

The Nucleus



Biological & Environmental Sciences Department

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Notes From the Department Chair

As the new Department Head of Biological & Environmental Sciences after having spent the last 15 years in higher university administration, I find it refreshing and exciting to be back where the real action is – interacting directly with students and faculty as well as having a chance to actively do research in the laboratory again.

These are exciting times indeed in the Department as we are undergoing a growth phase. We continue to grow in size and offerings with the addition of three new faculty in the last few years, including Dr. Izhar Khan, a reproductive physiologist and toxicologist, who joined us just this fall.

Academically, we offer three undergraduate degree programs of study for our students. Included are Biological Sciences, Environmental Sciences, and Wildlife and Conservation Sciences. The number of majors in these programs total 336. Biological Sciences has 249, Environmental Sciences 44, and Wildlife and Conservation Sciences 43. In 2012, 56 students graduated from the Department with B.S. degrees. Our graduate programs are flourishing and continue to grow in numbers and quality. The Master of Science Program in Biological Sciences has approximately 50 students at various stages in their degree programs. In addition, a 13-credit hour Graduate Certificate in Environmental Science is available

which attracts about six students on a continuing basis.

The addition of four new tenure-track faculty members coming this year will provide an exciting infusion of new ideas, new teaching expertise and new research programs. Faculty also have been involved in submitting applications to the NIH, NSF and other agencies for research grant funding. They are active in the service component of their responsibilities. Several serve on university and college-level committees as well as advisers to student organizations.

Overall, the Department of Biological and Environmental Sciences provides an exciting, stimulating and professional learning environment for our students and an exciting, stimulating and professional work environment for our faculty and staff. This is a great place to be.



Dr. Larry Lemanski



This mating pair of malachite butterflies (*Siproeta stelens*) was photographed in Costa Rica. Their upper wings are brilliant green and black and the lower wings are light brown and olive green. *Photo courtesy of Alton L. Biggs, Distinguished Alumnus*

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Spotlight on a Student

Kailee Johnson is a junior majoring in Biology and Chemistry.



She was born in Big Spring, but most recently lived in Longview and graduated as the

valedictorian of Sabine High School where she played basketball.

A transfer student from UT Tyler, she maintains a 4.0 GPA while working on research in Dr. Cheriath's lab. Kailee attends the University on a Pell Grant, STEM Scholarship, ETCF and JAMP tutor.

Kailee says she plans on getting a doctorate in pharmacy while also getting a PhD in pharmacology. She wants to do research and be a pharmacist.

"The University's small size

provides an atmosphere of unity and a closeness between students and professors that isn't available at a larger university," she said. "Here I don't feel like I am just a number."

I have told other students that this University provides opportunities to be involved on campus and form close relationships with others. You really get to know every-one around you in a close-knit community.

Kailee Johnson, Junior

2013 Biological & Environmental Sciences Scholarship Recipients

Alton L. Biggs Endowment in Biology

Maritza Ramos

Dr. Else Bodemann Memorial Biology Endowment

Simbarashe Mazambani

Donald Ingold Endowment

Devin Oliver

Gideon T. and Tena B James Endowment

Tricia Haas

Frances Elizabeth Potts Scholarship Endowment

Tricia Haas

Arthur M. Pullen Endowment

Jihyun Kim

Simbarashe Mazambani

Luis Parra

Maritza Ramos

Sydney Seaman

Meng Sun

Khanh Truong

Sravan Vemuri

These scholarships and the department "Excellence Funds" can always use improvement, but they can't be improved without donations from others. We graduates have benefitted greatly from our association with our University and our department. This is a good time of the year to make a gift. Gifts of any size can be made by mail or online. To donate online, you can do

so at: <http://www.tamuc.edu/GIVE>. To donate by check, make it payable to Texas A&M University-Commerce Foundation, P. O. Box 3425, Commerce, Texas 75429-3425. Write where you'd like the donation applied in the memo line of your check. Every donation of every amount will make a difference for **our** department and **our** students. Won't you please consider a

donation to help the department and students today?



Spotlight on an Alumnus

James Goode came to East Texas State University from the poor section of McKinney, Texas - an area called "The Mill Block" because the overshadowing business concern was a long-closed cotton mill. During his time here in the 1960s he received a B.S. in biology and physical education (1970), an M.S. in biology and physical education (1979), and a M.Ed. in Educational Administration (1983). Three degrees weren't enough for James so he earned the PhD from Louisiana.

He worked full-time at the local hospital doing all sorts of jobs in order to pay for his education. In addition to his work in the evenings at the now-demolished hospital, James worked at a local nursing home. From both of these jobs, James has stories to regale his friends.

Like many other students who graduated with similar degrees, James took several coaching jobs in such districts as Whitesboro, Honey Grove, Malakoff, Terrell and Lake Worth. After his stints in coaching, he worked



for Region 10 and Region 4 Education Service Centers as a Driver's Ed Administrator. He went back to coaching and teaching biology in Garland ISD. His work put him on the Legacy Walk at Cowboy Stadium.

