APRIL 2026

BGSA NEWSLETTER

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REMINDERS

Join our committees!!

Vote in the silly science awards

Active members must pay their yearly $1 dues and attend at least 1 meeting a semester

UPCOMING EVENTS

Special Seminar Speaker -

Dr. Seth Bordenstein

When: April 27th, 10-15-11:15 AM

Where: MBRB 1017 Auditorium

Silly Science Awards

May 13th at 2 pm in SELE 4068

UPCOMING BGSA SEMINAR SPEAKER

Darwin's Blind Spot: Holobiont Dynamics and the Architecture of Speciation

The Biology Graduate Student Association (BGSA) is excited to present

Dr. Seth Bordenstein

Professor & Director of One Health Microbiome Center

Pennsylvania State University

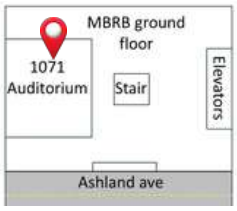
Departments of Biology & Entomology

s.bordenstein@psu.edu

April 27th, 2026
10:15 - 11:15 am
MBRB 1017 Auditorium

Please join us on Monday, April 27th, to learn from a BIOS graduate student-selected microbiologist and evolutionary geneticist, whose broad research relevance overlaps all BIOS graduate programs!

Scan QR code to add event to calendar



TRIVIA NIGHT!

On April 1st, Trivia Night was a huge success, with a great turnout and fierce competition. The win came down to a sudden-death question as two teams tied until the final round. The night consisted of five categories, ranging from general science to music. Our Event Coordinator, Jamie, put on a wonderful event, along with the help of our amazing volunteers. Remember, everyone is welcome to BGSA events, including non-graduate students. Keep an eye out for upcoming events to connect with your fellow graduate students!

GET TO KNOW SUZANNE HARRISON

Suzanne Harrison
The Director of Admin

What does your day to day look like?

I kind of think of myself as a troubleshooter. I handle most special events, report things for the department, and manage the soft-money budget. I've done so many different tasks that I can do a lot of people's jobs. I know enough that if I don't know how to do it, I can find someone who does. Every day's different, for sure, which is great.

How did you get started at UIC?

I started as a science teacher, had my kids, and then taught teachers how to teach science at Roosevelt University. After that, I thought, well, I don't want to go back to teaching after working at the collegiate level, so I applied for other positions. At first, I had Emily Beaufort's current job as E&E coordinator, then added Neuro coordinator to that, and just kept on doing more and more until finally, I got the job that I have now.

What's your favorite part of your job?

I think it's working with smart, inquisitive people. I know a lot of people on West Campus can be intense. I think people on East Campus are smart, have a very mellow vibe, and are very kind to each other. So, I know it can be stressful, but I think most people are trying to be good citizens of the department. I really appreciate that, because that's not true everywhere else, that's for sure.

GET TO KNOW SUZANNE HARRISON

How long have you lived here, and, if you're not from Chicago, where are you from?

My dad and mom grew up in Illinois, and then my dad enlisted in the military once he got his veterinary degree. I was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, and then lived in Europe. We lived in Germany and Denmark, then in Fort Sheridan, here in Chicago, before finally settling in the DC area. I wanted to get off the East Coast, so U of I was in-state tuition, because my dad was still in the military. That's how I ended up in Illinois, and then you come to Chicago, because Chicago's the best place to be when you're in your 20s. Yeah. Rockin'.

What is your favorite hobby or activity outside of work?

I work to travel. My favorite thing in the entire world is traveling. I have two kids, and we always left the country once a year in their childhood, and they're continuing that in their own independent lives. I'm close to 40 countries right now. I'm always working on my next trip. My son is living in France right now, so I'm meeting up with him in May, and we're going to go to 6 or 7 other countries. My siblings are also big travelers, so we visit a new national park most years.

What activity in Chicago do you think is a must-visit?

Going down and seeing the river being dyed. That whole experience, like, such a Chicago thing, for sure. Gotta get some deep-dish pizza from Gino's East, it's pretty good, but I'm more of a cracker-style one. If I could choose what to eat, I'd always eat Asian. Every single day, I'd eat Asian food. There are so many good Thai and Indian places here.

INTERVIEW WITH SUZANNE

What is your favorite place to travel to/best experience?

