

The Aubieclave Report



AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF
VETERINARY MEDICINE



THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT Dr. Jey Koehler

Dr. Jey Koehler, Tyler & Frances Young Endowed Chair in Pathobiology and a professor in the Pathology Department, has been part of the Auburn family for 19 years and originally hails from New Orleans.

She says what she enjoys most about working in Pathobiology is the people—fellow faculty staff, residents, and graduate students—whose humor, curiosity, and collaborative spirit make coming to work a joy. Dr. Koehler enjoys collaborating with researchers during the early planning stages of projects, where pathologists can offer meaningful insight into study design and interpretation. She also takes pride in the ongoing teamwork required to keep services such as the biopsy operating seamlessly throughout the year!

Many may be surprised to learn that Dr. Koehler began her academic journey as a fine arts major before deciding to pursue veterinary medicine. She continues to nurture that creative side through her artwork, which can be viewed on her [art portfolio](#). Outside the lab, she is an avid gardener with a passion for permaculture and ecological design, maintaining a large garden filled with vegetables, fruits, herbs, flowers, and native plants!



THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Arthur Cheng

Dr. Arthur Colombari Cheng is a Clinical Fellow in the Pathobiology Department, enrolled in a combined residency-PhD program under Dr. Rachel Neto. His residency focuses on anatomic pathology with an avian emphasis, while his PhD research is related to poultry. Originally from Paraná, Brazil, Arthur has been at Auburn since 2023 and will

celebrate three years in the department this July.

Arthur values the approachable, supportive nature of the Pathobiology team and the collaborative environment it creates. He is passionate about highlighting the critical role pathology plays in guiding treatment decisions and believes interdisciplinary case discussions are essential for learning and refining diagnoses.

Outside of work, Arthur enjoys spending time with his bearded dragon, Nuggets, and experimenting with bread and other dough-based recipes—an interest enthusiastically supported by his wife

THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Keisha Snerling

Keisha Snerling is a Research Assistant IV with three years at Auburn. Originally from Ozark, Alabama, and now based in Montgomery, she is known for her energy, expertise, and positive presence in the Histopathology lab.

Keisha enjoys the hands-on variety of her work, preparing cases for microscope slides and performing IHC and special stains to support diagnostic efforts. She values the fast pace, teamwork, and craftsmanship behind each case, approaching her work as a true art form that requires care, precision, and dedication every day.

Fun facts about Keisha: she loves peach rings and strawberry cake, is a natural-born social butterfly, and she shares a birthday with Janet Jackson—which perfectly matches her vibrant personality!





Welcome to The Jungle!



Dr. Christina Leyson

OUR NEW AVIAN VIROLOGIST

Dr. Christina Leyson is a molecular virologist with a special focus on respiratory RNA viruses of avian species. She has a particular interest in virus pathogenesis, host adaptation, and evolution. Her ultimate goal is to share her love of viruses with everyone and to create a positive impact on human and animal health using virological research.

She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in molecular biology and biotechnology from the University of the Philippines, Diliman, and a PhD degree in infectious diseases from the University of Georgia. Her postdoctoral work at Southeast Poultry Research Laboratory has been mainly focused on H5 subtype highly pathogenic avian influenza viruses and their pathobiology in major poultry species: chickens, turkeys, and ducks.

Prior to joining Auburn University, she worked as a staff scientist at Emory University, where they studied within-host virus dynamics of seasonal human influenza viruses. In her free time, she loves to cook, hike, rock climb, and spend time with her cats, husband, and (soon to be) son.



Deepika Goyal Recognized for Award-Winning Lightning Talk

Deepika Goyal, a graduate student under Dr. Richard Bird, recently gave a three-minute lightning talk at the Cancer Research Symposium at the Alabama State House and was honored with First Prize in the lightning talk category.

