Chairman Notes

Dear Alumni: Greetings and welcome to the Biology department. As you may have heard, I have recently taken up the chairmanship of the Biology department. Most of you know that I have spent nearly two and a half decades here very productively. I am looking forward to working with the students, faculty and alumni to make the life in our department very exciting. The University has hired a new Chancellor, Dr. Michael Collins. In our department, we have recruited a new faculty, Dr. Alexey Veraska in the cell signaling field. I anticipate that in the near future we will make more new hires in Molecular Cellular Biology and Evolutionary Biology. These additions will be essential to make this place productive and prosperous. We will continue to provide an enriching and exemplary teaching environment for our undergraduate and graduate students.

In every one's life, time they spent in school represents a wonderful and rewarding experience. As you pass through your life, and decide that at some point want 'to give back' to the society, please remember the joyous time you had in the department of Biology. You can participate in your department in numerous ways: teaching part time in one of our classes, serving as a mentor to one of our students, participating in fund raising or generously contributing to one of many deserving programs such as endowment for faculty positions, scholarships or laboratory renovations. You may find the great feeling of satisfaction in contributing to the welfare of your department. -- Dr. Sugumaran

Farewell to Ray Forget

Ray was in charge of the laboratory portions of the Introductory Biology, and sophomore level Genetics courses. This required a lot of preparation time as well as being available for students. Biology technicians are the most important part of undergraduate laboratory training in that they implement the laboratory-based goals of the instructor commensurate with the training of the new students. They use their knowledge as biologists to prepare buffers, collect specimens, set up enzyme-based assays, and keep interactive computer-based exercises active. Ray acquired all the materials, including living specimens, for the laboratories and set up the material for proper analysis. It is a difficult and sometimes tedious job to prepare laboratories for students. He did his job well, and with a flourish. Ray worked well with students, and made life-long friendships with many of them.

His teaching and guidance have enabled thousands of students to be successful not only while they were at UMass Boston, but also in careers after graduation. Ray helped all students especially those who had an interest and ability in solving problems in Biology. Students with an insatiable desire to learn Biology sought him out for advice. They counted on Ray to let them into the labs at all hours to work on their assignments. The best of our students were always on a first name basis with Ray. Students found him to be very supportive in their efforts to better understand complex biology problems. He was the person there for all laboratory activities, and also acted as a counselor, confidant and educator. After graduation, many students would come back to UMass Boston to see him and thank him for his help with their careers. He will be sorely missed as a colleague, friend and educator. -Dr. Hagar
Dr. William Woods, (a.k.a. Woody) remembers Ray:

In the undergraduate genetics course where Ray ran the teaching lab, Paula-- then Paula Leventis-- was my lab partner. For some reason I couldn’t quite figure out at the time, Paula was going to the lab at all hours during a Drosophila experiment, counting flies, flies and more flies. Nearly every time I went to the lab, there was a note from Paula dated a few hours before with the count data. We were supposed to count at least 300; in the end, we counted more than 1400, and about 1200 of those were Paula’s. Hmm. At the same time, I was wondering why Ray asked me so often about how my lab partner was doing. A larger hmm, soon afterwards explained by a wedding.

Once when several gung-ho freshman students, including me, wanted to get into the freshman biolabs on Sunday evening so we could get sharp for a lab practical exam, he drove all the way in from his home and unlocked the labs—not exactly in the job description.

During the lab practical (he had previously warned me about confusing gametophytes and sporophytes when answering questions about bryophytes) he followed me around the table where those questions were asked. Only after I had moved to the next table did he catch my eye and give a nod, so I knew I had gotten it right. I had known him for six months at the time, but if he identified you as one of the serious ones, he wanted to know how you were doing.

