

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION DAY



UMBC

Hosted by the

**COLLEGE OF NATURAL AND
MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES**

May 9, 2025



cnms.umbc.edu/recognition-honors

A Welcome Message

From Dean LaCourse

As Dean of the College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences, I welcome you to our CNMS Awards and Recognition Day. This event acknowledges the deep and inextricable connection between teaching, mentoring, and student success. The bonds between faculty, staff and students are forged together under the pressures of a rigorous education. Whether in the classroom or research laboratory, dedicated and compassionate instructors ask our students to rise to the level of exceptionalism that each holds within. Through grit, determination and hard work, both faculty and students achieve greatness. Today, we honor their achievements in our CNMS Awards and Recognition Day.

We also use this opportunity to recognize our world-class faculty and staff for their invaluable service in teaching, mentoring, and guiding our students. The college will be presenting several new awards to salute those faculty members who have shined in their continued pursuit of excellence for the benefit of our students, the college, and society.

Many of the undergraduates receiving awards today will be graduating at the end of the semester and will go on to study at graduate or professional schools, or to begin rewarding careers in the scientific workforce or maybe even start their own businesses.

While we will miss them when they leave us, we are confident that they received an exceptional educational experience here at UMBC. We look forward to hearing about their many successes in the future, and we are proud that they will become the next generation of alumni of this special place called UMBC.



William R. LaCourse, Ph.D.





**CONGRATULATIONS
TO ALL THE
HONOREES!**

Event Program:

3:00 p.m. - Welcome Remarks

3:10 p.m. - Presentation of the 2024 Carl S. Weber Award for Faculty Excellence in Teaching

Presentation of the Faculty and Staff Excellence Awards

Dr. William R. LaCourse, Dean, *College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences*

3:30 p.m. - Presentation of Student Awards

Department of Naval Science ROTC, Commander Christopher Boehm,
Executive Officer

Department of Military Science Army ROTC, Major Mamadou B. Sylla,
Executive Officer and Professor of the Practice

Department of Marine Biotechnology, Dr. Kevin Sowers, Associate Chair

UMBC at the Universities at Shady Grove: Translational Life Science Technology,
Dr. Elizabeth Friar, Undergraduate Program Director of Biotechnology Programs
at Shady Grove

Department of Physics, Dr. Matthew Pelton, Department Chair

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Dr. Animikh Biswas, Department Chair

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Dr. Brian Cullum, Department Chair

Department of Biological Sciences, Dr. Michelle Starz-Gaiano, Department Chair

4:30 p.m. - Recognition of Special Groups and Closing Remarks,
Dr. William R. LaCourse, Dean, *College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences*

Reception immediately following the conclusion of the ceremony



2025 CARL S. WEBER AWARD FOR FACULTY EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING

The Carl S. Weber Excellence in Teaching Award honors a CNMS faculty member at UMBC with exceptional dedication to teaching as demonstrated by his or her enthusiasm, up-to-date teaching materials, effective mentoring, community service in the teaching area, approachability, rigorous learning requirements, coherent teaching philosophy and inspirational teaching style.

Cody Goolsby-Cole, Ph.D.

*Associate Teaching Professor,
Department of Physics*



My passion for teaching began during my undergraduate years at the University of Southern Maine, where I tutored students in math and physics. This early experience inspired me to pursue a Ph.D. in physics at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where I conducted research in inflationary cosmology. During graduate school, I embraced every opportunity to teach, including leading a freshman seminar on cosmology—an experience that solidified my commitment to education.

Since joining UMBC in 2017 as a lecturer in the Department of Physics, I have taught large-enrollment, calculus-based introductory physics courses and the introductory physics lab. Now an Associate Teaching Professor, I continue to find deep satisfaction in the challenges and rewards of teaching and mentoring students. My dedication to student success has led me to collaborate extensively with colleagues within the Department of Physics and across the College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences (CNMS) to support and enhance student learning.

