

BIOLOGY NEWS



Diversity of life... diversity of opportunities
2022 Edition

UNI / University of
Northern Iowa



IN THIS ISSUE

2

LETTER FROM THE
DEPARTMENT HEAD
THERESA SPRADLING

PREPARING SCIENCE
TEACHERS

3

LEARNING BIOLOGY
AT UNI

4

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT
CH-CH-CH-CHANGES

5

SUPPORT THE
PROGRAMS THAT MEAN
THE MOST TO YOU

CONNECT WITH US

GREETINGS FROM THE DEPARTMENT



Dear Alumni and Friends,

The Department of Biology continues to be the vibrant place we hope you fondly remember. The university has taken on a new, fresher digital “look,” and we have been busy updating and improving our new website (biology.uni.edu). Along with that, we are going to transition our newsletter series online. We hope you enjoy this new format! We always love hearing from you and knowing where your UNI degree has taken you. You can contact us at biology@uni.edu.

Regards,
Theresa Spradling
Head, Department of Biology

UNI'S COMMITMENT TO PREPARING SCIENCE TEACHERS IS STRONG!



We were fortunate to hire Dr. Jesse Wilcox this year. He brings a wealth of experience to his position here, with several years teaching both at the 8th grade level and at the college level. His [research](#) at UNI will serve both in-service and pre-service teachers.



Dori Clausen, Billy Lange, and Molly Ramker are working on a research project that is investigating why effective science teachers stay in teaching. They are working alongside Dr. Jesse Wilcox. Their research helps us understand the factors that are shared by many effective science teachers. The knowledge gained will hopefully help shape professional development and support as well as preservice education in science.



LEARNING BIOLOGY AT UNI TODAY

Nearly half of all biology majors participate in individualized instruction. Many students learn by doing, working alongside biology faculty on research projects. Students currently are participating projects as wide ranging as studies of effective science teaching, genetic diversity in native Iowa bees and fish stocks, conservation of wood turtles, colonization of the animal intestinal microbiome, and studies of how the parasite that causes the tropical disease, Leishmaniasis, evades the human immune system. Ecological research remains a strength of our department, which is bolstered by our strong relationship with the [Tallgrass Prairie Center](#).

Many other students learn by teaching, helping other students as teaching assistants in labs like Anatomy and Physiology. These experiences have contributed to outstanding placement rates in graduate schools and professional health programs, like medical schools.

This fall, students in our first year classes and in Genetics will have some exciting new opportunities for collaboration using microscopes with attached digital cameras. These cameras will display images in real time on a large computer screen, where students can gather around and collaborate both with each other and with their faculty member. We thank the Carver Charitable Trust for funding this project. Here is our initial [unboxing video](#).



IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

Here are a few of the recent stories about UNI biology you may have missed:

- [After overcoming rare cancer, UNI alum wins prestigious fellowship](#)
- [Helping save the monarch butterfly](#)
- [Preserving a lifetime of research](#)
- [Saving a species](#)
- [Giving underrepresented students a Jump Start](#)

CH-CH-CH-CHANGES



Dr. Kurt Pontasch



Dr. Jim Jurgenson

Congratulations to Dr. Kurt Pontasch, who retired from the department in Fall 2021, and Dr. Jim Jurgenson, who is retiring in June 2022. Both saw the Department of Biology through many changes in the past 32 and 30 years, respectively.



SUPPORT THE PROGRAMS THAT MEAN THE MOST TO YOU:

Financial barriers for students who want to attend college are greater than ever before. Students often make their choice of college based on where they can get the most scholarship support. We greatly appreciate the way our supporters help us make the UNI experience available to more students. You can help by donating to one of the funds below using this [link](#).

- **Biology Department Fund, compliments scholarship support by providing support for needs of all students of the department (221607)**
- **Biology Undergraduate Research Fund, provides support dedicated to students doing undergraduate research (222596)**
- **Biological Preserves Fund, supports the biology nature preserves used for teaching, research and public enjoyment (220162)**

CONNECT WITH US:

We love sharing alumni news and stories about current students.

Follow [UNI Department of Biology on Facebook](#) for up-to-the-minute news!