



Welcome to the
Department of Biological Sciences
at the
University of North Texas!



Jyoti Shah, Ph.D.

Chair of Biological Sciences & University Distinguished Research Professor



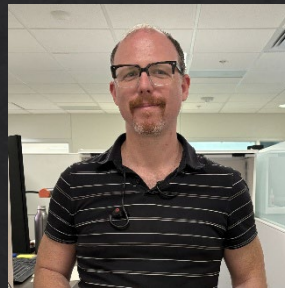
Find the personnel listed below on the biology.unt.edu website and identify their roles. Who are other staff members you might need to contact who are not shown and named below?



Shirl Richardson
Admin Coordinator
LSA -210



Kayla Shepherd
Student & Program
Coordinator
LSA - 128



Joseph Crane
Student & Program
Coordinator
LSA - 128



Carol Gagnon
Budget Officer
LSB - 125



Sarah Houdek
Admin Specialist
LSA – 205



Novita Rahman
Research Analyst
LSB - 113



Kimberly Piccolo
Instructional Lab Manager
LSA-205



Staff Representatives – Research Inst.

IAS/AERI – Env. Sci



Becky Petrusky

Admin Specialist IV – ENV – 215D

Biodiscovery (BDI)



Martha Frantz

Sr. Research Analyst
SRB - 122



Crystal Garrett-McEwen

Sr. Admin Coordinator
SRB - 121



Biology Facilities and Operations

LIFE SCIENCES COMPLEX

Ryan O'Shaughnessy – LIFE A122

Keys, Instrument Repair, Facilities



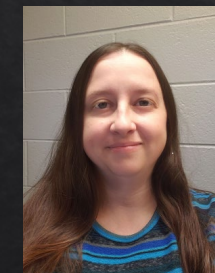
Jack Bolerjack – LIFE A122

Instrument Repair, Facilities



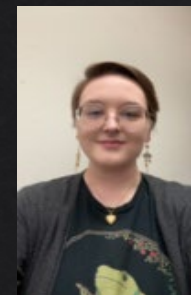
Kandice Green – LIFE A114/A115

Stockroom, Copier, Purchasing



Sophie Enslein – LIFE A114

Stockroom, Copier, Purchasing





IAS/AERI Facilities and Operations



Dr. Ed Mager
Director



ENV/EESAT – Environmental Building

Conference Rooms, Classrooms & Instructional Labs, Purchasing, Vehicles,
Keys – **Becky Petrusky**

ENV 215D

Events, Conference Rooms, Social Media–

Tara Principato

ENV 215B



Travel- **Mak Brown**

ENV 215A

*Copy codes differ; see staff member for assistance when making course copies in ENV/EESAT.



Biology Facilities and Operations: Copier Machines- LIFE A127

All copies are not the same!

- Research = charged to faculty member's account
- Instructional lab = charged to the course account
- Personal = charged to your student's fees; utilize General Access Labs in GAB, Library and other spaces only.



Biology Facilities and Operations: Keys and Building Issues – A122

If you spot an issue in the building, please email a description of the issue (and a picture if possible) to ScientificInstrumentShop@unt.edu.

If you need key access to any labs or rooms in ENV or LIFE, please contact the Instrument Shop and CC your major professor on the email for verification.

- For keys to labs and rooms in SRB, please contact [Crystal Garrett-McEwen](#).



SEED: Supporting Effective Educator Development Program

<https://learningecosystem.unt.edu/programs/seed.html>

SEED is a professional development program designed to help participants strengthen their teaching skills, build confidence as educators, and develop teaching materials that support future instructional roles. Through a flexible, structured pathway, participants engage with evidence-based teaching practices, receive feedback from experienced educators, and earn credentials that can enhance their academic and professional portfolios.



Student Travel, Conference/Classroom Reservations & More!

