

# T H E N I C H E

v1 #1

DEPAUL UNIVERSITY | DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

## FROM THE DESK OF THE CHAIR



As I get ready to start my 23rd year at DePaul, I can't help but think back to some of the first departmental meetings I attended as a junior faculty member. Even back then there was some discussion about ways in which we could reach out to our students and alumni and keep them informed about the events taking place in the department. We realized that a newsletter would be the best way to accomplish this goal. However, for some reason we never got it off the ground.

Finally, after more than 20 years, we have put out the first issue of what I hope will be a long series of newsletters. Of course none of this could have happened without someone taking the lead. In this case, our new academic advisor Michelle Johnson and long-time faculty member and past chair Stan Cohn have picked up this project and made it a reality. You are looking at the result of their hard work.

Over the next several issues you will hear about some exciting changes taking place in the department. Several new programs have been added or are in the process of being added, we have incredible new facilities for both teaching and research, and we have added some exciting and dedicated new faculty and staff. We are anxious to share our news with you and also anxious to hear your news. I hope you find this newsletter both useful and informative. ■

**John Dean**

Chair of Biological Sciences



## WELCOME

We're thrilled to introduce you to the inaugural edition of the biology newsletter, *The Niche*. Our hope is that through this newsletter we will be able to acquaint all of our friends and alumni with the diverse array of people and activities that create the current biological sciences community at DePaul. We have been growing and expanding over the last few years—in space, faculty, staff and alumni—and we want to make sure that we remain connected to everyone who is part of our extended biological sciences family. We hope to present you with information about our plans, our faculty, our students, our staff, and all the activities that make our department so exciting. But we want this to be more of a conversation than a one-way presentation. We would love to hear from you regarding your suggestions of things you would like to see within the newsletter. If you are one of our honored graduates it would be great to hear about your plans, activities and aspirations since leaving DePaul. Over the next few newsletters we hope to present items such as:

- Current faculty and their research interests
- Past alumni and their current work
- Spotlights and profiles on some of our current students
- Activities and events for alumni to visit the department
- Biology humor
- New grant projects being carried out
- DePaul resources for alumni and students
- Activities, speakers and events of our student clubs
- Departmental information resources (paper, electronic, Web and tweets)

If you have other ideas of what you would like to see, please let us know. We would be happy to help put together a newsletter that has the information you want. In the meantime, we hope that you enjoy this first edition, and we hope you will contribute to the newsletter with ideas, comments or material. [See article on the ASK knowledge networking program for a great first way to get involved with our current students]. We're grateful for your continued support, and are honored to count you as one of our friends. Please continue to keep in touch. ■

**Michelle Johnson and Stan Cohn**  
The Niche Editors

## FABULOUS FACULTY

We've been growing over the last few years, so we thought you would like a brief glimpse into the set of our current faculty and their areas of interest.

### **Windsor Aguirre**

Assistant Professor—Evolutionary Biology  
Ph.D. Stony Brook University  
waguirre@depaul.edu

### **Rima Barkauskas**

Assistant Laboratorian  
M.S. DePaul University  
rbarkaus@depaul.edu

### **Joanna S. Brooke**

Associate Professor—Microbiology  
Ph.D. University of Western Ontario  
jbrooke@depaul.edu

### **Jason Bystriansky**

Assistant Professor—Physiology  
Ph.D. University of Guelph  
jbystria@depaul.edu

### **Stanley Cohn**

Professor—Cell Biology  
Ph.D. University of Colorado  
scohn@depaul.edu

### **John V. Dean**

Professor and Departmental Chair—  
Plant Biochemistry  
Ph.D. University of Illinois  
jdean@depaul.edu

### **Phillip E. Funk**

Associate Professor—Immunology  
Ph.D. Loyola University  
pfunk@depaul.edu

### **William D. Gilliland**

Assistant Professor—Genetics  
Ph.D. University of California, Davis  
wgillila@depaul.edu

### **Jingjing Kipp**

Assistant Professor—Reproductive Biology  
Ph.D. University of Illinois  
jkipp@depaul.edu

### **Dorothy Kozlowski**

Associate Professor—Neuroscience  
Ph.D. University of Texas, Austin  
dkozlows@depaul.edu

### **Elizabeth E. LeClair**

Associate Professor—  
Developmental Biology  
Ph.D. University of Chicago  
eleclair@depaul.edu

### **Talitha T. Rajah**

Assistant Professor—Cancer Biology  
Ph.D. Osmania University  
trajah@depaul.edu

### **Kenshu Shimada**

Associate Professor—Paleobiology  
Ph.D. University of Illinois, Chicago  
kshimada@depaul.edu

