

“BIO BRIEFS”

May 15, 1999

From the Desk of the Chair

Kipp C. Kruse

Welcome to the first issue of the DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES NEWSLETTER!! We will try to make this newsletter as informative as the former “LEAF” and the “ZOO-REVIEW” and hope you will stay in touch as the new department of Biological Sciences grows and evolves.

As many of you know, the Departments of Botany and Zoology, and the Environmental Biology and Teacher Certification Programs were merged into the Department of Biological Sciences July 1, 1998. I was chosen as Chair of the new department and Dr. Andrew Methven, Professor of Botany, was chosen as the Associate Chair. Andy and I are very excited about the future of the new department as Eastern prepares for the 21st Century.

Despite an aging building and chronic under funding which has plagued the University for many years, I am EXTREMELY OPTIMISTIC about the future of the Biological Sciences. For the first time in many years, the department has a substantial base equipment budget which, coupled with grants and contracts awarded to faculty, has given the department an excellent start towards purchasing and replacing much-needed teaching equipment. The department now has a fully functional computer laboratory (including GIS capabilities) available to students and a new BIOTECHNOLOGY LABORATORY where students are trained in state-of-the-art molecular techniques. The Department of Biological Sciences is moving in a very positive direction and we look forward to the future as we attempt to become the very best department of this type in the region.

Who are we?

The Department of Biological Sciences currently has 33 faculty. Photographs and descriptions of our faculty, their academic training, current research interests and recent publications can be found on the **Department of Biological Sciences HOMEPAGE** ...<http://www.eiu.edu/~biology/>

Tenure-track Faculty

Eric Bollinger
Janice Coons
Charles Costa (Graduate Program Coordinator)
Steve Daniel
Robert Fischer (EVB Coordinator)
Gary Fritz
Judith James (Health Professions Coordinator)
Kipp Kruse (Chair)
Jeff Laursen
Marina Marjanovic
James McGaughey (Teacher Certification Coordinator)
Kip McGilliard
Andrew Methven (Associate Chair)
Bryan Miller
Mark Mort
Steve Mullin
Britto Nathan
Tom Nelson
Hank Nilsen
Henry Owen
Chuck Pederson
Paul Switzer
Gordon Tucker
Gene Wong

Annually-Contracted Faculty

Ruth Chesnut
Nancy Coutant
Lori Cudone
Nida Elmuti
Cheryl Laursen
Susan Mounce
Eden Rawski
Catherine Woodworth

Although we are a young department, we have an OUTSTANDING and TALENTED FACULTY dedicated to teaching, research and service. One of the quickest ways to build an excellent department is by hiring highly qualified new faculty to compliment the existing nucleus of faculty. To that end, the department has recently filled two tenure-track positions: A vertebrate biologist (Dr. Steve Mullin) and a plant evolutionary biologist (Dr. Mark Mort). As in previous tenure-track searches, the department was able to attract many outstanding applicants for each position. We hope to add several more tenure-track faculty to the Department over the next few years. As always, our faculty are committed to teaching, are active in research, give invited seminars at universities throughout the United States. make research presentations at scientific meetings, receive grant support for research, and publish in some of the finest peer reviewed journals in the world.

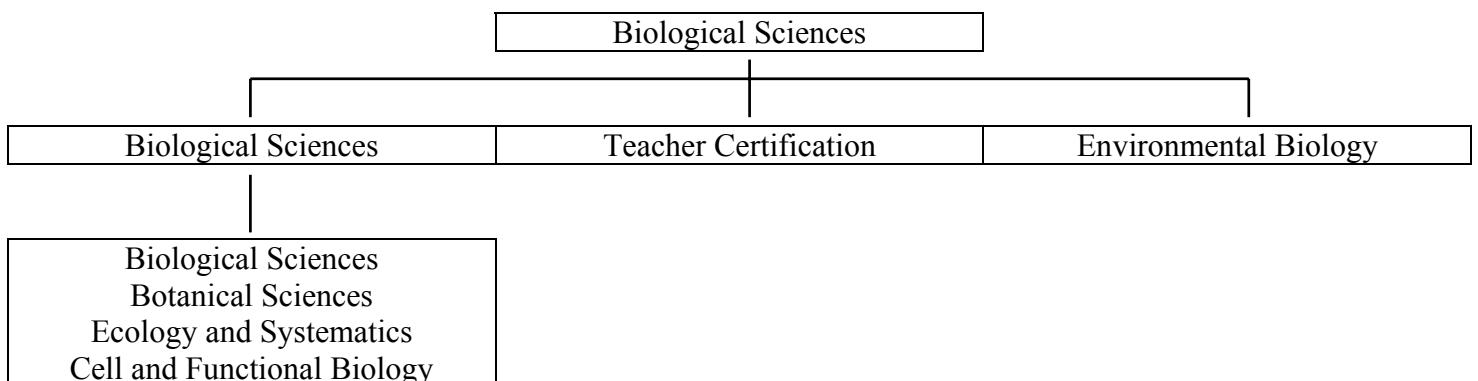
Where are they now?

Several of our senior faculty have retired in the last three years. We thought you might like to know where they have gone and what they're doing with all that free time

- 1998 - Steve Becker (enjoying retirement in Charleston)
Roger Darding (enjoying retirement in Charleston... when he's home)
Ed Moll (moving to Tucson, Arizona ..will still spend the summers in Wisconsin)
Terry Weidner (enjoying retirement in Charleston and leading trips to Costa Rica)
- 1997 - Richard Funk (enjoying retirement in Charleston)
Bert Landes (enjoying retirement in Charleston; still teaches continuing education courses)
J.C. Martinez (enjoying retirement in Bloomington, Indiana)
U. Douglas Zimmerman (enjoying retirement in New Mexico)
- 1996 - William James (enjoying retirement in Charleston)
William Weiler (enjoying retirement and catching all the fish in Wisconsin)

Where are we going?

