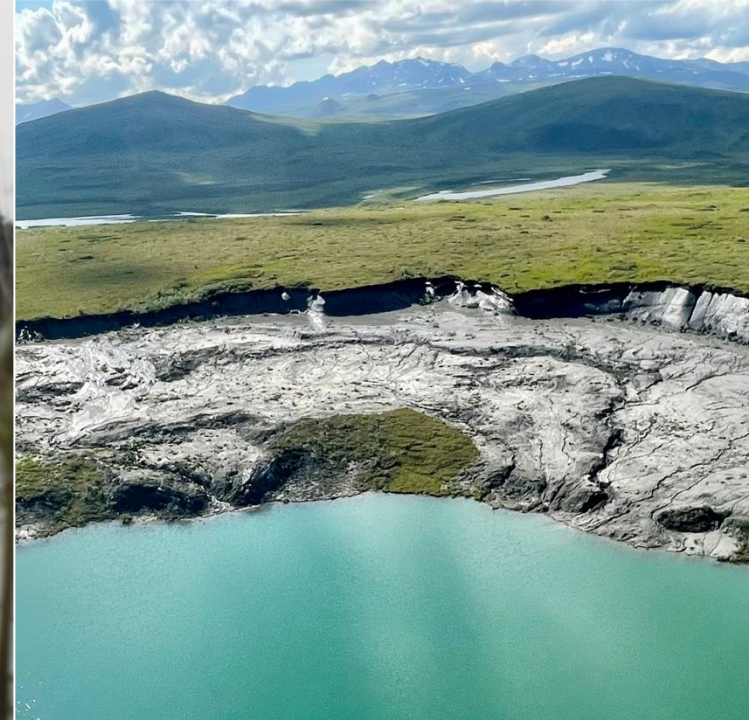
Third Place

"Red Rock Canyon Sunrise" - Christopher Durack



Runners-up

- Top: Lila Storaasli
- Bottom left: Andy Wszalek
- Bottom middle: Moiravi Aldunate
- Bottom right: Summer Xia