**Deborah (Deb)
Douglas**

Hickory Hall 264B



**Crystal Garrett-
McEwen**
SRB - 121



Tara Principato

ENV 215B



Mak Brown

ENV 215A



Travel

- ◇ Inform travel coordinator of travel plans.
- ◇ Submit funding source to Travel Coordinator (Deb, Mak, and Crystal). This can be from your major professor, COS, Toulouse, or International.
- ◇ Graduate students must submit a **Biology Graduate Leave Request**. The form can be found at (<https://biology.unt.edu/images/biologygraduateleaverequest.pdf>). This must be done before you travel. The form must be signed by you, your major professor, and sent to biology.chair@unt.edu.
- ◇ Non-Employee: **PaymentWorks**: the travel coordinator will send a **PaymentWorks** Invitation after notification to the coordinator.
- ◇ **Please include Travel Award letter(s) from COS, Toulouse, and International, or all three.** Before your trip, your delegate will enter the travel request in Coupa for approvals from Supervisor and Chair.
- ◇ **The below information is needed for your Coupa Request:**
 - ◇ The Account number/ Chart String
 - ◇ Dates of travel
 - ◇ Destination
 - ◇ The purpose of the trip
- ◇ Remember to take **TEXAS Hotel Tax Exempt Form** to all Texas hotels for the tax-exempt discount.
- ◇ Upon return, submit all **itemized** receipts to Travel Coordinator (Deb), (Tara), or (Shelley) for your expense report.



Graduate Program



Graduate Advisor



Mark Burleson, Ph.D.
Faculty & Graduate Advisor

Meet Your Graduate Program Coordinators

Biology

Dr. Dane Crossley



Biochemistry &
Molecular Biology

Dr. Brian Ayre



Environmental
Science

Dr. Ed Mager





Expected Graduate Degree Completion Time

Expected timeline for completion:

Masters = 3 years

Doctoral = 5-6 years

Transfer credit hour limits:

MS (30 Hours) – 6 hours

Doctoral – up to 24 hours



Graduate Committee

MASTERS

Three (3) members = Major Advisor + two others

No more than one member may be an **approved** outside member.

DOCTORAL

Five (5) members = Major Advisor + four others

Of the four additional members, one may be an **approved** outside member, with the remaining from the department.



Nomination for External Committee Members

Provide the following documentation to the Student & Program Coordinator at biology.grad@unt.edu:

- Updated CV of the outside member
- Current title at institution of employment
- A working title for student's thesis or dissertation

Note: The requested committee member will not be nominated if all required documentation is not provided. It is the student's responsibility to follow up on all requests.



Milestones

- ◆ Graduate Committee
- ◆ Degree Plan
- ◆ Research Proposal
- ◆ Qualifying Examinations
- ◆ Comprehensive Examinations or Final Defense
- ◆ Graduation!



Meeting the Milestones

- ◆ Students, work with your major professor to submit degree plans upon completing 18 graduate credit hours.
- ◆ It is the student's responsibility to meet this requirement. Failure to do so may delay progress in the degree program.
- ◆ Contact your major professor for milestone timing and paperwork submission.
- ◆ Additional questions, contact Student and Program Coordinator at biology@unt.edu.



Meeting With Your Graduate Committee

- ❖ Provide progress updates to your committee a minimum of once per semester.
- ❖ Meet with your committee members a minimum of once a year. (Schedule well in advance.)

Milestone Paperwork Submission

- ◆ Students and Major Professor must work together to finalize and submit **all** paperwork via email to biology.grad@unt.edu.
- ◆ The major professor **MUST** submit all documents to biology.grad@unt.edu; paperwork submitted by students will not be accepted.
- ◆ The Student and Program Coordinator will collect all required signatures and submit the final paperwork to Toulouse.



