**EcoJEDI Mission**

The EcoJEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) program is a citywide collaboration among three Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) – The University of Texas at San Antonio, Northeast Lakeview College, and Our Lady of the Lake University. The National Institute of Food and Agriculture, a division of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), funded a $1,000,000 grant to establish the EcoJEDI program. The goal of the program is to provide historically underserved populations with opportunities to engage in travel, research, workshops, mentoring, leadership, and collaboration across the three universities. Beginning in high school and continuing on to higher education, the program creates a career pipeline to USDA food and agriculture sciences by bolstering recruitment, graduation, and career readiness for professional and academic careers. EcoJEDI also emphasizes communication by assisting students in expressing their experiences and identity through oral, visual, and written storytelling.

Oso Bay Wetland Preserve and Learning Center, Port Aransas, Texas
Bruno Del Rio-Malewski
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
PH.D STUDENT

Bruno is originally from Mexico City and now resides in San Antonio. He received his bachelor's degree in biology from Grinnell College and his master's degree in genetics from Iowa State University. He is passionate for animals and is a caretaker for two bearded dragons and three axolotls. His research will investigate how microplastics affects gene expression in tadpoles, which will hopefully help him get into herpetological research. Bruno will be the first person on either side of his family to receive a Ph.D.

Fernanda Flores
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
POST-BACHELOR

Fernanda is a senior graduating in May 2023 with a B.S. in Environmental Science. She is a writing fellow working under Dr. Sue Hum.

Claire Littlefield
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
MASTER'S STUDENT

Claire was born and raised in San Antonio and received her B.S. in Environmental Science with a concentration in conservation and restoration ecology from UTSA in May of 2022. Her hobbies include drawing, painting, and reading. She is very passionate about the environment as well as education, and insects and woody plants are two topics she absolutely loves. Claire's research will determine microplastic concentrations in both dry and live biofilms from different pools in Leon Creek. After graduating, she hopes to become a professor or work on a conservation project with the San Antonio Zoo before coming back to obtain her Ph. D.

Kane Sandoval
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
POST-BACHELOR

Kane is a senior graduating in May 2023 with a B.S. in Environmental Science. He is a writing fellow working under Dr. Sue Hum. He plans to return for his master's degree after a break. He aims to conduct his own research with Para La Tierra, a nonporift organization in Paraguay. Kane loves adventure, learning languages, and conquering the world with iNaturalist observations. His academic interest includes evolution, conservation, restoration, prehistory, biodiversity, and systematics. On a personal level, he is a dinosaur and Godzilla fan and enjoys hiking, video games, movies, and clubbing.
Jazmin Carothers
CIVIL/ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING
SENIOR

Jazmin is a transfer student from Texas State University. At UTSA, she is a researcher in Dr. Kapoor's lab focusing on wastewater/stormwater research. This summer, she plans to intern at Collier’s Engineering Design, continue undergraduate research, and begin the process of obtaining a P.E. license. Jazmin, being a first generation student, will be the first in her family to receive a college degree. She hopes to pursue her passions and work as a Professional Engineer once completing her P.E. exam.

Kate Kampman
BIOLOGY
SENIOR

Kate was raised in San Antonio and is currently working toward completing her undergraduate degree in biology with a minor in environmental science and a concentration in pre-med. She will be researching urban forestry and completing projects that will allow for a greater diversity of plant species in urban areas. Her personal interests include hiking, poetry, horror movies, and board games. After graduation, Kate hopes to attend medical school for radiology or enter a master's program in environmental science and conservation.

Madison Orquiz
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
JUNIOR

Madison is a transfer student from Northwest Vista College and is currently working toward her B.S. in Environmental Science at UTSA. At Northwest Vista, Madison researched microplastics along various beaches in Costa Rica, conducted bat, bird, and monkey censuses, and aided in research pertaining to the endangered Hawksbill Sea Turtle and coral restoration. Madison is a researcher in Dr. Hutchinson’s lab collecting and filtering microplastics. Her professional interests include botany, marine life, conservation, and environmental remediation. Following graduation, she plans on pursuing her master’s degree and continuing research.

Camila Sandoval
BIOLOGY
JUNIOR

Camila is a junior working towards her undergraduate degree in biology. She is a researcher in Dr. Kapoor’s lab researching environmental microbiology, biotechnology, and environmental engineering to study the role of microbial communities in natural and engineered ecosystems. In the lab, she analyzes water samples through filtration and uses DNA extraction to identify pollution in the water. Camila plans to continue research in microbiology and aims for a Ph.D in biology.