This experience was especially impactful because the audience included cancer survivors and advocates from the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN). Presenting her research in a clear, accessible way to a broad audience—and connecting it to real-world impact—was incredibly rewarding and reinforced the importance of this work beyond the lab.



Nikolia Darzenta Recognized as Outstanding Doctoral Student

Nikolia Darzenta, a graduate student under Dr. Maria Naskou, has been selected by a special committee of the Graduate Council as one of Auburn University's Outstanding Doctoral Students, a prestigious honor recognizing exceptional academic and professional achievement. This award reflects the strong scholarly record Nikolia has established during her time at Auburn University and highlights the quality and impact of her doctoral work.

We congratulate her on this well-deserved honor and look forward to celebrating her continued success!



Welcoming the Class of 2027 to Their Clinical Year

The Diagnostic Pathology Clinical Rotation faculty and technicians would like to warmly welcome the Class of 2027 as they begin their clinical year. This milestone marks an exciting transition from the classroom to hands-on, real-world experience, where students will further develop the skills and knowledge that form the foundation of their future careers in veterinary medicine.

Throughout the coming year, students will work closely with experienced faculty and dedicated technicians who are committed to supporting their growth and success. The team looks forward to mentoring the Class of 2027, fostering curiosity and confidence, and helping students make the most of this important and rewarding phase of their professional journey.



Auburn Alumna Dr. Amie Perry Returns to Speak with Residents

Dr. Amie Perry (DVM, PhD, DACVP) visited Auburn's Residency Program on **Monday, April 13, 2026**, as part of the Society of Toxicologic Pathology (STP) Speakers/Training Institution Program (STIP). An Auburn alumna and former State Diagnostic Lab team member (2018–2023), Dr. Perry is currently a veterinary pathologist with Charles River Laboratories.

The STP Speakers/Training Institution Program is an outreach initiative designed to support career development and education in toxicologic pathology by connecting experienced professionals with training institutions across North America. Through guest lectures and engagement with students and residents, the program helps expand exposure to the discipline, particularly at institutions with limited prior access. Her Auburn visit was coordinated by resident Carlos Lopes, whose efforts made the event possible and successful!



Be the Creed Award Recipient: Brenda Bixler

The department is proud to recognize Brenda Bixler as a recipient of the *Be the Creed Award*. This honor celebrates individuals who embody the values outlined in the Auburn Creed and serve as positive examples within the Auburn community.

Brenda consistently demonstrates outstanding dedication, integrity, and a genuine commitment to helping others. Her strong work ethic, respect for others, and unwavering love for Auburn reflect the very spirit of the Creed. We are grateful for the many ways Brenda models these values each day and congratulate her on this well-deserved recognition.



Be the Creed Award Recipient: Heather McGrady

The department is pleased to recognize Heather McGrady as a recipient of the *Be the Creed Award*, which honors individuals who exemplify the values set forth in the Auburn Creed.

Heather is recognized for her strong work ethic, integrity, and thoughtful approach to supporting others. She leads by example through her professionalism, kindness, and willingness to help, while demonstrating a genuine love for Auburn. Her positive impact reflects the spirit of the Creed and makes her truly deserving of this recognition.



Dr. Pankaj Gaonkar Elected Student Director of AAAP

Pankaj Gaonkar, Avian Medicine resident supervised by Dr. Kellye Joiner, has been elected Student Director of the American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP). This honor reflects his strong commitment to professional service and helps keep our department well represented within AAAP following recent retirements.



Dr. Hauck Elected to AAAP Board of Directors

Dr. Hauck has been elected to the Board of Directors of the American Association of Avian Pathologists (AAAP), a well-deserved recognition of his leadership, service, and long-standing commitment to the field of avian medicine. This honor reflects the high regard in which he is held by colleagues within the organization.

Congratulations to Dr. Hauck on this outstanding achievement and continued service to the profession!



Thank You for Making Vet Fest a Success!

