

The Natural Inquirer



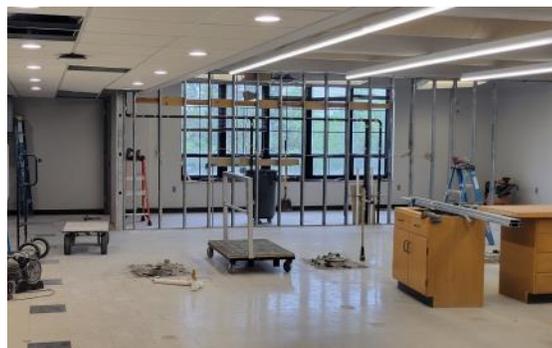
FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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Biology Department's cadaver lab receives major renovation

The Biology Department's cadaver lab, housed on the 3rd floor of Albertson Hall, has long been an important part of FHSU's Health Professions curriculum. Since the construction of the original cadaver lab during the 1998-2000 Albertson Hall renovation, students enrolled in Human Anatomy have had the opportunity for valuable hands-on dissection experience.



Renovation work began during summer 2025 and extended throughout the Fall 2025 semester.

Beginning in spring 2026, students will enjoy a newly renovated cadaver lab with all new equipment and floor-



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Another important upgrade was the addition of audio-visual and projection capabilities. Each cadaver table now features a monitor and laptop to guide students as they perform dissections. A camera mounted over one of the tables can be used by the instructor to demonstrate dissection techniques or display interesting features to all students. Students can compare dissections they perform in class with virtual dissections on their laptops at home. (continued on p. 2)



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Cadaver lab renovation, continued from p. 1

The expanded teaching space includes new modular desks and chairs to allow use by other classes, such as Osteology and Comparative Anatomy. Another valuable addition was the purchase of an Anatomage table. This innovative system uses digitized images of the human body to provide students with interactive 3D visualization opportunities.



Anatomage table

The Human Anatomy course primarily serves Biology, Chemistry, and Health and Human Performance majors that are pursuing careers in health professions. Nursing and Allied Health majors enrolled in Anatomy and Physiology (A&P) courses will also benefit from the upgrade, as they visit the cadaver lab throughout the semester to see real examples of human anatomy, as opposed to dissecting animal models or looking at diagrams.

Funding for this renovation was provided through the Kansas legislature, philanthropic support from our alumni, and a renovation grant from the Kansas Idea Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (K-INBRE). Biology Department chair Dr. Tara Phelps-Durr worked with the FHSU Foundation and others on funding campaigns. Lead anatomy instructor Dr. David Tarailo gave presentations and tours to donors, explaining the benefits of a renovation. The department is very grateful for the efforts of all who have helped make this renovation a reality.

Meetings and Presentations

American Society of Mammalogy's 104th Annual Conference, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, June 27-July 1, 2025.

Patrick, L. E., Assessment evolved: Beyond exams in mammalogy.



The American Society for Microbiology's Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), San Antonio, TX, November 19-22.

Antwi, Y, and C. D. Carvalho. Exploring the link between soil microbes, land use, and antibiotic resistance through a One Health Lens (poster).

Publications

Jenke, N., G. M. Smith, **B. T. Magar** and **M. Gruenstaeudl**. 2025. Variation of and associations with the depth and evenness of sequencing coverage in archived plastid genomes. *Scientific Reports* 15 (26294).

Barron, H. A., **L. E. Patrick**, J. C. Brown, and S. Cotner. 2025. What's troubling you? Examining how biology teaching assistants talk about teaching concerns. *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, 26 (2).
<https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.00226-24>.

Okyere-Addo, K. A., and **C. D. Carvalho**. 2025. Assessing the prevalence of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in pigs from the Fort Hays State University (FHSU) animal farm swine unit. *Transactions of the Kansas Academy of Science*, 128(3-4).

Congratulations!



Dr. Amanda Adams (L) won the Werth College Outstanding Teaching Award for Fall 2025, and **Dr. Michael Gruenstaeudl** (R) won the Werth College Outstanding Scholarship Award for Fall 2025. Pictured with Dr. Grady Dixon, Dean, and Dr. Tara Phelps-Durr, chair.



FHSU campus was host to many monarch butterflies during the summer and fall!

Student News:

Congratulations to **Amelia Growe** (B.S. 2017), who completed her M.S. degree and presented “Mosquitoes in Western Kansas” in November. Check out Amelia’s awesome mosquito photography on iNaturalist!

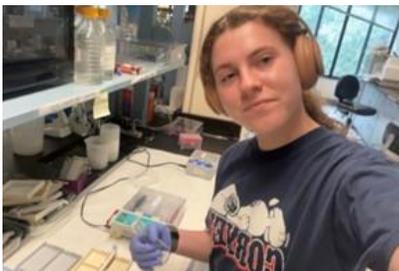


Congratulations to the following students who were accepted to professional programs:

Sarah Archer (B.S. 2025) was accepted to the Physician’s Assistant program at Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS.

Claire Shippy (B.S. 2025) was accepted to and will attend the University of Missouri’s School of Dentistry, Kansas City, MO. Claire was also accepted to Kansas City University’s Osteopathic Medical School in Joplin, MO.

Maggie Peterson was awarded a K-INBRE Star Trainee grant for 2025-26.



Hazel conducting research on cold tolerance genes in *Arabidopsis thaliana*.

