Awards and Recognition

Dr. Jannon Fuchs, Professor in Biological Sciences, who has been active in mentoring undergraduate and Texas Academy of Mathematics and Science (TAMS) students, and Goldwater scholars was honored with a scholarship in her name by the family of a TAMS student. ‘Dr. Jannon Fuchs and the TAMS Faculty Scholarship’, which will be awarded annually to a TAMS student who has excelled in Life Sciences, speaks to the excellence of a superb student and that of an outstanding faculty mentor. Julia Camacho who worked under the mentorship of Dr. Helen Wang in the Math Department, was the first recipient of this scholarship. Drawing upon genetic and clinical data from patients, Julia has helped develop a computational method that utilizes artificial intelligence to predict the development of secondary central-nervous-system cancer.

Fabrizio Bonatesta, graduate student with Assistant Professor Dr. Ed Mager was selected as a Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI) Scholar, a program by the GoMRI that recognizes outstanding graduate students and the vital research they contribute to improve understanding of the damage, response, and recovery following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill.

Promotions and New Appointments

Dr. Mark McLellan joined UNT as Professor with Tenure in the Department of Biological Sciences and Vice President of Research and Innovation. Dr. McLellan will lead the university in developing and implementing new strategies in collaboration with the Office of the Provost and others to transform and expand UNT’s research portfolio. He also is charged with overseeing UNT’s Strategic Plan for Research and with advancing the university’s goal to become a recognized National Research University.

Congratulations to Dr. Amie Lund on her promotion to Associate Professor with Tenure and to Dr. Jill Dewey on her promotion to the rank of Senior Lecturer. Dr. Lund’s research interests include investigating the effects of environmental (air) pollutants on progression of cardiovascular disease and neurovascular blood brain barrier disruption. Dr. Dewey, in addition to her role as a Lecturer, serves as senior undergraduate adviser in the Department.

Professor Dr. Pamela Padilla was appointed as the new Associate Vice President of Research and Innovation. In this new role Dr. Padilla will serve as the overall lead from the Office of Research and Innovation for management of UNT core research facilities on campus. In addition, she will chair the Research Space Adjudication Subcommittee (RSAS) and oversee research development activities for the Office of Research & Innovation.

Associate Professor Dr. David Hoeinghaus was appointed Associate Chair of the Department of Biological Sciences. Among other responsibilities, as Associate Chair Dr. Hoeinghaus will lead our efforts to meet the state mandated Institutional Effectiveness requirements, serve as the contact person for grade appeals, and supervise the development and implementation of assessment protocols in our undergraduate classes. Dr. Hoeinghaus conducts research on fish ecology, and community and ecosystem ecology of tropical and temperate aquatic ecosystems.

Professor Dr. Aaron Roberts was appointed Director of the Advanced Environmental Research Institute (AERI). He takes over the leadership of AERI from Dr. Sam Atkinson who served as the Director of AERI since its inception. The mission of AERI is to foster, facilitate and conduct science-based interdisciplinary environmental research that provides an understanding of how human actions impact the environment, and then use that knowledge to suggest scientific, engineering, policy and/or educational solutions to actual environmental problems.

Associate Professor Dr. Rudi Thompson was appointed Executive Director of the Center for Learning, Experimentation, Application, and Research (CLEAR). CLEAR supports the University’s goals of providing the best undergraduate educational experience in Texas and providing a superior graduate education by working closely with faculty to maximize their teaching effectiveness regardless of the mode of instructional delivery.

Dr. Calvin Henard joined the department of Biological Sciences as an Assistant Professor with expertise in microbial physiology and metabolism. Dr. Henard, who is affiliated with the BioDiscovery Institute, received a B.S. in Molecular Biology from Tarleton State University in Stephenville, Texas and a Ph.D. in Microbiology from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora, Colorado. Following his doctoral studies, Dr. Henard joined the National Renewable Energy Laboratory's National Bioenergy Center as a postdoctoral researcher where he used his expertise in molecular microbiology and metabolic engineering to develop algal, yeast, and bacterial biocatalysts for conversion of renewable substrates to biofuels and bioproducts. In 2016, Dr. Henard was promoted to a staff scientist at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory to lead research focused on the biological conversion of waste gases to platform chemicals. At UNT, Dr. Henard's lab leverages advanced molecular and synthetic biology to develop biotechnologies for the conversion of one-carbon substrates to fuels and chemicals using methanotrophic bacteria.
Heather Tunnell was appointed Student Program Coordinator. In her new role, Heather will assist the Associate Chair with review and coordinating curriculum updates, oversee and distribute scholarships, serve as the primary program liaison for graduate admissions and TA application processes. Heather will also coordinate Biology Advising Office operations, assist with undergraduate advising, including transfer credit evaluations, scheduling, enrollment/registration requests, and administrative support.

