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Spring 2021

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Bridgewater College

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Spring 2021
Newsletter

DIVISION OF NATURAL SCIENCES

Biology and Environmental Science
Chemistry
Mathematics and Computer Science
Physics
Psychology

FACULTY NEWS

Dr. **Stephen F. Baron**, Harry G. M. Jopson Professor of Biology, was the lead author for the article "Complete Genome Sequence of the *Streptomyces*-Specific Bacteriophage Brock," published in *Microbiology Resource Announcements*, Vol. 9 Issue 35 e00624-20. The article describes Baron's research in biodegradable plastics.



Dr. **Edgar B. Lickey**, Associate Professor of Biology, attended the annual Association of South-eastern Biologists (ASB) held jointly with the Southeast Region TriBeta Biology Honor Society meeting. **Joshua Sprouse**, a BC student, presented a talk about research done in collaboration with Dr. Lickey, "Determining the potential of gene flow between baldcypress and pondcypress," which won the District I Frank G. Brooks Award for Excellence in Paper Presentation (talk). Dr. Lickey was also awarded TriBeta Southeast District I Faculty Advisor of the Year at the meeting.



Dr. **Ellen Mitchell**, Associate Professor of Chemistry, had an article published in the journal *Atmospheric Environment*, Vol. 249, 15 March 2021. The article, "Trifluoroacetaldehyde aminolysis catalyzed by a single water molecule: An important sink pathway for trifluoroacetaldehyde and a potential pathway for secondary organic aerosol growth," is the second article she has published with collaborators at Guizhou Minzu University, China.



(Top to bottom): Dr. Stephen F. Baron, Dr. Edgar B. Lickey and Dr. Ellen Mitchell

MESSAGE FROM THE DIVISION HEAD

Greetings, alumni and friends!

As I write this, the annual year-end celebrations are in full swing as we approach commencement, but this year feels a little different. While we



Dr. Phil Spickler

celebrate the individual accomplishments of our students, along with awards and the long-time service of our faculty and staff, we also celebrate

the accomplishments of our community as a whole. Living life in a pandemic has certainly been different, but it has taught us some important lessons. We are all now more comfortable with technology, and we have developed new and creative ways to communicate ideas and information that we would not have considered before.

But perhaps the most important lesson is not new. We still believe strongly that learning happens best face to face, and the character and warmth of our community is best experienced in person. We look forward to renewing and strengthening these personal connections and hope that you will be able to join us on campus soon.

Best wishes,

Phil

Dr. Phil Spickler
pspickle@bridgewater.edu

Stevens Retires After 39 Years at BC

For 39 years, Prof. **Shane Stevens** '79, Instructor in Mathematics and Computer Science and Head Track & Field Coach, held numerous titles and positions at Bridgewater College—in many cases sev-



eral at the same time—but that wasn't the original plan. Stevens graduated from BC in 1979 with an undergraduate degree in business administration. He went on to earn an M.B.A. from James Madison University and planned to follow family tradition by joining the U.S. Navy.

When Stevens was only a few months away from enlisting, **John Spencer**, BC Head Football Coach, offered him a job as an Assistant Football Coach for the 1981 season. Stevens had played football at BC all four years of his undergraduate career. During the preseason practices in August, Stevens met up with one of

his economics professors, Prof. **George Fitchett**, who explained that one of the members of the department had a health crisis and would not be able available to teach during the upcoming term that was only days away. Fitchett convinced Stevens that he could help and offered him two classes for the term. Stevens commented, "Apparently he saw something in me that I didn't, but I convinced myself that if Prof. Fitchett thought I could do it, then I could."

At the time, Bridgewater's academic year consisted of three terms. Fitchett convinced Stevens to stay for the following term, and during that second term, Stevens was approached by Dr. **Harry "Doc" Jopson** and Spencer with yet another opportunity. Jopson had just retired at the end of the previous academic year, and the Head Track & Field Coach who was hired to replace Jopson had just resigned his coaching duties. Although Stevens had run track, he didn't actively compete after his first year. Even so, he stayed engaged with the team and helped Jopson organize and run practices and meets. Once again, the coaches saw something in him that he didn't see in himself. Since assuming these responsibilities would push past his reporting date to enlist in the Navy, he needed to make a decision. Although difficult, he said his decision ultimately came down to a feeling that he wanted to give back to not only the institution, but the many faculty, coaches and staff that continued to see something in him that he didn't.

The significance of service is evident

throughout Stevens' years at BC, as he assumed various duties and responsibilities at the College over a lengthy career. Besides assuming various coaching and staff positions in athletics, he also transitioned from instructing courses in business and economics to computer technology and computer science. After completing computer science courses at JMU and the University of Virginia, he moved to the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science where he taught courses in computer information systems.

Stevens has been the only remaining faculty member who also serves as a coach, which was a common practice at BC several decades ago. While the demands of both jobs might wear many down, Stevens has relished the opportunity to connect with students and thinks that it's likely students felt he was more approachable since they saw him in multiple roles. He's especially pleased that he's been able to help the track and field teams remain competitive over the years. Since his first ODAC championship in 1989, his tenure as head coach has included at least one ODAC championship in each decade.

