

# The Aubieclave Report



AUBURN UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF  
VETERINARY MEDICINE



## THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

### Dr. Richard Curtis Bird

Dr. Richard Curtis Bird (right), Professor of Molecular Biology and Cancer Genetics and Director of AU Flow Cytometry & High-Speed Cell Sorting Core Laboratory, has been a cornerstone of Auburn University for over 40 years. Originally from Toronto, Canada, Dr. Bird joined the College of Veterinary Medicine

in 1985 as one of the first molecular biologists at AU. His early mission was to help establish a graduate program in molecular biology focused on animal biology and disease—a challenge he embraced wholeheartedly.

Dr. Bird's research group operates on a mentored apprenticeship model, a teaching approach dating back to medieval European universities. He emphasizes dedication, investment, and personal discipline as the keys to success in science—values he instills in every student he mentors.

Outside the lab, Dr. Bird has a unique passion: brewing beer. With over 50 years of experience in fermentation, he helped create the **AU Brewing Science Program** alongside Dr. Martin O'Neil and continues to teach brewing science today. "If anyone has an interest in learning to brew, I can help," he says, having trained hundreds of brewers over the years.

## THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

# Shakiba Kazemian

Shakiba Kazemian is a Graduate Research Assistant in Dr. Kyriakis' lab in the Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program and has been part of Auburn University since August 2023. Originally from Iran, Shakiba values the collaborative and welcoming environment of the Pathobiology Department, where learning something new is part of every day.



Her work focuses on influenza research, which involves extensive behind-the-scenes efforts to ensure animal studies are conducted safely and ethically. This dedication to proper care and compliance is essential for meaningful scientific progress.

Outside the lab, Shakiba is a talented artist with an Instagram page showcasing her drawings. You can find her online at [@shakibakm.art](https://www.instagram.com/shakibakm.art). She's also passionate about languages—currently learning French as her fourth language after Farsi, English, and some German. Fun fact: as a child, she dreamed of being an actor and often performed full shows in front of the mirror!



## THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

# Diego Ventura

Meet Diego Ventura, Research Assistant II, whose journey from Guatemala to Auburn is full of surprises. Diego first arrived in 2021 for a one-year internship in the Poultry Department, later earned his master's there, and in 2024 joined Pathobiology to work with Dr. Kyriakis and Dr. Criado.

What Diego loves most about his job is the variety. His team's research is fascinating, using pigs as models for human biomedical studies and chicken embryos to explore viral pathogenesis and immune responses. These projects help uncover how influenza viruses evolve and interact with their hosts.

And here's a fun twist: Diego's dad dreamed he'd become a doctor, but Diego chose forestry in high school because he didn't want to work with animals. "Now look at me—I'm in biomedical research and working with animals every day!" he laughs.



# Welcome to The Jungle!



## Ashley Clowers

### OUR NEW DIAGNOSTIC MICROBIOLOGIST

Hi, I'm Ashley Clowers, the new diagnostic microbiologist. If my face seems familiar, it's probably because I've worked at AUCVM before as an undergraduate student in the Histopathology Lab. I completed my bachelor's degree in Laboratory Sciences at Auburn University, then went on to obtain my MLS (ASCP) certification.

A fun fact about me is that I love to draw and paint - I even won Best in Show at my hometown's annual art competition this year!

## Chelsea Waller

### OUR NEW MEDICAL TECHNOLOGIST

My name is Chelsea, and I spent many years in Auburn during college, so I'm excited to be back in the area. Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my animals (my shepherd, Kana, and my two cats, Smokey and Lumi). I love being outdoors, especially hiking and kayaking. I've also recently taken up TNR as a way to help care for the stray cats in my neighborhood.





## The Virology Lab passed the OIE Rabies Serology Proficiency Test

Our very own Virology Lab has successfully passed the OIE Rabies Serology Proficiency Test, conducted by the ANSES Nancy Laboratory for Rabies and Wildlife!

This test is considered the "Gold Standard" for rabies serology worldwide. Passing it is essential for laboratories to maintain recognition by competent authorities both within and outside the EU. They have passed both proficiency panels for FAVN and RFFIT. Since the lab began offering the FAVN test for pet travel in 2016, they've consistently achieved this milestone year after year. In 2021, the previous regulations expired, and a new EU/OIE regulation was adopted in 2023, introducing a requirement for accreditation (ISO 17025 or AAVLD), which they began pursuing last year. Moving forward, they'll participate in the proficiency panel every two years, with their next submission scheduled for Spring 2027.

