

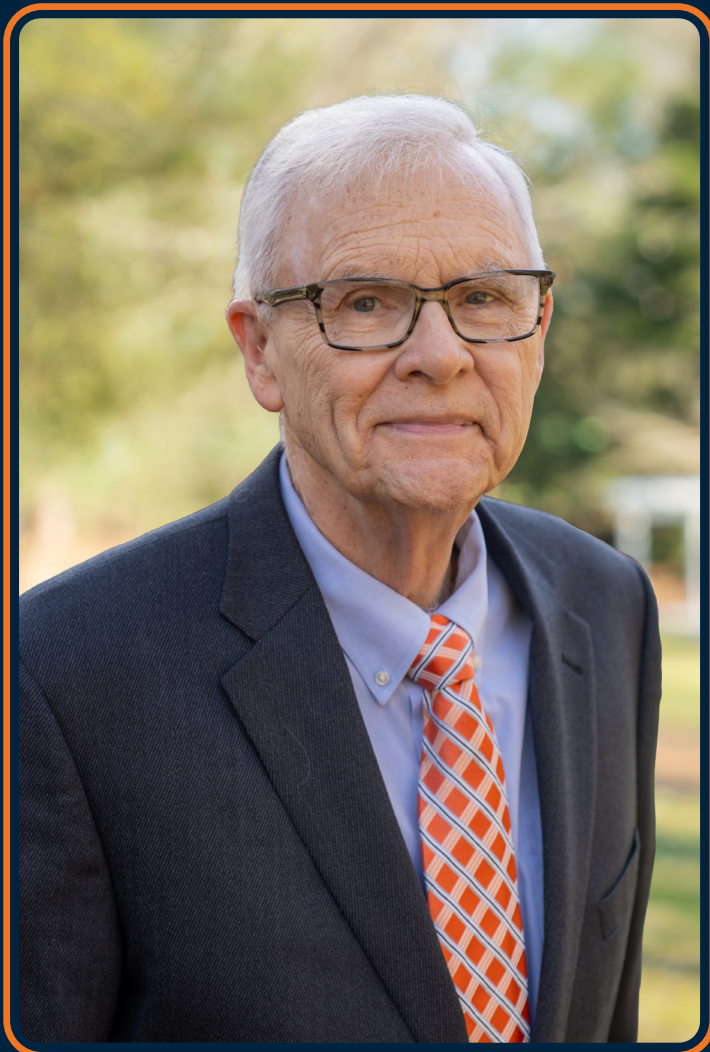


AUBURN UNIVERSITY  
College of Sciences and Mathematics

# 2026 HONORS CONVOCATION

SATURDAY, APRIL 18





## IN HONOR OF DR. LAWRENCE C. WIT

ASSOCIATE DEAN EMERITUS,  
PROFESSOR EMERITUS -  
DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGICAL  
SCIENCES

## 2026 HONORS CONVOCATION

<b>Welcome</b>	Presented by Dr. Maggie Han
<b>Ceremony Dedication to Faculty Honoree</b>	Presented by Dr. Edward Thomas, Jr.
<b>The Dean Schneller Award</b>	Presented by Dr. Edward Thomas, Jr.
<b>Presentation of Dean's Medals</b>	Presented by Dr. Edward Thomas, Jr.
<b>Dean's Award for Academic Excellence</b>	Presented by Dr. Katherine Buckley
<b>Outstanding Junior Awards</b>	Presented by Mr. Eric Hall
<b>Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistants</b>	Presented by Dr. Mark Liles
<b>Outstanding International Student Award</b>	Presented by Dr. Kimberly Mulligan-Guy
<b>Outstanding Faculty Undergraduate Teacher</b>	Presented by Dr. Kimberly Mulligan-Guy
<b>Outstanding Faculty Undergraduate Mentor</b>	Presented by Dr. Kimberly Mulligan-Guy
<b>Early Career Faculty Award</b>	Presented by Dr. Edward Thomas, Jr.
<b>Faculty Service-Outreach Award</b>	Presented by Dr. Edward Thomas, Jr.
<b>Student Choice Award</b>	Presented by Dr. Maggie Han
<b>Final Remarks</b>	Presented by Dr. Maggie Han

# THE DEAN SCHNELLER AWARD

*The Dean Schneller Award is presented in honor of former College of Sciences and Mathematics dean, Dr. Stewart W. Schneller, whose leadership and dedication helped shape the college's tradition of academic excellence. This award recognizes an outstanding student who exemplifies exceptional achievement, intellectual curiosity, and a commitment to advancing the mission and values of COSAM.*



**WILL  
MCCURLEY**

**Mathematics/  
Physics**  
Mobile, AL

Will McCurley will graduate summa cum laude from Auburn University in Spring 2026 with concurrent Bachelor of Science degrees in Mathematics and Physics. He has been named to the Dean's List every semester while at Auburn and is a member of the Sigma Pi Sigma Physics honor society.

