

AWARDS & RECOGNITION DAY



UMBC

Hosted by the

**COLLEGE OF NATURAL AND
MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES**

May 8, 2026

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.



Event Program:

Located in the University Center Ballroom, UMBC main campus

3:00 p.m. - Welcome Remarks

3:10 p.m. - Presentation of the 2026 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, Captain Jenna Weiner, Marine Officer Instructor

Department of Military Science Army ROTC, SCF Brian Reiley, Instructor

Department of Marine Biotechnology, Dr. Yonathan Zohar, Chair

UMBC at the Universities at Shady Grove: Translational Life Science Technology, James Sniezek Jr, Associate Dean for Shady Grove Affairs, Biotechnology Programs at Shady Grove

Department of Physics, Dr. Matthew Pelton, Department Chair

Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Dr. Andrei Draganescu, 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 and Photobooth Immediately Following the Conclusion of the Ceremony

FACULTY & STAFF AWARDS

2026 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.

Fernando J. Vonhoff, Ph.D.

*Assistant Professor,
Department of Biological Sciences*

Dr. Fernando J. Vonhoff is an Assistant Professor of Biology and began his career at UMBC in 2017. Fernando's work exemplifies excellence in research, teaching, and, most notably, mentorship. A neuroscientist by training, his research explores the molecular mechanisms underlying brain development, neurodegeneration, and behavior. His scholarly contributions include numerous peer-reviewed publications and national and international presentations, reflecting both scientific rigor and innovation.

What truly distinguishes Dr. Vonhoff, however, is his commitment to mentoring the next generation of scientists. Over the course of his career, he has mentored more than 80 undergraduate students, several master's and Ph.D. students, and numerous high school students, guiding them through research experiences, presentations, and degree completion. Dr. Vonhoff's dedication to student success has been widely recognized.

He serves as the elected president of the Latinx and Hispanic Faculty Association, the Faculty Advisor for the UMBC SACNAS Chapter, and the Neuroscience undergraduate Club. These accolades reflect not only his effectiveness as a mentor but also his commitment to creating inclusive and supportive environments for all students.

Excellence in Teaching Award

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

Allison Tracy, Ph.D.

Teaching Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Daniel Gonzales, Ph.D.

Assistant Teaching Professor, Department of Physics

Early Career Faculty Excellence Award

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

Matthew Kvalheim, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics

Mid-Career Faculty Excellence Award

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

Erin Green, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences

Staff Award for Superior Service

Recognizes excellence, dedication, and
superior service by staff members

Jennifer Salmi

Business Services Specialist, Department of Physics

Sarah Jackson

*Contracts Specialist,
College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences*

Special Recognition Award

For outstanding leadership and dedication in bringing the Science Olympiad to UMBC.

The Science Olympiad is a nationally recognized STEM competition that engages high school students in hands-on, team-based challenges across disciplines such as biology, chemistry, physics, engineering, and environmental science.

Thanks to the vision and commitment of Drs. Cullum and Abraham, UMBC has become a hub for this impactful event. In 2026, we celebrated our 3rd Annual UMBC Science Olympiad Invitational Tournament, welcoming high school teams from across Maryland and neighboring states.

Building on this success, UMBC further elevated its role by hosting the Maryland State Science Olympiad Competition this past April—an incredible milestone that highlights the university's leadership in STEM outreach and education.

Brian Cullum, Ph.D.

Chair and Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

Bindu Abraham, Ph.D.

Assistant Teaching Professor, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

GRADUATE & UNDERGRADUATE: DEPARTMENTS & PROGRAMS AWARDS

DEPARTMENT OF NAVAL SCIENCE ROTC

Captain Jenna Weiner, Marine
Officer Instructor, Naval Science
ROTC

Academic Excellence Award

Patrick Grundy

Olivia Pouncey

Madeleine Reno

Leadership Excellence Award

Gabriela Ulloa

Physical Fitness Excellence Award

Diego Almeida

Ashtyn Barton

Patrick Grundy

Savannah Hall

Cole Paradine

Angel Pressard

Madeleine Reno

Matthew Rotunda

Gabriela Ulloa

Kayden Young

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

Jacob Denning

DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY SCIENCE ARMY ROTC

Sergeant First Class Brian Reiley,
Instructor, Military Science

Physical Fitness Excellence Award

Kamari Roebuck

Caleb Sheng

Tyler Snow

Leadership Excellence Award

Mohamed Fall

Davalyn Micknal

Academic Excellence Award

Tyler Snow

Teamwork Excellence Award

Yazmin Duval

Stafford Conley

Fateha Sayed

DEPARTMENT OF MARINE BIOTECHNOLOGY

Yonathan Zohar, Ph.D.,

Department Chair, Institute of
Marine & Environmental
Technology

Outstanding Graduate Student in Marine Biotechnology Award
Yalong Sun

UMBC AT THE
UNIVERSITIES
AT SHADY GROVE

TRANSLATIONAL LIFE
SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY

James Sniezek, Ph.D, Associate
Dean for UMBC Affairs

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

Elaysha Hall

Princess Nyamali

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

Matthew Pelton, Ph.D.,
Department Chair

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching
Assistant in Physics for Fall 2025 Award**
Emily Ferketic