Maggie conducting research on antimicrobial properties of essential oils in Dr. Eric Gillock’s lab.



Hazel Frans was selected for a 10 week internship in Ithaca, NY, this summer, at the Boyce Thompson Institute and Cornell University Plant Genome Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU).

Demetria Sanchez (B.S. 2024, M.S. 2025) will join the faculty as an Instructor of Biology beginning in spring 2026. As a graduate student, Demetria worked with Dr. Medhavi Ambardar studying stress levels in house wrens, and also gained teaching experience as a lab TA for courses such as Human Biology, Principles of Biology, Human Anatomy, and Anatomy and Physiology. Biology department chair Dr. Tara Phelps-Durr said, “Demetria is a dedicated educator and broadly trained biologist. Her background in both field and laboratory research provides real-world context for her teaching, making her an excellent and highly relatable role model for our student body.” *Welcome Demetria!*

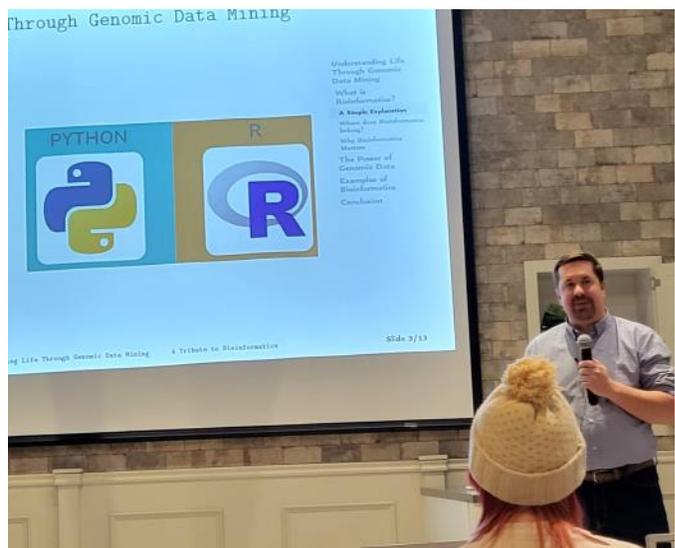


Graduate student **Cody Christian** participates in mammal trapping at the Sternberg nature trail during Dr. Lori Patrick’s Mammalogy class.



Emily Redding (with assistance from **Zane Smith** and **Elizabeth Horinek**) temporarily relocated to a larger study space outside Dr. Rob Channell’s office in mid-October.

Dr. Michael Gruenstaeudl presented, “Understanding life through genomic data mining: A tribute to bioinformatics,” at the Science Café on November 10.



Alumni news:

Dr. Derek Peckham (B.S. 2018) has accepted a position with Hays Medical Center, as an Emergency Department physician. Dr. Peckham earned his D.O. degree from A.T. Still University's Osteopathic Medical School in Kirksville, MO, and completed his residency at Lincoln Family Medicine Center, Lincoln, NE. During his time as an undergraduate, Dr. Peckham gained experience working as a phlebotomist at Hays Med from 2016 to 2018.



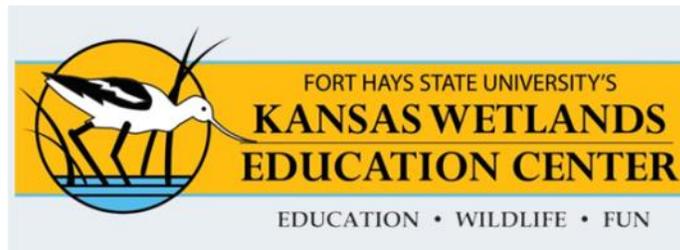
Drake Kee (B.S. 2020) completed his Physician Assistant (P.A.) degree at Kansas State University, and accepted a position at Kearney Regional Medical Center, Kearney, NE.

Justin Roemer (B.S. 2016, M.S. 2019) was featured in an article in *Kansas Reflector* where he described his work as manager of the Nature Conservancy's Smoky Valley Ranch in Logan County, and some of the programs being developed on the ranch.

<https://kansasreflector.com/2025/12/31/smoky-valley-ranch-provides-exportable-conservation-model-for-kansas-cattle-ranchers/>



Biology Department members pose for a photo after the welcome-back meeting in August. (Front row, L-R: Dr. Ifelayo Adefuye, Dr. Tara Phelps-Durr, Hilary Gillock, {Heidi}, Dr. Claudia Carvalho, Dr. Lori Patrick, Dr. Amanda Adams. Back row, L-R: Dr. Michael Gruenstaeudl, Dr. Satomi Kohno, Michael Frangello III, Dr. Eric Gillock, Diana Staab, Dr. Samuel Abassah-Oppong, Dr. David Tarailo, Dr. Matt Galliard, Dr. Bill Stark. Not pictured: Dr. Rob Channell).



In October, a **limpkin** was spotted at Cheyenne Bottoms, foraging for snails in Pool 1A. The normal range for this bird is Florida and southern Mexico through the Caribbean and Central America to northern Argentina (KWECE Facebook page).



Thanks to a coronal mass ejection hitting the Earth's magnetic field, the Northern lights put on a beautiful show over Cheyenne Bottoms in mid-November. (Photo by Tom Bidrowski, KWECE Facebook page)



600 Park Street
Hays, KS 67601
Phone: 785-628-4214

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