Will has served as a research assistant in Dr. Yinong Zhou's computational condensed

matter physics group since his junior year. In this role, he has contributed to the development and application of advanced computational techniques used to investigate quantum topological properties in materials.

Will has held several leadership roles within campus organizations, including serving as President of Quiz Bowl at Auburn University, Treasurer of the Society of Physics Students, and member of the Auburn University Math Club. He has worked as a game moderator at quiz bowl tournaments throughout the Southeast and previously served as a question writer for National Academic Quiz Tournaments. Will has also volunteered at Camp M.A.S.H. (Make Arthritis Stop Hurting) and the Alabama State Science Olympiad at Auburn University. Additionally, Will tutors students in Calculus I and linear algebra at the Math Tutoring Center.

Looking ahead, Will plans to continue his work in computational condensed matter physics as a Ph.D. student in Auburn University's Department of Physics beginning in Fall 2026. His long-term career goal is to work in computational physics research, contributing to advancing scientific understanding in the field.



**LANE  
DOMINY**

**Biological  
Sciences**  
Southold, NY

Lane Dominy will graduate with a Bachelor of Science in Organismal Biology: Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior, with a minor in Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies. She has been named to the Dean's List every semester since Fall 2022. As a result of her academic achievements, Lane has earned multiple academic scholarships, including the True Blue Scholarship, George W. Folkerts Memorial Endowed Scholarship, Alesia M. Davenport Alumni Scholarship, Dr. Edmund C. Dyas IV Endowment Scholarship, and the Miles and Mary Stephens Endowment Scholarship.

Lane has conducted undergraduate research with Dr. Moisés A. Bernal in the Fish Ecology and Evolution Lab in the Department of Biological Sciences. She was awarded the Undergraduate Research Fellowship in March 2025 and recently presented work on how environmental temperature influences levels of oxidative damage in pinfish.

Beyond academics and research, Lane has served as a tutor for the Auburn Athletics Department and member of the Panhellenic Sorority Sigma Kappa in the Theta Xi Chapter. Her professional interests center on using biological science to foster positive, sustainable interactions between human and animal communities. Lane has broadened her experience through internships with the Surfrider Foundation, Cornell Cooperative Extension's "Back to the Bays" Program, the Southampton Animal Shelter, and Limpopo Eco Operations (Phalaborwa, South Africa). After graduating from Auburn University, Lane will pursue a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree.



**FAITH  
WIX**

**Biological  
Sciences**  
Orlando, FL

Faith Wix will graduate summa cum laude with Honors, earning a Bachelor of Science in Genetics and a minor in Psychology. She has been on the Dean's list every semester at Auburn earning a perfect grade point average and has received multiple scholarships. As a Genetics major, Faith has prioritized service and clinical observation by volunteering on the NICU and pediatric floors at East Alabama Medical Center. She has worked as a Tutor Mentor for the Study Partners Peer Tutoring Program since her sophomore year, where she facilitates one-on-one tutoring sessions in biology, chemistry, and statistics. Additionally, Faith conducts undergraduate research in the Reif Parasitology Lab at Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine, where she investigates the prevalence of tick-borne pathogens in wild-caught ticks.

Beyond her scientific pursuits, Faith has been an active member of Kappa Alpha Theta, serving as Vice President of Education in 2025, Academic Development Director in 2024, and a Pi Chi for Auburn Panhellenic. She also served as Vice President of Advancement for Auburn University Dream Makers, an organization dedicated to raising funds and awareness for pediatric healthcare in the Auburn community. Faith also had the opportunity to perform in two dance concerts with Auburn's Theatre and Dance Department. In the fall, Faith will begin a Genetic Counseling Training Program to earn a Master's degree and pursue certification as a genetic counselor.



## **PARKER ENSMINGER**

**Biomedical  
Sciences**  
Montgomery, AL

Parker Ensminger will graduate summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences. Parker has received multiple scholarships, including the National Scholars Presidential Scholarship, the Dr. Lawrence Wit Endowed Scholarship, the Jack and Glenda Morris Endowed Scholarship, and the Joseph Sarver Scholarship. He has been named to the Dean's List every semester, maintained a perfect grade point average while at Auburn, and was awarded the 2025 COSAM Outstanding Junior Award for Biomedical Sciences.