Thank you to everyone who volunteered, participated, and supported Vet Fest 2026 to make it a memorable and successful day for our community. Your time, energy, and enthusiasm created meaningful learning experiences for families, prospective students, and visitors from across the region.

From hands-on activities and live animal encounters to behind-the-scenes coordination and event support, Vet Fest would not be possible without your dedication. We are grateful to everyone who contributed to showcasing the College of Veterinary Medicine and inspiring the next generation of scientists and animal health professionals.

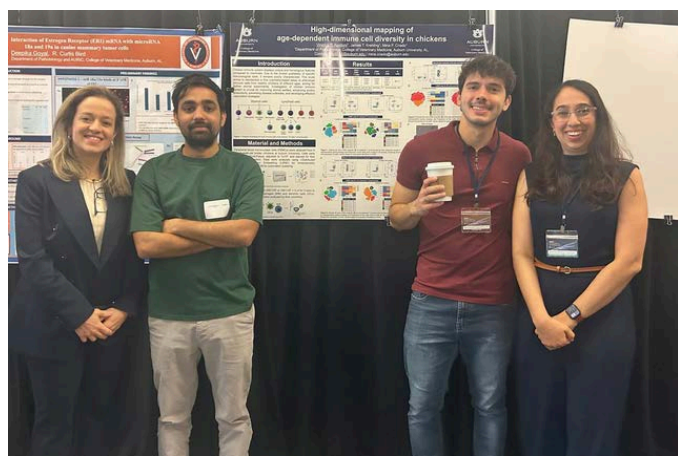


From AU to Communities in Need: One Smile at a Time

Through the CVM's undergraduate **Public and One Health major**, sophomore Caroline Burrows is examining ways to improve oral health awareness while serving communities that often lack access to vital care.

Her story shows how learning, leadership, and compassion come together to make a difference – one conversation and one smile at a time.

Read more of her amazing work **HERE**.



Exploring Chicken Cellular Immunity: Research Presented at Auburn Symposium

Vinicius Bottura Apolloni, a PhD student in Dr. Miria Criado's laboratory, attended the Auburn Research Symposium on March 26 to present his research in poster format. The symposium provided an opportunity to showcase ongoing graduate research and engage with the broader Auburn research community.

His work focuses on applying flow cytometry to characterize chicken cellular immunity, an area that remains largely unexplored. These efforts are crucial for advancing understanding of disease resistance, informing the development of improved vaccines, and strengthening strategies for the control and prevention of disease outbreaks in poultry. Vinicius's participation highlighted innovative research efforts underway in the department and the importance of basic immunological discovery in animal health.



Now on Instagram: Auburn University Pathobiology

We're excited to announce that the Pathobiology Department is now on Instagram! Our new page is up and running and provides another way to stay connected with the Auburn University Pathobiology community—including faculty, staff, students, and alumni.

Through this platform, we'll be sharing regular updates, highlights, and glimpses into the important work happening across our department. We encourage everyone to follow, like, and share our posts to help expand our reach and visibility. Thank you, as always, for your continued support!

Big shout-out to Chidinma Odili, who is the manager of all our departmental socials.

Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/auburnpatho>



Isabella Lord Awarded Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowship

Isabella Lord, a junior majoring in Biomedical Sciences on the pre-medical track mentored by Dr. Maninder Sandey, has been awarded the Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowship, a competitive honor that recognizes outstanding undergraduate students engaged in research. This award supports students who demonstrate academic excellence and a strong commitment to scholarly inquiry.