In addition to my teaching, I serve as the coordinator of the Physics Tutorial Center, which offers academic support to students in introductory physics courses. I have also contributed to various departmental, college, and university committees, including the Physics Undergraduate Curriculum Committee and, most recently, the search committee for the new SIPASS Coordinator for the Academic Success Center.

Complementing my teaching and service, I have engaged in pedagogical research focused on the impact of question pools and ungraded practice questions on student learning. Over the years, my enthusiasm for teaching has only grown, and I remain committed to fostering an inclusive, engaging, and supportive learning environment for all my students.

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FACULTY EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Excellence in Teaching Award

Recognizes excellence in teaching, service, and leadership by a full-time instructional faculty member



Sarah Bass, Ph.D.

Associate Teaching Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Dr. Sarah Bass joined the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UMBC as a Lecturer in 2017 and currently serves as an Associate Teaching Professor. She teaches General Chemistry I, a gateway course enrolling over 1,000 students annually, along with Analytical Chemistry (lecture and lab) and Instrumental Chemistry Lab. Her teaching emphasizes active learning, digital accessibility, and inclusive practices.

Since the pandemic, Dr. Bass has served as a faculty leader in digital accessibility, working to ensure that all students can meaningfully engage with course materials. She also leads efforts to integrate generative AI into chemistry education, developing course-specific tools that provide scalable, real-time support and promote metacognition in large-enrollment settings.

Beyond the classroom, Dr. Bass contributes to curriculum development, teaching-focused research, and campus-wide initiatives focused on instructional innovation and equity. She also mentors faculty and collaborates with colleagues across disciplines and institutions to promote inclusive, student-centered teaching. Her work reflects a strong belief in structured, supportive environments where all students can succeed.

Early Career Faculty Excellence Award

Recognizes excellence and promise in scholarship and teaching by a tenure-track assistant professor

Tara LeGates, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Biological Sciences



LeGates earned her B.S. in Behavioral Neuroscience from Rider University, followed by a Ph.D. in Biology from Johns Hopkins University and did her postdoctoral research at the University of Maryland School of Medicine. Tara's research explores how plasticity within specific neuronal circuits influences complex behaviors, particularly those related to reward processing and psychiatric disorders. Her work integrates electrophysiology, imaging, and behavioral studies in mice to uncover the neural mechanisms that regulate behavior. She is passionate about mentoring students and fostering skills in scientific communication, experimental design, and hypothesis testing, and she developed the GRITTY [Gaining Resilience, Inspiring Tenacity, Trusting Yourself] Scientist Series to address the ongoing struggle that many graduate students have in navigating the challenges of life as a graduate student and scientist and help trainees develop the skills necessary to identify obstacles and actualize resilience to overcome them.

Early Career Faculty Excellence Award

Recognizes excellence and promise in scholarship and teaching by a tenure-track assistant professor

Allison M. Tracey, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Marine Biotechnology



I am an Assistant Professor with UMBC/ UMB at IMET. My lab focuses on marine ecosystems, including host-parasite interactions, the microbiome, habitat and biodiversity. Our primary study systems are shellfish, submerged aquatic vegetation, and octocorals. I completed my PhD at Cornell University and my BA at Princeton University.

Mid-Career Faculty Excellence Award

Recognizes excellence in scholarship, teaching, service, and leadership by an Associate Professor



Justin Webster, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics

His research lies at the intersection of applied mathematics, partial differential equations, and dynamical systems, with a focus on fluid-elastic interactions. The models he analyzes arise across various fields of science and engineering, from aircraft wings and suspension bridges to biological tissues. His academic work is characterized by both interdisciplinary reach and mathematical rigor, and he has collaborated with engineers, physicists, and biomedical scientists. His research has been supported by multiple National Science Foundation grants and NASA fellowships and has appeared in top tier journals across applied mathematics.

At UMBC, Webster has committed himself to both graduate and undergraduate mentorship. He has been involved with several pedagogical and interdisciplinary initiatives, including the recent Quantum Science Institute. He is a frequent invited speaker across the US and at many international conferences and serves in editorial and organizational roles across several professional societies and journals.