Organisms

First Place

Tim Legare



Second Place

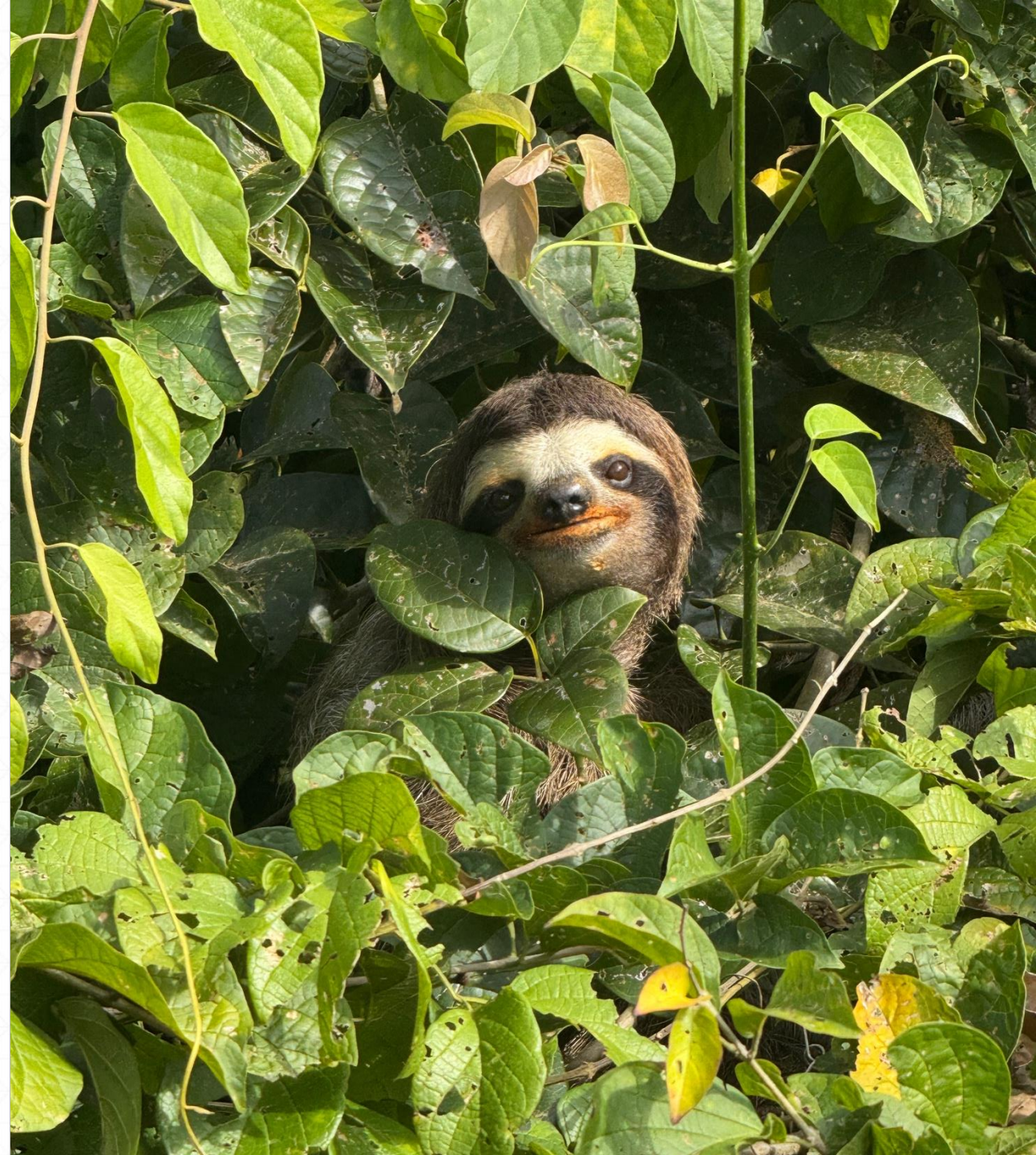
"Last Flower" - Ana Saballos



Office or unit name

Third Place

"Photo of a Sloth taken from Bradley Crane in
Panama City, Panama" - Jasmine Kaur



Runners-up

- Top Right: Allanis Vera Barron
- Bottom Right: Jordan Abenes
- Center: Abigail Daniele
- Left: Tim Legare





Biologists at Work

First Place

"Photographer's Grip" -Andy Wszalek



Second Place

Cristian Hernandez



SIB

Third Place

Amanda Martinez



Runners-up

- Top: Grace Magavern
- Bottom left: Nolan McCrary
- Bottom right: Moiravi Aldunate

