



## BIOLOGY/ALLIED HEALTH DEPARTMENT

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

By Everett Young, MD



Everett Young and his wife, Juli, celebrate his medical school graduation in May 2025.



During a General Biology camping trip, Jake Krein, Sarah Pan, Sierra Sanchez, Ivan Muchiutti, Adam Fisher, Alexa Muchiutti, Daniella Fisher, Cheryl Wang, Everett Young, and Mason Clark (front center), became the Squirrel Corn group.

It's hard to believe that next summer will mark 10 years since I first began my undergraduate journey at Southern. Looking back, I realize just how profoundly those years shaped my life, far more than I could have imagined when I first arrived on campus nine years ago.

The friendships I made through Southern remain one of the greatest blessings of my life. I still remember the spring semester of freshman year when the Biology Department held its annual General Biology camping trip. We had to form our own groups, each named after a plant. My group proudly called ourselves "Squirrel Corn," and that quirky name became the foundation of some of my closest friendships — bonds that have lasted long beyond graduation.

We spent many weekends hiking, chasing

waterfalls, or braving cold nights while back-packing. Southern also opened doors for travel and adventure. During my junior year, I joined a medical mission trip to Peru, serving local communities and even visiting Machu Picchu before returning home. The following summer, several of us took a Tropical Ecology course in the Bahamas, where we alternated between snorkeling in turquoise waters and battling sunburns, mosquitoes, and relentless humidity. Later that year, I climbed the tallest and third-tallest mountains in Mexico, which was an unforgettable mix of exhaustion and exhilaration.

One of my favorite memories came that fall, when a few friends invited me on a local water-

Alumni Spotlight Continued on page 3

Life Sciences



# DEPARTMENT HAPPENINGS

By Keith Snyder, PhD



*Professor Keith Snyder, Sandy and Professor Corbit, Peter Ni, Jose Montiel, Joshua Jenkins, Luke Singletary, Owen Kim, Minha Yang, and Ashley Paik attended Smoky Mountain Creation Retreat.*

On October 3-5, Professor Aaron Corbit and his wife, Sandy, and Professor Keith Snyder took seven students to the Smoky Mountains for a Creation Retreat hosted by Todd Woods of Core Academy of Science. The participants discussed how short-term creation is impacted by theistic evolution and alternative views from the Christian viewpoint. It was a great time to get to know some non-SDA creationists to build bridges in deep thought about common ideas. Our students were especially impacted by the challenges of trying to meld a Christian worldview with that of evolution, since these seem to be mutually exclusive.

Through personal friends, Professor Abhishek Thavamani was invited to host a health fair for the Indian Association of Chattanooga on September 14 at the Standifer Gap Park. Sixteen students and several faculty participated in the event, which was organized by the Pre-Med Club. They welcomed participants, tested blood pressure and blood glucose, gave massages, measured BMI, and shared health-age calculations. The visits were capped off with flyers and re-

sources, along with small gifts and dental kits for the kids (courtesy of Kianna Simmons-DeGraff, a local dentist). The all-day event started slowly, but as the kids got interested, so did the parents.

The number of students interested in pursuing research this year has grown substantially. Typically, about a dozen students take one of the four research classes: Research in Biology (introduc-

tion), Proposal Writing, Research (their own research), and Senior Thesis. This year we have almost twice as many involved in these classes. This is great for the students, since they can get one-on-one research exposure with highly qualified professors. Many have recently co-authored articles in peer-reviewed journal publications (see QR codes to the right).