We envision a department, which maintains a traditional strength in organismal biology and a well-deserved reputation in ecology and systematics while adding new courses and new faculty in evolution, cell and molecular biology to complement these areas. The 21st century has been called the “Century of Biology” and the new department has developed a strong core curriculum (Biological principles, general botany, animal diversity, genetics, principles of ecology, evolution, inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry, physics, calculus, statistics) which ensures that all of our students will have excellent quantitative and analytical training as well instructional experiences at all levels of biological organization... from molecules and cells to communities and ecosystems. Students now major in Biological Sciences and can pursue options in Biological Sciences, Environmental Biology or Teacher Certification. Within the Biological Sciences option, students can choose up to 30 semester hours in a chosen concentration: Biology, Botanical Sciences, Cell and Functional Biology, and Ecology and Systematics. With the addition of 5-10 new courses to the large number of existing courses, which were maintained after the merger, students have even greater flexibility and choice when it comes to their academic training and specialization. A flow chart of the new academic program follows:



Outstanding students

The new department has more than 550 majors, many of whom are excellent students. Many of our students are actively involved in research, receive research grants and awards, give presentations at scientific meetings, and co-author scientific publications with their faculty mentors. We are also offering a new HONORS PROGRAM/CURRICULUM to challenge our best undergraduate students with a more rigorous curriculum and the opportunity to conduct a thesis project with a faculty mentor. We still hold the spring banquet to recognize our students' achievements. This year's award recipients included:

Warner Award in Zoology (Andrew Hurt, Piper Ehorn, JaLana Lewis), *Hugh C. Rawls Award* (Fatema Esmail), *The Eugene B. Krehbiel Scholarship Award* (Brandy Varvel), *Walter Merritt Scruggs Scholarship Award* (Jennifer Vala), *Ernest L. Stover Scholarship* (Kristopher Fairfield), *The Burgner Memorial Scholarship* (Tina Funk, Saeed Kashefi), *The Errett Warner/P. Hinz Pre-Med Award* (Jay Hildebrand, Jay Woodland, Matthew Jones), *The Heath Sports Medicine Scholarship Award* (Jebediah Odam), *The Gayle Hutton Adkins Award* (Jared Kocher), *H.F. Thut Award* (Brent Todd), *The William B. Tym Scholarship Award* (Victoria Rinando), *The Clinical Laboratory Science Award* (Somer Berkemann), *The E. Warner/L. Durham Award in Environmental Biology* (Kate Bliss, Jennifer Miller, Martha Sojka), *Warner Award in Botany* (Eileen Adler), *The Barrie Hunt Environmental Biology Award* (Steve Honn), *The Embarras Valley Quail Unlimited Award* (Rachel Wright), *Altamont Lions Club/Ernie C. Ballard Scholarship* (Rachel Wright).

The Graduate Program

The Master's degree program in Biological Sciences enrolls approximately 35-40 graduate students/year; the majority of whom complete theses. Many of these students work as graduate assistants in the laboratory sections of our undergraduate courses and a majority of them are actively involved in research. The department is very proud of the fact that graduates from this program continue to find employment in their field of study or continue graduate education at the very finest Ph.D. programs in the country.

Ongoing Research

The department continues to encourage faculty to seek outside funding to support their research. Recent faculty-student research grants include an NSF-REU grant (Fischer, Nelson) which brings nine students from across the country to conduct research with Eastern's faculty during the summers. In addition we have faculty funded through the Illinois Department of Public Health (Nathan), the NSF-ILI program (Fritz), the IDNR (Fischer (2), Nelson (3), Methven), and the City of Decatur (Fischer, Pederson). This funding gives us the ability to provide research opportunities for students. We estimate that 50-100 of our students have been active in research in the past year alone.

Burgner Acres

Many of you may remember Burgner Acres, a ten acre forested tract which was the first land gift made to Eastern in 1955. Over the years studies of birds, mammals, and woody plants have been completed in the forest and numerous classes have visited the woods to study spring wild flowers, birds, and mammals. Although this tract of land has been a valuable part of Coles County for more than forty years, the County Board will soon begin debating a proposal to site a new 240 acre landfill adjacent to Burgner Acres. The Department of Biological Sciences is working to preserve and protect Burgner Acres and has proposed that a buffer zone be created on three sides of the forest, that the buffer zone be restored as an oak-hickory savannah, and that the department be allowed to conduct ecological monitoring of the buffer zone and the original ten acres of woods for at least the next ten years. Public hearings on the landfill proposal will be held at the end of June and beginning of July. Stay tuned for more future updates on the future of Burgner Acres.

Alumni Giving and Fund Raising

We continue to need your gifts to keep the department growing. Contributions of any type are always welcome and you can still direct your gift to a single program ...The Botany, Environmental Biology, Zoology or even the new Biological Sciences gift accounts! In this way, alumni can support specific programs of study and groups of students studying in particular area. We sincerely thank the many alumni who have given funds to the department through the annual telefund and other fundraisers. Gifts are almost exclusively spent on undergraduate and graduate students for computers, scholarships, travel, research funding, biology conference fees, etc.)

Check us out on the world-wide-web

For on-line information visit the Biological Sciences HOMEPAGE

(<http://www.eiu.edu/~biology/>)

As well as ...Eastern's HOMEPAGE

(<http://www.eiu.edu/>)