



# BIOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER

2023-2024

McINNIS HALL

## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear students, colleagues, and alumni,

It was another wonderful year of blessings in our department. Students did dissections, went on canoe trips and birding excursions, pinned insects, identified bones and muscles, performed microscopy, and cloned genes. They conducted faculty-led research projects and did many presentations. They were challenged to think critically about science and faith. Yes, they were busy!

We graduated 10 students and enjoyed a productive summer with five students engaged in research in our SOAR program under the mentorship of Dr. Brian and Dr. Rachael Alfaro, and Dr. K (Kandace Thomas). Many of those who graduated are already working or will be entering graduate programs this fall. Several of our current students are engaged in internships this summer in the areas of medicine and environmental science.

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



*Dr. Maria Fichera*  
*Chair, Department of Biology*

**Psalm 25:5**

***Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation;  
for you I wait all the day long.***





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

-JEREMIAH 29:11



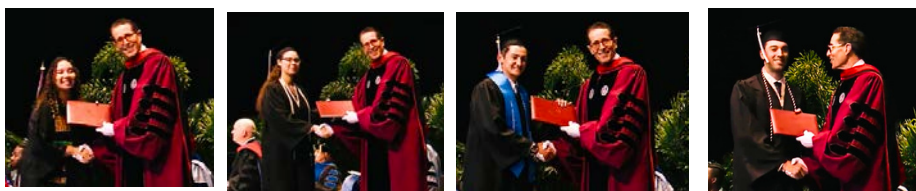
## CONGRATULATIONS TO THE CLASS OF 2024!

The biology department celebrated the achievements of our majors as we graduated 10 students – three graduated with a BS in Environmental Science, four with a BS in Biology, and three with a BA in Biological Studies. Students who graduated with honors include Caroline Herring who earned Summa Cum Laude, and Nivini Coutinho and Ian McDonald, who graduated Cum Laude.

### BS Environmental Science



### BS Biology



### BA Biological Studies



*Congratulations*





# THE BACCALAUREATE SERVICE



L to R-Tyler, Kaela, Andrew, Madeline, Julianne, & Trinity

**CONGRATULATIONS**



Our students were inducted into the Sigma Zeta National Science and Math Honor Society:

***Julianne Anemone, Tyler Foote, and Trinity Gruber (Environmental Science majors); Andrew DeStefano and Madeline Weeks (Biology majors); and Kaela Miles (Biological Studies major)***

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



Dr. Brian Alfaro (below) was the invited speaker and shared important life lessons. Congrats to all!





# SENIOR THESIS PRESENTATIONS



**“What lies behind us  
and what lies  
before us are tiny matters  
compared to  
what lies within us.”  
– Ralph Waldo Emerson**

## Faculty presentations



**OUR  
AMAZING  
SENIORS**



# SUMMER RESEARCH 2024

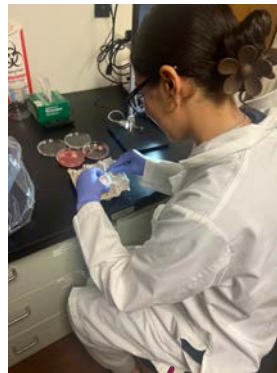


Our summer research community



The SOAR team

(L to R) Top row- Dr. K, Trinity, Madeline, Luisa and Daniel  
Bottom row- Marianni, Dr. Brian and Dr. Rachael Alfaro



*The white coats!*





# Breaking News

↓ READ MORE ↓



Research paper just accepted for publication from work done in Dr. Brian Alfaro's Ecology class!  
Student authors in blue!

Tracking ground arthropod diversity in urban forests: Lessons learned from a new undergraduate long-term project (2024). Brian Alfaro, Riley C. Porter, Tyler G. Foote, Mercedes J. Lohmann, Caroline Herring, Kaitlyn E. Blankley, Julianne N. Anemone, Kayla Madden, David W. Unander, and Rachael E. Alfaro. *Urban Naturalist*.



Fun in the lab and field

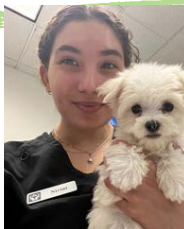


Friendship

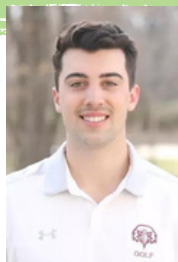




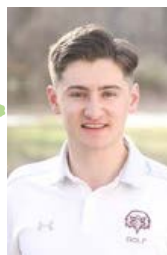
# What are some of our 2024 grads doing?



**Nivini** - attending Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine



**Ian** -pursuing a Masters in Biomedical Sciences at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine



**Lucas** - attending Rosenberg School of Optometry- University of the Incarnate Word



**Julia** - pursuing a Masters of Business Administration/ Healthcare Administration at Eastern

## More alumni news



**Dr. Kaylie Canada**  
(Class of 2017)  
Emergency & Critical Care Vet (Pinnacle Veterinary Specialists)



**Dr. Matthew Craddock**  
(Class of 2019)  
Covenant Family Dentistry (2023)



**Michelle Gallaher**  
(Class of 2011)  
Manager at Charles River Laboratories



**Talus Gaymore**  
(Class of 2022)  
Masters in Biopharmaceutical Process Engineering at Thomas Jefferson University



**Mariah Hammer**  
(Class of 2019) -  
Physician Assistant-  
Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science (2024)



**Alejandro Martínez Lago**  
(Class of 2023)  
Marketing & Medical Affairs Intern, Abbott Vascular Division- Madrid, Spain



**Dr. Christa Peyton**  
(Class of 2020) DDS  
Howard University College of Dental Medicine



**Riley Porter**  
(Class of 2023)  
Associate Scientist 1- Weston



**Myeika (Judkins) Steward**  
(Class of 2007)  
MPH Epidemiology & Biostatistics; Senior lab tech Baruch College



**Elizabeth Wright**  
(Class of 2018)  
Masters in Biology at Villanova University

## Looking forward to an amazing 2024-2025 academic year!

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

Find us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube!



Questions? Contact Dr. Maria Fichera -- [mfichera@eastern.edu](mailto:mfichera@eastern.edu) or 610-341-1779