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching
Assistant in Physics for Spring 2026 Award**
Tomas Sujeta

**Outstanding Undergraduate Learning
Assistant in Physics for Fall 2025 Award**
Ben Trivas

**Outstanding Undergraduate Learning
Assistant in Physics for Spring 2026 Award**
Arya Ashtian

**Outstanding Graduating Senior
with Honors in Physics Award**
Gregory Behrendt
Katherine Carver
Jacob Chapman
Andrew Dvorak
Aria Tauraso

**The Donald N. Langenberg Undergraduate
Research Award in Physics**
Gregory Behrendt

Sigma Pi Sigma Physics Honor Society 2026 Inductees

Sigma Pi Sigma is a prestigious national honor society for physics and astronomy that recognizes high academic achievement. Membership is limited to students in the top third of their class with high GPAs

Gregory Behrendt

Jacob Chapman

Jaden Chilimigras

Andrew Dvorak

Noah Reichardt

Frank Tagaytay

Isabella Worley

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS

Andrei Draganescu, Ph.D.,
Department Chair

**Dr. Bimal and Mrs. Suchandra Sinha Endowment for Excellence
in Statistics Graduate Award**
Soumadeep Bhowmick

**Dr. Bimal and Mrs. Suchandra Sinha Endowment for Excellence
in Statistics Undergraduate Award**
Kaleb Zegeye

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*
Michael Duffy
Thomas Schwartzbauer

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

Outstanding Graduate Research in Mathematics
Zainab Almutawa
Ehsan Shakeri

Outstanding Graduate Research in Statistics Award
Mesfin Haileyesus

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant
in the Field of Mathematics**
Muhammad Jalil Ahmad
Ahmet Kaan Aydin

**Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant
in the Field of Statistics**
Jhilam Sur

Outstanding Graduating Senior in Mathematics Award

Jeremy Bruce
Katherine Carver
Kevin Chau
Nathan Dayie
Rachel Grapes
Annabel Levy
Jackson Moore
Manav Narendra
Kayla Nemirovsky
Haley Patel
Trevor Stepp
Ellie Taragano

Outstanding Graduating Senior in Statistics Award

Helen Frankovich
Kara Nguyen
Annamaria Palmiero

Pi Mu Epsilon Honor Society

Founded in 1914, Pi Mu Epsilon recognizes students who demonstrate excellence in mathematics at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

Membership is extended to students with high GPAs

Justin Collier
Marley Cosgrove
Malcolm Dickens
Michael Duffy
Jack Leonard
Manav Narendra
Avi Newman
Gerald Oxford
Haley Patel
Om Patel

Mu Sigma Rho Honor Society

Mu Sigma Rho recognizes academic excellence in statistics among undergraduate and graduate students. It was founded in 1968 and is affiliated with the American Statistical Association. Membership is extended to students with high GPAs

Abhisek Chatterjee

Helen Frankovich

Rachel Grapes

Kevin George

Akanksha Madhu Kiran

Manav Narendra

Avi Newman

Kara Nguyen

Annamaria Palmiero

Haley Patel

Sarah Simpson

Chad Smith

Nicholas Todd

DEPARTMENT OF CHEMISTRY AND BIOCHEMISTRY

Brian Cullum, Ph.D.,
Department Chair

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Foundational Labs)
Prashanta Sharma Roy

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Organic Labs)
Lahari Saha

Graduate Teaching Assistant Award (Advanced Labs)
Ashesh Sharma

Graduate Research Assistant Award (Pre-Candidacy)
Bethel Beyene

Graduate Research Assistant Award (Post-Candidacy)
Daniel Pierce

Graduate Research Assistant Award (Post-Candidacy)
Lekan Ajiboye
Nav Phulara

Robert F. Steiner Award
Awarded to an outstanding Biochemistry Graduate Student
Brian Grossman

Outstanding Graduating Senior Award
*Awarded to graduating seniors who have
displayed excellence in the classroom*
Suzi Agyako-Wiredu
Severin Elbich
Gabriel Kengni

