Morgan Glass (she/her)

PhD Student at Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

Hometown: Wheeling, WV

Hi, I'm Morgan Glass, and I'm the Founder of WV Scientists.

I'm originally from Wheeling and earned a degree in Biochemistry in 2022 from West Virginia University. After completing a postbaccelaureate fellowship at the National Cancer Institute, I'm now working toward my PhD in Biological and Biomedical Sciences at Harvard Medical School in the lab of Sandra McAllister. Here, I study breast cancer as a systemic disease with a focus on how immune fitness influences disease progression.

I first became interested in science through my grandfather who was a science teacher and through TV shows like Animal Planet's Most Extreme. I like to think about cancer as an extreme type of human cell biology.

Outside of science, I enjoy running, reading with my book club, and exploring all of Boston's parks and museums.

Ask Morgan About:

Harvard University/Harvard Medical School | National Cancer Institute at NIH | Biomedical Sciences PhD Application Process | "Gap Years" | Cancer Biology | Vascular Biology | Science Communication (social media/writing)

Rocky Diegmiller, Ph.D. (he/him)

Postdoctoral Fellow at Duke University, Durham, NC

Hometown: Wheeling, WV

Hi everyone! I'm Rocky Diegmiller, originally from Wheeling. I earned my undergrad degree in chemical engineering and math at UPenn, and was lucky enough to get a fellowship (Thouron Award) senior year to study in the UK. I spent this time getting a master's in applied math at Cambridge and returned stateside to do my PhD in chemical engineering at Princeton. There, I studied how clusters of interconnected cells coordinate behaviors and signals during early development in the lab of Prof. Stas Shvartsman.

Currently, I'm a postdoc at Duke working in the lab of Stefano Di Talia (and co-mentored by Ken Poss at the Morgridge Institute in Madison, WI) studying pectoral fin regeneration dynamics in zebrafish, funded by a Jane Coffin Childs Fellowship. In the future, I hope to start my own research lab where I can live between the fields of experimental and quantitative biology focusing on questions in development and regeneration.

In my free time, I enjoy playing soccer and basketball, reading, traveling, and watching WVU sports when I can.

Ask Rocky About:

Engineering PhD Application Process | Thouron Fellowship at Penn | NIH Fellowship Applications | Jane Coffin Childs Postdoc Fellowship Application | Mathematical Biology | Developmental Biology | Regeneration | Living and Studying Abroad

Gretchen Pifer (she/her)

PhD Candidate at Penn State University, State College, PA
Hometown: Morgantown, WV

Hi! I'm Gretchen Pifer, and I'm originally from Morgantown, WV. I earned my undergraduate degrees in Anthropology and Psychology from WVU in 2021. After spending a year as a full-time lab technician, I began my PhD in Biology at Penn State University, where I currently am. I am a member of the Kwapis Lab, and my research focuses on the impacts and mechanisms of estradiol on spatial memory formation in female mice across the lifespan. In the future, I would love to continue doing behavioral neuroscience research in an animal model, perhaps as a staff scientist!

When I'm not in the lab, you can probably find me running, reading, cooking, or hiking! I also enjoy traveling (when the stipend allows ;)).

Ask Gretchen About:
Biology PhD Application Process | Being a Lab Technician | Penn State University | Behavioral Neuroscience | NRSA F31 Application Process

Dr. Jim Schiffbauer (he/him)

Marie M. & Harry L. Smith Professor, Geological Sciences, University of Missouri, Columbia, MO
Hometown: Wellsburg, WV

Hi, my name is Jim Schiffbauer, and I'm one of the old guys in the WV Scientists group. I'm originally from Wellsburg, graduated from Brooke High in 1996, and WVU (Honors, Biology) in 2000. After two MS degrees in Marine Sciences from the Oceanographic Center at Nova Southeastern University, a PhD in Geosciences from Virginia Tech, and a couple of years as a postdoc and research faculty member (also at VT), I joined the Geology faculty at the University of Missouri (Mizzou - personal website) in 2012.