Where to go with Questions:

1. Your major professor!
2. Graduate Committee
3. The Graduate Advisor- **Dr. Mark Burleson**
4. Program specific questions, go to the program coordinator (**Drs. Crossley, Ayre, or Mager**) for your program.
5. The staff contact for general or paperwork related questions:
ENSC (Environmental Science), BIOL or BIMO = **Kayla Shepherd**, Student & Program Coordinator
6. Student-Mentor relationship issues: Graduate Student Faculty Liaison Group (GaSFLiG)





We foster connections between the Department of Biological Sciences graduate students, staff, faculty, and administration.

- Representation and support
- Professional development
 - Research presentations
 - Faculty panels
 - Invited seminar speakers
- Social events
 - De-stress
 - Find community

Join our Teams!



Email: BGSA@unt.edu
Instagram: @untbgsa

Meet the BGSA Officers!

Not Pictured:
Kristina Fite



Victoria Vo



Ben Berggren



Memo Contreras Rello



Lauren Kowalski



Infinity Alvarez



Kat Burbules



Emmanuel Lamptey



Sophie Davis



The Step-by-Step Walk to a Thesis/Dissertation

What is a Thesis/Dissertation?



<http://fbs.admin.utah.edu/research-corner/files/2016/05/thesis-dissertation.jpg>

- Final product of your research work.
- A product that you will want to cherish and be proud of for the rest of your life.

How do I Make this Product?

- **S**pecific question
- **M**ust read literature
- **A**chievable goals
- **R**elevant research-workout a plan
- **T**imely execution of the plan

Thesis/dissertations are a Large Undertaking



Don't be overwhelmed - We will help you break up the process into smaller steps

Step 1: Identify a Graduate Research Mentor

- Have a graduate research mentor (major professor)
- Discuss your long-term interests
- Decide on a thematic area of interest



<https://www.fullerton.edu/graduate/webnewsletter/winter2014/images/ThesisProjec.jpg>

Step 2: Catch Up With the Literature

During the first 6-9 months

- It is OK to not know much about the research area of interest – with time you can build on it
- Begin with extensive literature reading
- Start with some recent reviews- then work backwards to original research articles
- Summarize each work you read, preferably in writing
- Build up your reference list – use EndNote or another reference managing software
- In consultation with your major professor, identify a sub-area; an unsolved problem

Before you realize it, you have nearly completed a draft of the '**Introductory Chapter**' for your thesis/dissertation

Step 3: Get a Graduate Committee in Place

Before end of second semester (the earlier the better)

- In consultation with your major professor get a graduate committee in place and work with them to come up with a **degree plan** (courses you need to take and when).
- What is the role of a graduate committee?
- How do I select my graduate committee?

Step 4: Complete Graduate Qualifier Exams

In your 4th semester

- Schedule with your graduate committee to complete the following:
 - Written Qualifier and Oral Exam
 - Graduate Proposal

Step 5: The Research Proposal

What is a research proposal and why do I need to develop a research proposal?

- It is the road map of your research
- Forces you to think about the big picture – the intellectual context
- Allows you to identify a problem/hypothesis and justify your research within context of the big picture
- Come up with an experimental plan to test your hypothesis
- Think about expected outcomes of each experiment and interpretation.
- Develop a timeline for your experiments
- At the end of it you have a clear and smart workable plan

The Research Proposal --- An **Executable Plan** for Gathering Data for Your Thesis/Dissertation

Conducting Your Research

- Follow the proposal plan
- Keep track of how long each experiment will take and when to initiate it
- Consult regularly with your Major Professor
- Keep up with new developments in the field
- Be ready to adjust and update plan as needed, but in consultation with your Major Professor
- Apprise your graduate committee **at least once a year**, preferably with a written progress report

Make Your Thesis/Dissertation Writing Easy

- Maintain a good log of all your experiments in a notebook
- Have a detailed experimental plan including reagent composition
- Record data for easy retrieval
- Machine generated data--- store in original format; make edits to a copy, not to the original file
- Back-up all data in multiple storage forms
- Type out your experimental plan, results and conclusions while everything is still fresh in your mind
- Keep it organized so that it is easy to find

