



Claflin University Biology Department Newsletter

Fall 2023



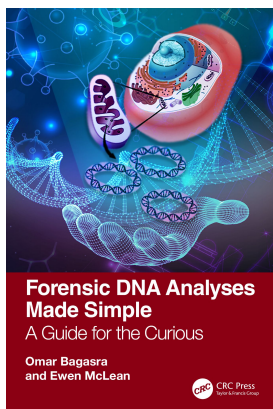
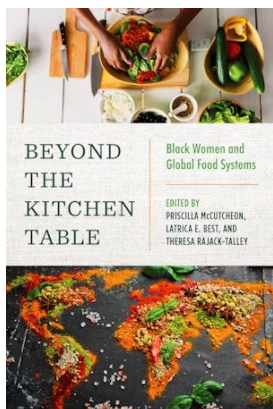
Words from the Chair

Greetings to Students, Alumni, Staff, Faculty, and Friends: It is a great honor to greet you as we are totally engaged in teaching and research that continue to provide transformational experiences for our students. President Warmack has emphasized the importance of developing innovative curricula and academic programs, with a strong focus on learning in and outside of the classroom, as we prepare our students for a global society, economy, and workforce. Whether it is through biology/pre-health, biotechnology, environmental science, or bioinformatics, we look forward to spotlighting alumni, students, and mentors in upcoming newsletters as we focus on “elevation and transformation”! - **Gloria S. McCutcheon, Ph.D.**



Claflin Biology In-Press

Two faculty in the biology department have recently become book authors. Dr. Gloria McCutcheon, in addition to her responsibilities as chair, made contributions to “Beyond the Kitchen Table: Black Women and Global Food Systems” (UNC Press). And Dr. Omar Bagasra co-authored a book on, “Forensic DNA Analyses Made Simple: A Guide for the Curious” (CRC Press).



Updates from the Master's Program

Exciting things are happening in the Biotechnology master's program! In the summer of 2023, the Biology Department initiated a new “pathways” program. The summer program consisted of coursework and research, and aimed to transition students from undergraduate studies to a place in the master's program in the Fall 2023 semester. The pathways program was a resounding success. As of the writing of this newsletter, the Biotechnology master's program enrolls nine students in-person and six students online. Use this QR code for more information, or to apply!

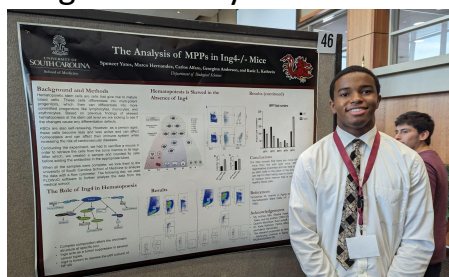


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Student Highlights

Recently, Claflin University students have participated in some amazing internships and research experiences. As an example, during the summer of 2023, ten students from Claflin participated in the South Carolina – Advancing Diversity in Aging Research (SC-ADAR) program. These students participated in research locally at the University of South Carolina in Columbia, but also made trips to the regional ADAR research summit in Florida and the annual meeting of the Gerontological Society of America.



Mr. Spencer Yates at ADAR Research Summit

Sponsored Clubs

Friends of the Earth: We are a collective of students and faculty who promote environmental stewardship, sustainable lifestyle habits, and community service. Friends of the Earth has encouraged recycling and learning about Biology at the Brookdale Elementary STEAM Night, and hosted a mental wellness gardening event for Claflin students.

Public Health Alliance: We seek to bring awareness about diseases affecting our community, to advocate for those who need a voice, and to prepare to handle public health situations. We participate in events like the Orangeburg Sickle Cell Walk. Our members have become part of the South Carolina Public Health Preparedness Student Corps.

New Biology Faculty

Ross Johnson, Ph.D.

Dr. Johnson comes to Claflin from the University of Pennsylvania, where he completed his doctoral work. His research focuses on microplastics in aquatic ecosystems and their impact on human health.

Steffani Driggins, Ph.D.

Dr. Driggins completed her doctoral work at Tennessee State University and her postdoctoral work at Vanderbilt University. Prior to coming to Claflin, she was at Allen University. Her research focuses on the effect of E-liquids on *C. elegans*.

Shrikant Pawar, Ph.D.

Dr. Pawar completed his doctoral work at Georgia State University. Prior to coming to Claflin, he was a postdoctoral researcher at Yale University. His research focuses on applying machine learning techniques to large biomedical datasets.

Gabrielle Edwards, Ph.D.

Dr. Edwards completed her doctoral work at Clark Atlanta University and her postdoctoral work at the Medical University of South Carolina. Prior to coming to Claflin, she was at Trident Technical College and The Citadel. Her research focuses on prostate Cancer metastasis into the nerve microenvironment.

Daniel Koenemann, Ph.D.

Dr. Koenemann completed his doctoral work at Howard University. Prior to coming to Claflin, he was a postdoctoral researcher at Howard University and the National Museum of Natural History. His research focuses on plant classification in the buckwheat family of plants.

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