To put this achievement into perspective—there are **only 57 laboratories worldwide that meet this standard!**



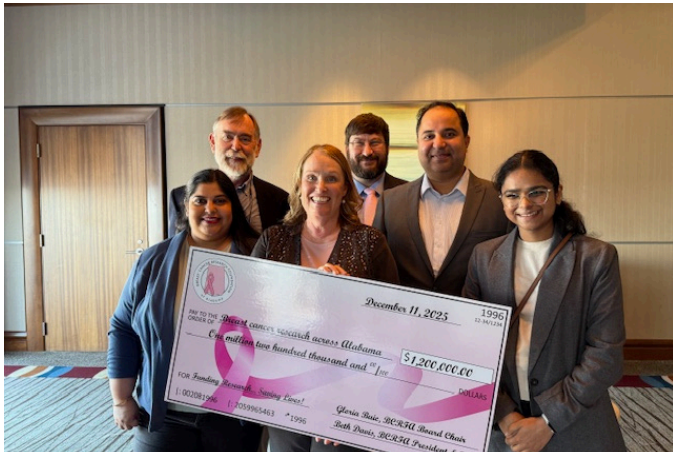
## Faster, kinder, and more precise gut research with fewer animals rolling their eyes at us.

Led by Dr. Shaan Mooyottu's lab and supported by a multidisciplinary team from institutions across the USA and Europe, this study introduces the IsoLoop model—a pig-based platform that revolutionizes how we study human gut-microbe interactions.

Published in the reputed journal **Gut Microbes**, the IsoLoop model enables multiple treatments to be tested within the same animal, dramatically reducing animal use and enhancing data precision—advancing the 3R principles (Replacement, Reduction, Refinement) in animal research.

This research enables region-specific gut analysis while improving ethical standards in animal studies. By bridging the gap between animal models and human gut health, it supports faster, more humane investigations into gut health, infections, and immune responses—ultimately benefiting both animals and humans.





## Patho at Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama

Pathobiology was well represented at the Breast Cancer Research Foundation of Alabama's (BCRFA) Investment Celebration, December 11th, at The Club, in Birmingham.

The meeting allowed researchers to present posters of their work and served as the official announcement of breast cancer research grants awarded by BCRFA. Pictured are, front row: Dr. Payal Agarwal (co-investigator, BCRFA grant), Beth Davis (CEO, BCRFA), Himanshi (Graduate student, poster presenter), back row: Dr. Bruce Smith (BCRFA Medical Advisory Board member), Dr. James Gillespie (co-investigator, BCRFA grant), and Dr. Maninder Sandey (principal investigator, BCRA grant). Ms. Davis is holding a check representing BCRFA's 2025 fundraising total of \$1.2 million, of which 90% funds research grants!



## Collaborative publication between Pathobiology and Nestlé/Purina Research

In January 2024, the department was privileged to host Dr. Johnny (Qinghong) Li, Senior Principal Scientist at Nestlé Research, and Dr. Li delivered a well-received Joy-Goodwin Lecture during his visit.

In early 2025, Dr. Li became an Affiliated Professor within our department with a unanimous departmental vote, and he started research collaborations with Dr. Xu Wang and other faculty members in our department on several key projects focusing on feline urinary disease as well as companion animal microbiome. We are pleased to announce that this productive partnership has already resulted in a recent publication, which is currently in **Communications Biology**.

# IN THE NEWS

## 2025 Patho Fall Graduates

We are so very proud of all of our graduates and the next steps they are taking! Join us as we celebrate their accomplishments and all they have done with us in the department!



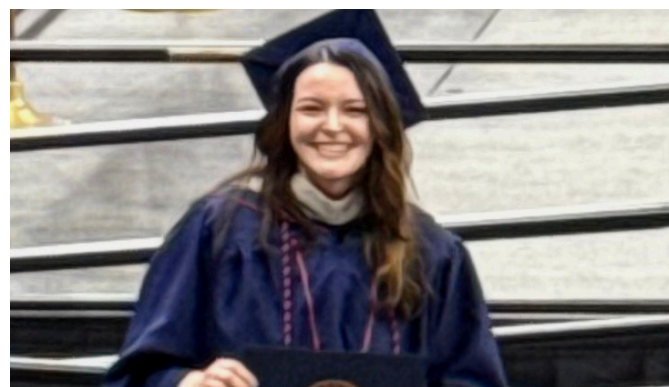
**Dr. Camila Cuadrado (right) - PhD in Biomedical Science (Dr. Toro);** Next Steps: Post Doc in Dr. Hauck's Lab



**Dr. James Fletcher North (left) - PhD in Biomedical Science (Dr. Kyriakis);** Next Steps: Finishing a study in Dr. Kyriakis' lab.



