

The History of the Biology Department

Howard University was founded March 2, 1867 during the Reconstruction era after the Civil War. The departments of Botany and Zoology along with Medicine were established to represent the life sciences. The departments joined other academic units in the humanities and the social sciences during the beginning years of the university. The department of Zoology was established in 1907 with Dr. Ernest E. Just as its first Head/Chairman (1907-1938). The Botany department offered its first course in 1867 and was established as a department in 1922. Dr. Thomas W. Turner was the first Head/Chairman of the department. Initially the departments were located in the Physics building (Thirkiel Hall).

In 1957 the Biology – Greenhouse building opened. It was a state-of-the-art facility designed by Dr. Marie C. Taylor (Head/Chairman – Botany department 1947-1976) and Dr. Harold E. Finley (Head/Chairman Zoology department 1947-1969).

The academic programs of the departments offered specializations in cytology, endocrinology, embryology, genetics, parasitology, photobiology, virology, microbiology, bacteriology, immunology, plant physiology, plant populations and environment.

The Departments of Botany and Zoology both began M.S. graduate programs in 1930. The Botany M.S. program begun under the leadership of Dr. Charles Parker (Head, 1922-1947) produced nearly 300 M.S. degrees. Fifteen alumni have gone on to earn doctoral degrees in Botany (17% of all African-American Botanists), and 53 have received doctorates in other biological disciplines. The M.S. program in Zoology, established under Dr. Just, produced more than 300 graduates, many of whom have continued on to earn their Ph.D. degrees. The Ph.D. graduate program in Zoology, the third doctoral program at Howard University, was founded in 1958 under the guidance of Dr. Harold E. Finley.

The department has awarded doctoral degrees to over 125 students who represent more than 12% of the total living African-American biology Ph.D. holders in the United States. In addition, the department represented an essential training site for students from other historically black colleges and universities that did not have doctoral programs.

The Departments of Botany and Zoology, along with elements of Geology and Geography, merged to form the Department of Biology in July 1992.

The Mission of the Biology Department

The mission, goals and objectives of the department closely parallel those of the University. The department has established a strong instructional and research unit in contemporary biological sciences and maintains a faculty that is committed to optimizing the pursuit of new knowledge and the discovery of new information through original research and to the communication of specialized information and skills. The department is committed to providing a broad program of research and instruction within the biological sciences focused on: providing undergraduate and graduate students with course instruction and research opportunities, conducting original research in a variety of areas in the biological sciences and commitment to promoting scientific literacy in the university community.

At the undergraduate level, the department offers programs leading to the Bachelor of Science degree. The department offers both lecture and laboratory courses as well as research opportunities organized around three areas of concentration: Cellular and Molecular Biology, Anatomy and Physiology, and Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. The department particularly encourages students to participate in research opportunities offered by departmental faculty and by other academic, federal and private organizations. Graduates are qualified to seek advanced graduate degrees, pursue teaching or work at the technical level in governmental, industrial, or private research organizations.

About Ernest Everett Just

Ernest Everett Just (August 14, 1883-October 27, 1941) was a pioneering African-American biologist, academic and science writer. Just's primary legacy is his recognition of the fundamental role of the cell surface in the development of organisms. In his work within marine biology, cytology and parthenogenesis, he advocated the study of whole cells under normal conditions, rather than simply breaking them apart in a laboratory setting. Just took what seemed to be the best choice available to him and accepted a teaching position at historically black Howard University in Washington, D.C.

College of Arts and Sciences Degree Scheme Department of Biology Biology Major 120 Hours

Biology Requirements (for a major)

Biology Courses required for the major (Must be passed with a minimum grade of C)

Biology	BIOL 101, 120	8
Genetics	BIOL 200	4
Biology Electives	BIOL 494/495	22
Senior Seminar	BIOL 494	1
Total Biology Major Requirements		35

Other Requirements (for the Biology Major)

General Chemistry	CHEM 003/005	5
General Chemistry	CHEM 004/006	5
Organic Chemistry	CHEM 141/142	6
Organic Chemistry	CHEM 145	3
Physics	PHYS 001/002	10
Total Other Biology Major Requirements		29

College of Arts and Sciences Requirements

English	3 Courses	9
Mathematics	2 Courses	7
Division A	3 Courses	9
Division B	1 Course	3
Division C	2 Courses	6
(Divisions: African-American Studies Cluster)		
Foreign Language	4 Courses	12
Philosophy	1 Course	3
Speech	1 Course	3
Physical Education	3 Courses	3
(3 1-credit courses, must include Swimming) (1 health, 1 activity and swimming)		
Freshman Orientation	1 Course	1
Total COAS Requirements		56

TOTAL REQUIRED CREDITS 120

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DEPARTMENT of BIOLOGY

BIOLOGISTS CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE



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