

# BioNews – November 2021

## Dr. Julie Emerson retires

A Mammoth congratulations and thank you to Dr. Julie Emerson, who is retiring after finishing her 35th semester of teaching students in introductory biology. As laboratory coordinator, she has taught thousands of students in the Biology 181 and 191 laboratories, has trained hundreds of student TAs, has worked with many different staff members in facilitating smooth operations of teaching laboratories, and has collaborated with more than a dozen different faculty members in mounting introductory biology at Amherst College. Julie also created, and ran for several summers, an HHMI-funded high school teacher boot camp in molecular biology laboratory instruction at the College and subsequently played an important role in the Summer Science Program (part of the Summer Bridge Program) each summer. Through her 17 years of service at Amherst, Julie has held a sharp focus on student learning and laboratory operations, planning and adapting to a new building and to a pandemic, and making a significant contribution to the team-based learning revolution that overhauled introductory biology learning ten years ago. Faculty, staff, and students have always been able to rely on her dedication to successful learning, and we grateful for and applaud her tireless service to department and the College. Congratulations Julie! We will miss you!



## New paper by Levin and Patsis '17

Amanda Patsis '17 (currently a Ph.D. student at the University of Minnesota) was the lead author, and Rachel Levin was the senior author, on [a new paper](#) published in *Systematic Botany* entitled "Elucidating the Evolutionary History of *Oenothera* Sect. *Pachylophus* (Onagraceae): A Phylogenomic Approach." Congratulations to them both!



## Lori Nichols celebrates Mammoth anniversary

Biology technician Lori Nichols, who works behind the scenes to ensure that so many things run smoothly in our research and teaching labs, celebrated her 10-year anniversary at the College. Thanks for everything you do, Lori, and congratulations!

## Mirow '22 is co-author on new paper

Andrea Mirow '22 is a co-author on the new paper “The Organization and Development of Cortical Interneuron Presynaptic Circuits are Area Specific,” which was published in *Cell Reports*. You can see the paper [here](#). The paper is the result of work Andrea contributed to while working in Gordon Fishell’s lab at Harvard. Congratulations Andrea!

## DEI Interns and Research Invitational

Earlier this fall, the Biology Department hired its inaugural Diversity, Equity and Inclusion interns. The 2021-2022 interns are Grace Nyanchoka '24 and Carolina Andrade '24. They will be working on a few projects this year to help further the Department’s DEI goals. First up is the “hidden curriculum” of research opportunities within Biology. To help address this, Grace and Carolina organized our first-ever Research Invitational, in which faculty, staff and students shared information about how to get started in research in the biological sciences across campus and beyond. More than 50 students attended the event. Keep your eyes open for more Biology DEI events next semester.



## Biology Steering Committee



The Biology Steering Committee is planning lots of events for next semester, including a trivia night, a graduate school information session, a spring picnic, and more. Follow them on Instagram [@amherstbiologystudents](#) to learn more. And remember that these events are open to everyone in the broader Biology community!

## News from Alumni

### Tracy Montgomery '10 publishes two new papers

Biology Department alum Tracy Montgomery '10 published two papers recently on her work on spotted hyenas in Kenya. First, she was part of a team that documented that infection with the protozoan parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* causes increased, costly boldness in hyena cubs towards lions, which are the parasites' definitive hosts.

[This paper](#) was published in *Nature Communications*.



More recently, Dr. Montgomery (currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Max Planck Institute in Germany) published [a first-authored paper](#) in *Hormones and Behavior* detailing a novel technique for collecting non-invasive hormone samples from wild hyenas. Read more about Dr. Montgomery's work [on her website](#).

Cara Giaimo '11 has several new science articles in the New York Times, including [this one on paper wasp nests](#) and [this one on giraffe social complexity](#).



If you have anything to share for the next BioNews, please send it to Ethan Clotfelter ([edclotfelter@amherst.edu](mailto:edclotfelter@amherst.edu))