By doing so, you have already begun writing your thesis/dissertation

Step 6: Almost there

- Publish your research
- A semester before actual graduation, meet with your committee to finalize the content and plan of your thesis/dissertation
- Complete thesis/dissertation writing in consultation with your Major Professor (it does take couple of months, hence do not procrastinate)
- While you are working on writing, schedule a defense date keeping in mind deadlines set by graduate school
- Oral defense of your thesis/dissertation

You are not alone in this journey

Step-by-Step to a Successful Thesis/Dissertation





Salaried Graduate Assistantships

Salaried Assistantship

- ◆ Teaching Assistant (TA)
- ◆ Research Assistant (RA)



Salaried Graduate Assistantships

Employment Eligibility Requirements

- ◆ Research-based MS or PhD
- ◆ Nine (9) sh of graduate-level coursework
- ◆ 3.0 GPA
- ◆ Satisfactory progress in program/coursework/
employment



Salaried Graduate Assistantships

General Employment Terms

- ◇ 20 hours/week / 0.50 FTE
- ◇ Nine-month academic year
- ◇ Employment funding limits:
 - ◇ MS - 3 years (6 long semesters)
 - ◇ PhD - 6 years (12 long semesters)



Salaried Graduate **Hiring**

Major Steps

- ◇ Background check; email from Accurate Background, Inc.

Note: TAs may not begin work without a complete and satisfactory background check.



Salaried Graduate **Hiring**

Major Steps

- ◇ Background check via Accurate Background, Inc.
- ◇ Onboarding & I-9 Section 1
- ◇ I-9 Verification (face-to-face interaction)



Salaried Graduate **Hiring**

Major Steps

- ◇ Background check via Accurate Background, Inc.
- ◇ Onboarding & I-9 Section 1
- ◇ I-9 Verification (face-to-face interaction)

Both a cleared background check and I-9 verification are **required** to be hired.



Salaried Graduate **Hiring**

Major Steps

- ◇ Background check via Accurate Background, Inc.
- ◇ Onboarding & I-9 Section 1
- ◇ I-9 Verification (face-to-face interaction)
- ◇ **Electronic Payroll Action Request (EPAR)***

***I-9 not verified? Background check incomplete?
You will not be hired.**



Salaried Graduate **Hiring**

Who puts me on payroll?

- ◇ TA = Kim Piccolo & Sarah Houdek
- ◇ RA =
 - AERI, TBD
 - BDI, Crystal Garrett-McEwen
 - BIOL, Novita Rahman



Salaried Graduate Payroll

Payroll details are provided on your annual offer letter.



Salaried Graduate Payroll

When do I get paid?

- ◇ The first paycheck for the Fall 2026 term is scheduled for September 15, 2026, provided all hiring processes and documentation have been completed and submitted by UNT deadlines.
- ◇ The semi-monthly pay schedule is included in the Salaried Assistantship document located at <https://cos.unt.edu/biology/graduate-programs/graduate-student-forms-other-important-information.html>



Salaried Graduate Employment

- ◇ TA – Direct supervisor (for lab course)
- ◇ RA – Major Advisor/s (generally)

For administrative concerns, contact whoever put you on payroll and/or departmental representative.

For work-related questions/concerns/expectations, contact your direct supervisor.



Conclusion of Salaried Assistantships

Questions, comments, concerns?

TBP (Tuition Benefit Program) and Scholarships

- Full-time enrollment required (9 credit hours).
- Even if you are awarded a TA position, TBP is NOT guaranteed.
- Scholarships require:
 - TA/Scholarship Application.
 - Updated Transcripts.
 - Letter from major professor.
 - Letter from lab supervisor if possible.
 - Letter from YOU explaining need.

