Congratulations
We were notified on the last day of 2021 that the Biology Teaching Lab (Melanie Trinick, Tammy Gomersall, Yiming Li, Fiona Roxburgh and Mrinalini Pratap) were the recipients of the team award ‘Commendation for Programs that Enhance Learning’ in the College of Science Dean’s Commendation for Excellence in Education 2021.

The Team’s dedication and professionalism has allowed ANU biology students to continue to experience hands-on laboratory training throughout the last year. Due to the teaching lab team’s dedication, students have been able to deepen their learning in multiple biology courses, and to develop critical skills, integral to their science degree.

We were also notified at the end of last year that Ben Long (Price and Badger Groups, PS) received a Dean’s Commissions for Excellence in Education award for ‘Excellence in Supervision’. The energy and integrity Ben brings to positions of leadership instils passion and a deep sense of equity in all he supervises, fostering a culture of diversity and creativity in the workplace. Ben is an effective Supervisor who knows when to give his students independence to explore their ideas and hypotheses, as well as when to direct productive discussion and thinking.

This month we celebrated the graduation of PhD students. Following the graduation ceremony, our PhD graduates joined with friends, family and supervisors to celebrate and acknowledge their magnificent achievements with some canapés, drinks and a small congratulatory gift.

PhDs submitted
Jian Chen (Rathjen Group, PS) Investigation of the signalling function of the plant resistance protein TIR domains.

Sashika Richards (Whitney Group, PS) Structure-function studies of multidrug resistance transporters of the malaria parasite.


Tanuka Sen (Verma Group, BSB) Study of the functional roles of hypothetical proteins in the virulence of Shigella flexneri serotype 1c.

Haochen Wei (Solomon Group, PS) Using RNAseq to dissect virulence factors of wheat and barley pathogen Bipolaris sorokiniana.

PhDs awarded
Upama Aich (Jennions Group, E&E) The effects of age and mating history on male reproductive success.

Sally Buck (Whitney Group, PS) The chaperone mediated assembly of Rubisco and its SynBio potential.

Yiheng Hu (Rathjen Group, PS) Pathogen detection and microbial community compositions during fungal infections.

Manuzza Rajput (Verma Group, BSB) Study of O-acetyltransferase B (oacB) and three novel orfs encoded by Sf101 bacteriophage of Shigella flexneri.

Yu Zhou (Whitney Group, PS) Exploring the evolutionary protein landscape of red Rubisco towards improving plant photosynthesis.

Welcome
Welcome to Professor Colin Jackson and his team who have recently established a research group within BSB. While the majority of Colin’s group will remain at the Research School of Chemistry, the RSB sub-group will act as the Canberra node of the ARC Centre of Excellence in Synthetic Biology (https://www.coesb.com.au/), with projects at RSB focussed on the development of engineered enzymes and protein-tools to support the Centre of Excellence’s primary goal of “engineering novel microbial cell factories to help establish an environmentally sustainable advanced biomanufacturing industry in Australia”. The Group will initially be made up of a few Honours and PhD students, as well as Postdoc, Joe Kaczmarski. The Group will be based in the RN Robertson Building (C206), please come and say hi! Colin and his group are looking forward to working closely with researchers from all Divisions of RSB and building upon the School’s strengths in phylogenetics, bioinformatics and protein characterisation.

The Atkin lab has welcomed a new PhD student, Xuan Hu, who arrived from China in mid December. Xuan’s PhD will investigate impacts of drought and heat on plant respiration, both in above and below ground organs.
Dr. Jing Zhang joins the Pogson lab as a Postdoc working as part of Barry’s ARC laureate project looking in to the performance of SAL1 wheat lines in the field. Jing brings a great deal of crop experience to RSB after working at CSIRO for several years.

Farewell
Sally Buck has been an influential parts of RSB both as a PhD student in the Whitney lab, a leader of the social-hour team, and more recently working as a Postdoc in the Atkin lab. We say thank you and farewell to Sally as she takes up a position at CSIRO Black Mountain in February 2022 and best of luck on the adventure ahead.

The Atkin Group is sad to say goodbye to Brad Posch who has submitted his PhD in November 2021 and will soon leave the Atkin lab to take up a post doc at Texas Tech University, working with Associate Professor Nick Smith.

After nearly a year of providing excellent support as an IT Client Services Officer, we farewell Nicolette Yue, and wish her well in her new role in the ACT Government. Nicolette’s last day was 4 February.

Farewell to Jessica McLachlan, who is completing her post-doc in the Langmore lab after a herculean effort in the field this summer. We couldn’t have done it without you Jess!

News
On February 17, Upper Snowy Landcare Network planted out the first of 1,400 eucalyptus trees that Justin Borevitz, Helen Bothwell, Tim Brown, Shagufta Iqbal and Chloe Tan have been growing in RSB’s Plant Phenomics Facility to measure their response to contrasting climate conditions. This is part of a collaborative research program to genomically quantify and predict climate adaptation traits of two groups of tableland and mountain Eucalyptus species from all over the state with funding from the Environmental Trust and the Landcare Led Bushfire Recovery Program. The trees were planted in a Travelling Stock Reserve near Berridale that has been ravaged by a eucalyptus dieback event that spanned an area the size of the ACT, as documented by Fenner School’s Cris Brack and Catherine Ross. The Landcare group in this partnership is led by Margaret Mackinnon, Honorary Associate Professor at RSB.

Grants awarded
Barry Pogson, Diep Ganguly, Marten Moore (both Pogson Group, PS) and their colleagues received an ARC DP22 grant that will investigate the regulation of protein translation in plant productivity.

Owen Atkin, Andrew Scafaro (Atkin Group, PS), Danielle Way and their external colleagues received an ARC DP22 grant on modelling the relationship between respiration and photosynthesis in leaves.

Papers


Bromham L. Meaning and purpose: using phylogenies to investigate human history and cultural evolution. *Biological Theory*.


Dagvadorj B, Outram M, Williams SJ, Solomon PS. The necrotrophic effector ToxA from *Parastagonospora nodorum* interacts with wheat NHL proteins to facilitate Tsn1-mediated necrosis. *The Plant Journal*. https://doi.org/10.1111/tpj.15677

Dougherty LR, Skirrow MJA, Jennions MD & Simmons LW. Male alternative reproductive tactics and sperm competition: A meta-analysis. *Biological Reviews of the Cambridge Philosophical Society*.


Hoops D, Whiting MJ & Keogh JS. A smaller habenula is associated with increasing intensity of sexual selection. *Brain, Behavior and Evolution*. https://doi.org/10.1159/000521750
Hsiao Y & Oberprieler RG. Bionomics and new host plant records of the Australian trunk-boring cycad weevils (Coleoptera, Curculionidae). The Coleopterists Bulletin. https://doi.org/10.1649/0010-065X-75.3.695


Rahimi F & Abadi ATB. Is Omicron the last SARS-CoV-2 variant of concern? Archives of Medical Research. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.arcmed.2022.01.001