Angel Velasquez
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE
JUNIOR

Angel is a junior working towards her undergraduate degree in environmental science at UTSA. She is a researcher in Dr. Hutchinson’s lab identifying leaf species and will be researching urban forestry by analyzing native and non-native trees in San Antonio. Her professional interests include conservation of endangered wildlife and urban ecology. She plans on pursuing a master’s upon completing her degree. Angel’s hobbies include hiking, traveling, and reading.
Torrence Campos
BIOLOGY
SENIOR

Torrence Campos is a senior working towards completing her B.S. in Biology at OLLU. Her educational interests are in conservation and restoration as well as marine science. After completing her bachelor’s degree, she plans to pursue a master’s in environmental science, and eventually a PhD. Her hobbies include baking, archery, cup making, and most recently, gardening.

Julianna Collins
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & SOCIOLOGY
FRESHMAN

Julianna Collins is a freshman at OLLU, double majoring in Environmental Science and Sociology. She is passionate about wildlife conservation, environmental justice, and business sustainability. Julianna plans on furthering her education with a master’s degree after graduation. She also loves animals, literature, and music.

Aaliyah Delgado
BIOLOGY
JUNIOR

Aaliyah Delgado is a junior at OLLU majoring in Biology and minoring in Chemistry. She is from Brownsville, Texas, and currently resides in San Antonio. She is a member of the OLLU Honors Program, as well as the Sigma Zeta National Honors Society – Sigma Chapter. Her post-graduation goal is to enroll in a master’s program to become a Physician’s Assistant. She plans to specialize in gynecology and wants to create a safe space for all women. Her hobbies include digital art, going on outdoor walks, and trying all types of restaurants.

Rachel Dziuba
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & SUSTAINABILITY
JUNIOR

Rachel Dziuba is a junior at OLLU, double majoring in Environmental Science & Sustainability, and Biomathematics. She is also the Student Government President and a captain of the Women’s Soccer Team. Her professional interests include data modeling, water sciences, and pollution control. Rachel’s personal interests include hiking, reading, yoga, and soccer. Rachel is working as a writing fellow for Environmental Science and Sustainability under Dr. Briana Salas.

Sierra Jaramillo
CHEMICAL BIOLOGY
FRESHMAN

Sierra Jaramillo was born and raised in San Antonio and is a freshman at OLLU. She has a passion for conservation and medical research and is working towards her B.S. in Chemical Biology. Her personal interests include music, painting, and hiking. Sierra plans on continuing school after completing her degree and grow her research experience.
BIOLOGY
SOPHOMORE

Brooke Farr

Brooke is originally from Warner Robins, Georgia; however, she’s had the pleasure of being able to spend the last decade living in Texas. She is currently a sophomore studying biology at Northeast Lakeview College. She hopes to expand her horizons in the field of science and to explore what specific divisions interest her as she continues on with her studies. In her free time outside of school, Brooke loves to play video games, write, and help her parents with their farm and their many animals.

BIOLOGY
SOPHOMORE

Tia Kline

Throughout life, Tia would somewhat struggle when it came to figuring out exactly the type of career she desired to pursue after college. Taken into deep consideration, she’s always had a fascination when it came to analyzing various organisms and their functions and chemical reactions. Originally, she hoped to pursue Biochemistry, but settled on a Biology Associates degree, since it was the only one NLC offered. With knowledge in both chemistry and biology, Tia can potentially search for a position that focuses solely on research of such organisms and chemicals. Other than her interest in the sciences, she was also heavily involved in music arts such as playing piano, percussion, guitar, and other instruments.

BIOLOGY
SOPHOMORE

Rozalia Laskowski

Rozalia was born in raised in San Antonio. She is currently obtaining her associate’s, but after this semester she plans on applying to UT Health San Antonio to obtain her BSN in hopes of becoming an RN. She hopes to get into the Spring semester of 2024. She currently works as a medical assistant, excited to take that next step into nursing. When not working or at school, Rozalia enjoys going on hikes or taking her dog to the dog park with her husband. She really enjoys learning about and spending time in nature on top of playing video games, gardening, and coffee.

