

BIORHYTHMS



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Thanks to everyone for trekking out to Professor Robertson's house for the picnic, we had a great turnout. Good thing everyone is so hydrophilic!

New Stuff

Our bulletin boards have moved to a new and exciting location in the bio commons (in the 1800 corridor of Noyce). If you actually want to see who wrote this newsletter or read about our lives, come check out our biographies. If this doesn't lure you in, the bulletin boards will also include information about upcoming bio events, research, study abroad opportunities, and sweet biology comics.

Upcoming Events

The first biology study break of the year will be held on Wednesday, October 3rd at 9PM in Noyce 2021. We will be watching the movie, 'Evolution' and we'll have delicious edibles. If you have any special requests, please feel free to email us! Signs will be posted around Noyce.

Also, there are biology seminars every Friday at noon, in room 2021. These seminars include student or faculty research presentations, grad school panels, or research presentations by visiting professors. Everyone is welcome and we have snacks! This week we have Fred Janzen from Iowa State University presenting, "The Evolutionary Ecology of Environmental Sex Determination."

On Tuesday, October 2nd there will be a Prairie Seed Harvest at CERA. Buses will be leaving at 4:15 from the Crystal Center. Contact Larissa Mottl at [mottll] to RSVP. You need to wear long pants and sturdy shoes, but it should be a good time for all!

Faculty Insider: Professor DeRidder

I first visited Grinnell ten years ago as a junior in college, during a Thanksgiving blizzard...the tow truck hauled me to a gas station at midnight so I could make a phone call home. Needless to say, it is great to be here under different circumstances a decade later and it is my pleasure to join the Biology Department as a new faculty member. While my love for biology has always existed, I also became interested in agriculture while working long summers on a family farm in western Michigan where I grew up. With the advent of the first genetically-engineered crops and the controversial environmental and social issues that came with it, I realized I could unite my interests in agriculture and biology in the emerging field of plant biotechnology. Having completed my undergraduate degree in Biology at a liberal arts college in Michigan, I attended Purdue University, where I became interested in the way plants respond to environmental stress at the molecular and biochemical levels. After receiving my Ph.D. in plant molecular biology I served as a research scientist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Phoenix, Arizona, exploring new ways to improve plant stress tolerance through genetic engineering. During my graduate and professional experience, I developed a love for teaching and am excited about the opportunities here at Grinnell College to integrate teaching and research. I am currently leading a section of BIO 150 called Plant Genetics and the Environment, and an upper-level course on Plant Molecular Biology. In the Spring I will teach Plant Physiology. I look forward to making Grinnell my home and meeting all of you.

Alumni Insider

Hi. My name is Christine Vigeland, and I am a second year medical student at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Some of you may be thinking about going to medical school, and I'm here to share some advice with you. I'm going to skim over parts that you may already know and focus on what I've learned since getting here.

The application process starts early. It's best to take the MCAT the April before you plan on applying. Even though schools say that they take applications until October or later, almost all schools admit on a rolling basis, so it's best to get everything in by the end of the summer. That way they will be more likely to grant you an interview. Since so many applicants sound exactly the same, try to use your personal statement and interview to let your personality shine through. Rarely you may get a horror-story interview, where the interviewer is drilling you about the number of ATP molecules produced by the Krebs's Cycle or the signs and symptoms of different diseases, but in that case just try to stay calm. Doctors like to rattle students, and the important thing is to try to answer the question and not get upset.

The most important thing is to pick a good group of schools to apply to – some stretch schools, some safety schools. The general rule is the more the better. Remember though that public schools reserve about 90% of their spots for in-state applicants. For each school, figure out if this is a place that you want to be. All schools will teach you the same material, but they arrange them in different ways. Some do a staggered block schedule, with each class lasting only a few weeks, and some have you taking every class all year long. Decide which style works best for you. When you're doing clerkships in 3rd and 4th years, schools also allow different levels of

hands on experience. (For example, here students deliver babies and do lumbar punctures. but that's not true everywhere.)

The goal of medical school is to get into a good residency. That requires that you do well on Step 1 of the boards, which is taken after your second year. See how well the students tend to do on Step 1 and also the percentage of students who get into their top choice residencies.

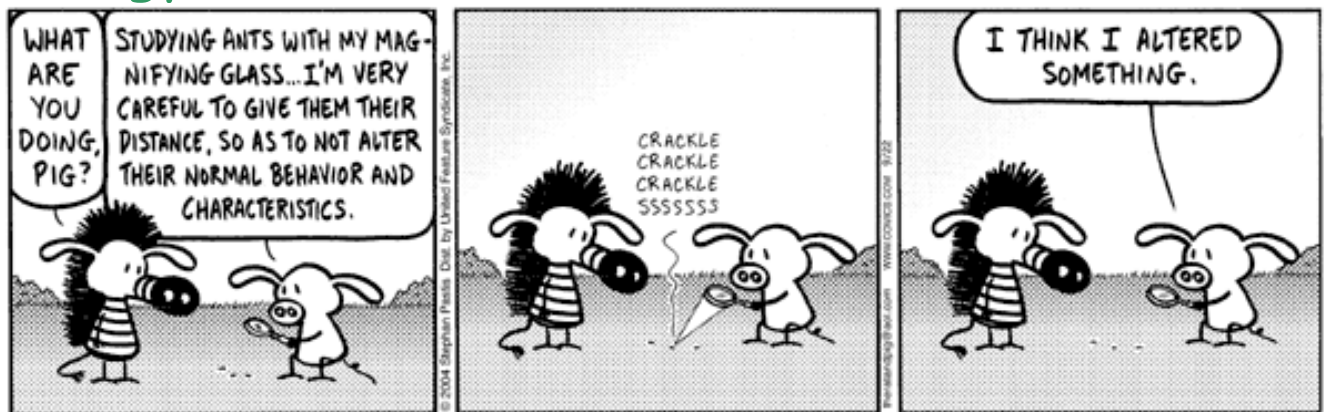
Once you've interviewed, sit back and try to relax. Honestly, there's a lot of mystery surrounding admissions, and so if you don't get in the first time around, apply again. It also might be helpful to email the admissions director at your top choice school to meet and find out how you may improve for the future. That's what I did, and I swear that it helped me get in off of the waitlist because he knew how serious I was about going here. He also gave good advice about how to improve my chances for the future.

Finally, don't feel that you have to rush into medical school. There isn't a time limit to get in. About half of my class consists of non-traditional students, who took 1-18 years off after college. Medical school is incredibly hard, fast-paced, and demanding, and so I don't recommend it for anyone who isn't certain that this is what they want to do.

Feel free to email me if you have any questions about medical school. They say that it's like trying to drink from a fire hose or memorize the phone book, and while that is true, I couldn't be happier doing anything else.

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Biology Comic of the Month



© Stephan Pastis/Dist. by UFS, Inc.

From: <http://perso.ens-lyon.fr/martin.castelnovo/comics1.gif>

Random Fact of the Month

Rats multiply so quickly that in 18 months, two rats could have over 1 million descendants.

From: <http://www.sciensational.com/biology-facts-pg6.html>

Keep an eye out for future issues of BioRhythms! If you have any questions, please feel free to ask!

We can be contacted at [biosepc].

Your friendly BioSEPC,

Marci Kirchberg '09
Zach Newman '08
Courtney Smith '09
Ali Titiz '08
Caroline Townsend '09
Nick Vitko '08
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