Parker served as an Undergraduate Research Assistant in Dr. Mohtadin Hashemi's lab in the Department of Physics, where he studied protein-DNA interactions related to disease. Parker was selected as a recipient of both the Auburn University Research Fellowship and the Auburn University Honors Research Fellowship and presented his work at the Auburn University Research Symposium in Spring 2025.

In addition to his academic and research experience, Parker served as a COSAM Leader, an Undergraduate Learning Assistant for an MCAT preparation course, a Volunteer Medical Assistant at Mercy Medical Clinic, and a tutor and mentor with I Am My Brother's Keeper (IAMBK). He also served as Scholarship Chair for the Alpha Zeta Chapter of Farmhouse Fraternity and Project Coordinator for IMPACT community service events. Parker will continue his education at the University of Alabama at Birmingham Heersink School of Medicine.



## **MIRANDA CORREIA**

**Biomedical  
Sciences**  
Auburn, AL

Miranda Correia will graduate summa cum laude as a University Honors Research Scholar, earning a Bachelor of Science in Biomedical Sciences with a minor in Chemistry. Miranda has been named to the Dean's List every semester while at Auburn, was awarded the COSAM Outstanding Junior Award for Biomedical Sciences, and has received multiple scholarships, including the Spirit of Auburn Presidential Scholarship and the Dr. Larry Wit Endowed Scholarship.

During her time at Auburn, Miranda demonstrated a strong commitment to leadership and service as a COSAM Ambassador in the Office of Academic Engagement, Innovation, and Opportunity and as Treasurer for COSAM Leaders. She also served as a Shift Leader for Campus Kitchen and a peer mentor in the EAGLES Program.

Alongside her campus involvement, Miranda gained extensive academic and clinical experience. She was an undergraduate research assistant in the Lotsch Lab in the Department of Biological Sciences, where her work focused on the interaction of engineered nanoparticles and microplastics with human cells. Miranda also completed over 600 hours as a Supplemental Instruction Leader and Peer Mentor for General Chemistry I and II courses and gained over 1,000 clinical hours through her internship with Pinnacle Cardiovascular Associates. Miranda plans to continue her education and begin medical school in July 2026.



## **CAMDEN MYERS**

**Biomedical  
Sciences**  
Hueytown, AL

Camden Myers will graduate summa cum laude with a degree in Biomedical Sciences and a minor in Leadership Studies, with a University Honors College Scholar Distinction. Camden has been named to the Dean's List every semester while at Auburn and has maintained a perfect grade point average. He has received multiple leadership, academic, and service scholarships, including the Spirit of Auburn and Ever to Conquer Never to Yield scholarships.

During his time at Auburn, Camden worked as a COSAM Learning Assistant for Organic Chemistry and engaged in organic chemistry undergraduate research with Madison Sowden in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. He also participated in the Doctors in Italy Fellowship Program, served as a student observer at Andrews Sports Medicine, and assisted individuals with chronic conditions as a home health aide.

Camden is a member of the National Society of Leadership and Success, Senior Pals at Auburn University, and a Tiger Excellence Scholars Program. As National Society of Collegiate Scholars President, he led efforts to rebuild the organization post-pandemic and partnered with Active Minds, a nonprofit organization promoting youth and collegiate mental health, to co-host events and fundraisers, helping refine his commitment to service and mental health advocacy in academic communities. Camden plans to attend medical school following graduation.



## **JADA CONNER**

**Chemistry &  
Biochemistry**  
Tuscaloosa, AL

Jada Conner will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry, Pre-Medicine. Jada has received numerous scholarships and was named the Outstanding Junior for the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry.

Jada has engaged in undergraduate research with the Goodwin Lab in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry to evaluate the role of through-protein electron transfer in the mechanism of KatG catalysis, including isoniazid activation. She received the University Research Fellowship Scholarship in Spring 2025, which enabled her to continue her work. Jada has also worked as a COSAM Learning Assistant for General Chemistry II, aiding fellow students within the course lectures. While at Auburn, Jada served as Publicity Coordinator for Alpha Epsilon Delta, Student Government Association COSAM Senator, Vice President of Outreach for the Black Student Union, Volunteering Coordinator for Rural Health Connect, and Membership Services Chair and Internal Audit Chair for Delta Sigma Theta sorority. During summer breaks, Jada returned home to Tuscaloosa and gained clinical experience at North River Surgical Center and volunteered at the West Alabama Multicultural Association and Weaver CRF.