Donald “DJ” Lynch was appointed Inventory/Stockroom Specialist. In this new role, DJ will oversee the functioning of the stockroom. He will lead stockroom activities including receiving, stocking, recordkeeping, and distribution of materials, monitor capital equipment inventory, assisting users with liquid nitrogen, copier/printer related activities, and mail services.

Kathryn “Katy” Tunks joined the department as Stockroom Associate. Katy has been with UNT in another role as a Video Helpdesk Assistant with CLEAR. In her role as the Stockroom Associate, Katy provides customer service by assisting faculty, students and lab supervisors with purchasing, receiving and distributing merchandise, maintaining stockroom inventory, assisting users with liquid nitrogen, copier/printer related activities, and mail services.

Deborah “Deb” Douglas joined the department as Office Support Associate. She comes from Texas A&M in Galveston, TX. In this role she assisted faculty and the Department with travel and other office duties. She has been with the State system for 16 years. As Office Associate, among other services, Deb will assist Biology faculty, staff and graduate students with travel, conference room scheduling, and textbook orders. She will also manage the Department website and the publication of the Department newsletter BioSphere.

Shantelle McDonald joined Advanced Environmental Research Institute (AERI) as Office Support Associate. Shantelle comes from Moscow, ID. Her role will include assisting with travel and expenses for faculty, staff, and students affiliated with AERI. She is excited to continue learning about the administrative process as well as supporting the fascinating research undertaken by students and faculty here at UNT. In the office and in life, she is driven by insatiable curiosity and passion for helping others.

Rachel Leads took over as the President of the Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA) committee for FY2020. Joining Rachel on the BGSA committee are Vaidehi Pusadkar (Vice President), Cameron Emadi (Secretary), Cory Green (Treasurer), and Sara McGillewie (Social Media Representative). Rachel and Cameron are graduate student in Dr. Aaron Roberts’ aquatic toxicology lab, Corey and Sara are graduate students in Dr. David Hoeinghaus’s aquatic community and ecosystem ecology lab, Vaidehi is a graduate student in Dr. Rajeel Azaz’s bioinformatics lab, and Cameron is a graduate student in Dr. Ed Mager’s aquatic toxicology and fish physiology lab.

Extramural Grants and Contracts


Elucidating the cellular machinery for lipid storage in plants. US Department of Energy Basic Energy Sciences- Physical Biosciences. PIs - Kent Chapman (UNT); Co-PIs - Robert Mullen (Univ of Guelph, Ontario, Canada), and John Dyer (USDA-ARS Maricopa, AZ), $ 790,000.

Embryogenic Cell Culture Screening System for Herbicide Tolerance, BASF Plant Science, LP. PI – Kent Chapman (UNT), $42,992 (supplement).

Genetic Manipulation of Cottonseed Protein Reserves, Cotton Incorporated. PI – Kent Chapman (UNT); Co-PIs - Robert Mullen, Brian Hoehn and John Dyer, $1,000,000.

Functional analysis of candidate genes involved in oil storage and stability in Penny cress, US Department of Energy- Biological Environmental Research Division. PI - Ana Alonso (UNT); Co-PIs - Kent Chapman (UNT) and Erich Grotewold (Michigan State), $ 2,388,159.

Pollinative Prairie Phase II, a native Texas prairie habitat reconstruction at the University of North Texas. We Mean Green Fund. PI: Baxter-Styse (Biology and AERI) and Thompson (Philosophy), $22,000.

Publications


Seminars/Talk


Capturing Genetic Variation in Cottonseed Constituents to Enhance Value. 2019 Cotton Breeder’s Tour- Cotton Incorporated, College Station, TXJuly 22, 2019. Invited talk by Dr. Kent Chapman.


Heterogeneity of Neutral Lipid Storage in Jojoba Embryos. 9th European Symposium on Plant Lipids, Marseille, July 8, 2019. Invited talk by Dr. Kent Chapman.

Role of vertebrates as frugivores and as seed dispersers, Ph.D. and M.S. programs in Sciences, Conservation and Management of Natural Resources, Universidad de Los Lagos, Chile. Talk by J.E. Professor.

Structural Insights into the Evolutionary Divergence of Acylethanolamide Signaling. Institute of Food Science and Technology, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences, Beijing, China, August 20, 2019. Invited seminar given by Kent Chapman.

Tracking the Flow of Carbon in Lesquerella (Physaria fendleri), an Emerging Crop Producing Hydroxy Fatty Acids. European Symposium on Plant Lipids, Marseille (France), July 2019. Invited talk by Jean-Christophe Cocuron.


**Conference Presentations**


Jimenez, J.E. Conservation and ecology of Chileans birds. Chile’s Forest Service, Robinson Crusoed Island, Chile.