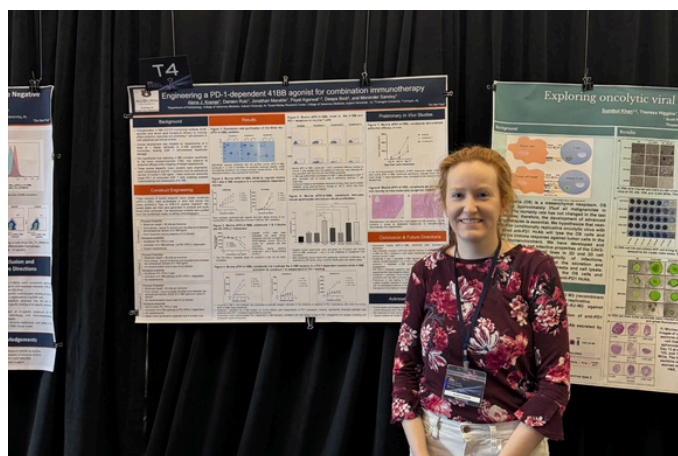
Through the fellowship, Isabella will have the opportunity to further develop her research skills while contributing to Auburn's vibrant research community. Her achievement highlights both her dedication to academic excellence and her passion for scientific discovery as she prepares for a future career in medicine.



Jonas McAbee Awarded at College of Agriculture Awards Day

Jonas McAbee, mentored under Dr. Kathryn Reif, was awarded an Undergraduate Research Fellow Certificate during the College of Agriculture Awards Day ceremony in recognition of his outstanding undergraduate research. The honor highlights the work he completed during the final semester of his Animal Science Pre-Veterinary undergraduate program.

Jonas's research project, titled "*Effects of Intramuscular Iron Administration Strategy on Hematological Characteristics of Suckling Pigs*," examined how different iron supplementation strategies affect pig health and development. A highlight of his project will be published in the *Auburn University Journal of Undergraduate Scholarship*, showcasing his work to a broader academic audience and marking a significant milestone in his academic journey.



Dr. Alana Kramer Earns Best Graduate Student Poster Award at 2026 Auburn Research Symposium

Dr. Alana Kramer presented her research at Auburn University’s 2026 Research Symposium on Thursday, March 26, where she received the College of Veterinary Medicine Award for Best Graduate Student Poster Presentation. The recognition highlights excellence in graduate research and effective scientific communication across the college.

A PhD student in Dr. Maninder Sandey’s laboratory, Dr. Kramer’s research focuses on the development of translational cancer immunotherapies. Her poster presentation showcased innovative work at the intersection of immunology and oncology, underscoring its potential impact on advancing therapeutic strategies.



Jillian Henderson Represents Auburn at National Conference of Undergraduate Research

Jillian Henderson, mentored under Dr. Maninder Sandey, attended the National Conference of Undergraduate Research (NCUR) held April 13–15 in Richmond, Virginia, an event that brought together more than 5,000 attendees, including 30 students from Auburn University. Jillian was notably the only Auburn student selected to give an oral presentation at the conference—an impressive achievement.

At the conference, Jillian presented her work titled “*A Nanobody-Based Approach to Immune Checkpoint Therapy.*” Her research focuses on evaluating the binding efficiency and blocking capability of anti-PD-1 and anti-PD-L1 nanobody constructs she has developed, with the goal of advancing a less toxic and more effective immune checkpoint therapy for canine cancer. Her participation at NCUR showcased both her individual accomplishments and Auburn’s strong presence in undergraduate research on a national stage.



Patho Admin at A&P Professional Development Day

Members of the Pathobiology administrative team recently attended A&P Professional Development Day, a valuable opportunity focused on learning, growth, and cross-campus connection. The event's keynote address was delivered by Auburn University's Athletics Director, John Cohen, who shared insights on leadership, teamwork, and building a culture of excellence—both on and off the field.

Throughout the day, attendees participated in a variety of engaging workshops covering topics such as the practical use of artificial intelligence in the workplace, human resources training, and leadership skill development. Sessions also included a presentation from Family and Consumer Sciences–EFNEP, highlighting ways to eat well and incorporate physical activity into daily work routines. The experience provided meaningful takeaways that the admin team looks forward to applying in their roles while continuing to support the department efficiently and effectively.