STAFF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Staff Award for Superior Service

Recognizes excellence, dedication, and superior service by staff members

Erik Crowe

Building Manager, Physics Department



Erik has been with UMBC since 2014 as the Building Manager for the Physics Department, overseeing daily operations and collaborating with FM, DoIT, and various campus partners on maintaining and improving infrastructure. Additionally, he manages the department's machine shop, assisting with research prototyping and fabrication, as well as training users in machining operations, and provides consultation services to both the Physics Department and the Earth and Space Institute.

Staff Award for Superior Service

Recognizes excellence, dedication, and superior service by staff members

Michele Mullins

*Office Supervisor III,
Chemistry and Biochemistry Department*



I have been working for the State (University System of Maryland) since 1983. I started working at the downtown campus, UMB, Greenebaum Cancer Center, as a Secretary I. Eventually I was hired to work for the Director of the Blood and Marrow Transplant Department and as the Fellowship Program Coordinator. In 2005, I transferred to UMBC, Department of Chemistry & Biochemistry. I have remained with the department since then and I am currently the Office Supervisor and the assistant to the Department Chair.

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GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE DEPARTMENT & PROGRAMS AWARDS





DEPARTMENT OF NAVAL SCIENCE ROTC

Commander Christopher Boehm,
Executive Officer

Academic Excellence Award

MIDN 4/C Patrick Grundy

MIDN 4/C Olivia Pouncey

MIDN 4/C Madeleine Reno

MIDN 1/C Mary Schmidt MIDN 1/C Jacob Zotter

Leadership Excellence Award

MIDN 1/C Mary Schmidt

MIDN 2/C Gabriela Ulloa

Physical Fitness Excellence Award

MIDN 3/C Ashtyn Barton

MIDN 4C Savannah Hall

MIDN 1/C Scaria John

MIDN 3/C Cole Paradine

MIDN 2/C Gabriela Ulloa

SSgt Nathan Worley

MIDN 1/C Jacob Zotter

Bluejacket Midshipman of the Year Award

Awarded to one 4th Class Midshipman who stands out from the rest of the peers for their professional excellence, dedication, and stellar military bearing

MIDN 4/C Edgar Trelles



DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY SCIENCE ARMY ROTC

Major Mamadou B. Sylla,
Executive Officer and Professor
of the Practice

Physical Fitness Excellence Award

CDT MS3 Mac Cong
CDT MS3 Davalyn Micknal
CDT MS3 Tyler Snow

Leadership Excellence Award

CDT MS4 Alok Barua
CDT MS4 Jacob Bland

Academic Excellence Award

CDT MS4 Alexander Gudat

Teamwork Excellence Award

CDT MS3 Mohamed Fall
CDT MS4 Christopher Atkinson
CDT MS4 Nick Subong





DEPARTMENT OF MARINE BIOTECHNOLOGY

Dr. Kevin Sowers,
Associate Director at the
Institute of Marine &
Environmental Technology

Outstanding Graduate Student in Marine Biotechnology Award

Jessica Baniak

Hannah Brunelle

Jonas Miller

Hilla Turbowicz

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UMBC AT THE
UNIVERSITIES
AT SHADY GROVE

**TRANSLATIONAL LIFE
SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY**

Dr. Elizabeth Friar,
Undergraduate Program Director
of Biotechnology Programs at
Shady Grove

**Outstanding Graduating Senior in Translational
Life Science Technology**

Godwin Aizenofe
Angelique Monolakis



DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

Dr. Matthew Pelton,
Department Chair

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching
Assistant in Physics for Fall 2024 Award**
Maliq Adetunji

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching
Assistant in Physics for Spring 2025 Award**
Mathew Varghese

