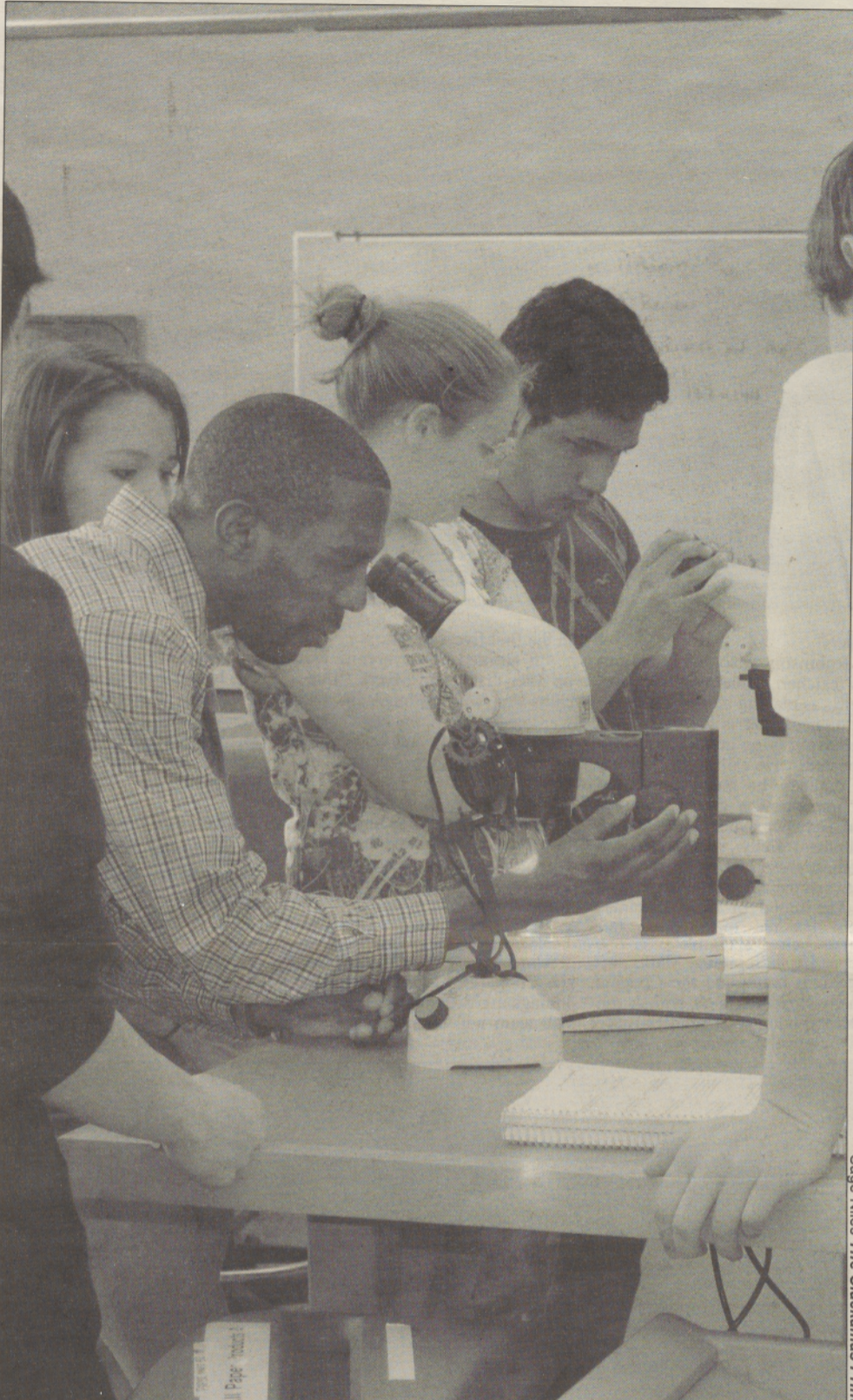


Instructor brings new life to biology



Tory Blackwell works with his students in his 1 to 2:50 p.m. biology lab class. He adjusts the focus on the microscope to better observe the specimen in the petri dish below, while his students record observations of their own.

Sage Niles The Clackamas Print

"I have a long and checkered past," said Tory Blackwell. Tory Blackwell is referring of course to his years teaching and doing scientific research. It is important to note that this quote was followed by a laugh that represents Blackwell's sense of humor and wit.

Blackwell is a new hire at Clackamas Community College and the end of this term will mark his first year at the college. Blackwell teaches entry level biology course and is currently teaching General Biology 103.

He has taught anatomy and physiology at Parkland Community College in Illinois, and undergraduate research courses at the University of Illinois. From 2006 up until he was hired at CCC, he has primarily been doing research and teaching part-time.

The research he was doing is undoubtedly interesting and involved real world applications.

"The first project I was on in Illinois, which I was on for about five years, was research on fragile x protein, so fragile x disorder is in autism class of disorders. I like to describe it as sort of a combination of Down's Syndrome and autism," said Blackwell.

Another major project involved the study of bees.

"I spent about a year and a half looking at fat storage in honey bees, because honey bees that live in a hive that nurse honey bees are fatty. They have huge fat storages, but the ones that you usually see out on plants don't have very much fat. The idea is if we could understand which genes get turned on and off when you go from being a nurse to a forager, then we could understand how that switch from fatty to skinny works," said Blackwell.

Most of the research that Blackwell has done has been at the basic level, the level of research that lays the groundwork and precedence for study into larger levels that culminate into clinical research that gets applied to human beings.

Students at CCC have come to enjoy Blackwell's classes and teaching style in particular.

"He's a good teacher; he

really is. He knows his stuff. He's definitely put the research in on the biology parts, especially with the way the class is set up working with the workbooks," said student Michael Ando.

Jennifer Bown the Science Department Chair has noticed the students liking to Blackwell as well.

"I've heard nothing but great things, they're always lined up at his door. He seems to be very patient with them and he always spends a lot of time in the lab," said Bown.

Bown was responsible for hiring Blackwell last year.

"He just has a dynamite background, wonderful energy. He's got a tremendous amount of molecular biology which is something we wanted to bring in and infuse in our science program," said Bown.

Although Blackwell's main interest is science, he shares other hobbies as well.

"I have a seven year old and a four year old so right now most of our hobbies are very child-centric, both of my boys are both into comic books, we went to the Portland Comic-Con. We are going to the Stump Town Comic-Con because they just really love to see people dressed up," said Blackwell.

The year so far has been enjoyable for Blackwell, the science department and students alike. Blackwell's impression of students at CCC has been very positive.

"Our students here don't generally come in with that 'I'm going to go to medical school mentality.' There's a lot more diversity. I feel like they might have a long term plan, but they've got some flexibility in their long term plan," said Blackwell.

“

He is a good teacher; he really is. He knows his stuff.”

Michael Ando
Student

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