*Students have fun during icebreaker rotations at department convocation on October 2.*



The Biology/Allied Health Department has been publishing more than ever before. Professor David Nelsen has been extremely productive and able to include many students in both his popular and professional publications. They include:

### Popular Level (News Interviews with Professor Nelsen)



1. Joro spider patrol: National Park Service seeks help tracking species



2. Joro spiders continue spreading across southeastern U.S. and beyond

### Peer-reviewed

1. Keep calm and carry on: bites from *Trichonephila clavata* are unlikely and cause minimal discomfort”



2. “Chemical management strategies for the invasive Joro spider, *Trichonephila clavata* (Araneae: Araneidae)”



3. Mitochondrial and Wolbachia phylogenetics of the introduced Joro spider, *Trichonephila clavata* (Araneae: Araneidae) in North America



Professor Abishek Thavamani has recently published work from his research titled: Masculinizing Testosterone Therapy Reduces the Incidence of PIK-3CA-Mutant/ER+ Breast Cancer but not BRCA1-Associated Triple-Negative Breast Cancer. medRxiv [preprint]. Sept. 19, 2025.

Professor Keith Snyder has been working with professors from the University of North Dakota, Auburn University, Southwestern Adventist University, and University of Maryland. Their paper titled “Trace Element Taphonomy of the Hanson Ranch Edmontosaurus Bonebed Supports its Origin via Transportation of a Mass Death Assemblage” in chemical geology adds weight to a non-traditional (creation-friendly) view of how dinosaurs were killed and buried. A follow-up publication last month furthering this work can be found at:



The Biology/Allied Health Department hosted a Convocation on October 2 with icebreaker activities for students and faculty. Every five minutes, mixed groups of students rotated between faculty-facilitated icebreakers, which challenged them to find commonalities and to build connections among themselves. Stations included Common Ground; Silent Line-



Students serving the community at a Health Fair on September 14.

up; Human Knot; Picasso; Hula Hoop Challenges; Rock, Paper, Scissors; and Paper Airplane Facts. Over 90 students attended, shared, laughed, and enjoyed light refreshments following the event.

Our department has acquired a new (to us) -80 freezer. This increases our storage capacity for research projects and class materials. Negative 80 degrees is required for long-term storage of biological samples, genetic materials, etc., to prevent degradation over long periods. Our old -80 has served us well but is showing its age. Funds for this great upgrade were from capital equipment. ■

### Alumni Spotlight (Continued from page 1)

fall hike. They brought along a visitor from Andrews University. We struck up a conversation that weekend, then kept in touch after she returned to school. Last year in June, I was incredibly blessed to marry her.

After graduating from Southern, I attended medical school at Loma Linda University. Many of my friends from

Southern also studied there for medical or dental school, and despite our hectic schedules, we found time for Sabbath lunches, beach trips, and study breaks. Those friendships once again carried me through challenging years. Graduating in May of 2025 was bittersweet; after nearly a decade of learning and growing together, we were all heading our separate ways.

Today, my wife and I are completing our residency training in Las Vegas, Nevada. Though many of us are now scattered across the country, the friendships formed at Southern continue to be a steady source of support and joy, a reminder that some experiences stay with us for life. ■

# INSIGHTS FROM THE PROFESSOR

By Paulo Dias, MD

## True Success

Every new academic year brings the thrill of getting to know a new group of students as we spend time together in class, and for a professor, it's energizing to hear the plans, projects, and dreams of each student. What a privilege to be a small contributor to the construction of each student's present and future. We all rejoice when we see our students march on graduation day, when they proceed to new challenges, and when we see them succeed as professionals, individuals, and citizens. However, as I think more about this, I wonder: How do we measure success in an individual's life? Two examples in the Bible come to my mind: Saul of Tarsus and the young rich ruler.

Saul, a brilliant young man, was educated at the feet of one of the best teachers of his time: Gamaliel. Rising like a rock star, he was an extraordinary Pharisee (at the time one of the most prestigious societies to be part of), Saul was probably a member of the Sanhedrin (equivalent of a member of the House of Congress), a zealous and trustworthy militant of the morals and principles of the established church, a leader in the execution of heretical followers of Jesus Christ—a blasphemer who proclaimed to be the I AM God—have mercy!! I can only imagine how proud of Saul his family, friends, teachers, and church leaders must have been. Surely they considered him a gem of his nation. Then, in the moment of “insanity,” Saul converted to Christianity, sacrificing everything: family, status, prestige, economic stability, and personal safety, being later beaten, stoned, jailed, and finally beheaded by order of Nero. Surely, to many this seemed like a total life failure! Yet, he leaves a strong legacy as author of more than half of the New Testament books, a role model to thousands in the past, present, and future. Only heaven will reveal the complete works of Saul of Tarsus, the apostle Paul.