Following graduation, Jada is taking a gap year and working at Christ Health in Birmingham, Alabama to assist underserved populations in the community.



**NAOMI  
KERSCHEN**

**Geosciences**  
McDonough, GA

Naomi Kerschen will graduate summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Geology. She has been awarded the Nicholas Hood Endowed Scholarship, the Robert & Dianna Fousek Endowed Scholarship, and been named to the Dean’s List every semester. Naomi was also named a Geosciences Advisory Board Outstanding Undergraduate Student in 2025.

Naomi is completing directed studies in Analytical Methods with Dr. Laura Bilenker in the Economic Geology and Geochemistry Lab where she has been an active research group member since Fall 2025. Naomi serves as a Co-President for Geo Club, an undergraduate led club for students interested in geology.

Naomi has also served as a COSAM Learning Assistant under Dr. Margaret Veitch for the past three semesters, assisting with introductory level geology courses. Outside of COSAM, Naomi has been a member of the Auburn University Marching Band for her four years at Auburn. She is also a member of Kappa Kappa Psi, a National Honorary Fraternity that serves the Auburn Bands.

After graduation, Naomi plans to complete an internship through the Scientists in Parks program to prepare for a career with the National Park Service.



**MATTHEW  
KUEHR**

**Mathematics  
& Statistics**  
Vestavia Hills, AL

Matthew Kuehr will graduate summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Applied Mathematics with Honors. He has been awarded the Spirit of Auburn Founders Scholarship, the Jack and Jane Brown Endowed Scholarship and the Andrew C. Connor Memorial Award. Matthew has been named to the Dean’s List every semester and has maintained a perfect in-major grade point average.

Throughout his time at Auburn, Matthew has been engaged in research in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics. He completed an Undergraduate Research Fellowship in the Fall 2025 semester under the mentorship of Junshan Lin, where he studied photonic crystals. Since January of 2024, Matthew has been a member of a research group led by Mark Carpenter from the Department of Mathematics and Statistics and Roy Hartfield from the Department of Aerospace Engineering. Matthew’s work in this group culminated in him presenting a paper at the 2026 AIAA SciTech conference, the largest aerospace conference in the world.

Beyond academics and research, Matthew served as a Supplemental Instruction Leader for Calculus I and worked at Hadrian Automation as a machine learning engineer intern. Additionally, Matthew’s team won first place at the Harbert School of Business’s Business Analytics Case Competition in Fall 2025.

After graduation, Matthew intends to return to Hadrian Automation for a second internship, before completing the Accelerated Bachelor’s to Master’s (ABM) in Data Science at Auburn University.



**GABRIELLE  
BLADON**

**Physics**  
Cumming, GA

Gabrielle Bladon will graduate summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Science in Physics and a minor in Statistics. Gabrielle is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Sigma Pi Sigma honor societies and a recipient of the Auburn University Presidential Scholarship and the Ever to Conquer Scholarship.

During her time at Auburn, Gabrielle conducted undergraduate research under the mentorship of Dr. Evdokiya Kostadinova in the Department of Physics, studying the ablation of heat-shielding materials and contributing to ongoing work in high-temperature material performance. Gabrielle is currently authoring a paper on this research to be published through the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics. Gabrielle also served as a teaching assistant for Physics I, supporting foundational instruction in the department. In addition to her research at Auburn, Gabi worked at the DIII-D National Fusion Facility in San Diego, where she studied electron temperature measurements in high-energy thermonuclear tokamaks. She presented her work at the American Physical Society Division of Plasma Physics conferences in 2025 and 2026.

Following graduation, Gabrielle plans to pursue a Ph.D. in Systems Engineering at Auburn, where she aims to apply physics-based modeling to complex engineered systems.



