



2019 Scholar on Campus Nominee: Christopher Blair, PhD

I knew when I accepted my position in fall 2014 that City Tech was a teaching-intensive institution. However, I also realized that the college was continuing to place more emphasis on research and scholarship. I found this dual focus appealing, which is one of the reasons that I was attracted to City Tech and CUNY. I also continue to have a strong interest in educating historically underrepresented groups in fundamental scientific principles both in and outside of the classroom.

Until recently (fall 2018), the Department of Biological Sciences was housed in the Pearl building with extremely limited research space, which made it very difficult to pursue scholarship and mentor students. However, I was able to overcome these hardships through a combination of dedication, excellent collaborators, and financial support from City Tech. Since beginning my position, I have published 10 peer-reviewed papers in high impact journals in my field. In addition, I have mentored multiple Biomedical Informatics students on research projects focused on rattlesnake evolution and diversification, chameleon biogeography, gecko population genomics, and horned lizard speciation. One of my former mentees, Tristan Charran, did such a good job on his internship project that he will be first author on an upcoming publication that is currently in revision with *Biological Journal of the Linnean Society*. I am now fortunate to have state-of-the-art lab space in the New Academic Building, and I am eager to continue supervising undergraduate students. I am also interested in mentoring doctoral students through my cross appointment at the Graduate Center. To date, I have taught three doctoral courses, served on two dissertation committees, served on Graduate Council, and presently serve as Interim Chair of the Ecology, Evolution, and Behavior subprogram. Increasing the presence of doctoral students at City Tech will further increase the research impact of the institution, while also providing additional personnel to enhance the undergraduate research experience.

In addition to continually publishing in high impact journals, I have obtained two PSC-CUNY grants and submitted multiple proposals to the National Science Foundation (NSF). I was also invited to serve as a NSF panelist, and traveled to Virginia to review and discuss several proposals to decide on funding allocations. This was an amazing experience that allowed me to network and get a better sense of the types of projects of interest to NSF. I am also continually invited to peer-review manuscripts in the fields of molecular systematics, population genetics, phylogenetics, and biogeography. For two consecutive years I was one of the top reviewers in the journal *Molecular Ecology*. I also continue to attend the annual Evolution meeting where I present new research, network, and discuss new and exciting directions for the field of evolutionary genetics.