



## Dean's Blog 2024

As another academic year concludes, I am delighted to welcome you to the summer edition of my blog, my first as Dean of Life Sciences.

I am thrilled to announce that our Faculty continues to excel in global rankings. The Faculty of Life Sciences is ranked fourth in the world for Pharmacy and Pharmacology, sixth for Biological Sciences, and ninth for Life Sciences (QS World University Rankings by Subject 2024).

One of the highlights this year has been the opening of the People and Nature Lab Rooftop Garden, a testament to UCL's commitment to interdisciplinary collaboration and our Grand Challenges. This innovative space is already a vibrant hub for both research and relaxation.

I extend my congratulations to Professors Ijeoma Uchegbu FMedSci and Andreas Schatzlein from the UCL School of Pharmacy, who have been honoured with the King's Award for Enterprise 2024 in the category of innovation. This remarkable achievement underscores the cutting-edge work within our Faculty.

We are also celebrating the School of Pharmacy's recent success in achieving the Silver Athena SWAN Award, reflecting our ongoing dedication to advancing gender equality and supporting career progression for all staff.

Our alumni continue to shine on the global stage, with three of our own – Sioned Jones, Tara O'Driscoll, and James McBride – making the latest Forbes 30 Under 30 Europe list. Their achievements are a source of great pride and inspiration.

In research news, we are thrilled to announce that Professor Jürg Bähler from the UCL Institute of Healthy Ageing has secured two large funding grants. Professor Bähler has been awarded an ERC Advanced Grant, one of nine awarded to UCL researchers this year. This prestigious funding will support his pioneering work on the roles of priority unstudied proteins in cellular quiescence and ageing. Additionally, he has received an eight-year Wellcome Discovery Award to pursue bold and creative research ideas that promise significant advances in our understanding of human life, health, and wellbeing.

Our Faculty's research continues to capture widespread attention. Professor Roberto Mayor's study on how pressure in the womb may influence facial development has garnered significant media coverage. Additionally, a global analysis co-led by Professor Ian C.K. Wong and Dr Kenneth Man suggests that the link between maternal diabetes and child ADHD may not be causal, challenging previous assumptions and opening new avenues for research.

I am immensely proud of our Faculty's accomplishments and the extraordinary team that makes them possible. I look forward to sharing more exciting developments with you in the months ahead.

Do keep in touch with us and, if you are using [LinkedIn](#), follow us for lively and engaging content and to keep in touch with what is happening here at UCL.

**Professor Gail Taylor**  
Dean, UCL Faculty of Life Sciences



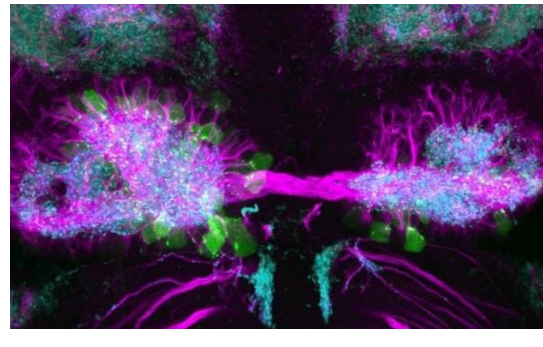
## Faculty of Life Sciences News



### Genes provide hope for the survival of Arabia's last big cat

The release of captive bred Arabian leopards carefully selected for their genes could make a significant contribution to the successful recovery of the critically endangered wild population and avert extinction, according to new research involving UCL.

[Read more on our website >>](#)



### Left side story: new insights into the genetics of brain asymmetry

Differences between the left and right sides of the nervous system are seen in all animals, including humans. This study reveals a new piece in the puzzle of how such asymmetries can arise.

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### Analysis: A new AI tool to help monitor coral reef health

PhD candidate Ben Williams (UCL Centre for Biodiversity and Environment Research and ZSL's Institute of Zoology) writes with a colleague about why they built SurfPerch, an AI led system to make it faster and easier for marine scientists to answer ecological questions.

Coral reefs cover only 0.1% of the ocean's surface — yet they host 25% of all known marine species. It is critical that we greatly scale-up our efforts to monitor, manage, protect and restore reefs around the world that are in crisis as a result of threats such as overfishing, disease, coastal construction or heatwaves.

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### Cell division, fishing, Latin and some far eastern languages - Richard Poole's lab combines all!

Richard Poole's lab (UCL Cell and Developmental Biology) has recently had a paper published in the prestigious journal, 'Development'. Here, we reveal their findings - and links to fishing, and the Latin, Japanese and Korean languages!

The development of multicellular organisms creates various cell types with unique molecular signatures and specific sizes, often through asymmetric cell division. This paper suggests that the regulation of neural fate and cell size is a mechanism to ensure adequate neuronal size during *C. elegans* embryonic development, where cell growth mechanisms do not operate.

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## Faculty Awards and Accolades



### Nanometrics awarded the King's Award for Enterprise 2024 – Innovation

Nanometrics Ltd, founded by Professors Ijeoma Uchegbu and Andreas Schätzlein, has received a King's Award for Enterprise in the category of Innovation. The King's Award for Enterprise is the most prestigious business award in the UK.

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### Semir Zeki elected International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Professor Semir Zeki, Professor of Neuroesthetics in the Department of Cell & Developmental Biology, has officially been confirmed as an International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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### ISIS Impact Award – understanding therapeutic antibodies

Professor Steve Perkins (Division of Biosciences) and Dr Jayesh Bhatt (Department of Physics & Astronomy) have received the Society Impact Award 2024 from ISIS, STFC (UKRI).

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### Athena Swan Silver Award for the UCL School of Pharmacy

We are delighted to announce that the UCL School of Pharmacy has been awarded a Silver Athena Swan award following the application submission in March 2024.

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## Meet the Expert: Joanne Littlefair



Dr Joanne Littlefair is a researcher at the People and Nature Lab at UCL East. Within her role, she pioneers innovative methods to monitor and protect biodiversity. We met up with her recently to talk about her research and what motivates her. Here's what she told us.

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