

# LifeTimes

## Winter 2023

As another year draws to a close, I am delighted to welcome you to the winter edition of the Faculty LifeTimes newsletter. We have had another busy year at UCL and are delighted to share some of our news with you.

On 29 February 2024, will see the return of our Faculty lecture series with Dr Laura Porro, UCL Division of Biosciences, talking about her work applying cutting-edge technology to reconstruct skull shapes, and shedding light on the lifestyles of extinct animals. [Numbers are limited so please sign up early!](#)

As always, I would like to acknowledge the excellent team that we have in the Faculty of Life Sciences. This year has seen more staff from the Faculty identified as "one in 1,000 Citation Elite" on *Clarivate's annual Highly Cited Researchers List 2023*. We have new appointments, including Professor Tim Behrens joining the Sainsbury Wellcome Centre.

Among the research grants and accolades is the news of major new funding for a new Strategic Research Centre, led by Professor Paola Vergani, which will address issues arising from Cystic Fibrosis.

Our research continues to make headlines with a study in *Neuron* that shows how hunger hormones impact the hippocampus to define behaviour around food. Further studies featured highlight the impact of farming practices on disease and how biodiversity protects against invasions of non-native tree species.

You can also read about the impact of big tides on a field trip at Blakeney Point, which led to students having a rare sighting of a squid! And we continue our series of Meet the Experts and this edition features Kate Jones, Director at the People and Nature Lab located at our new location, UCL East.

I have really enjoyed my time as Interim Dean leading the Faculty and I am sure you will all join me in welcoming our new Dean, Professor Gail Taylor, who takes up her new role in the spring. Gail is currently Chair of Plant Sciences at University of California, Davis (UC Davis). As our President and Provost, Dr Michael Spence AC commented: "Life Sciences is a big, brilliant faculty and I am delighted that, after an extensive international search, we are able to welcome Gail to UCL to lead it. She brings a wealth of expertise, and I am very much looking forward to working with her."

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the contributions made by you, our alumni, in supporting our students and wider UCL community. This year sees the launch of UCL's startups' latest range of not-so-usual gift ideas so you can [discover presents you're unlikely to find in the shops](#), and support a UCL-created business at the same time. We look forward to seeing more of you in 2024.

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.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

**Professor Stephanie Schorge**  
Dean, UCL Faculty of Life Sciences (Interim)



## Faculty of Life Sciences News



### Farming practices could have helped a bacteria to become an important cause of disease in both pigs and people

Livestock farming practices may contribute to the rise of disease-causing pathogens, according to a recent PNAS study with lead author Dr Gemma Murray and senior author Dr Lucy Weinert, UCL's UCL Division of Biosciences, who worked with researchers from the University of Cambridge.

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



### Biodiversity protects against invasions of non-native tree species

This global study reveals the widespread impact of non-native tree invasions, with human activity proximity playing a key role. The research, led by ETH Zurich and published in *Nature*, identifies regions most vulnerable to such invasions.

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



### Big tides at Blakeney Point

In September, the full moon spring tide coincided with winds that pushed more water than expected into Blakeney Harbour, and up to and into the Old Life Boat House. It also brought an [unusual visitor in the form of a squid](#), which was caught by students from the Division of Biosciences and released safely back into the harbour.

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



### Tribute to Professor David Brown

It is with great sadness that we relay the news of David Brown's (FIBiol, FRS) passing in October.

Recognised as a Fellow of the Royal Society, and known for his innovative lab techniques and contributions to pharmacology, colleagues remember him as a pioneering scientist and mentor, whose work spanned molecular studies and behavior, with a legacy of scientific collaboration and inspiration.

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

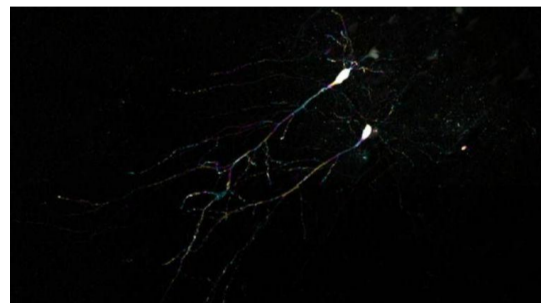
## Faculty Awards and Accolades



### Tim Behrens joins SWC as Group Leader

Dr Tim Behrens joins UCL as a Group Leader at Sainsbury Wellcome Centre (SWC). The Behrens Lab at SWC will focus on how brains learn and represent knowledge about the world to enable flexible behaviours. Tim will also retain a portion of his group at the University of Oxford.

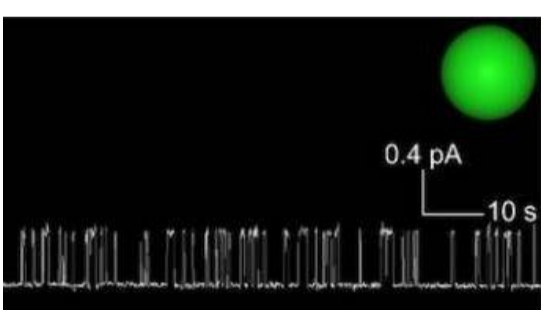
[Read more on our website >>](#)



### Lab shows hunger hormones impact the hippocampus to define behaviour around food

A hunger hormone produced in the gut can directly impact a decision-making part of the brain in order to drive an animal's behaviour, finds a new study Ryan Wee in the MacAskill Lab in Neuroscience, Physiology & Pharmacology.

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



### Major new funding for UCL Cystic Fibrosis research centre announced

The Cystic Fibrosis Trust has announced £1.4m co-funding for two new Strategic Research Centres. One of the recipients is a team led by Dr Paola Vergani, Associate Professor, UCL Division of Biosciences.

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



### Life Sciences academics recognised in annual global list of influential researchers

The Faculty lists a number of researchers among the 60 UCL academics featured in Clarivate's annual 'Highly Cited Researchers List' 2023.

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

## Meet the Expert: Kate Jones



We recently had the opportunity to connect with Kate Jones, Professor of Ecology and Biodiversity, UCL Division of Biosciences and Director at the People and Nature Lab located at UCL East.

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

## Alumni Services and Benefits

Discover the wide range of services and benefits available to you as a UCL alum by visiting our [alumni website](#). Access a wide range of talks and e-journals, and benefits including discounts for London hotels, travel companies and much more.

Stay connected to UCL through [social media](#), and join our [Official Alumni Group](#) on LinkedIn to build your network and get involved with UCL's remarkable global alumni community.

[Visit the UCL Alumni website](#)

Connect and share:



[Unsubscribe](#): By clicking this link you will unsubscribe from all future UCL fundraising and alumni communications.

Contact: [alumni@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:alumni@ucl.ac.uk) +44(0)20 3108 3833

View the UCL Office of the Vice-President (Advancement) [Data Protection statement](#).

Copyright UCL Alumni Relations. All rights reserved.