**Dr. Damien Ruiz (second left) - PhD in Biomedical Science (Dr. Sandey);** Next Steps: Teacher



**Dr. Jessica Lambert - Master of Biomedical Sciences, Non-thesis (Dr. Neto);** Next Steps: Preparing for ACVP boards examination.



**Dr. Deepa Chaudhary (right) - PhD in Biomedical Science (Dr. Hauck);** Next Steps: Post Doc at Penn State University





## 2025 Pathobiology Holiday Party

On behalf of the Department of Pathobiology, Dr. Narayanan, and the admin team, we want to express our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joined us for this year's holiday party!

This year's event was one of our most participated in yet, with cheerful holiday outfits, delicious desserts, and plenty of laughter. The spirited (and sometimes cutthroat!) Dirty Santa gift exchange kept everyone on their toes and added a fun twist to the evening. We were also delighted to welcome our retired colleagues back into the fold, making the occasion even more special.

Beyond the games and treats, what truly made the party memorable was the sense of community and camaraderie that filled the room. It's moments like these—sharing stories, laughter, and holiday cheer—that remind us of the strength of our team and the joy of celebrating together!



# IN THE NEWS



## Patho Admin at AU's Staff Council Professional Development Day

The Pathology Admin team attended the 2025 Staff Council Professional Development Day, an event designed to foster growth, collaboration, and innovation across campus.

Throughout the day, our team explored strategies for leveraging AI in marketing and wellness initiatives. They learned techniques to enhance communication across diverse personality types in the workplace and gained insights into becoming "High Road Leaders" through HR coaching. The keynote address, delivered by a representative from **FOODU**, showcased the program's groundbreaking work in agricultural science and its multidisciplinary applications that advance both research and industry.

This event provided valuable knowledge and tools that will strengthen our team's effectiveness and support the university's mission of excellence.



## Students and faculty gather to celebrate Dr. Price's last lecture!

Students and staff came together to honor and surprise Dr. Price during his final lecture, marking the end of an incredible chapter in his teaching career. The celebration was filled with heartfelt gratitude, laughter, and shared memories, as students expressed their appreciation for his dedication and impact on their academic journeys. Dr. Price's passion for teaching and commitment to his students have left a lasting legacy that will be remembered for years to come!

### Help us make dreams a reality!

Your impact begins here – choose the Auburn causes that are important to you. Whether you give to empower students through scholarships, drive groundbreaking research and life-changing outreach, or enrich the Auburn Experience, you are shaping our future.



<https://aub.ie/PathoGift>







## PUBLICATIONS

**Barua S, Tarannum A, Huber L**, Easterwood LA, Velayudhan B, Da Silveira BP, Enyetornye B, Cohen ND, Dimitrov KM, Schwarz ER, Awtrey A, Groover E, **Barua S, Naskou M, Wang C**.

Epidemiology and risk factors of equine parvovirus-hepatitis, hepacivirus, *Pegivirus caballii*, and *Pegivirus equi* in horses from the Southern United States. *Vet Microbiol*. 2025 Dec 9;312:110831. doi:

10.1016/j.vetmic.2025.110831. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41380367.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41380367>

Brozek J, Bayne JE, **Zuber E, van Santen E**, Cole R. Ultrasound-guided cerebrospinal fluid collection at the atlantoaxial space in mature cattle with a comparative evaluation of lumbosacral cerebrospinal fluid collection.

*Vet Radiol Ultrasound*. 2026 Jan;67(1):e70124. doi: 10.1111/vru.70124. PMID: 41392751.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41392751/>

**Camus MS**, Miller R, Lindley S, **Johnson CM**.

Auburn University provides unique exotics experiences. *J Am Vet Med Assoc*. 2025 Dec 1;263(12):1582. doi: 10.2460/javma.25.10.0663. PMID: 41275611.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41275611/>

Khalid Z, **Hauck R**. Molecular responses to avian reovirus inoculation *in vitro*. *Viruses*. 2025 Nov 10;17(11):1489. doi: 10.3390/v17111489. PMID: 41305511; PMCID: PMC12656875.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41305511/>

Malmström E, Tryland M, Passler T, Becker A, Bull-Aurbakken S, Silvis S, Phillips R,

**Falkenberg S**. Ear tissue as a diagnostic sample for pestivirus detection in semi-domesticated Eurasian tundra reindeer (*Rangifer tarandus tarandus*) in Norway.