I think the most interesting place I've ever been to is Turkey. You land at the airport, and people are coming from Asia, and Africa, and Europe, and it is bizarre. I mean, just the mixing of the worlds.

My favorite travel experience I've ever had was doing a nighttime rainforest walk in Costa Rica. We all got our own headlamps, and we had a naturalist, and the howler monkeys were making a racket right at dusk, and then we walked for, like, 3 hours through the jungle, seeing the sloths and the snakes.

Any last comments you'd like to express?

I think we're in a great department, and I'm so excited that the students have revived the BGSA organization, because I think you guys are doing such great work and supporting people. We all need support, and I feel particularly strongly after COVID that we need a sense of community. I think it's easier to be disconnected. That's why I have all the social gatherings I organize. I told Eric, "I'm like, we have to do that." People need an opportunity. So I think that's great that you guys are also giving people an opportunity to socialize.

BGSA GENERAL MEMBERS MEETING

Silly Science Awards | May 13TH , 2026

Last year, the BGSA launched something new and a little different that, surprisingly, became one of the most memorable events in BGSA history: the **BGSA Silly Science Awards**.

Initially thought of as a fun way to joke about the quirks of graduate life quickly became a meaningful way to celebrate the aspects of graduate school that don't usually make it into CVs or annual committee meeting reports.

The truth is, graduate school isn't just about publications, presentations, and deadlines. It's also about the people who bring the snacks, the labmates who somehow always fix the equipment, the friends who help you start on a baby step towards progress, and the moments that make everything feel a little more human.

Thats what these awards are really about.

They're about celebrating each other in a way that feels genuine, funny, and specific to the lives were all living through in this very moment. They're about building a culture where people feel seen, not just for their work, but for who they are within this space.

And we're bringing them back! ✨

We'll be using many of last year's categories (because some are too good to retire), but we're also refreshing others to better reflect this year's personalities, moments, and memories.

Join us on May 13th at 2 pm in SELE 4068 to make this year even more memorable!

RSVP & Nominate: https://forms.gle/LhTgRtRpbKGjpeM77 or scan QR code →

EARTH DAY T SHIRTS!

These can be yours!

Just $20? what a great deal!!

BGSA is selling t-shirts for Earth Day!

Scan the qr code to order yours

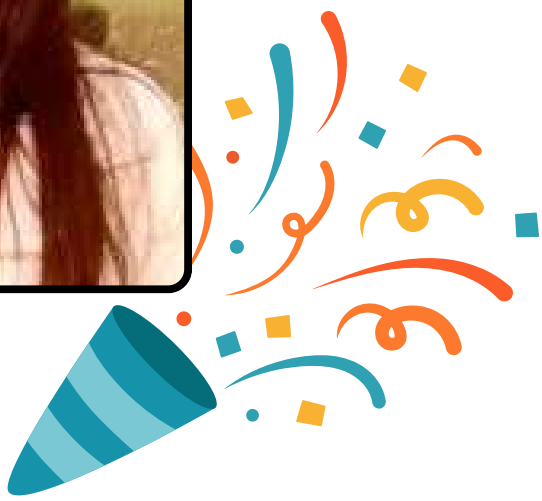
by april 14th 5pm

WHAT MODEL ORGANISM ARE YOU?

Aries	***Sus scrofa***
Taurus	***Mus musculus***
Gemini	***Saccharomyces cerevisiae***
Cancer	***Rhesus macaques***
Leo	***Escherichia coli***
Virgo	***Vibrio Fisherii***
Libra	***Arabidopsis thalinia***
Scorpio	***Tetrahymena Thermophila***
Sagittarius	***Caenorhabditis elegans***
Capricorn	***Populus trichocarpa***
Aquarius	***Drosophila melanogaster***
Pieces	***Danio rerio***

BIRTHDAYS!!

Happy birthday Luisa !



Everyone wish Luisa a happy birthday April 28th !!

we appreciate everyone in the biology graduate department. If you would like anyone highlighted for their birthday, please let us know by filling out this form!

STAY CONNECTED

Thank you for sticking with us through the semester! We love to see everyone's support for our new students and BGSA efforts!

Want to get involved with the BGSA?

Sign up for one of our committees where it all happens!

Find your committee here:
https://biosgsa.com/committees/

If you're a graduate student and not a BGSA member yet, don't miss this QR code to sign up!