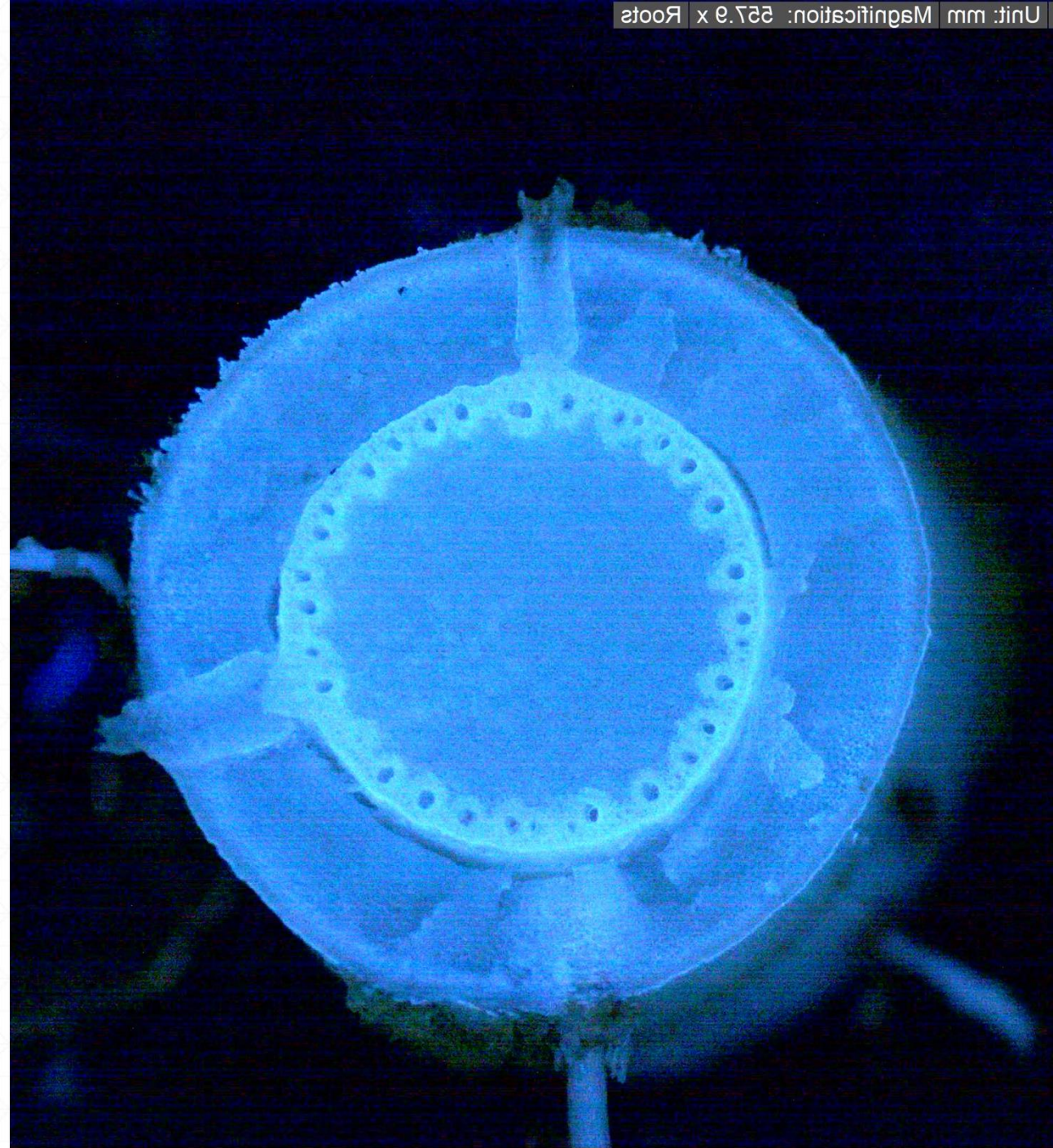




Biological Imaging

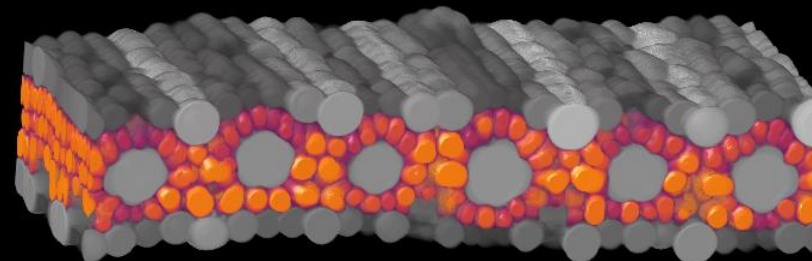
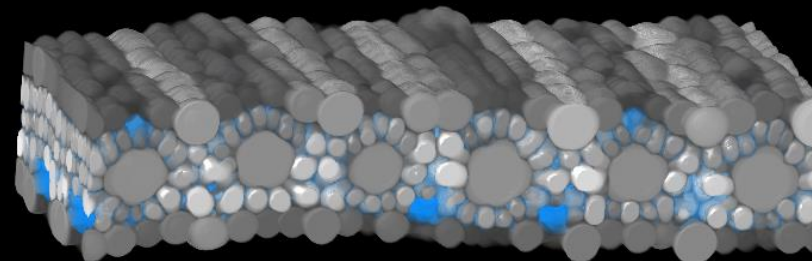
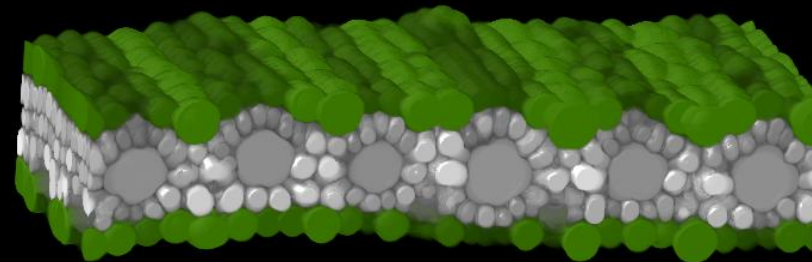
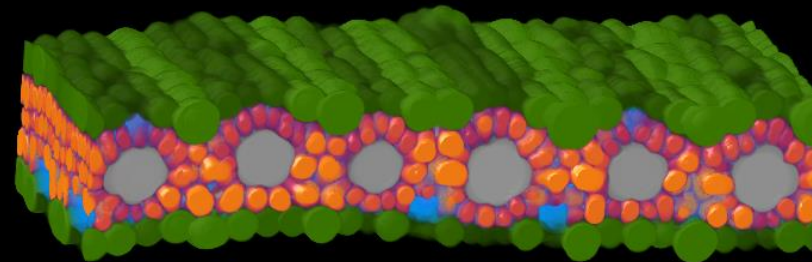
First Place

"Sorghum Root" - Charles Gove



Second Place

“Intricate Sorghum leaf organization revealed through microCT and machine learning” - James Fischer