James says that the University taught him to be more mentally focused and to learn how to think. His least favorite class was geometry. He says his parents taught him his message for students, "Always make things better than you found them."

Dr. Goode has played rhythm guitar and bass in a number of bands, including the Excels, Silver Streak, Groove Kings and now the Ruff Kutt Blues Band. He has written several songs such as "Drowning on Dry



James Goode, PhD

Land" and the awarding winning song "Mill Block Blues" a tribute to the area in McKinney where he grew up. You can see a video of one of his songs at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rZqE0E1a2M8>.

James would like to connect with alumni who went to school with him and says, "We all went through a wonderful experience of learning from really gifted teachers at ETSU!" He can be reached at James.Goode@hotmail.com.

Spotlight on a Staff Member



Susan Osgood

Assistant. She always has time to talk to faculty, students and visitors. Susan

As you enter the department, you'll be immediately greeted by the smiling face of Susan Osgood, the department's Administrative

is the "grease" that keeps the cogs of the department running smoothly.

One of three siblings born in Long Beach, California, Susan Osgood loves the beach. She graduated from Berkner High School in Richardson and completed her education at North Texas State University (now University of North Texas). Although she has lived in several states, she now calls Texas "home".

Susan said, "Texas skies are unique in their tranquil blueness with puffy cumulus clouds."

She says that she's had many roles,

with the two top being a mother and friend. Now that she is an "empty nester" Susan is most interested in learning more about helping others. To that end, she enrolled in the Commerce Leadership Institute and says it taught her a lot and that she is happy where she is.

You may reach Susan via email at Susan.Osgood@tamuc.edu or call (903) 886-5378. Why not come back and make a connection with us?

A Word From The Editor

Be sure to read the “Whatever Happened To Bob Williams?” below on this page. Bob was one of my favorite professors here during the 1970’s. It was my pleasure to track him down, have a long lunch with him and write this particular piece. If you’d like for him to get in touch with you, let me know and I’ll certainly relay the message. If you have a suggestion for featuring a retired faculty member or alumnus, let me know. I’ll be happy to do some leg work and try to track him or her down. Next semester I hope to use some stories from alumni, so email them to me at altonb@ix.netcom.com.

Again, I urge you to donate to the Departmental Excellence Funds or one of the Department’s endowed scholarships. Information for doing so can be found on Page 2.



Alton L. Biggs

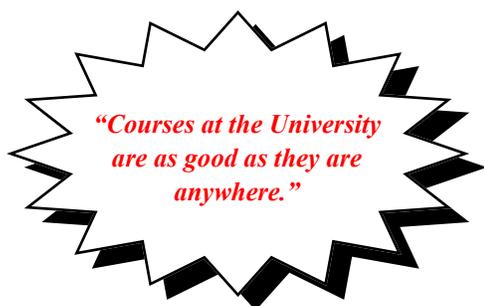
Professional Accomplishments

The National Academies have named Drs. Venu Cheriya and Jeffery Kopachena National Academies Education Fellows in the Life Sciences for the 2013-2014 academic year. The honor recognizes their selection to and participation in the 2013 National Academies Gulf Coast Summer Institute on Undergraduate Science Education, which was held at Louisiana State University (LSU) in July. At LSU, teams from 17 universities and colleges from across the U.S. assembled for five days of events focused on enhancing undergraduate education through the themes active learning, assessment and diversity. The teams gathered to develop “teachable tidbits” that they agreed to incorporate into courses and assess at their individual institutions.

In her announcement of Cheriya and Kopachena’s designations as Education Fellows, Barbara A. Schaal, chair of the Division of Earth and Life Studies at the National Research Council, noted the importance of the professors’ participation for A&M-Commerce.

Whatever Happened to Robert K. (Bob) Williams?

Many alumni will remember Dr. Robert K. “Bob” Williams who taught many undergraduate and graduate courses in the Department from 1958 until his retirement in June of 1993. Even after his retirement, Dr. Williams taught as an adjunct instructor at the Mesquite campus.



Dr. Williams—Bob to his friends—received all three of his degrees from Texas A&M University

in College Station. His PhD was in entomology.

Bob now resides in Allen, Texas with his wife, Bobbi. He moved to Allen after his retirement to be near his sons and their families.

He said that he very much enjoyed his entire teaching experience at ETSU. During his tenure the department increased from five or six to a high of about fourteen. When asked what he wished to relate to others he said, “The University was a place where students came and enjoyed relating to their teachers in a learning environment.” He went on to say, “Courses at the University are as good as they are anywhere.”

Of course no one enjoys everything, and Bob is no different in that respect. He said that he most disliked the

campus politics in the 1960s. The University had grown from fewer than three thousand students to more than seven thousand and then began a decline. He remembered that some faculty feared they’d lose their jobs in the downturn, although none did.

Dr. Williams and Dr. Wilson revamped the curriculum in the late 1960’s with the blessing of Dr. Pullen. They focused on foundations in biology rather than the divided courses that had been taught previously. Bob said that he always liked to use new textbooks and teach new courses.



Robert K. “Bob” Williams, Ph.D.