I am a paleobiologist, studying the earliest animals in the fossil record about 600 to 550 million years ago. My biggest claim-to-fame at this point in my career is discovering the oldest-known fossil digestive tract (here's a cool NYT story about the find).

In my freetime, I'm *enjoying* all aspects of finishing my basement, spending time with my kids, and watching WVU and Mizzou sports (foremost, football and basketball).

Ask Jim About:

Preparing a competitive tenure-track job application | Preparing for academic job interviews | Surviving the pre-tenure years and tenure process with your sanity | The NSF CAREER Award Program | All-things ancient life | The interface between arts & science | Grunge rock (I haven't changed my look since '93, just more grey)

Catherine Blackwood, PhD (she/her)

Research Scientist, West Virginia University School of Medicine, Department of Microbiology, Immunology, and Cell Biology
Hometown: Charleston, WV

Hi y’all! I am Catherine, a Charleston native and graduate of Capital High School. I moved to Morgantown thirteen years ago for college, and never left! I graduated in 2016 with bachelor's degrees in Biology and Psychology, and earned my PhD in Immunology and Microbial Pathogenesis in 2021.

I was working on vaccine development and am passionate about understanding and harnessing immunological responses towards tricky pathogens. I spent some time working at CDC NIOSH before the agency was gutted, and am now back at WVU as a research scientist. I am excited about science policy efforts, because science is and always has been political, and think that scicomm is an undervalued but incredibly important field for us to develop. I want to expand opportunities for West Virginians to stay in WV and do science.

Outside of the lab, office, and halls of congress, you can find me in the wilderness with my dogs and family, crafting, gardening, and doing all kinds of at-home science (cooking and baking!)

Ask Catherine about: Grad school and PhD programs | being a vaccine scientist at the beginning of a global pandemic and getting fired by DOGE | Experimental design | Writing for a variety of audiences

MacKenzie Jacobs, Ph.D. (she/her)

Postdoctoral Scholar at Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana
Hometown: New Cumberland, WV

Hello everyone, I'm MacKenzie! I earned my BS in chemistry with a minor in biology from West Liberty University in where I worked as an undergraduate student researcher in the Horzempa Lab. I also completed summer internships at the Naval Research Laboratory in Washington, DC and through the Plant Genomics REU at Michigan State. Following graduation in 2020, I began my graduate studies at Michigan State University in the BioMolecular Science Gateway program. There, I worked in the Edger lab investigating parental contributors, pathogen resistance, and subgenome dominance in polyploid crops.

I am currently a postdoc at Ball State University in Muncie, IN working in the lab of Dr. Rob Denton studying unisexual, polyploid salamander genomics. It is my dream to someday become a teaching and research professor at a primarily undergraduate institution– hopefully somewhere near the Ohio Valley.

Outside of the lab, I love to cook, bake, craft, read, and play with my pets!

Ask MacKenzie About: Michigan State University | Ball State University | Primarily Undergrad Institutions | Polyploidy

Thomas Whitlow, PhD (He/him/his)

Duke PROSPER Fellow, Duke University, Durham, NC

Hometown: Ghent, WV

Hi everybody, I'm Thomas! I grew up in a small town about 20 minutes south of Beckley. I received my undergrad degree in biotech from Marshall University. I worked in environmental toxicology and found that I really enjoyed lab work, so I moved on to the University of Cincinnati to get a PhD in biochemistry. During my PhD, I worked in the lab of Dr. Katherine Vest, studying post-transcriptional regulation of trace nutrient metabolism in skeletal muscle cells. At the end of my PhD I had developed a pretty strong interest in gene regulation.

After defending, I moved on to Duke University, where I am currently working in the The Tata Lab studying chromatin regulation, cell activation, and cell identity maintenance in the lung after injury or disease. Long term, I hope to lead my own research program to blend my training to understand chromatin regulation and transcriptional activity dependent on trace nutrients in regenerating tissues

In my free time, I like to boulder, see live music, and watch movies, so feel free to ask me about my favorite music or directors!

