



Tenure-Track Assistant Professor of Biology - Invertebrate Biologist

Position Expectations

Teaching. Our new invertebrate biologist colleague will demonstrate a potential for excellence in teaching biology at a small liberal-arts college. We consider excellence in teaching to encompass the fostering of inclusive learning environments, where all students can thrive. Yearly teaching responsibilities most likely will include the following: one core first-year “seminar” style course; one climate biology/ecology/organismal biology core course in collaboration with one or two colleagues (with lab); one intermediate organismal-level course (with lab); and one additional course or seminar in the candidate's area of expertise, for an annual four-course teaching load (where courses with one class and one lab section count as one course). Courses with labs are typically capped at 20-24 students per lab, while the lecture size of the course may range from 18-36 students. Seminars (discussion-based courses) are capped at 12-16 students. In their first year, new tenure-track appointments teach a three-course load. [A list of all our courses is here.](#) Our departmental laboratory manager provides support for laboratory courses and works with faculty to prepare equipment/reagents/etc. prior to lab meeting time; we, Bio faculty, teach our own labs at K.

Research. The successful candidate will develop an active, sustainable, and undergraduate-targeted research program. Active: we desire a colleague with plans for an ongoing and dynamic scholarly research program; this program will generate peer-reviewed scientific publications and presentations with undergraduate co-authors. Sustainable: our colleague will plan long-term research that can be done throughout their time at the college, even after start-up funding might be exhausted; as such, familiarity with, and interest in, seeking external sources of funding through grant applications is desirable. Undergraduate-targeted: candidates will be expected to mentor and work alongside students with independent research projects during the academic year and may also do so over the summer. Our new colleague will receive a dedicated research lab space in the shared biology-chemistry building on campus. Start-up funds will be available and will be negotiated with the administration. The building has multiple pieces of shared equipment and infrastructure that our new colleague may choose to take advantage of with their research work.

Service. Service on college-wide committees and academic advising are both formal requirements of all faculty starting with the second year of employment, although service at Kalamazoo College can take many forms. From their second year onward, tenure-track faculty become members of one or more campus-wide and departmental committees — these committees perform vital roles in the administration of the department, the faculty, and the college. As an academic advisor to undergraduates, tenure-track faculty help advisees track their progress towards graduation, select their classes, and maintain manageable workloads. Service to a faculty's discipline (e.g., as a reviewer, editor, or in a leadership position in an academic society) and/or to entities outside of academia may also be valued as part of each faculty member's tenure evaluation.

Institutional Context

The Biology Department. Our department is currently composed of seven tenured members, one Coordinator of Biology Laboratories, and one Office Coordinator. This search is to replace our beloved colleague Dr. Ann Fraser, who is retiring. We believe we have a healthy, supportive, and well-functioning department.

Student demographics. Our students are refreshingly committed to their education, the liberal arts, and their role as engaged citizens. The department graduates ~50 young biologists per year, accounting for ~15% of all college graduates, making us one of the largest majors on campus. Many of our graduates go on to obtain doctorates in the life sciences: we rank in the top 2% of all U.S. colleges and universities (2020 Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium). We also produce a large number of young biologists headed towards health professions.

A noteworthy trend over the last ten years, both at the College and in our department, is an increase in diversity. Concerted efforts to recruit and enroll a more diverse student body has led to more diversity in race/ethnicity, country of origin, family income level, geography, and first-generation status in the Biology department ([Diversity at K](#)).

DEI efforts. From the preceding link: "In 2018, Kalamazoo College was awarded a \$1-million, five-year grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to participate in a nationwide quest to find ways to better serve students from demographic groups that are underrepresented in science and mathematics. The funds are being used to revise the curriculum of introductory science and math courses to better integrate career guidance and shared concepts between disciplines; enhance academic support centers; provide professional development for faculty and staff to increase their cultural competencies; and revisit the hiring, tenure and promotion policies to better reward inclusive practices."

The Biology department is undergoing a significant curriculum renewal effort in order to address similar issues. We expect to start offering the new curriculum in academic year '24-'25, the same year our new colleague is expected to start.

Support and Resources

Competitive start-up funds, dedicated lab space, and an office (not in the same space as the lab) are all included in the offer. The department values work-life balance and will try to accommodate our new colleague in as many ways as possible — we want our future colleague to be successful! First-year faculty do not have advising duties, are exempt from committee work, and receive a single-course “release” from teaching duties for the year.

Summer research can be supported through departmental funds awarded to students and through institutional [student-faculty research grants](#). Travel funds for conference attendance/presentation (up to \$2,200 [domestic] and \$2,500 [international] per year) and/or support for ‘scholarly activities’ (up to \$2,000) can be requested through a faculty committee. Numerous internal teaching-and-learning funds (e.g., [1](#), [2](#)) are also available, as well as [civic engagement](#) grants and [social justice](#) fellowships (biology faculty have received many of these awards).

To aid in the successful preparation of a tenure packet, a one-term leave is given to fourth-year tenure-track faculty members. After six years of full-time service to the College, faculty can request a sabbatical leave of one-, two-, or three-terms.

Detailed Application Instructions

[Application materials must be submitted here](#). To help you succeed, we have made every effort to be specific about the knowledge, skills, and experience we will assess in the application materials. Candidates should submit materials by 1 October 2023.

Cover letter (two-page maximum)

Summarize your interests in this position. Please address:

- (a) how a position at K aligns with your career goals;
- (b) your experience in, and plans to, mentor young biologists;
- (c) your teaching experience and any innovative approaches you have used and/or plan to use in your teaching;
- (d) your interest in the liberal arts and experiential education;
- (e) any multidisciplinary aspects to your research program.

Curriculum vitae (no page limit)

Summarize your education and professional accomplishments, including mentorship experience. Include names and contact information of three references.

Teaching philosophy (two-page maximum)

Describe your approach to and experience with teaching, including descriptions of pedagogical training, practices, assignments, or activities and how they enhance student learning and belonging. Teaching experience is helpful, and we also prioritize potential for excellence in undergraduate education. Thus, you can discuss activities or approaches you have applied, or will apply, in your teaching and research as well as pedagogical training in which you have participated. Descriptions of the organismal course and a potential upper-level discussion-based seminar you would like to teach are encouraged.

Statement of research interests/plans (two-page maximum)

Provide an overview of your proposed research program at K College, including focal questions, methodologies, and how they align with the position description. Additionally, please address how your research will operate during the academic year with undergraduate researchers, and whether you plan to take advantage of any of the local resources (the College's very own [Lillian Anderson Arboretum](#), nearby [Michigan State University's Kellogg Biological Station](#), or other [local organizations/institution/partners](#)).

Letters of recommendation (three of them)

We debated whether to request letters at the beginning of the application process or at a later stage. We chose to do it at the onset for two main reasons: (1) we will adhere to a strict search schedule and do not want to risk delaying the process while securing letters, and (2) effective letters of rec help paint a fuller picture of each candidate and will be considered at each step of the process. Needless to say, we will be reading each and every letter carefully and appreciate in advance the effort required to both request them and produce them.

Timeline

After applications are due on 1 October 2023, we will conduct virtual interviews with select candidates in mid-October. A final group of 3-4 candidates will be invited for on-campus visits late October-early November.

Questions?

We are, of course, more than willing to answer any questions. Feel free to reach out to [Binney Girdler](#), ecologist/plant biologist and chair of the search, [Michael Wollenberg](#), microbiologist and chair of the department, or [Santiago Salinas](#), vertebrate biologist and chair of nothing (thank goodness).