When asked if there's anything he'll miss, he mentioned the daily interaction he has with colleagues and students. Stevens is a quiet leader, preferring to talk about the success of the team or one of his colleagues or student-athletes rather than claiming any contribution of his own. He said he "appreciates the fact the College has allowed me to do both things as long as I have."

NATURAL SCIENCES ALUMNI CONNECT

Last year, we unfortunately had to cancel our Alumni Connect career event just days before we were scheduled to welcome Natural Sciences alumni back to share career information with current students. During the past year, we've learned a lot about how to hold virtual events, and software such as Zoom has become the common way for us to interact while social distancing.

On the evening of March 23, we held a virtual Alumni Connect event, allowing current students to hear from alumni panelists who shared their experience from serving on a hiring committee. The alumni gave advice about the hiring process, from reviewing candidate materials to do's and don'ts in the interview. Many thanks to **Brad Cox '86**, **Beth (Strohmayr) Gamble '87**, **Greg Gum '89** and **Rob Ham '05** for sharing their wisdom with current Natural Sciences students!



Interested in becoming a Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP)?

Check out Bridgewater's MSPsy program

The new Master of Science in Psychology – Mental Health Professions (MSPsy) program is designed for students who wish to complete a one-year master's degree in psychology. If taken full-time, the program can be completed in as little as 35 weeks.

The program content and skill development meets the state requirements for the designation of Qualified Mental Health Professional (QMHP), which is a new first-level professional designation administered by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The program can also be used as a stepping stone for future mental health graduate programs in clinical social work, professional counseling, school psychology or clinical psychology.

Find out more: bridgewater.edu/mscopy

A Tribute to *Emeritus* Physics Professors Neher and Ulrich

The two primary founders of Bridgewater's physics program passed away within the past year and a half. Dr. **Dean R. Neher**, Professor of Computer Science and Physics, *Emeritus*, and Dr. **Dale V. Ulrich**, Provost, Dean and Professor of Physics, *Emeritus*, were instrumental in the development of the physics program at the College, introducing it in the early

1960s and then supporting its growth over the next 30-plus years.

After graduating from McPherson College and earning a Ph.D. in physics from the University of Kansas, Neher taught physics, math



Dr. Dale V. Ulrich

and computer science at Bridgewater College for 33 years from 1961 to 1994. He passed away at the Bridgewater

Retirement Community on Feb. 12, 2020, at the age of 91.

The first in his family to graduate from college, Ulrich earned his undergraduate degree at the University of LaVerne and an M.S. at the University of Oregon. He joined BC in 1958 and taught for three years, then enrolled at the University of Virginia where he earned a Ph.D. in physics. He returned to BC in 1964, teaching physics and also holding administrative positions as Dean and Provost before retiring in 1999. Ulrich died at the age of 89, also at the Bridgewater Retirement Community, on March 3, 2021.

Both Neher and Ulrich were committed to academic excellence and encouraged and mentored many students to pursue the study of physics and related disciplines. They encouraged the personal development of each of their students, modeling lives that reflected the integration of faith and science. Both were committed and active members of the Church of the Brethren. Many of their students went on to graduate school



Dr. Dean R. Neher (Photograph by Denise Taylor)

and careers in physics and engineering, as well as areas such as business, law, medicine and ministry. Their students and colleagues have remembered them over the years with two endowed funds established in their names, one supporting a student scholarship and the other assisting student research. Together, they laid a firm foundation for academic studies in pure and applied physics that endures at Bridgewater.

2021 COLLEGE AWARD WINNERS

BIOLOGY

Excellence in Biology Award

Shannon Jenkins, Cailyn Leo

Excellence in Environmental Science Award

Kaitlyn Hilliker, Katrina Martin

Outstanding Research Award in Biology

Cailyn Leo, Josh Sprouse

CHEMISTRY

John Martin Award for Organic Chemistry

Heather Knotts

Garland L. Reed Chemistry Award

Ben Hancock, Tyler Lynn

Dr. Stuart R. Suter Endowed Scholarship

Jonathan Brubaker, Era Shehu

American Chemical Society Outstanding Senior Award

Jyailah Friendly

Joseph M. and Jane A. Crockett Award Endowed Fund

Kara Eppard, Marshall Ritchie

MATH AND COMPUTER SCIENCE

Outstanding Senior in Mathematics Award

Erika Clary

Outstanding Senior in Computer Science Award

Arun Bhandari

PHYSICS

Dale V. Ulrich Physics Scholarship Award

Daniel Hancock

PSYCHOLOGY

Donald R. Witters Psychology Award: Outstanding Academic Award

Eli Lenig

Donald R. Witters Psychology Award: Outstanding Research Award

Kynah Walston

2021 Retirements in Natural Sciences

The Division of Natural Sciences is saying goodbye to two retiring faculty at the end of



Prof. Shane Stevens



Dr. Jeffrey Steve Isaacs

this academic year.

Prof. **Shane Stevens**

(see story on page 2

for more on Ste-

vens' tenure at BC)

is retiring after 39

years as an Instruc-

tor, most recently

in the Department

of Mathematics and

Computer Science.

Dr. **Jeffrey Steve**

Isaacs is also depart-

ing, after 12 years

as an Instructor in

the Department of

Mathematics and

Computer Sciences.

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Bridgewater, VA 22812

402 East College Street

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