*Front Microbiol*. 2025 Nov 20;16:1688206. doi: 10.3389/fmicb.2025.1688206. PMID: 41356484; PMCID: PMC12675472.

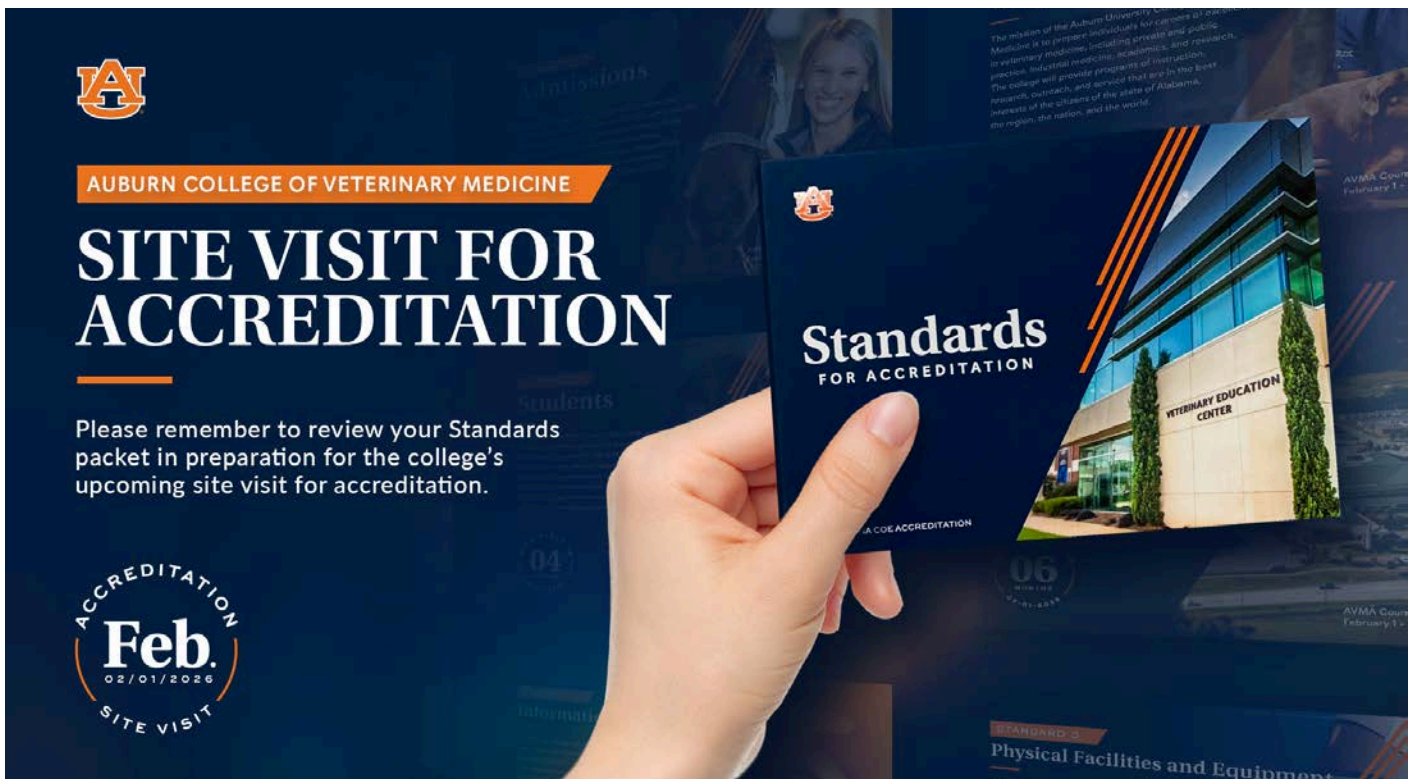
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41356484>

**Smith RC, Barrantes Murillo DF**, Mitchell J, Seetahal J, Davis R, Herrin BH, **Wang C, Wood T**, Duncan K, Burton W, Starkey LA.

Seroprevalence of selected vector-borne agents in pet cats using the SNAP® 4Dx® PLUS, United States, 2022–2025. *Vet Parasitol Reg Stud Reports*. 2025 Nov;66:101369. doi: 10.1016/j.vprsr.2025.101369. Epub 2025 Oct 30. PMID: 41354526.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41354526>

# IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS



## AVMA COE Site Visit - February 1-5, 2026

As you are likely aware, the college is preparing for an **AVMA Council on Education (COE) site visit**, scheduled to take place on-site the week of **February 1-5, 2026**. This is a routine visit, which happens every 7 years, to ensure continued compliance with the 11 standards of accreditation.