Expectations

1. TA

1. Tasks performed as a TA are not part of your degree requirement
2. It is like any other job
3. Be prepared to teach
4. Office hours
5. The coordinator of your teaching lab is there to mentor

2. RA

1. The tasks performed during an RA **may or may not** be associated with thesis research and are subject to an advisor's discretion

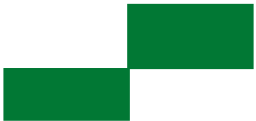


Expectations

1. Graduate Degree

- a. Follow the timeline
- b. Dissertation/Thesis research occurs outside of TA/RA hours and classes
- c. Publish along the way
- d. Working hours
 - a. At times, your dissertation research may require effort beyond a typical 40-hour week.
- e. Find a work – life balance: weekends, vacations, etc.
- f. Talk with advisor to establish expectations
 - Mentorship agreement
- g. Reach out to others for mentorship
- h. Attend seminars and scientific meetings

To be successful, being a graduate student is a full-time effort that requires good time management and planning



Expectations

1. In your lab

- a. Be a good lab citizen
- b. Complete required safety and RCR training
- c. Develop strong research skills
- d. Read, read, read
- e. Respect others' time
- f. Meet regularly with your advisor AND your committee members
- g. Understand how you will communicate with your advisor
- h. Discuss authorship early
- i. Take ownership of your educational experience



UNT Emergency Management

Stay in the Loop!

- **Discord** – Graduate student communication
 - QR code to join the Discord!



Download the 'Mean Green Ready App' from the app store to review emergency guidelines and resources.



*GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP EMPLOYMENT

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS -Eligibility for employment as a salaried Graduate Assistant in the Department of Biological Sciences:

- Graduate student in “good standing” with the University, College and Department
- Research-based degree program (i.e., Ph.D. or MS-thesis) with approved major advisor
- GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Full-time, continuous enrollment (9 graduate credit hours in Fall and Spring) per Toulouse Graduate School. (If ABD, see catalog for graduate credit hours).
- International and/or non-native English speakers are required to meet English proficiency standards as set by the state of Texas to be considered for a Teaching Assistantship. Assessment of English proficiency is administered through the Intensive English Language Institute (IELI) prior to the start of classes. Enrollment in IELI classes/workshops may be required.
- Meet eligibility requirements for employment in the U.S.

*Subject to change, pending additional information from the Office of the Provost & Toulouse Graduate School.

(details: <https://biology.unt.edu/graduate/graduate-student-forms-other-important-information>)

TA EMPLOYMENT TERMS

- Appointment Term Details Start date: One week prior to start of classes; specific date at the discretion of Supervisor. End date: End of University final exam week; specific date at the discretion of Department.
- The appointment is for 20.0 hours per week, or 0.50 Full-Time Equivalency (FTE) employment. As with any professional appointment, the amount of work may vary from week to week. Specific duties will be assigned by the supervisor.
- Graduate Assistant pay is based on a monthly rate consistent with progression through the degree
- Pay Periods: Semi-monthly pay occurs on the first and fifteenth business day of each month, beginning mid-September (estimated) for the Fall term.
**Complete hiring steps by stated deadlines to prevent delays to payment processing!*
- Assistantships are limited during the summer. Students are encouraged to seek alternate employment.

TA EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS

TAs are expected to-

- complete FERPA training in UNT Bridge prior to the first day of class,
- assist/observe a veteran in a lab earlier in the week/day to better anticipate problems, questions and concerns (as applicable) if new to a course/assignment,
- be punctual, present and prepared for each assignment,
- prepare all presentation materials and assessments, including quizzes, pre-labs, exams, handouts, etc. as directed by the supervisor. All copying may be completed in LIFE A127 or EESAT 215. Contact Stockroom personnel or student workers in Advising Office for training on the machine in LIFE A127. Note: To allow for high volume traffic and technical difficulties, copies are to be made no less than 48 hours in advance.
- maintain the laboratory by arriving early to ensure materials are present, instructing students to clean workstations, and remediating workstations at the end of the lab period,
- hold up to 3 office hours per week.
 - a. TAs are expected to be present and available during scheduled office hours.
 - b. Provide contact information and office hours to each of the following no later than the first week of classes: supervisor(s), department staff, students via CANVAS.
- Additional preparatory duties may be required per the supervisor. Report any maintenance issues (clogged sinks, dripping faucets, non-functioning microscopes) to the supervisor and/or Instrument Repair Shop in LIFE A122.