Faculty Award for Excellence Biochemistry

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

Thomas Foulkes

Megan Nguyen

Tyler Sadtler

Faculty Award for Excellence Chemistry

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

Kevin Schwanebeck

Stephen Shaner

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.*

Gabriel Kengni

John Mittino Award for Service

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

Eunice Sung

Satterfield-Bell Award for Research

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

Caleb Zeleke

Vitullo Award for Research

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

Stephen Shaner

American Chemical Society Chesapeake Chemist Award

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

Kevin Schwanebeck

American Chemical Society Analytical Chemistry Award

*Recognizes a chemistry or biochemistry student for
excellence in analytical chemistry.*

Severin Elbich

American Chemical Society Organic Chemistry Award

*Recognizes a chemistry and biochemistry student for
excellence in organic chemistry.*

Aliyyah Roberson

American Chemical Society Physical Chemistry Award

*Recognizes a chemistry and biochemistry student for
excellence in physical chemistry*

Aeon Kaplowitz

American Chemical Society Biochemistry Award

*Recognizes a biochemistry student for
excellence in biochemistry*

Tyler Sadtler

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DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Michelle Starz-Gaiano, Ph.D.,
Department Chair

2025 Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award

Payton Barry

Biological Sciences Departmental Honors in Research Award

Phoenix Bryant

Aniket Camarushi

Natasha Dao

Darrell Davis

Sara Gavagan

Jessica Hoffman

Shanmukha Josyam

Daniel Mirahmadian

Deeya Mistry

Ella Reinders

Eunice Sung

Zoya Syed

Biological Sciences Departmental Service Award

Ahmad Hussin

Faculty Award for Excellence in Biological Sciences

Xander Barton

Jessica Hoffman

Jariatu Kargbo

Megan Nguyen

Hardik Paudyal

Ella Reinders

Tyler Sadtler

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

Noah Johansson
Maame Manu
Saria Rimmer
Bereket Tewodros

Kloetzel & Musall Scholarship

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

Nicolas Llobet

The William C. and Gregory O. Faith

Established in June 1992 by friends and family of William C. and Gregory O. Faith, twin brothers who graduated from UMBC in 1973. This fund supports scholarships for students majoring in Biological Sciences, Chemistry, or Biochemistry who plan to attend graduate or professional school.

Branwen She
Silvi Shah

Outstanding Graduating Senior in Biological Sciences

Romina Daraei Baf
Emma Chaney
Jane-Frances Chia
Stephanie Collins
Severin Elbich
Thomas Foulkes
Alleanna Hines
Gabriel Kengni
Antuan Palmer
Jordan Wandja Petnji
Zoya Syed
Suzi Agyako-Wiredu

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.

Favour Nwogu

The Sandoz Undergraduate Teaching Award

Steph Potisk

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.

Ehsan Alam

Faridah Folorunsho

Aaron Johnson

Dennis Lee

Daniel Martinez

Iskandar Nassar

2026-2027 Thomas F. Roth Undergraduate Research Award

Recognizes outstanding undergraduate research at UMBC

Cherub Willmott

2026-2027 The Hong Family Award

Recognizes students who demonstrate a commitment to advancing research in the natural sciences.

Magdalen Ruth

2026-2027 Havelock and Jennifer Brewster Art of Science Award

Recognizes original, visually stunning photographs, illustrations, or data visualizations that effectively communicate research.

Elleora Velador Svoboda

2026-2027 College of Natural and Mathematical Sciences

Endowed Travel Award

Payton Barry

Justine Anne Guevarra

Recognition of **SPECIAL GROUPS**

William R. LaCourse, Ph.D.,
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.

Fathima Hasna Abdul
Gaffoor
Muhammed Adigun
Suzi Agyako-Wiredu
Kiah Alabi
James Anderson
Nicolas Bartolomeo
Xander Barton
Thomas Bower
Pablo Cairns-Almeria
Aniket Camarushi
Katherine Carver
Emma Chaney
Ayan Chaudhry
Jane-Frances Chia
Xavier Cohen
Stephanie Collins
Alseny Daffe
Ellie Davidson
Sandra Deutl
Ijeoma Ekwunazu
Isabella Evers
Sethu Gokulakrishnan

Rachel Grapes
Theo Hanna
Christian Henry
Jessica Hoffman
Russell Hong
Ahmad Hussin
Jan Iringan
Jasmine Jenkins
Ethan Johnson
Emma Jordan
Shanmukha Josyam
Jariatu Kargbo
Katie King
Quinlynn Le
Emerson Lehnert
Annabel Levy
Bromley Lowe
Krishna Madhiwala
Owen McMann
Advaitha Midde
Deeya Mistry
Abigayle Morgan
Megan Nguyen

