



# The Critical Zone

CLIPS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

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## Notes from Dept Head



Friend,

As we continue to isolate and socially distant, it is exciting to plan for a time in the not-too-distant future when we can return to our classrooms, laboratories, and field sites to re-engage—side-by-side—with the people and science we value so highly.

Here is a (not exhaustive) list of research projects on the front burner for some ENVIS folks:

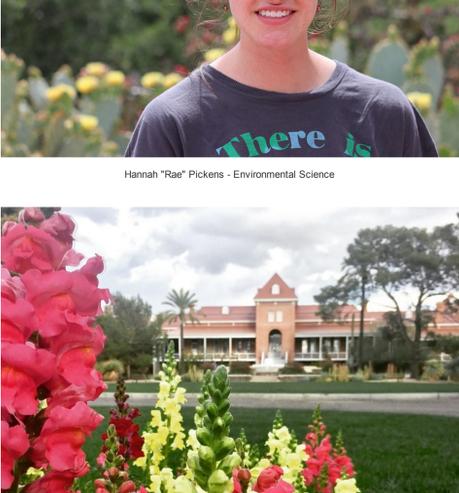
- Renewal of UAs Superfund Research Program focused on the environmental fate and toxicology of arsenic derived from mining environments
- Studies into the survival of coronavirus on surfaces and in wastewater
- Degradation of organic contaminants by redox-active minerals
- Role of organic matter composition in simulating recovery of degraded arid landscapes

Our faculty and staff are also collaborating on an instructional project: the establishment of a new UA Global Microcampus for the ENVIS B.S. major at Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University in Yangling, China. The first student cohort will join in September 2020, taught by three new ENVIS professors based in Yangling.

This project represents a global reach of our undergraduate curriculum, and is testament to the demand worldwide for our unique pedagogical approach to environmental science.

*Jo Chan*

## Meet the People



### Welcoming New Faculty

Bringing with her a fresh 'plant perspective' to a department with a deep knowledge of soil and geochemistry, Dr. Alicia Babst-Kostecka joins (virtually for now) as an assistant professor.

[Read Alicia's Story](#)

## Spring 2020 Outstanding Students

Click the photos to read their interviews!



Hannah "Rae" Pickens - Environmental Science

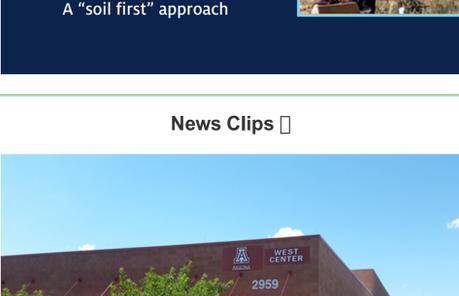


Casey Gajewski - Sustainable Plant Systems



Joy Custer - MS Student

## Virtual Events



Over 40 ENVIS students created lightning talks on their research and projects for an internal EarthWeek D2L. Our students placed 2nd (Richelle Thomas), 3rd (Chelsea Mendoza), and 4th (Ariel Leger) out of 15 total presenters during the virtual SEES presentation on April 22!

Click any image to watch their talks!

We will be adding more talks soon!

**EarthWeek ENvision 2020**

**Richelle Thomas**  
presents

Heavy metal contamination of medicinal plants: Implications for public health of Indigenous people



**EarthWeek ENvision 2020**

**Chelsea Mendoza**  
presents

Arsenic field test-kits provide rapid and accurate readings in harvested rainwater



**EarthWeek ENvision 2020**

**Ariel Leger**  
presents

Using mulch and compost to increase restoration success: A "soil first" approach



## News Clips



### UArizona Tracking Coronavirus Through Wastewater Across US

Dr. Ian Pepper, Dr. Charles Gerba, Dr. Walter Betancourt, and others at the West Center are testing wastewater across the country to trace coronavirus prevalence in communities and to help public health officials better prepare for the future.

[Read the story](#)



### Four Students Get Creative to Communicate Science

Supported by the CLIMAS Environment & Society Graduate Fellowship, Norma Villagómez-Márquez, Alma Anides Morales, JoRee LaFrance, and Kunal Palawat put research into action through illustrations, community engagement, film-making and cooking expertise.

[Read the story](#)



### Making Citizen Science Accessible For All

Socioeconomic factors affect countless other life outcomes but they do not predict the success of a citizen scientist, according to research and recent publication by Dr. Mónica Ramírez-Andreotta and recent UA alumna Leona Davis.

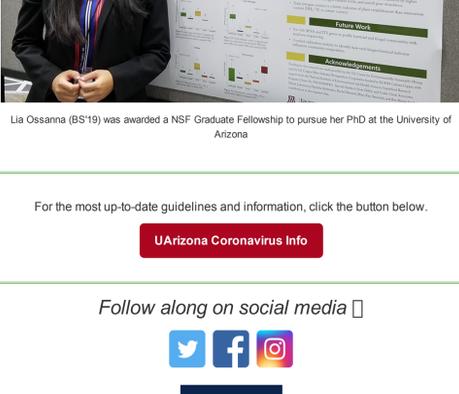
[Read the story](#)



### Sculpting a Saguaro for Climate Science

Senior Rae Pickens wanted to culminate her environmental science major experience with an honor's thesis project that combined her interest in science communication and art that would speak to the local Tucson community.

[Read the story](#)



### Desert Trails and Microbial Life Excite This Soil Scientist

Doctoral candidate Lydia Jennings shares her journey to science, and how she wants her research on mining and microbes to help her Indigenous community.

[Read the story](#)

## Quick Bites

- Join CALS for the **Virtual Graduation Convocation on Friday May 15pm at 2pm Arizona Time**, livestreamed on the [CALS Facebook page](#).
- Check out [VCAT \(Virtual Computing Access Technology\)](#) for **FREE UA access to specialized software and applications** (Adobe, ArcGIS, Mendely, RStudio, and more). Contact Malik Hawkins with any questions.
- [Meet Ryan Daily](#), a licensed professional counselor and **new life management counselor in CALS** who provides in-house, no-cost and confidential mental health counseling for undergraduate students along with counseling consulting for faculty and staff.
- Check out the [CALS Virtual Student Experience](#) to help prospective students learn and explore CALS.

[E-Newsletter Archive](#)

## Snapshots

Highlights from social media!



Master's student Kunal Palawat was featured in "a Day in Life" on @lifeatuarizona!



Postdoc Dr. Priyanka Kushwaha is an AGU 2020 Voices for Science Advocate



Dr. Rivka Fidel adopted these bio crust cultures when essential research was shut down



Dr. Ian Pepper was awarded the UA Graduate College Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching and Mentoring

"This award means a lot to me—when I see I've made an impact on students' lives, it's very special."



Lia Ossanna (BS'19) was awarded a NSF Graduate Fellowship to pursue her PhD at the University of Arizona

For the most up-to-date guidelines and information, click the button below.

[UArizona Coronavirus Info](#)

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