**Outstanding Undergraduate Learning
Assistant in Physics for Fall 2024 Award**
Tirth Patel

**Outstanding Undergraduate Learning
Assistant in Physics for Spring 2025 Award**
William Marchineck

**Outstanding Graduating Senior
with Honors in Physics Award**
Nishwanth Gudibandla
Paul Wampler

**Sigma Pi Sigma Physics Honor
Society 2024 Inductee**
Michael Moody
Katherine Carver

The 2025-2026 Hong Family Award
*Recognizes students who are committed to advancing
underrepresented groups in natural sciences*
Ziggy Monarrez



DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS

Dr. Animikh Biswas,
Department Chair

**Dr. Bimal and Mrs. Suchandra Sinha Endowment for Excellence
in Statistics Award (undergraduate)**
Helen Frankovich

Freeman A. Hrabowski President's Advisory Council Scholarship
*Awarded to a Mathematics major who has completed at least one semester at
UMBC and has a 4.0 cumulative GPA*
Kevin Chau
Annabel Levy
Owen McMann

The Michele P. Hayes Scholarship
*Established in 1998 by Michele P. Hayes, class of '85, is awarded
to an outstanding student majoring in mathematics*
Rleigh Mansfield

Outstanding Graduate Research in Mathematics
Dr. Naghmeh Akhavan

Outstanding Graduate Research in Statistics Award
Weixin Wang

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant
in the Field of Mathematics**
Saeed Damadi

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant
in the Field of Statistics**
Fred Azizi

Outstanding Graduating Senior in Mathematics Award

Hikaru Belzer
Chris Bispels
Nishwanth Gudibandla
Ignatius Llobet
Emmanuel Mekasha
Ephraim Ruttenberg
Evan Sheldon

Outstanding Graduating Senior in Statistics Award

Arushi Bhattacharyya
Liana Hill
Tad Mrozek
Nehal Naqvi
Ethan Weisgerber

Pi Mu Epsilon Honor Society

Nicolas Bartolomeo
Henry Birger
Katherine Carver
Kevin Chan
Xavier Cohen
Rome Davis
Thomas Foulkes
Ethan Gaver
Rachel Grapes
Nicholas Harrell

(continued) Pi Mu Epsilon Honor Society

Carolyn Hibbs

Liana Hill

Akanksha Madhu Kiran

Jamie Mamana

Rileigh Mansfield

Michael Moody

Mustabshira Musarrat

Kara Nguyen

Annamaria Palmiero

Evan Sheldon

Mu Sigma Rho Honor Society

Henry Birger

John Bui

Helen Frankovich

Michael Hallett

Nicholas Harrell

Liana Hill

Misa Kasparcova

Akanksha Madhu Kiran

Jamie Mamana

Nehal Naqvi

Nolan Ngo

Kara Nguyen

Annamaria Palmiero



DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY AND BIOCHEMISTRY

Dr. Brian Cullum,
Department Chair

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Foundational Labs)

Kayry Segarra

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Organic Labs)

Kyle Davis

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Advanced Labs)

Nav Phulara

Graduate Research Assistant Award (Pre-Candidacy)

Megan Bauer

Graduate Research Assistant Award (Post-Candidacy)

Daniel Pierce

Graduate Research Assistant Award (Post-Candidacy)

Rajat Kumar Jha

Robert F. Steiner Award

Awarded to an outstanding Biochemistry Graduate Student

Manju Ojha

Outstanding Graduating Senior Award

*Awarded to graduating seniors who have
displayed excellence in the classroom*

Alexander Huynh

Rya Holzman

John McKenna Soto

Isabella Naimi

Aria Tauraso

Bart Tolentino

Faculty Award for Excellence Biochemistry

*Given to a graduating senior who has displayed
excellence in the classroom and the laboratory.*

Gabriel Otubu

Jason Daniels

Anna Adelstein

Faculty Award for Excellence Chemistry

*Given to a graduating senior who has displayed
excellence in the classroom and the laboratory.*

Shauna Kearney (Chemistry)

The Creighton Award for Research

*Established by Arlene G. Creighton and family,
the Creighton Award recognizes outstanding achievement
in research by a senior Biochemistry student.*