On February 2, 2005 a Memorial Service in honor of Raymond Forget held in Ryan Lounge -McCormack 3rd floor at UMass Boston. Joanna Scagliotti played the Cello during the opening and Dr. William Hagar, Dr. Steven Ackerman, Dr. Woody Woods, Yvonne Vaillancourt, Sabrina Hawthorne and Patrice Rateau, all spoke of Ray in remembrance. Millicent Riggins, McNair Program Director, sang Amazing Grace, and Sister Dorothy, Church Services, and Eden Medaglia, Biology LabTechnician, read poems. Kahrim Wade, of Central Duplicating made wonderful posters of Ray, James Allen, of the Biology Greenhouse provided the beautiful plants that decorated the room. Many thanks to all the faculty, colleagues, students and staff who attended and to Ray’s family and friends.
Dedication to Honor Army Officer and UMass Boston Alumnus Kyran Kennedy, BS 1983. On Friday, November 5, UMass Boston’s Office of Veterans’ Affairs, the Student Veteran’s Center, and the Joiner Center will honor the memory of 1983 graduate U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer Kyran Kennedy, who was killed in Iraq. The ceremony was held on the Harbor Walk, near the Fox Point Gazebo. Chief Warrant Officer Kennedy was born and raised in West Roxbury and graduated from UMass Boston with a degree in biology.

Marion Mealey-Ferrara BS 1997. Marion is currently taking some graduate courses through the University of Florida distance MS program for Forensic DNA Analysis and Serology. She volunteers once a month at her local police department in their Forensic Lab helping them put together a Safety Plan and learning to do drug analysis. She has acquired a semi-retired Explosive Sniffing Canine named “Denny” that is now involved in demonstrations at Counter-terrorism conferences and drills. More recently Marion applied to the PhD program at the University of Kansas Lawrence (the main campus) to a Biological Anthropology/Molecular Genetics program and was excepted. She will pursue research in the area of Molecular Genetics.

After that, she hopes to find a university faculty position somewhere that has an Ocean! She states, “I hate being landlocked out here, but the people are very friendly and the job is great.”

Daniel Jones BS 2004. Dan is enjoying a new job in Reproductive Cryogenics and is considering going back to school for!

Melissa Privetera class of 2000. Melissa is currently employed at Bristol-Myers Squibb as an Assistant Research Scientist in Billerica, MA.

Andrea Talis, BS 1980. Andrea just landed a position at Tufts.

Suzanne Shrewsbury traveled this past January to Costa Rica to do Research. She sent us these breathtaking pictures. On the left is a picture of Rio Sucio’s volcanic ash deposits, and on the right is the view from their hotel in Manual Antonio on the Pacific coast.
Congratulations to recent graduate Obioma Okafor, who was accepted to Dental School at Temple University.

**Jennifer Schomp**, Environmental Studies undergraduate 2001, completed the Vermont Master Gardener certification and planted an educational native plant garden with signage promoting the use of natives in home landscaping for the minimization of invasive success and the encouragement of wildlife habitat and food. Jennifer has worked at seasonal botany jobs in VT and NY and is now waiting to hear about whether she’ll be accepted to the graduate school in ecology next fall. All the Best to Jennifer.

**Fatimah Abdul Basir**, past undergraduate 1996 writes to thank James Allen, the Greenhouse Manager, for the support he gave her during her graduate school application process. Fatimah is officially enrolled in the graduate program for Secondary Biology Teaching Certification at Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, CT. Fatimah is also continuing her training at the New England Wildflower Society, (NEWFS). Ultimately, she wants to involve her students in this and other scientific societies and hopes to be sending Jim data that her students have collected.

**Akochi Agunwambo**, a Biology undergraduate and past UMEB program student, was accepted into the competitive 2005 Intramural National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) Research Opportunities Program (INRO 2005) – with the support of Drs. Stevenson, Ondrechen, and Sugumaran. As a result, from 6-11 February, 2005, he will participate in intensive lectures, seminars, and workshops on current research topics on infectious diseases at the National Institutes of Health campus, Bethesda, MD. In addition, he will interview for 1-2yr post-baccalaureate opportunities at the NIAID labs. The goal of this traineeship at the NIAID will be to build upon the background he has received so far in the UMass Biochemistry program and gain further experience conducting basic research in infectious diseases. It will also serve as a natural step forward in pursuit of his academic goals and research interests.