In the case of the rich young ruler, scripture reveals much about him: young, capable, recognized, successful, respected, intelligent, inquisitive, a seeker of the truth. His sincere question to Jesus in Matthew 19:16 (NASB) says much about him: “Teacher, what good thing shall I do so that I may obtain eternal life?” (What professor does not rejoice when a sincere student seeks to be in the kingdom of God?) His dialogue with Jesus shows his profound knowledge of the law of God and how he was intentional in applying and living his life according to it. Jesus told him “If you want to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have a treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew 19:21, NASB). The young ruler chose not to sacrifice his successful, promising life for what looked like a gloomy unsuccessful future, thereby giving up, his eternal life with Jesus. Legacy: no known act

of this young man's life is registered after this moment.

The question stands: who was truly successful in this life? Saul of Tarsus or the young rich ruler? As a professor, I look at my students and try to imagine where they will be in 10, 20, or 30 years. Maybe one will be a future Nobel prize laureate, or a renowned professional, a successful entrepreneur, or a dedicated missionary in a remote country...and all that is fantastic. However, if any of us does not make it to heaven, what a waste!

***“True success in education, as in everything else, is found in keeping the future life in view.”***  
(Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p.21)

May we all succeed in this life which God has given us for preparing our characters for eternity. ■



# STUDENTS IN SERVICE

*By Bridgette Oh, junior pre-physical therapy major*



*Bridgette Oh befriends students as a student missionary in Saipan.*

## Make Me a Servant

It is the last day of my student mission year, and I can think of no better way to reflect than to write about how service has changed my life forever.

At first, I arrived as simply a teacher's assistant. I would assist the third-graders and fourth-graders with their multiplication and their sentence structure. However, we had some complications, and the homeroom teacher for 7th and 8th grades was dismissed. So, I volunteered to take over the position of being an actual teacher, where I taught math and science for grades 5-8, along with Bible for grades 7-8.

At surface level, this might seem like a boring or undesirable job. I often heard comments from people who do not like teaching middle schoolers, saying that they are happy they did not have my job. However, I had the experience of a lifetime. I loved Bible class, where we were able to talk about how the Bible affects our life in practical ways. We talked about how God is not just someone to

pray to at night. He is Someone we have a relationship with, and because of that relationship, the decisions we make are different. Since Saipan is a primarily Catholic island, it was especially rewarding being able to show them how the Bible is alive.

In addition, I truly feel that I was more than their teacher; I was their friend. The age gap between the students and me was quite close, and therefore, we laughed so much in class. We found similar jokes hilarious, we liked the same songs, and their desire to have fun gave my classroom a warm and joyful atmosphere.

I realized that middle schoolers are a little sassy, as others had mentioned. However, that only scrapes the surface. They feel deeply, they play hard, and they bring a loud energy that is hard not to love. I loved working with middle schoolers. I loved making explosive volcanoes and memorizing raps about cells to help them remember the different organelles. I loved being able to be

their older sister and have meaningful conversations with them.

I always find it insane how I often serve others for their benefit, but in the end, I am the one who comes out more blessed. Yes, the students needed someone to teach them, but I needed this gap year to grow as a person, and my students are the ones who gave me that opportunity. It was such an honor and privilege to be a part of their lives, and I am indebted to them. I have learned what really matters in life.

There are so many things I want to do with my life. I want to be a missionary as a physical therapist, a loving mom, a reliable friend, a good daughter, and a strong leader. However, whatever I do, I pray that God will make me a servant. I want to be humble and meek, lifting up those who are weak. May the rest of my life be a humble reflection of the servant character Jesus showed us when He walked this Earth. ■





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