### **Margaret E. Silliker**

Associate Professor—Molecular Biology  
Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley  
msillike@depaul.edu

### **Timothy Sparkes**

Associate Professor—Behavioral Ecology  
Ph.D. University of Kentucky  
tsparkes@depaul.edu

### **Carolyn Wrobel**

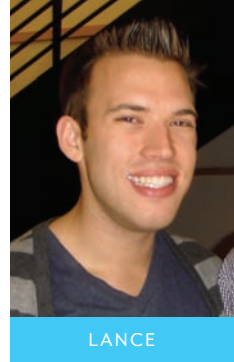
Laboratorian—Cell Biology  
Ph.D. Harvard Medical School  
cwrobel1@depaul.edu

## OUTSTANDING BIOLOGY SENIOR AWARD

### STEVEN LANCE

Each year, the Department of Biological Sciences awards one graduating student with the award for outstanding senior. This year the department proudly gave this award to Steven Lance.

Steven graduated summa cum laude this June 2011 with a major in biological sciences and minors in chemistry, religious studies and community service studies. During his time at DePaul he did research in Dorothy Kozlowski's lab and published and presented numerous abstracts. Recently, he presented their research on rehabilitation following traumatic brain injuries at the Chicago Society for Neuroscience. His presentation on neurorehabilitation was awarded best undergraduate presentation for the conference.



In addition to his work in the biology department, Steven worked for the past three years as a teaching assistant in the chemistry department. Due to his community service scholarship, Steven also volunteered at many nonprofits across the city of Chicago. For the past three years he volunteered at Howard Brown Health Center. Howard Brown is the Midwest's largest LGBT focused health care center and Steven spent the majority of his time there working in development and volunteer services.

In June, Steven moved to Los Angeles to start his two-year program with Teach for America. He will be teaching 11th grade chemistry at a charter school in East Los Angeles. Following the completion of Teach for America, Steven is looking to get a master's in public health in order to work in the field of either community or international health care. ■



This picture of *Rhoadsia altipinna* was taken by one of our faculty, Windsor Aguirre, Ph.D. Aguirre's research involves understanding the nature of evolutionary change by investigating how morphological changes in fish populations correlate with changes in their conditions and habitats. His work has taken him from the urban jungles of Chicago and New York to the waters of Ecuador and the icy blasts of Alaska.

Each issue we also plan to show photos highlighting the work of one of our faculty members (see opposite page). You can see more of Aguirre's work by looking at his Web page: [condor.depaul.edu/waguirre](http://condor.depaul.edu/waguirre).



## PHOTO GALLERY

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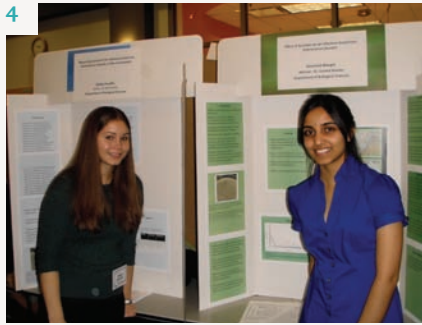
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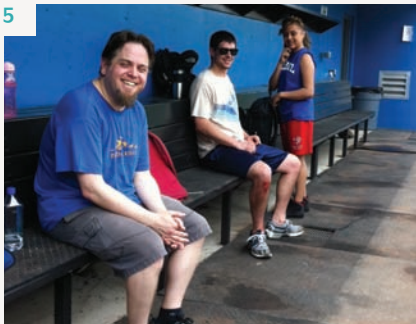
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1 Kelly Mueller (left) and Daniel Clark (right)

2 Working with diatoms in Cohn's lab.  
Nick Hawley (left) and Brittany Ness (right)

3 Enjoying refreshments at the senior reception.  
Caitlin Nelson, Mattina Alonge, Kathryn  
Brennan, Zachary Pekor, Brittany Wolfe and  
Shelby Judd (left to right)

4 Presenting posters at DePaul's annual Natural  
Sciences, Mathematics, and Technology  
Undergraduate Research Showcase. Ashley  
Snouffer (left) and Ramneek Mangat (right)

5 Annual biology vs. chemistry softball game  
at Wish Field. It was a crushing victory:  
BIO-37, CHE-11. Bill Gilliland, Ph.D. (left) and  
Michael DeFazio (center)

6 Seniors who worked in Kozlowski's lab in a  
photo opp from graduation. Steven Lance,  
Kevin McDonough, Dorothy Kozlowski, Ph.D.  
and Sasha Pevtsov (left to right)

## CLUB CONNECTIONS

Our student groups are as active as ever. Below are the current groups and their contact information. Please let them know if you would like to join or just want to know more about their activities.