**40**  
**YEARS OF DISCOVERY**

**COLLEGE OF SCIENCES  
AND MATHEMATICS**

**1986-2026**

## DEAN'S AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

### John Asheton Benefield

Biomedical Sciences  
Parrish, FL

### Elizabeth Campbell-Work

Biomedical Sciences  
Defuniak Springs, FL

### Alyssa Carlota

Biomedical Sciences  
Athens, AL

### Brody Church

Biomedical Sciences  
Hoover, AL

### Christopher Consoli

Microbial Biology  
Cranbury, NJ

### Miranda Correia

Biomedical Sciences  
Auburn, AL

### Caroline Dawson

Biomedical Sciences  
Dothan, AL

### Katherine Day

Biomedical Sciences  
Andalusia, AL

### Parker Ensminger

Biomedical Sciences  
Montgomery, AL

### Grayson Follis

Biomedical Sciences  
Franklin, TN

### Julian Gilstrap

Biomedical Sciences  
Hoover, AL

### Gaston Grant

Applied Discrete Mathematics  
Hoover, AL

### Brady Guthrie

Microbial Biology  
Enterprise, AL

### Jacob Hamilton

Actuarial Science  
New Lenox, IL

### Alayna Harvey

Genetics  
Miramar Beach, FL

### David Haskins

Biomedical Sciences  
Birmingham, AL

### Braeden Heath

Biomedical Sciences  
College Grove, TN

### Sarah Helms

Actuarial Science  
Madison, AL

### Emma Hines

Biomedical Sciences  
Athens, AL

### Amy Hudson

Biomedical Sciences  
Mountain Brook, AL

### Joseph Hull

Chemistry  
Madison, AL

### Lucas Jenkins

Biomedical Sciences  
Berry, AL

### Lauren Lacour

Biomedical Sciences  
Pensacola, FL

### Cathy Le

Biomedical Sciences  
Auburn, AL

## DEAN'S AWARD FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

### Joshua Len

Biomedical Sciences  
Opelika, AL

### Miranda Mabrey

Biomedical Sciences  
Auburn, AL

### Anna McClellan

Biomedical Sciences  
Owens Cross Roads, AL

### Ethan McGinnis

Laboratory Science  
Odenville, AL

### Hannah Montgomery

Genetics  
Daphne, AL

### Camden Myers

Biomedical Sciences  
Hueytown, AL

### Luke Paul

Biomedical Sciences  
Brentwood, TN

### Mason Pearce

Genetics  
Huntsville, AL

### Laila Perkins

Biomedical Sciences  
Madison, AL

### Karoline Reeves

Biomedical Sciences  
Allen, TX

### Tori Schultz

Biomedical Sciences  
Mason, OH

### Carter Stremmel

Actuarial Science  
Anniston, AL

### Kaina Thomas

Biomedical Sciences  
Cullman, AL

### Zoe Toups

Biomedical Sciences  
New Orleans, LA

### Alison Wampler

Biomedical Sciences  
Madison, AL

### Peter Weglarz

Biomedical Sciences  
Grosse Pointe, MI

### Jonathan Wilson

Biomedical Sciences  
Vestavia Hills, AL

### Faith Wix

Genetics  
Orlando, FL

### Tyler Wojichowski

Biomedical Sciences  
Rochester, MI

20  
26



**HAYLEE  
COOK**  
Biological Sciences  
Leeds, AL



**MARY  
PRZYBYSZ**  
Biological Sciences  
Birmingham, AL



**LAUREN  
JONES**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Mountain Brook, AL



**NOAH  
MCAFFEE**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Hoover, AL



**MARKELLE  
SCOTT**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Birmingham, AL



**CHRISTINA  
WESSER**  
Chemistry &  
Biochemistry  
Madison, AL



**JOHN  
ERNEST**  
Mathematics &  
Statistics  
Homewood, AL



**KIERAN  
PATEL**  
Physics  
Madison, AL

## OUTSTANDING GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTS



**Autumn Arnold**  
Geosciences  
Woodstock, GA



**Gabriel DiQuattro**  
Physics  
Mobile, AL



**Francesco Moen**  
Biological Sciences  
Saint Joseph, MI

## OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT



**Michael Agbozo**  
Geosciences  
Mafi-Kumase, Volta Region, Ghana

## OUTSTANDING FACULTY UNDERGRADUATE TEACHER



**Rachel Prado**  
Chemistry & Biochemistry

Rachel Prado is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, where she has served since 2019. She earned her BS and PhD in chemistry from the University of Alabama at Birmingham and completed a teaching postdoctoral fellowship at UCLA. At Auburn, Dr. Prado teaches across the general and organic chemistry curriculum, including large enrollment Fundamentals of Chemistry and Organic Chemistry courses that serve thousands of students. Her instruction emphasizes evidence based, student centered practices that promote conceptual understanding, active learning, and a strong sense of belonging. She has developed flipped and active learning course models supported by Learning Assistants and serves as a trainer in COSAM's LA Program.