**Kalynda Gonzales** Biology UMEB Program, won the Minority Trainee Research Forum (MTRF) Award from the National Institute of Health (NIH) for her current research in Dr. Pollack’s lab. She is presenting her work at the New England Symposium. The MTRF only awards 12 undergraduates in the country, 12 MDs, 12 PhDs and 12 Graduate students. Kalynda still can’t believe she is one of them! They are flying her to Washington, DC to attend the Award’s Ceremony and to present her research. Congratulations and all the best to you.


**Sabrina Hawthorne**, Phd. 2004. After completing her Ph.D., Sabrina Hawthorne has accepted a postdoctoral position with Dr. Janet Paluh, Department of Biology, Boston College. Sabrina is using molecular biology and genetics to elucidate how the microtubule cytoskeleton regulates cell morphology and cell cycle progression in yeast.

**Patty Szczys**, Ph.D. 2004. Patty accepted a tenure track position at Wayne State College in Nebraska. There she will develop upper level classes in molecular ecology and conservation and population genetics. Currently she is working on a grant for the Nebraska Bird Conservation to fund a long term project on Black Terns that nest in the Sandhills.

**Edyta Tyminski** M.S. 2004. Edyta is working at Biogen Idec in the Virology Department. She started there last January after a year and half in a small start-up company called Genpath Pharmaceuticals.
Dr. Michael Shiaris was recently funded to fingerprint bacteria that indicate water pollution. For full article please go to http://www.ensr.com/newsroom/pr/2004/R&D_Bacterial_Fingerprinting.htm.

Dr. Robert D. Stevenson attended a workshop on ecological metadata entitled “KNB Data Management Tools Workshop” at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, University of California Santa Barbara from Sept 28-Sept 30, 2004. He learned about the Ecological Metadata Language (EML), Morpho, a metadata editor, and Metacat, a server for EML. The workshop was designed to provide ecologists, biologists, and data managers hands-on experience with some of the new ecoinformatics tools being created under the Knowledge Network for Biocomplexity Project, (http://knb.ecoinformatics.org), part of the www.ecoinformatics.org effort.

Dr. Adán Colón-Carmona received funding from an NSF subcontract along with Dr. Patricia Springer from University of California Riverside “Assigning Functions to the Arabidopsis LBD-Family”. He will be involving UMass undergraduates in the analysis of plant mutants of the LBD gene family being studied in Dr. Springer’s lab. He will also be developing educational material that could be used in undergraduate plant biology courses and in high schools.

Dr. Kamaljit S. Bawa was elected Honorary Fellow of the Association for Tropical Biology and Conservation (ATBC). Each year the ATBC recognizes an outstanding tropical biologist whose contributions merit the highest award from ATBC. Kamal was recognized as the Honorary Fellow in 2004. He was cited for his contributions to basic research in tropical biology and conservation, service to his profession, and to the establishment of Ashoka Trust in India. Dr. Bawa served as President of ATBC in 2000.

Our newest addition to the faculty, Dr. Roderick Jensen, Alton Brann Chair Professor, has a large scale project with Dr. Ted Dryja at the Mass Eye and Ear Infirmary (MGH) on macular degeneration, retinitis pigmentosa, and gene splicing. Dr. Jensen is currently setting up a DNA microarray facility here at UMass Boston.

Dr. Sugumaran presented a paper in the session on Pharmaceutical and Agriculture in the 4th Green Chemistry conference held at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth on January 13-14, 2005. The title of the talk was “Potential Green chemistry applications through the study of melanogenic and sclerotinogenic pathways in animals” He also chaired the session on Plastics and Renewable Feed Stocks in this conference.