### **DePaul Life Sciences and Pre-Med Club**

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The Life Sciences and Pre-Med Club at DePaul University is for students who are interested in the sciences and/or medicine. Although ideal for pre-med students and science majors, this club is open to any student interested as it is designed to stimulate and promote interest in all aspects of science and medicine.

#### **Officers and Contact Information:**

Brandi Swafford—President, [bswaffor@mail.depaul.edu](mailto:bswaffor@mail.depaul.edu)  
Brett Rydzon—Vice President  
Sarah Zawadski—Treasurer  
Ramiah Jacks—Secretary  
Brittany Ness—Event Coordinator

#### **Social Media Information:**

- Join OrgSynch ([orgsync.com/cas/depaul-university](http://orgsync.com/cas/depaul-university)) and join Life Sciences and Pre-Med Club to be an official member.
- Facebook: View our page at “DePaul Life Sciences and Pre-Med Club”—it’s automatically linked to your membership in OrgSync—in order to join the group and get regular updates.

#### **Meeting times:**

Usually about once a month.

### **Biotechnology Club**

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The Biotechnology Club provides information regarding resources, internships and career enhancement opportunities for students interested in the health and science fields, but unsure about attending medical school. The Biotechnology Club also offers a network of students, faculty and professionals to aid the student’s journey down a career path in the health and science fields.

#### **Officers:**

Ramiah Jacks—President, [miahjacks@comcast.net](mailto:miahjacks@comcast.net)  
Brandi Swafford—Vice President  
Ryan Finn—Treasurer  
Brittany Ness—Secretary

#### Social Media Information:

- OrgSync: Biotechnology 'Biotech' Club
- Facebook: DePaul Biotechnology Club

#### Meeting Times:

Meeting times are generally from 6-7 p.m. once a month.

### DePaul University Pre Dental Club (DPDC)

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DPDC is a student-lead organization giving DePaul University's elite students a "bite" in the pursuit of the dental profession. This club offers many opportunities to gain knowledge and experience in the dental field such as: oral health elementary outreach, community volunteering opportunities, local guest speakers, dental school representatives, etc. In addition, DPDC is a great place for peer advice regarding: shadowing local dentists, the application process, how/when to take the DAT and planning courses.

#### Officers and Contact Information:

Email: [pre dentaldepaul@gmail.com](mailto:pre dentaldepaul@gmail.com)  
Kim Boisvert—President  
Alex Moore—Vice President  
Gaby Perez—Secretary  
Nick Poulos—Treasurer  
Lauren Dixon and Rana Sweis—PR/Technology Executive

#### Social Media Information:

Search for "DePaul University Pre-Dental Club" on Facebook  
(Website is coming, but will not be functional until fall of 2012)

#### Meeting times:

The DPDC meets once a month to either organize upcoming events or to attend planned events/guest speakers.

### DePaul Pre-Vet Club

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Pre-Vet Club is an organization open to all students who wish to explore the world of veterinary medicine and the veterinary school admissions process. Love science? Love animals? Join Pre-Vet Club.

#### Officers and Contact Information:

Email: [prevet.depaul@gmail.com](mailto:prevet.depaul@gmail.com)  
Stephanie Bucki—President  
Alexandra Confer—Vice President  
Jenny Kuhn—Treasurer

#### Social Media Information:

- Facebook: DePaul Pre-Vet Club

#### Meeting Times:

Meeting every other Wednesday 6-7 p.m. in SAC

## ALUMNI SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Back when you didn't know the difference between forceps and phalanges, who did you ASK? If you are one of our treasured biology alumni, you already understand the value of professional networking and mentoring of undergraduates who are in the process of determining their future careers. Why not share your knowledge with the future generation of biology professionals (i.e., current biology undergraduates)?

The Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK) Volunteer Network allows you to share your experiences, accomplishments, and unique insight with students and alumni. Your experiences make you the perfect ASK mentor. ASK mentors help our undergraduates by:

- Participating in one-on-one mentoring relationships with students
- Conducting practice interviews or assisting in job fairs
- Speaking at networking events, classrooms, or open houses throughout the university

By becoming an ASK mentor you can help guide our students throughout their career development and help them understand what it really means to be a member of your profession. The flexible opportunities mean you can be as involved in whatever way you want to be. We are actively asking for volunteers to help our students make the most of their career development. Learn more about how you can help at [ask.depaul.edu](https://ask.depaul.edu). You can become a member of the ASK network by contacting Gina Sian at (312) 362-8281 or email at [ask@depaul.edu](mailto:ask@depaul.edu). Please consider becoming an ASK mentor today. 