Ask Thomas about: Being a first gen Appalachian in the sciences | Applying for biochemistry PhD programs | Applying for postdoctoral fellowships | Transitioning to a new field of study | Lung health | Cell identity | Chromatin and Transcription Factors | Beer | Metal and progressive rock | Hair care

Eliza Siefert (she/they)

Critical Materials Water Researcher at WV Water Research Institute; MS Student at WVU
Current Location: Morgantown, WV
Hometown: Parkersburg, WV

Hello, I'm Eliza! I am originally from Parkersburg, WV but currently live and work in Morgantown. I graduated from WVU in 2022 with my BS in Environmental Microbiology. As a student, I had the opportunity to work at the Ohio River Islands National Wildlife Refuge and the West Virginia Water Research Institute. Once I graduated, I started working full time for WVWRI.

Currently, I am the Critical Materials Water Researcher at WVWRI, with focus on critical materials and rare earth element extraction from acid mine drainage. My day can range from being in a lab, running our pilot plant, mucking in a creek, organizing our annual trash sweep, writing, analyzing data, and much more. Additionally, I am working on my MS in geology at WVU part-time under Dr. Vesper. My thesis is focused on the complexation of rare earth elements with sulfate, organic and inorganic carbon within mine drainage in WV. Through this, I hope to inform the current and future efforts of REE extraction from mine drainage to bring jobs to the state and remediate our streams.

Outside of work, class, and thesis writing, you can find me crocheting, junk journaling, backpacking, misting my crested gecko, or spending time with my cats and partner!

Ask Eliza about: water quality | acid mine drainage | rare earth elements | working while being a grad student | outdoor recreation | backpacking | giardia | any and all arts | cats | vegetarian/pescatarian recipes

Ian McKnight (he/him)

PhD Candidate in Biomedical Engineering, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

Hometown: Davisville, WV

Hello everyone, I'm Ian! I grew up in Davisville, WV and graduated from Parkersburg South High School in 2018. I attended Marshall University as a Yeager Scholar and Biomedical Engineering major, where I was actually in the first cohort of BME students!

Since I suffer from various food, animal, and environmental allergies, I decided to pursue a PhD in Biomedical Engineering at Johns Hopkins University under the mentorship of Dr. Stephane Lajoie (Lab Website) and Dr. Scott Wilson (Lab Website), where I'm currently investigating allergic diseases as an NSF Graduate Research Fellow. Ultimately, I hope to develop a novel therapeutic to induce allergen-specific immune tolerance/permanently reverse allergic sensitization. (Hoping that one day I'll be able to own a dog and/or eat a Snickers!)

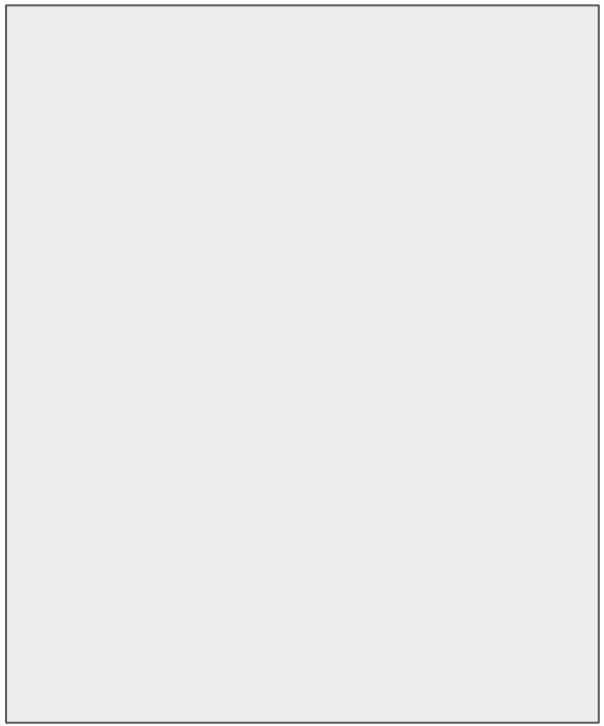
I'm really passionate about mentoring and teaching (specifically immunology/ immunoengineering lectures), so I'm planning to stay in academia and start my own research lab.