Anna Adelstein

John Mittino Award for Service

*Recognizes a chemistry or Biochemistry student for both
exceptional academics and service to the department.*

Samuel Barnett

Satterfield-Bell Award for Research

*Recognizes an outstanding junior student in chemistry
or Biochemistry with research experience.*

Megan Nguyen

Vitullo Award for Research

*The Victor Vitullo Award recognizes outstanding achievement
in research by a senior student in chemistry.*

Johnathan Ragazzo

The William C. and Gregory O. Faith Award

Awarded to an outstanding junior Biochemistry student who plans to attend graduate or professional school

Mesha Shajahan

The 2024-25 Hong Family Scholarship

Recognizes students who demonstrate a commitment to advancing underrepresented groups in natural sciences fields

Afrah Ahmed

The Inaugural Havelock and Jennifer Brewster Art of Science Award

Established in 2024 by Dr. Rachel Brewster, Professor of Biology, in loving memory of her parents. Award recognizes original, visually stunning photographs, illustrations, or data visualizations that effectively communicate research

Maggie Wang

American Chemical Society Chesapeake Chemist Award

Awarded to an outstanding chemistry student. Sponsored by the Maryland section of the American Chemical Society.

Rya Holzman

American Chemical Society Analytical Chemistry Award

Recognizes a chemistry or Biochemistry student for excellence in analytical chemistry.

Lexi Wise

American Chemical Society Organic Chemistry Award

Recognizes a chemistry and Biochemistry student for excellence in organic chemistry.

Jason Smith

American Chemical Society Physical Chemistry Award

Recognizes a junior chemistry or Biochemistry student for excellence in physical chemistry.

Haneul Kim

American Chemical Society Biochemistry Award

Recognizes a junior chemistry or Biochemistry student for excellence in organic chemistry.

Jumana Al-Anesi







DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Dr. Michelle Starz-Gaiano,
Department Chair

2025 Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

Megan Bryley

Biological Sciences Departmental Honors in Research Award

Michael Ack

Maxine Akunnakwe

Mufaro Chiduza

Emaan Chaudhry

Austin Gayhart

Praise Lasekan

Keiko Luke

Elizabeth Moser

Inioluwa Oluseyi

Andrew Opincar

Gabriel Otubu

Mukta Sangar

Felix Siewe

Julia Sunnarborg

Yashitha Yarubandi

Briana Young

Biological Sciences Departmental Service Award

Divina Bhatia

Faculty Award for Excellence in Biological Sciences

Asiya Ahmed

Nataley Der

Jihae Jang

Keiko Luke

Emmanuel Mekasha

Shivam Patel

Fatima Tariq

John H., Sr. and Althea Griner Scholarship Fund

*Established in 1987 by Dr. Winston Griner, Class of '74, recognizes
outstanding first-year undergraduates who are planning to pursue biological
sciences as a major*

Zeynep Akan
Desiree Amponash
Peace Timi

Kloetzel & Musall Scholarship

*Recognizes a Department of Biological Sciences student who
plans to teach science in K–12 after graduation*

Gabrielle Herrod

Outstanding Graduating Senior in Biological Sciences

Michael Ack
Ajeetha Arudchandran
Sara Jane Domerichie
Austin Gayhart
Andrew Kern
Elizabeth Moser
Elizabeth Nabutovsky
Andrew Opincar
Ayush Patel
Nisha Shah
Sabeeh Shahid
Abdullah Shahzad
Brendan She
Sydney Vance
Christian Verastegui
Liz Willman

The Roger Michael Davis Endowed Scholarship

Established in 1998, Dr. Davis received his Ph.D. from UMBC in 1986 and taught Introductory Biology and Introductory Biology Lab at UMBC for many years.

This award recognizes full-time undergraduates who demonstrate promise and intend to major in the Biological Sciences.