Biology Office Happenings

Biology Faculty and Staff were honored by the Interim Chancellor, Keith Motley for their long years of service to the University: (30 years - Dr. Kamaljit S. Bawa, Dr. William G. Hagar and Mr. Charles King), (25 years - Dr. Manickam Sugumaran), (20 years - Dr. Kenneth C. Kleene), and (10 years - Dr. Greg Beck)

Women in the Biology Department who have recently became Moms!

Nancy Roderiguez-Sheridon, BS undergrad- baby girl, Amelia,
Paige Miller, PhD. Program - baby girl, Zoelle, July
Elizabeth Munoz - baby boy, Pablo, July
Dr. Linda Haung - baby boy Jonathan - August
Alexa MacPherson BS 2004-baby girl, Heavene, August
Rakhee Busanelli, MS 2004 - baby boy, January
Stephanie Wood-Lafond, Ph.D. Program -baby boy, Michael, March
Dr. Ying Tan - baby girl -Ester, - April

As you can see, the department is highly productive!
The Undergraduate Biology Club of UMass Boston is well known for its efforts to further students’ interests in the sciences. For years the club has sponsored twice-a-year trips to the UMass Boston field station, located on Nantucket Island, where students participate in sample collection, species identification, and mark and recapture efforts. There are lectures on salt marsh ecology as well as biodiversity. Students spend time visiting every nook and cranny of this pristine ecosystem to better understand some of the interactions of living systems. During the May 2004 trip, students were invited to participate in Nantucket’s Biodiversity Week, a week-long event hosted by the Island to help identify and catalogue its many species. Students were also able to attend a series of lectures conducted by UMass Boston professors as well as other visiting scientists.

The Club also promotes the sciences by participating in college fairs aimed at attracting new and transferring students. For the Spring 2004 college fair the Club constructed a booth highlighting, not only the research of UMass professors, but also the research activities of students. Through monthly meetings, the Club is also able to promote many of the different programs available at the university, such as Undergraduate Mentoring Evolutionary Biology and Research Ecology for Undergraduate programs.

The 2004 Fall Semester was very successful for the Biology Club with one of the largest student turn-outs ever! The club held Friday afternoon meetings catered by Wit’s End cafe who delivered delicious platters of cookies, brownies, coffee and juices. The officers (Kim Carroll and Joanna Scagliotti) arranged an impressive display for the UMB Fall Semester Open House for new students including exhibits of student research poster presentations, news articles, photographs, and even sponges and cockroaches from the Invertebrate and Neurobiology labs (ThanksYvonne!). The prospective students and their parents were impressed and intrigued by the display, which was the largest of all of the student organizations. Also in preparation for the Open House, members of the BioClub expressed their artistic side by creating flashy posters with photographs and glitter that advertised the Biology Club’s various activities.

The BioClub sponsored a pizza party in November where eight large pizzas from Patty’s Pantry were ravenously devoured in our former club space to lively music and conversation in order to celebrate the end of midterms. Through a joint effort with the Chemistry Club three study sessions were held Thursday evenings in December leading up to final exams week. In these study sessions upper classmen provided mentoring support and their experiences to students from all levels of chemistry and biology. Shortly before the Spring Semester of 2005 members of the biology club teamed up with members of TriBeta to share advice experiences with high school students and their parents as part of the Massachusetts Science Fair Workshop.

During the Spring Semester of 2005 club members are looking forward to a bake sale fundraiser, a lecture science social at the Museum of Science, participation in another Open House, a camping trip to the mountains of New Hampshire, and another educational trip to the Nantucket Field Station.

Lastly, the club takes pride in collaborating with other undergraduate clubs to sponsor many successful study groups. Members volunteered their time and their knowledge to assist each other and other students in subjects ranging from mathematics to biochemistry. Whether volunteering or participating in research, the undergraduate biology club actively seeks to interest and motivate students to learn more about the sciences.
Dear Alumni, 2005 Graduates, Faculty, Staff and Students

Please join us for a gathering after commencement June 3rd, 2005 from 3:00-5:00pm in the Biology Department Wheatley 3rd floor

Please RSVP to Maria via email maria.mahoney@umb.edu.