TA EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS-contd..

TA are expected to-

- be familiar with and enforce all policies associated with assigned duties,
- follow instructions, protocols and safety measures as directed by the supervisor,
- follow the published schedule of topics. Changing dates/topics/etc. is not acceptable.
- identify a substitute at the beginning of the term who can assist in the event a TA is unable to be present for an assignment (lab/course). Decide whether reciprocation will be in kind or at the substitutionary rate of \$25.00 per hour/lab.*
- notify both the substitute and supervisor in the event of an absence.
- notify the direct supervisor of any and all situations that affect or may potentially affect the assignment (tardiness, emergencies, student issues, etc.) promptly (in a time frame identified by the supervisor).

*Failure to reciprocate may result in docking of TA/GSA pay. Canceling lab is not an option.

TA/GSA CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

- Attire: Business casual while teaching and ALWAYS wear closed toe shoes.
- Be courteous to your students and do not engage in arguments in class
- There is a report button in the TA station computer in case of disruptive behavior in class
- Report student problems to supervisors (document all behavior/emails for report)
- Be professional, you are the instructor in the class-do not fraternize with students

TA/GSA EMPLOYMENT RENEWAL

- Funding for assistantships is limited to six (6) long semesters for M.S. students and twelve (12) long semesters for Ph.D. students. Department needs supersede individual needs. On-the-job training may be required.
- Note: Additional responsibilities may be required as indicated by your supervisor. These responsibilities are non-negotiable. While the department appreciates that students have other obligations, for employment purposes, only class conflicts may be considered for alternate assignment requests. If a resolution cannot be reached, the assistantship may be revoked.
- Conditions for renewal of employment-TAs hired for the Fall semester will normally be rehired for the subsequent semester under the following provisions, unless the initial term of assistantship was for a single semester only, with no guarantee of continuation:
 - o Department need and budget permits rehiring
 - o Supervisor recommends renewal
 - o A cumulative GPA of 3.0 or higher was maintained
 - o Student evaluation scores are above 2.5*
 - o Assignments were conducted/completed to the satisfaction of the supervisor and department
 - o There have been no violations of the stated conditions of employment.

TA EMPLOYMENT PROBATION/TERMINATION

TAs who fail to meet the terms of employment described in this document and in the employment offer letter may be placed on probation.

- The supervisor will meet with the TA to discuss the terms of probation and will notify the major advisor. The department will prepare a probation letter that will be provided to the TA and the major advisor copied, as well as filed in the TA file.
- The TA will have one semester to remediate the issues that led to the probationary status. The TA will be reevaluated at the close of the probationary semester. If improvement is insufficient to reinstate good standing, that will be grounds for termination or dismissal of the TA.
- A TA may be terminated at any time during the term of employment for insubordination, incompetence, moral turpitude, neglect of responsibilities, or failure to properly perform assigned duties.
- NOTE: Teaching assignments and/or pay could change during the first twelve class days until enrollment stabilizes and departmental budgets are finalized.
- SPOT evaluation scores below 2.5 will be reviewed; continuation of the TA will be made on an individual basis. Lack of improvement over a successive term may be means for revoking the TA.

*More details in-<https://biology.unt.edu/graduate/graduate-student-forms-other-important-information>



Final Notes

- Email an appointment request when you need assistance. Allow 24 to 48 hours for a response.
- All email correspondence is to be from an official UNT email address. Students should respond to email requests from the department or university within 48 hours.
- Check your UNT email daily.
- Provide progress updates to your committee a minimum of once per semester.
- Meet with your committee members a minimum of once a year. (Schedule well in advance.)