Abby Brownell Awarded Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowship

Abby Brownell, an undergraduate student mentored by Dr. Priscilla Barger, has been awarded a one-year Auburn University Undergraduate Research Fellowship in recognition of her academic excellence and research potential. The fellowship will support her contributions to a project focused on environmental monitoring of disease risk in aquaculture systems.

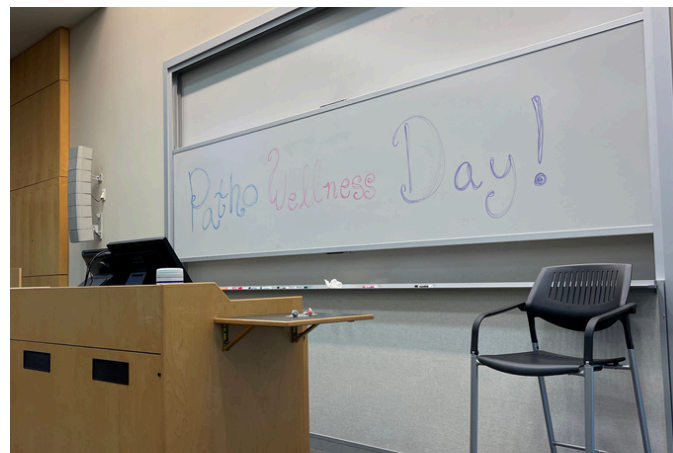
Through this project, Abby will gain hands-on research experience involving water sampling, microbial analysis, and the use of modern diagnostic tools to better understand, prevent, and manage disease outbreaks in aquaculture environments. Her work supports efforts to improve animal health and sustainability in aquatic systems while highlighting the importance of undergraduate research at Auburn University.

Celebrating Our Team: Patho Employee Appreciation & Wellness Day

Thank you to everyone who joined us for Patho Employee Appreciation & Wellness Day! It was wonderful to see familiar faces, share some laughter, and take time to relax and reconnect with colleagues outside of our usual routines. The positive energy throughout the day truly reflected the strength and spirit of our Pathobiology community.

We are incredibly grateful for the dedication, expertise, and care that our faculty, staff, technicians, residents, and student workers bring to the department every day. This event was just a small way to say thank you for all that you do to support our missions of teaching, research, and service.

We hope the day provided a moment to recharge and feel appreciated—you certainly deserve it!



War Eagle Wings: A VetMed Appreciation Event

As part of Auburn University's Employee Appreciation Week, the College of Veterinary Medicine was proud to host War Eagle Wings: A VetMed Appreciation Event, a high-flying celebration.

Attendees were treated not only to an unforgettable flighted raptor show, but also to refreshing drinks and a build-your-own gourmet popcorn bar!

We hope you enjoyed watching these incredible birds take flight and felt just how grateful we are for all you do to keep VetMed soaring. Thank you for your hard work, dedication, and the vital role you play every day—we're so glad you could celebrate with us!





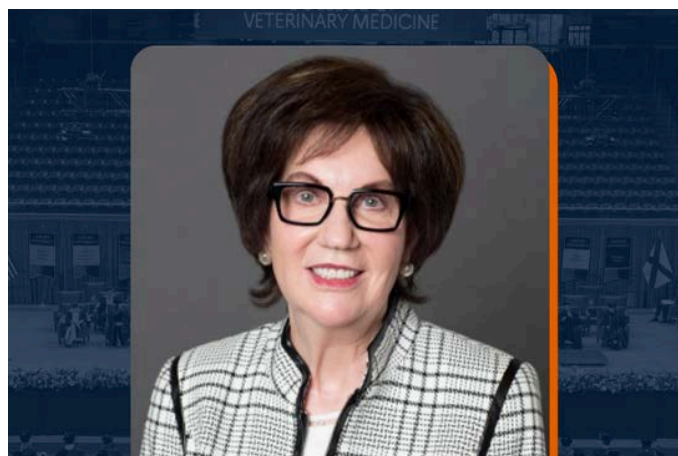
PUBLICATIONS

Barrick A, **Watanabe R**, Beck BH, Hoang T. Innovative method to measure response of Cyanobacteria to copper exposure: implications for harmful algal research and management. *Environ Toxicol Chem.* 2026 Mar 24:vgag074. doi: 10.1093/etjnl/vgag074. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41875366.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41875366>

