

Top students honored in the College of Science

April 13, 2022



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The Clemson University College of Science recognized some of its most outstanding undergraduate and graduate students during an awards ceremony on April 13.

"We honor the best and brightest in the [College of Science](#). This year's honorees are outstanding scholars; many are accomplished researchers; and others have committed themselves to special service projects," said Antonio Baeza, the scholarships and awards committee chair.

The following students won awards:

Outstanding Senior in Science

Louise Franke, Genetics and Biochemistry



Louise Franke

This award recognizes the best overall graduating senior based on scholarship and character. Louise Franke is a [biochemistry](#) major with minors in philosophy and political science. She is from Spartanburg, South Carolina. She recently became the [first Clemson student named a Rhodes Scholar](#). She has a nearly perfect GPA while often taking class loads exceeding 21 credit hours. Franke is in her fifth semester of research on the eukaryotic pathogen *Entamoeba histolytica* in the Ingram-Smith lab. She will present and defend her Departmental Honors thesis in philosophy. She authored two science and ethics editorials over the last two years addressing the timely topics of masks and vaccination.

Her passion is bioethics. After graduation, she will start a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy, politics and economics at Oxford before earning a joint M.D. and Ph.D. in bioethics. Her goal is to practice as a physician while forging a career as a bioethicist in the public policy and academic realms.

"Louise is a student who approaches every experience fully invested and committed. Louise has an exceptional understanding of effective communication across different educational levels and backgrounds," said William Lasser, executive director of the [Clemson Honors College](#). "I can think of no student stronger than Louise in terms of strength, character or accomplishments."

Outstanding Undergraduate in Discovery

Luke Broughton, Genetics and Biochemistry



Luke Broughton

This award honors a graduating senior who has performed outstanding original research in the sciences. A Lancaster, South Carolina native, Luke Broughton is a biochemistry major with minors in chemistry and Spanish studies. He was one of 62 students nationwide selected for the 2020 [Beckman Scholars](#) program. Working in the lab of professor Julia Brumaghim, Broughton has been [exploring the oxidation of glutathione](#), a naturally occurring cellular antioxidant. He has been formally testing the effects of biological metals, such as iron and copper, on this process.

There's a link between improved disease prognosis and high cellular glutathione levels.

"Students like Luke are extremely rare. Without question, he has the academic abilities to succeed. But beyond that, he has a strong motivation and desire to learn and make a difference through his work," Brumaghim said. "He has a maturity and dedication that I rarely see in undergraduate students."

In addition to his research, Broughton tutors students at the [Class of 1956 Academic Success Center](#) and is a mentor in the College of Science [COSMIC](#) peer-to-peer mentoring program.

Outstanding Junior in Science

Grant Wilkins, School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences

This award recognizes the best overall junior in the College of Science

based on scholarship and character. Grant Wilkins is a mathematics and computer engineering major from Kingsport, Tennessee.

Wilkins, [recently named a Goldwater Scholar](#), is conducting research on predicting and optimizing the energy usage of moving data on high-performance computers and Internet of Things devices. The goal is to find methods to reduce power while maintaining a consistent run time. After he finishes his undergraduate degree at Clemson, he plans to attend graduate school to focus on designing smarter electric grids for the United States.



Grant Wilkins

He is a member of Blue Key and Phi Kappa Phi. In addition, he is a member of the [Dixon Global Policy Scholars](#), is the ring director of the Student Alumni Council and is a member of the National Scholars Program in the Clemson Honors College.

Blue Key Academic and Leadership Award

Korianna Hays, Biological Sciences



Korianna Hays

The Blue Key Academic and Leadership Award recognizes one student in each of the seven colleges at Clemson who has distinguished themselves in academic scholarship and campus leadership. Korianna Hays is a biology major from Irmo, South Carolina.

Hays is a leader on and off campus. On campus, she has conducted independent research with Associate Professor Michael Childress to understand the social structure of butterfly fishes in relation to territoriality and coral disease

transmission in the Florida Keys. Off campus, she is a docent in the [“Something Very Fishy”](#) marine science outreach program, which combines a musical theater production with a hands-on marine science exhibit to improve conservation literacy of elementary students.

“Korianna is one of the most dependable students I have ever worked with. She is intelligent and learns quickly; she is thorough in her work and careful in her data collection; she is curious and knowledgeable enough to investigate questions that interest her. She is a team player dedicated to her lab mates, peers and adviser,” Childress said. “But what makes her exceptional is her love of science and passion for sharing it with others.”

Phi Kappa Phi Certificate of Merit

Sarah Fields, Physics

The Phi Kappa Phi Certificate of Merit recognizes a graduating senior with a GPA of 3.4 or above who has made noteworthy contributions in leadership, service and creative endeavors to their department, College or Clemson. Sarah Field is a [biological](#) sciences major from Chapin, South Carolina. She is minoring in political science.



Sarah Fields

Fields has conducted research projects in particle physics, biophysics and nuclear physics. In her current work with North Carolina State University researchers and the [Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility](#), she is studying fundamental descriptions of protons and neutrons and their fields to improve models of their interactions in a nucleus or in collisions. She plans to get her Ph.D. in nuclear physics.

Besides her academics and laboratory work, she volunteers with

the [Clemson LIFE](#) program, serves as captain of the Clemson University competitive dance team Tiger Strut, co-chairs Clemson's Women in Physics and has served as a tutor in calculus and astronomy.