Anderson Rivas

Aeon Kaplowitz

Sandoz Undergraduate Teaching Award

Emerson Rivas

Thomas V. Marsho & Martin Schwartz Memorial Fund Award

Recognizes outstanding students in Biological Sciences. It honors the contributions of Professor Martin Schwartz and Professor Thomas V. Marsho, who significantly impacted the department and established UMBC as a strong research institution in plant biology.

Ashkon Hazrati

Alleana Hines

Michelle Jebaseelan

Ryan Lee

Steph Potisk

Petra Tembei

2024-2025 Thomas F. Roth Undergraduate Research Award

Recognizes outstanding undergraduate research at UMBC

Ryan Lee

2025-2026 Thomas F. Roth Undergraduate Research Award

Charles Rogers

2025-2026 College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences

Endowed Travel Award

Ahmad Hussin

Gelila Isayas



Recognition of **SPECIAL GROUPS**

Dr. William R. LaCourse,
Dean of the College of Natural
and Mathematical Sciences

Phi Beta Kappa

Founded at the College of William and Mary in 1776, Phi Beta Kappa is the country's oldest and most prestigious academic honor society. Membership is highly selective and offered to only those students from across the nation with a record of scholarly distinction.

Zuhdi Abujayyab
Michael Ack
Jayo Adegboyo
Anna Adelstein
Asiya Ahmed
Jumana Al-Anesi
Ziad Almekawi
James Anderson
Ajeetha Arudchandran
Henry Birger
Phoenix Bryant
Tessa Byrum
Jonathan Calderon
Meghna Chandrasekaran
Ramsha Chaudhary
Erica Cheon
Maya Classon
Ally Clearfield
Jason Daniels
Teju Datla
Courtney De Leon
Ethan Denny
Nataley Der
James Diaz
Emanuela Effah-Owusu
Thomas Foulkes
Austin Gayhart
Samuel Geleta
Annie Grove

Nishwanth Gudibandla
Nhat Han
Emma Heijstee
Lesley Hernandez
Leslie Hernandez
Alleanna Hines
Samiyah Hossain
Jihae Jang
Bosola Jerry-Asooto
Allison Kende
Fuwaiz Khan
Jenna Khatib
Oluwaseun Kintunde
Ria Lagdameo
Khadijat Lawal
Megan Lisk
Ignatius Llobet
Aicha Louriqate
Jamie Mamana
Robert Maxwell
John McKenna Soto
Tad Mrozek
Nehal Naqvi
Akiva Neuman
Nhi Nguyen
Elise Nikitina
Munachi Nkeonye-Mbaekwe
Paisley Nowell
Obahi Oniha

Andrew Opincar
Gabriel Otubu
Annamaria Palmiero
Daisy Parry
Ayush Patel
Aarya Patel
Shivam Patel
Katelyn Peugh
Alena Sagalovsky
Will Sakowicz
Mukta Sangar
Nisha Shah
Abdullah Shahzad
Brendan She
Julia Sunnarborg
Meghan Thomas
Bart Tolentino
Ngan Tran
Ayeoritse Tuedon
Pavan Umashankar
Maira Usman
Sydnee Vance
Hannah Wallace
Liz Willman
Nathan Zekarias



CNMS Scholars Program

Supports individuals interested in advancing women in the sciences to increase student persistence in academic majors where women are still underrepresented. The program is designed to connect scholars to a community of faculty mentors and campus support services for academic success.

Arushi Bhattacharyya

Annabel Levy

Nhi Nguyen

Annamaria Palmiero

Aria Tauraso

Lucy Viechnicki

Beckman Scholars Program

The Arnold and Mabel Beckman Foundation funds the Beckman Scholars Program and supports undergraduates interested in research in the biological and chemical sciences who are pursuing an M.D./Ph.D.

Elana Frazier

Jihae Jang

Andrew Opincar

Christa Richardson



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS!

The College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences is the home of more than 45 endowed funds established by donors. Their generous donations fuel the academic success of our students, help us recruit and retain top-notch faculty, ensure support for programs and people across the university, and inspiring others to give. On behalf of UMBC and the College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences, we thank you!

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