Dr. Prado also provides significant service to COSAM and Auburn University. She is Secretary of the University Senate, Chair of the Senate Rules Committee, and a Biggio Faculty Fellow and COSAM Outreach Fellow. Her instructional innovations—supported by competitive internal grants, including funding for immersive virtual reality learning tools—have led to peer reviewed publications and national presentations. Her contributions to teaching, service, and outreach have been recognized through multiple awards, including the Vivian Ballenger Memorial Award, McGraw Hill Pathfinder Award, and COSAM Service Outreach Award.

## OUTSTANDING FACULTY UNDERGRADUATE MENTOR



**Saikat Chakraborty Thakur**  
Physics

Saikat Chakraborty Thakur is an Associate Research Professor of Physics whose work centers on plasma instabilities, turbulence, transport, and dusty plasma physics in experimental, low temperature plasma environments. His research contributes to a deeper understanding of fundamental plasma processes with applications in fusion, space, and industrial plasma systems. Dr. Chakraborty Thakur plays an essential role in Auburn University's collaborative Magnetized Plasma Research Laboratory, where he mentors graduate and undergraduate students, supports visiting and external collaborators, and advances the laboratory's high magnetic field plasma research capabilities.

Over the course of his career, he has authored more than 75 peer reviewed publications and delivered over 300 presentations at national and international conferences, workshops, and seminars. He has also mentored more than 90 students at various levels—including high school, undergraduate, and graduate—helping develop the next generation of plasma physicists and researchers. In addition to his scholarly achievements, Dr. Chakraborty Thakur contributes significantly to national plasma physics organizations and federal agencies through service, proposal review, and advisory activities. He is also deeply engaged in public outreach, promoting broader understanding of plasma science within the physics community and beyond.

## EARLY CAREER FACULTY AWARD



**Rafael Bernardi**  
Physics

Rafael C. Bernardi is an Associate Professor of Physics, where he joined the faculty in 2020. A biophysicist by training, his research examines how mechanical forces regulate protein function, integrating molecular simulations, computational modeling, and experimental collaborations to study mechanoactive proteins involved in infection and cellular signaling. He leads Auburn's Computational Biophysics Group, which develops widely used software for biomolecular simulation, visualization, and AI based prediction of protein structure and function, tools now used by more than 350,000 researchers worldwide.

Bernardi also organizes international hands on training workshops in computational biophysics at Auburn, drawing participants from across the United States and abroad. His research program is supported by the National Institutes of Health, the U.S. Department of Defense, and the National Science Foundation, which awarded him an NSF CAREER Award. Additional honors include a national dissertation award in Brazil recognizing the best PhD in biotechnology and the 2026 Early Career Award from the Biophysical Society.

He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in physics and a PhD in biophysics in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, conducted part of his doctoral work at the University of Pennsylvania, and completed postdoctoral training at the University of Illinois.

## FACULTY SERVICE-OUTREACH AWARD



**Melinda Lanius**  
Mathematics & Statistics

Melinda Lanius is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics and Statistics whose work reflects a strong commitment to service, teaching, and community engagement. As an undergraduate at Wellesley College, she embraced the meaning of its Latin motto—Non Ministrari sed Ministrare (“Not to be served, but to serve”)—a principle that continues to guide her professional ethos. At Auburn University, she has contributed to numerous standing committees, including Undergraduate Studies and University Writing, as well as ad hoc initiatives such as Strategic Planning and the Interim Chair Advisory group.

As a discipline based education researcher, Dr. Lanius studies psychological stress in undergraduate mathematics courses, focusing on math anxiety, academic distress, and factors that shape students' relationships with mathematics. She also examines professional development for faculty and graduate teaching assistants to help strengthen instructional practices and learning environments. Recognizing the long term impact negative math experiences can have on adults, she is dedicated to fostering positive early encounters with mathematics in the community. She leads hands on “math carnivals,” outreach events supported by graduate students, departmental colleagues, and COSAM Outreach that offer engaging, confidence building math activities for local children and families.

## STUDENT CHOICE AWARD



**Wonil Choi**  
Biological Sciences

## COMER MEDAL\*



**Pierce Meinert**  
Microbial/Cellular/Molecular Biology  
Auburn, AL



**Will McCurley**  
Mathematics/Physics  
Mobile, AL

## PRESIDENTS AWARD\*



**Amy Hudson**  
Biomedical Sciences  
Mountain Brook, AL

\*Awards presented at other ceremonies



# AUBURN UNIVERSITY

College of Sciences and Mathematics