We are working hard to showcase the great work of our college and its people. In the coming days, you will receive an envelope through campus mail containing the first of 11 cards with key facts and figures related to how our college meets and exceeds each standard. Please keep your envelope, which you can use to store all 11 cards, scheduled to arrive approximately every 2 weeks, until the site visit to serve as a handy reference. Thank you to the hard work of the marketing and communications team for preparing them for us.

**Please reach out to Dr. Camus if you have any questions about the accreditation process or the content of the cards.** Specific details of the site visit will be forthcoming as the visit is planned and the itinerary is finalized. You are all important to the visit's success!



# IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

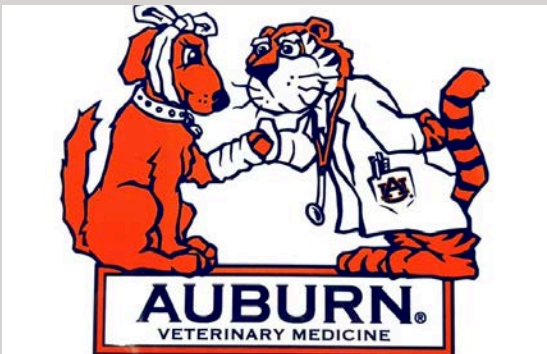


## Spring 2026 Preparing Future Faculty Final Nominations

If you would like to nominate any additional students for this program, please email their names and email addresses as soon as possible to Dr. Kelley Noll. The class will meet on Tuesdays from 9:30 to 11:00 am, with the first session on Tuesday, January 13.

Selected participants will engage in meaningful discussions and activities that will prepare them for all levels of the academic job search and their first year as new faculty members. This program is free and non-credit bearing. Successful completion of the one-semester program will be certified with a digital badge and official certificate endorsed by the Biggio Center.

# IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS



## Next Faculty Meeting:

Jan. 7 in GH 168 from 1-3 PM

## Next Staff Meeting:

Jan. 8 in VEC246/248 from 9:30-10:30 AM

A list of official holidays for Auburn employees, including schedules for 2026, is available on the [University Human Resources website](#).

### 2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Holiday	Weekday(s) Observed	Date(s) Observed
New Year's Day	Thursday	Jan. 1, 2026
Martin Luther King Jr. Day (2026)	Monday	Jan. 19, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday	May 25, 2026
Juneteenth Day	Friday	June 19, 2026
Independence Day	Friday	July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday	Sept. 7, 2026
Thanksgiving	Wednesday-Friday	Nov. 25-27, 2026
Christmas*	Friday	Dec. 25, 2026

\* In addition to the above dates for Christmas Day and New Year's Day, we will close campus on Friday, Dec. 18, 2026, at 4:45 p.m. and re-open on Monday, Jan. 4, 2027, at 7:45 a.m.

- Friday, Dec. 18, 2026: All offices will remain open and operating until 4:45 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 4, 2027: All offices will re-open and resume operations at 7:45 a.m.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL JANUARY BIRTHDAYS!

<b>Bird, Richard C.</b>	<b>23-Jan</b>
<b>Diaz, Darielys M.</b>	<b>11-Jan</b>
<b>Graff, Emily C.</b>	<b>23-Jan</b>
<b>Hauck, Ruediger</b>	<b>4-Jan</b>
<b>LNU, Himanshi</b>	<b>1-Jan</b>
<b>Marable, Jonathan G.</b>	<b>11-Jan</b>
<b>Stewart, Jen</b>	<b>20-Jan</b>
<b>Vines, Ruth A.</b>	<b>11-Jan</b>
<b>Young, Christie R.</b>	<b>22-Jan</b>







# Farewell and Best Wishes!

As we close this chapter, we want to take a moment to celebrate and thank the incredible staff, faculty, and students who are moving on to new adventures—whether through transferring to other departments, graduating, relocating, or retiring.

Your dedication, hard work, and collaboration have helped shape our programs and strengthen our community. We are grateful for the time, energy, and passion you've shared with us, and we know you'll continue to achieve great things in your next steps.

We're excited for what the future holds for each of you! Thank you for being an important part of our story—you will always have a place in our hearts and in the legacy of this department.

**Wishing you success, happiness, and new adventures ahead!**

**Dr. Shelby McAlister - Graduate Research Assistant (Dr. E. Graff)**

**Dr. Damien Ruiz - Graduate Student (Dr. M. Sandey)**

**Dr. Deepa Chaudhary - Graduate Student (Dr. R. Hauck)**

**Dr. Jessica Lambert - Clinical Fellow (Dr. R. Neto)**