Khalid Z, Alvarez-Narváez S, Harrell TL, Chowdhury EU, Conrad SJ, **Hauck R**. Viral Heterogeneity in an Avian Reovirus Isolate Despite Plaque Purification and Differences in Segment-Wise Abundance Between Different Amplification and Purification Steps. *Avian Dis.* 2026 Apr;70(1):23-31. doi: 10.1637/aviandiseases-D-25-00068. PMID: 41973006.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41973006>

Phasaludeen B, Sheffield H, Pancholi K, Bharathan G, Darwich DM, Khan H, Mudgil P, Habib I, **Huber L**, Buhr R, Nazir A, Srikumar S. 4-Hydroxycinnamic acid and Itaconic acid exhibit broad spectrum synergy with conventional antibiotics in inhibiting multidrug-resistant *Salmonella* Typhimurium. *Sci Rep.* 2026 Apr 12. doi: 10.1038/s41598-026-48079-0. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 41968141.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41968141>

Publication information is downloaded from PubMed. We recognize that not all publications may be found on that site. Please let Liz Nowling know if your publication did not make the list, and it will be included in the next issue.



AVMA Executive to Address CVM Class of 2026

The CVM will welcome American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer Janet Donlin as its Spring 2026 commencement speaker.

Dr. Donlin will address the CVM's 131-member graduating class during its commencement ceremony on **Monday, May 4, at 6 p.m. in Neville Arena.**

Since 2016, Donlin has led the AVMA as the first woman to hold the association's highest staff leadership role since its establishment in 1922. She works closely with veterinary leaders nationwide to advance the profession and support veterinarians as they navigate a rapidly changing professional landscape.



CVM's 13th Annual Summer Teaching Institute

Faculty and graduate students are invited to attend the **Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine's 13th Annual Summer Teaching Institute** to advance educational efforts in the health sciences. The annual professional development seminar presented by the college's Teaching Enhancement Committee is scheduled for **Friday, May 15, 2026, in VEC 101.** This year's program is titled *Artificial Intelligence in Medical Education.*

This event is free of charge; however, registration is required no later than May 8, 2026, for planning purposes.

Five (5) hours of continuing education credit will be provided for pre-registered veterinary participants. Contact Dr. Ryan Gibson with questions about the program.

Register Here:

<https://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/veterinarians/ce/summer-teaching-institute/>



Spring 2026 Commencement

Auburn University will celebrate its Spring Commencement ceremonies **May 1–4, 2026, at Neville Arena**. More than 5,400 graduates are expected to be recognized across eight ceremonies representing Auburn's colleges and professional programs, marking an important milestone for students and their families.

In addition to honoring graduates, the university will welcome several distinguished speakers, including notable Auburn alumni, who will address the Class of 2026 throughout the weekend. These ceremonies highlight the hard work, dedication, and achievements of Auburn students as they prepare to begin the next chapter of their academic and professional journeys.

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](https://aub.ie/PathoGift)

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS



Next Faculty Meeting:

May 27 in GH 168 from 1-3 PM

Next Staff Meeting:

May 21 in VEC 246 from 10:30-11:30 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 MAY BIRTHDAYS!

Buckley, Reuben M.
Falkenberg, Shollie M.
Glover, Sheniqua R.
Horzmann, Katharine A.
Iduu, Nneka V.
Johnson, Rose M.
Murphy, Bridgette J.
Reis Ribeiro, Paula
Snerling, Keisha C.
Spencer, Stephany E.
Walz, Paul H.

9-May
11-May
7-May
12-May
30-May
26-May
30-May
21-May
6-May
5-May
14-May