COMPUTER SCIENCE
SOPHOMORE

Jayden Rocha

Jayden is currently pursuing a degree in science, majoring in computer science. He is very straightforward, creative, and rambunctious which makes for a great team dynamic. Some of his hobbies include crocheting and playing guitar. Jayden’s goals for this program include finding an intersection between Scientific research and computer science as well as how to streamline that process in order to build overall efficiency.
In the summer, we will be working with the Urban Forestry Department of San Antonio Parks and Recreation. The study will evaluate the growth and survival of urban trees in San Antonio. At each sampling d.b.h, height, crown width, health, and surrounding landscape variable will be recorded. The data will be entered into the U.S. Forest Service’s iTree program to estimate ecosystems services urban forest health, air quality improvement, health benefits based on the reduction of pollutants, water infiltration, reduced runoff, carbon sequestration, reduction in energy use by buildings from shading, and the compensatory value of urban trees per site.

We will work on extracting RNA from already processed samples of M. cavernosa. These corals are from a field experiment in 2011 that reciprocally transplanted coral from a less-stressed to a more-stressed reef. The goal is to target stress-related genes in both the coral and algal symbiont. We will then measure gene expression variation using q-PCR in Dr. Kapoors lab in the summer.

This summer, we will be working on assisting in the development of the high-tunnel garden on campus, conducting water testing of the retention ponds, lake and other local water sources. We will be looking into software programs and reviewing rainfall history including field monitoring, review of satellite images that show land changes overtime, and study soil mapping and plant growth locally. We will also look into plant genetics and how the agricultural industry conducts market research to assess nutritional and growth needs for areas.
Texas State Aquarium

Upon arrival, the scholars took a trip to the Texas State Aquarium in Corpus Christi. There, the scholars guided through the many exhibits while exploring different species and their habitats.

The aquarium and wildlife rescue center highlighted the importance of clean oceans and gave the scholars some great insight into the aquatic environments around the world. This part of the trip also highlighted unique career fields for the scholars, especially those in the conservation or rescue domain.

Anti-Racist Pedagogy & Counter-Story with Dr. Hinojosa

At Texas A&M Corpus Christi, Dr. Yndalecio Isaac Hinojosa presented a pedagogy on anti-racist Latino history as well as shared his counter-story with the EcoJEDI team. The EcoJEDIs were encouraged to write and share their own counter-stories and will be expanding and applying this knowledge to other subjects for a project this summer.
All Aboard the RV Katy!

Early in the morning, the scholars set sail aboard the RV Katy in Port Aransas. They were taught various catching methods such as netting and had the opportunity to examine many kinds of aquatic species.

The scholars were able to sort through buckets of fish, crabs, krill, and even eels, learning about each organism before gently tossing it back into its ocean habitat.

The research vessel showed how diverse the Texas gulf is, and allowed for the scholars to gain hands-on experience with the organisms. Additionally, the scholars were able to use some of the technology on board to sort, magnify, and maintain the health of the organisms while they are out of the water.

Oso Bay Wetlands

The Oso Bay Wetlands Preserve and Learning Center allowed for the scholars to hike nature trails and see local flora and fauna. From the smallest ant hills to the tallest trees, the scholars made sure to learn about it all and have a little fun along the way.
Tour of TAMUCC’s Research Facilities

The scholars were given a tour of Texas A&M’s research facilities such as the fisheries lab, marine genomics lab, coral ecology lab, and the genomics core facility. Faculty and students received first-hand experience on how the labs functioned and the goals of the facility.

This tour gave scholars a great insight into the various fields within marine biology research and highlighted why learning about our oceans is pivotal to maintaining the health of our ecosystems.

Alongside learning about the field of marine biology, the students learned about Texas A&M Corpus Christi as a university, and were able to reflect on their options at the graduate levels.
June Events

Hardberger Park
- Yoga
- Land Bridge
- Education Center
- Talk with Biologist
06/01

UTSA Workshop
- Resume Building for USA Jobs
- UTSA Grad School Visit & Lab Tour
- Weekly Check-In & Counter-story Project Work
06/12

OLLU Workshop
- Overcoming Imposter Syndrome Presentation
- Weekly Check-In & Counter-story Project Work
06/02

CL Browning Ranch Field Trip
06/15

NLC Workshop
- Interviewing & Career Readiness
- Weekly Check-In & Counter-story Project Work
06/05

Texas State
- Grad School Visit
06/16

ABK Nature Walk
- Plant Classification
- Restoration
- Geology Walk
06/08

Guadalupe River State Park Field Trip
06/22

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