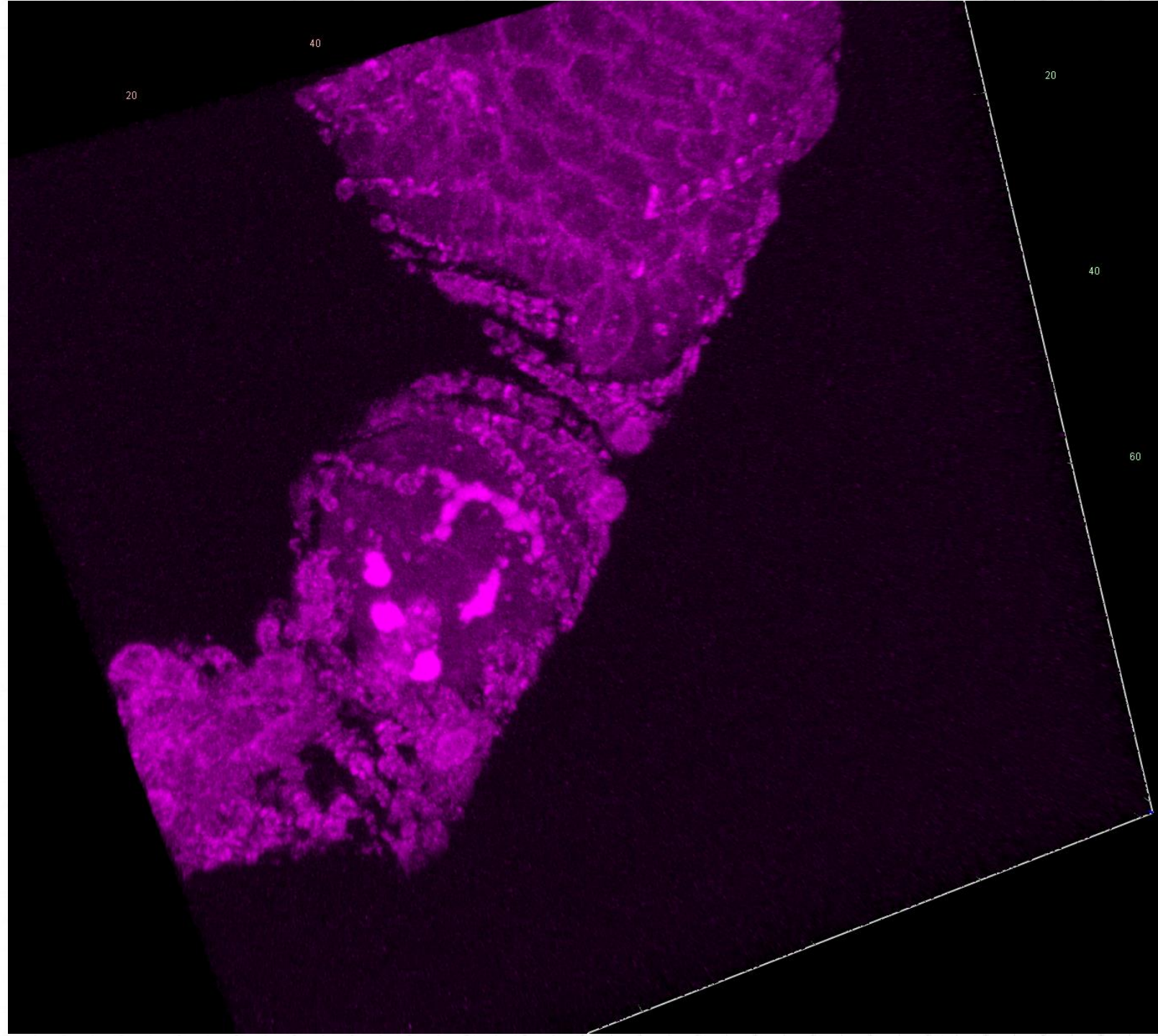
Third Place

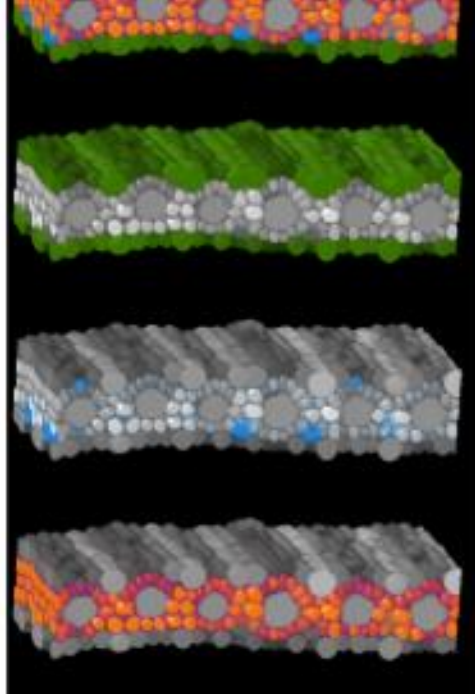
Nolan McCrary



Runner-up

Moiravi Aldunate





Final Thank You!



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“That’s all Folks!”