In my free time, I enjoy running, soccer, pickleball, ping-pong, trivia, reading, writing poetry, and making **way** too many puns for my own good.

Ask Ian about: First-generation Appalachian in STEM | Graduate School/BME PhD Applications (or just check this resource out: BMEAAP) | NSF GRFP | Allergy/Immunology | Epithelial/Endothelial Cells | Immunoengineering | Vaccine Development | Trivia/Jeopardy | Bad puns

Julia Ivey (she/her)

Academic Lab Manager, Chemistry, West Virginia University
Current Location: Morgantown, WV
Hometown: Oak Hill, WV



Hi, I'm Julia Ivey, originally from Oak Hill, and currently living in Morgantown. I went to undergrad at Shepherd University, where I played soccer and earned a B.S. in Biochemistry. From there I didn't know what I wanted to do and so I came to WVU for a PhD in Neuroscience. My main interest then, and still a big interest of mine now, includes concussion related work. Multiple factors, including problems with my advisor and simply not enjoying my life, lead to me making the decision to master out with a degree in Biomedical Sciences. Currently, I am working as an Academic Lab Manager for WVU where I am responsible for delivering all of the undergraduate Chemistry labs.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my dog and family, puzzles, arts and crafts, and being outside.

Ask Julia About: what is an academic lab manager | graduate school applications | managing a lab | deciding whether or not to go grad school | choosing a graduate school mentor | anything neuroscience, TBI, or CTE related | being a student athlete | arts and crafts

Hayden Moran (he/him)

Ph.D. Candidate in Chemistry, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX

Hometown: Fairmont, wv

Howdy, I am Hayden Moran. I am a native WVian from Fairmont, WV. I did my undergraduate degree in Chemistry at West Virginia University, where I was a member of Dr. Fabien Goulay's laboratory. In the Goulay Lab, I spent time calculating transition states to examine how conjugation affects reaction barriers in OH radical reactions with unsaturated cyclic ketones. I was apart of the 2021 Summer Undergraduate Research Opportunity program at the University of Georgia where I was a member of Dr. Brandon Rotavera's laboratory. Here, I worked to co-develop binary classification models for interpreting VUV absorption spectra. After I graduated in 2022, I moved to Texas A&M where I currently am a Ph.D. candidate in Dr. Daniel Tabor's laboratory. I was named a Department of Defense National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellow in 2023. My Ph.D. work is developing efficient methods for calculating and interpreting electronic spectroscopy of conjugated polymers/macromolecules in the condensed phase, and using vibrational perturbation theory to interpret nonlinear vibrational spectra. In my free time, I still root for the Eer's and the Fightin' Texas Aggies.

Ask Hayden About: Theoretical Spectroscopy | Graduate School Applications | DoD NDSEG | Graduate Fellowship Applications | Condensed Phase Chemistry | Physical and Theoretical Chemistry Doctoral Studies | TAMU

Camila Romero (She/Her)

PhD Student at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA

Hometown: Morgantown, WV

Hello! I'm Camila Romero, and I am originally from Chile. I was raised in Mexico till I was 10, spent a year in Germany, and moved to Morgantown after that. I earned a B.S. in Neuroscience from West Virginia University and completed a wide range of research experiences, including one at the California Institute of Technology focusing on the evolution of the nervous system in rove beetles. After graduation, I worked as a laboratory technician in Biomedical Engineering at Vanderbilt University focusing on brain machine interface development.

Currently, I am a PhD student in Psychology at the University of Pennsylvania working in the Neuroethology lab with Prof. Nacho Sanguinetti. I am an NSF-Graduate Research Fellow and my research focuses on how the rodent brain evolved to support complex and flexible behaviors in the wild.

Outside of the lab I enjoy watching psychological thriller movies, reading, and crocheting.