Outstanding Graduate in Discovery —Experimental

Rhett Rautsaw, Biology



Rhett Rautsaw

This award honors a graduating doctoral student who has made distinctive and discernible contributions to their field with an experimental emphasis. Rhett Rautsaw is a biology student from Laura, Ohio.

He joined Clemson in 2017 after earning his master's degree from the University of Central Florida. At Clemson, he conducts research on venom evolution, diversification and genomic adaptation using rattlesnakes and water snakes as model systems. Rautsaw has published 15 papers on evolutionary biology and is the first author of six. He has generated more than \$30,000 in research grants and fellowships. He has also given six external conference and intramural presentations.

"Rhett is a dedicated, focused scientist and an excellent mentor," said Chris Parkinson, his adviser. After his May graduation, Rautsaw will take a postdoctoral position at Washington State University and the University of South Florida to work on Tasmanian devil cancer genomics.

Outstanding Graduate in Discovery — Theoretical/Computational

Andrew J. Peloquin, Chemistry

This award honors an outstanding graduate in discovery with a theoretical/computational emphasis. Andrew J. Peloquin is from Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Peloquin joined Clemson in 2019 under an arrangement with the [U.S. Air Force](#) and a prestigious Air Force fellowship. In 2008, he obtained his M.S. at the University of Florida under a similar program. His research focuses on incorporating halogen bonding interactions in solution and the solid state to both influence and direct reactivity and stabilize very unstable products such as hydrazines. He has published 16 papers on the subject and is the first author of 13. Peloquin will defend his dissertation in May. After being promoted to lieutenant colonel on July 1, his first assignment will be as deputy division chief for the Test Sciences Division at the Defense Threat Reduction Agency.



Andrew J. Peloquin

Clemson Department of Chemistry Chair William Pennington said Andrew is "quite simply the most intelligent, creative, organized and productive person I know."

Outstanding Graduate in Learning

Lauren Stoczynski, Biology

Lauren Stoczynski, a student in the Department of Biological Sciences from Erie, Pennsylvania, has taught multiple 1000-level courses for biology majors and non-majors. She is the leading teaching assistant for labs for Biology majors. Her passion for teaching became more evident while she earned her Ph.D. and led her to pursue an engineering and science education certificate.



Lauren Stoczynski

Senior Lecturer Christine Minor calls Stoczynski “a unicorn.” “It is rare to find someone interested in teaching and learning and focused on pedagogy while pursuing a rigorous Ph.D. program in the sciences.”

Stoczynski has designed data analysis activities for students to practice data interpretation, presentations and basic statistics using Excel. Additional experience with data analysis had long been an area of need in the majors level courses. During the pandemic, she developed 12 activities for Biology 1101 and 10 for Biology 1111. She was the key to the success of Biology online at Clemson during the pandemic.

Her students describe her as dedicated, enthusiastic and passionate. One said, “Lauren’s greatest strength was her ability to infuse her passion for biology with the lesson plan and lab every day.” Stoczynski, who is from Erie, Pennsylvania, defended her dissertation in March and will graduate in May. She has accepted a postdoctoral position at [Purdue University](#), focusing on teaching and learning in STEM. Her long-term goal is to remain in academia at a liberal arts institution.

Outstanding Graduate in Learning

Peter Westerbaan, Mathematics

At Clemson, Peter Westerbaan began teaching Math 1000- and 2000-level courses, impacting 600 students each year. He is a noted participant in the Math Club. His influence since the pandemic has been monumental in having a successful Math-In. The Math-In is an all-day service the Math Club has done in conjunction with the School of Mathematical and Statistical Sciences since Fall 2013. Westerbaan is from Canton,



Peter Westerbaan

Pennsylvania.

"Peter seems to have infinite patience and is a master at using humor and levity to create a relaxed and open environment for students, and I have seen this work to his (and the students') benefit without exception," said Professor Jim Coykendall.

One of his students summed it up best, writing, "Peter's strongest quality as an instructor comes from how he treats his students. In the classroom, Peter's more relaxed, jovial attitude allows the students to ask questions confidently. Peter can easily adapt his teaching style to the student he is interacting with, allowing everyone to receive a tailored explanation of the topic."

Outstanding Graduate in Engagement

Jordan Eagle, Physics



Jordan Eagle

This award goes to a graduate student who has excelled in strengthening and engaging with the community outside of the University. Hampton, Virginia, native Jordan Eagle meets the criteria perfectly by serving as a direct link between scientific research and the community that benefits from it.

Eagle's studies focus on understanding where cosmic rays are produced in our galaxy. An important but underappreciated aspect of this work is communicating the relevance of astronomical research to the general public.

Eagle and four other female peers started a new [YouTube channel named "\(On\) Planet Nine"](#) that is rooted in science education and sharing their enthusiasm and expertise in the field. She also works as a volunteer

operator at the Clemson University Planetarium to make this resource accessible to interested persons or groups.

Eagle is a graduate student at Clemson and a pre-doctoral fellow at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics. In September, [she will start a Goddard postdoctoral position at NASA's Space Flight Center](#), where she will study particles emitted by supernova explosions.

Other Awards

The College of Science Student Advisory Board made two additional presentations:

- Kat Terwelp, Outstanding Member Award
- Jennie LaMonte, Advocate Award

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