Kara Nguyen
Lea-Pearl Njei
Antuan Palmer
Krisha Patel
Jenny Pham
Tithi Prajapati
Zada Prout
Madeleine Reichman
Ella Reinders
Anderson Rivas
Kyla Rogers
Aya Saeid
Kareena Sai-Palm
Mesha Shajahan
Sanjana Srimath
Zoya Syed
Aria Tauraso
Chinyere Ukwuoma
Josh Vidmar
Jordan Wandja Petnji

CNMS Scholars Program

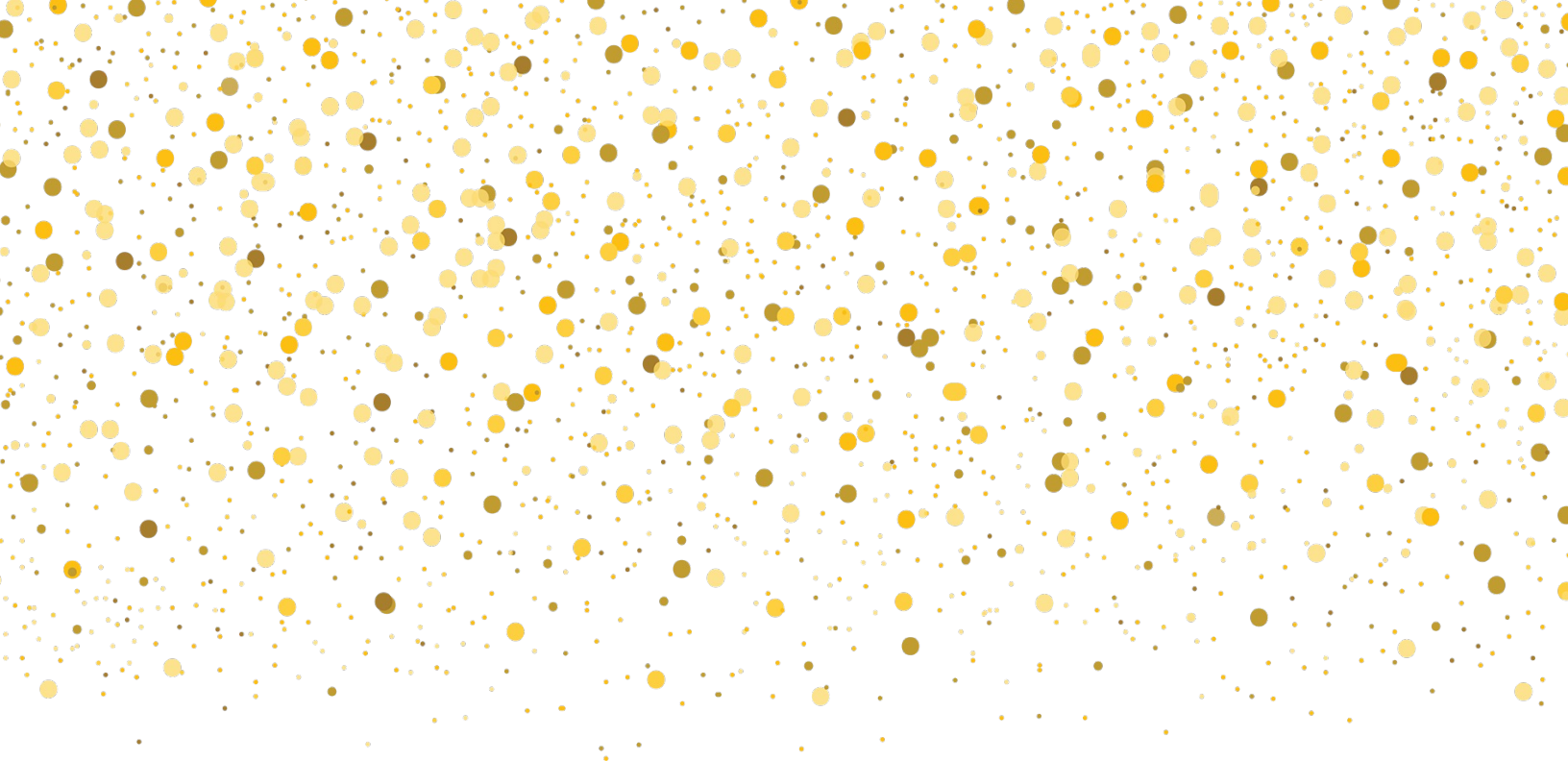
Supports individuals interested in advancing women in the sciences to increase student persistence in academic majors where women are still underrepresented. The program is designed to connect scholars to a community of faculty mentors and campus support services for academic success.

Aria Tauraso

Annabel Levy

Annamaria Palmiero





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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