

DATA VERSIFY

Dr. Peggy Biga

Researcher Background:

Peggy Biga (she/her) is a comparative physiologist at Texas State University. The Biga Lab studies the mechanisms that regulate how large or small an organism grows. Her research has focused on specific molecular markers that might affect how skeletal muscle cells become committed from stem cells. This work is conducted mainly in fish species, as fish can generally continue growing throughout their lives, while mammals mostly have a size pre-set at birth.



Q: How would you describe your science to a 5th grader?

A: I study why elephants grow so large, while mice stay quite small. I work to uncover what causes these differences, since all organisms have the same materials that regulate growth.

Q: Why did you become a biologist?

A: I wanted to be an astronaut when I was young because I loved adventure and asking questions about the unknown (to me at least). As I went through school, particularly university, I realized I loved the idea of being a scientist and testing hypotheses about the natural world. Biology was a natural fit for me because of my love of animals, and my favorite hobby of fishing became a focus of my graduate work.

Q: What is your favorite part of your job?

A: My favorite part of my job as a biologist is working with young people who have such interesting perspectives on life and the natural world around them. Seeing students and trainees have "ah-ha" moments in the lab or classroom is exciting because you get to see your impact on the world through them. The pursuit of knowledge, and a deeper understanding of our world, helps us become the best of who we can be, so passing the love of science to future generations is just amazing.

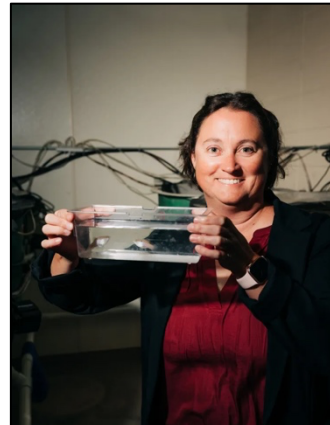
Q: Do you have any aspects of your identity that you feel are underrepresented, marginalized, or minoritized in STEM or society?

A: I think being a woman in science is still not easy. Particularly if the woman wants to have or does have a family. Since our society still assumes main parental responsibilities to women, it is a real struggle to balance life and parenthood with an

academic career in biology. There are more women today in faculty positions in biology departments than there were when I started, but there is still a limited number of women at higher ranks and in administrative roles. I am the only female administrator in my college (Science and Engineering) and it can be lonely sometimes!

Q: What are hobbies and/or interests that you have outside of your research?

A: I love to read, but have to read non-science related works to shut my brain off. I love to read detective series and post-apocalyptic novels. I also love to garden and bake fresh breads. Growing my own healthy food and baking bread without preservatives is a way I relax and take care of myself and my family. I also love to watch my teenager (19 years old) dive into his life at university and play futsal - a sport not very popular in the US, but he plays (and goes to school) in Belgium.



Peggy in her lab with the fish that she researches.

Q: What is your favorite thing about watching your kid explore his new life?

A: Being able to watch him become HIM. It gives me a good feeling to watch him grow, make mistakes, learn from them, and thrive. It gives me hope for the future.



Peggy sightseeing while visiting her son in Belgium.

Q: What advice do you have for aspiring biologists?

A: Look for something that truly brings you joy. Science can be hard, but also very rewarding. It helps if you work on questions that you truly find fascinating and pour yourself into.

Q: What do you believe are key elements that contribute to being successful in biology?

A: Creativity and critical thinking are key elements that help biologists be successful. Along with persistence and perseverance.

Learn more about [Dr. Peggy Biga's research here](#).