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# DLS *Spotlight*

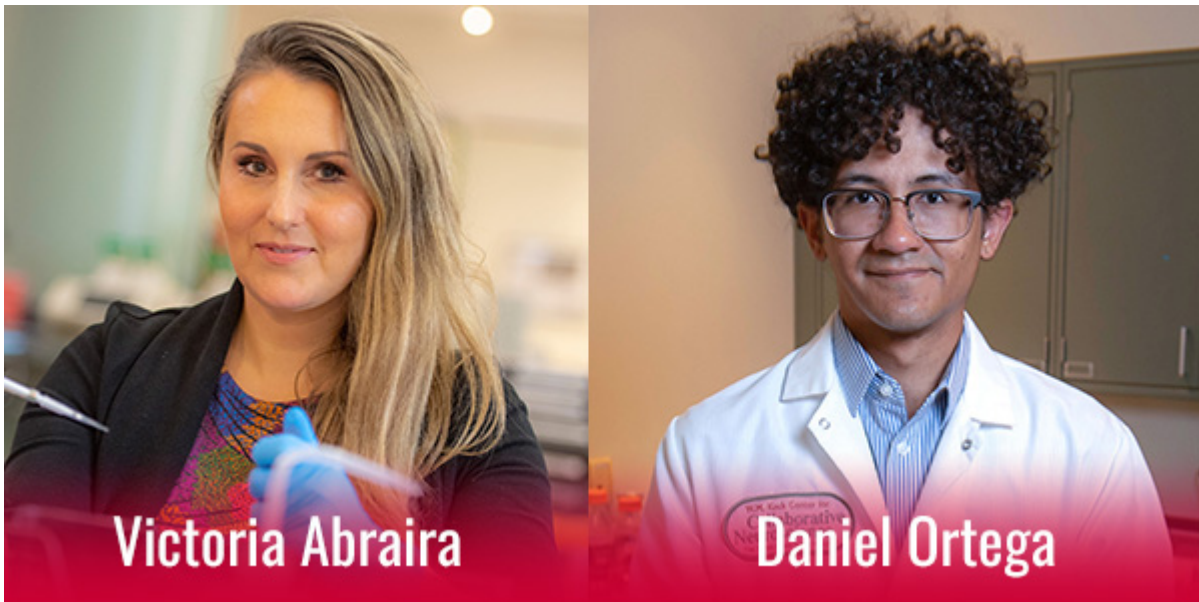
Division of Life Sciences

## Letter from the Dean

Welcome to the Spring 2024 edition of the Division of Life Sciences newsletter! We are excited to share a sampling of “DLS excellence” in the form of faculty, student and staff achievements. Changes are apparent across the Division with new programs, courses and facilities being developed and implemented in ways that ensure our students and trainees are receiving an outstanding and competitive education. Please take a moment to read about the ongoing initiatives within the Division and the distinguished recognition of some of our most illustrious faculty, students and staff!

Lori R. Covey  
SAS Dean of Life Sciences

## Top Highlights



**Victoria Abraira**'s research into the sense of touch and how it helps us to move, socialize, and feel pain has earned her recognition as a 2023 Rita Allen Foundation Scholar. [Read more here.](#)

In May 2023, **Daniel Ortega** graduated with a degree in biological sciences, showcasing an impressive 4.0 cumulative grade point average. He is charting a course toward medical school at Columbia University, marking the commencement of an exciting new chapter in his educational journey. [Read more here.](#)

## Departmental Highlights

**Biological Sciences:** The Office of Undergraduate Instruction is thrilled to welcome Kristen Goodrich as the new Senior Academic Program Coordinator. Kristen comes to us from the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS) where she worked as a Career Management Specialist. [Read more here.](#)

**Cell Biology and Neuroscience (CBN):** Graduate student Tess Kowalski, who conducts research on Tourette Syndrome (TS) in the Max Tischfield lab, received the Faith W. Rice Memorial Scholarship for her work as an educator and advocate in the TS community. [Read more here.](#)

**Genetics:** Michael Verzi was named the Duncan and Nancy MacMillan Endowed Chair in Cancer Genomics. Professor Verzi is an internationally recognized researcher specializing in gastrointestinal (GI) health including the development of the intestine, intestinal stem cells, inflammatory bowel disease, and GI-related cancers. [Read more here.](#)

**Health Professions Office (HPO):** The Health Professions Office helps connect gap-year students, who are taking a year off before going to medical school, with local clinical experiences. This program fills a need for experiential learning and provides aspiring medical students with meaningful work during this critical year. [Read more here.](#)

**Kinesiology and Health (DKH):** Professor Javier Robles, in conjunction with faculty from other schools, spearheaded the effort to create a new minor in Disability Studies. Launched in the fall of 2023, this minor is designed to support the lived experiences of individuals with disabilities and examines societal perspectives on disability. [Read more here.](#)

**Molecular Biology and Biochemistry (MBB):** Monica Driscoll, a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Molecular Biology and Biochemistry and a graduate of Douglass College, was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in recognition of her acclaimed research studying the fundamental biology of health maintenance with age, by identifying the molecular, cellular and organism-wide drivers of aging. [Read more here.](#)

## Additional Division Highlights

**Biological Sciences:** Congratulations to Biological Sciences faculty member Cassie Nelson, who received the prestigious 2023 Barbara Munson Goff Teacher of the Year Award by the Rutgers Fraternity Alpha Zeta.

**Cell Biology and Neuroscience:** Graduate Student Spotlight: Meet Diego Prado De Maio, a graduate student in Lori Covey's lab, conducting research on CD40L and its role in the immune system. [Read more here.](#)

**Genetics:** Faculty Spotlight: Meet Genetics professor Christina Bergey, who researches population and evolutionary genomics. She started as an undergraduate extracting DNA from monkey feces: "It still feels like magic that you can reconstruct species' histories going back millions of years..." [Read more here.](#)

**Kinesiology and Health:** Professor Steven Malin delves into exercise's impact on blood sugar in Type 2 diabetes. His research focuses on identifying optimal physical activities and their timing to produce best health outcomes for patients. [Read more here.](#)

## Rutgers Giving Days

**Be a Part of Rutgers Giving Days  
March 20 and 21**

Rutgers Giving Days, an exciting 48-hour giving campaign, is coming soon. Join your Rutgers community as we unite as one on two very special days, March 20 and 21.

Together we'll support our shared values: access to academic excellence, building community, and a commitment to the common good.

These days are about showing that Rutgers is more than just a place—it's a place where people and ideas flourish.

Together, We Are Rutgers University. Together, WE ARE YOU.

Click the following DLS departments to give:

[Biological Sciences](#)  
[Cell Biology & Neuroscience](#)  
[Genetics](#)  
[Health Professions](#)  
[Kinesiology and Health](#)  
[Molecular Biology and Biochemistry](#)  
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*Twenty-six Division of Life Sciences (DLS) majors shared their research projects at the 2023 Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) poster session.*



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