Ask Camila about: Graduate School Applications | NSF-GRFP | Field Work | Neuroscience | Being Latino in STEM | Philadelphia | UPenn | Vanderbilt | Gap Year | Psychology | Biomedical Engineering

Keith Skaggs (he/him)

MD-PhD Candidate in Neurobiology at UChicago Pritzker School of Medicine, Chicago, IL
Hometown: Grafton, WV

Hello! I am Keith. I grew up in Grafton, WV and graduated from Grafton High School. I attended MIT where I majored in Brain and Cognitive Sciences and minored in Biology. As an undergraduate (having never done research before), I worked in the Guoping Feng Lab (at MIT), investigating the relationship between the thalamus and neuropsychiatric disorders like Parkinson's, autism, and schizophrenia. I worked at the Universidad Panamericana (in Mexico City) where I piloted a project to measure visuomotor learning in children and adults with Parkinson's or Huntington's disease. I worked at the WVU School of Medicine on a project that focused on developing new compounds to treat Alcohol Use Disorder. Extracurricularly, I held leadership positions with the following organizations: MIT Wrestling Team, SAE, 2020 AI Latin American Summit and Hackathon, and the MIT BrainTrust.

I am now a MD-PhD student at UChicago and am in my fourth year. I am completing my PhD in Neurobiology with my project focusing on the role of the thalamus in cortical processing and working memory in the mouse visual system. I am involved with the Latino Medical Student Association, MSTP Student Council, UC Computational Biology Outreach, multiple free clinics, and Beat the Streets as a volunteer assistant wrestling coach.

Outside of school, I love exploring Chicago, playing and watching sports, and going to concerts.

Ask Keith About: Medical and/or Graduate School | Neuroscience | Community Outreach | Boston | Chicago | Being a Latino in STEM | Sports | Music | TV Shows/Movies|

Adam Carte (he/him)

Joint Postdoctoral Fellow at Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA and Arizona State University (remote)
Hometown: Hico, WV

Hi everyone. I'm from Hico, WV (Fayette County, near the New River Gorge) and went to Nicholas County High School. I studied biochemistry at WVU ('14) before heading to Harvard for the Systems, Synthetic, and Quantitative Biology PhD Program ('22). Now I'm a joint postdoc with Norbert Perrimon (Harvard Medical School, Dept. of Genetics, where I am physically located) and John McCutcheon (Arizona State University Biodesign Institute).

At WVU, the McNair Scholars program played an instrumental role in introducing me to research and showed me that careers in science exist. Participating in research was a transformative experience, and I was even elected to the Board of Student Governors on the platform of advocating for increased undergraduate research opportunities.

During my PhD, I worked in Alex Schier's lab (Harvard '14-'20 and then at the Biozentrum, University of Basel, Switzerland '20-'22) as an NSF Graduate Research Fellow. I paired quantitative microscopy with zebrafish to learn more about the generation and interpretation of signaling gradients in developing vertebrate embryos. As a fun aside, I was selected as the student speaker for Harvard Medical School's 2022 PhD Hooding Ceremony and analogized the experience of navigating grad school to whitewater river rafting (a tribute to my parents' professions when I was young).

As a postdoc, I spend my time in the lab trying to learn about the cellular, molecular, and

Junior Noss (he/him)

PhD Candidate in Mechanical Engineering, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA
Hometown: Kingwood, WV

Hello, I'm Junior! I grew up in Kingwood, WV and went to Preston High School. I graduated in 2018 to attend West Virginia University and study Mechanical Engineering. I missed out on engineering research in my undergrad studies and instead focused on adding foreign language and recreation, parks, and tourism courses to help round out my experience. I graduated from WVU in 2022 and moved to Charlottesville, VA to attend the University of Virginia as a PhD student.

I am currently a PhD candidate at the Center for Applied Biomechanics. While my background is in traditional mechanics, I currently work with biological tissue to assess and inform injury tolerance in the human body during car crashes. My work in particular focuses on how changes in shape between individuals can impact injury risk.

Outside of work, I enjoy running, soccer (or sports in general), traveling, and reading.

Ask Junior about: Injury biomechanics | First-Gen | Grad School | UVA | Sports