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THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA



February 2026

Celebrating collaboration and longtime service



Hello Caroline,

As February comes to a close, I'm happy to share updates of what we've been working on at BIO5.

One exciting initiative we're excited to pilot this year is **Scientific Interest Groups (SIGs)**. These groups of BIO5 researchers come together in intentional ways from across disciplines to work on shared topics, each contributing their own expertise and resources to collaborative research.

To me, this is BIO5 in a nutshell — bringing together great minds to work together and help solve some of society's most pressing challenges related to health and biosciences. You can read more about the [work of one such SIG on amyotrophic lateral sclerosis \(ALS\) in this feature story](#).

If you'd like to hear from members of the SIGs, I invite you to [join us on April 9 for Behind BIO5](#), an immersive experience inside the world of collaborative bioscience research. You'll have the chance to hear from SIG participants in

fireside chats and see demonstrations of some of the newest innovations coming from our labs.

Finally, earlier this month we celebrated the retirement of four longtime colleagues: **Kate Riley, Uwe Hilgert, Scott Derigne, and Nirav Merchant**. I enjoyed sharing stories and meeting friends as we toasted to decades of their service. It was also special to share the evening with Vicki Chandler, Fernando Martinez, and Jennifer Barton, all the previous BIO5 directors.

I hope to share updates from at least one BIO5 Scientific Interest Group each month.

Sincerely,

Vignesh Subbian

Interim Director, BIO5 Institute

Featured Stories



Shared RNA language drives ALS research at the University of Arizona

Ross Buchan and Kevin Rhine combine complementary strengths in RNA biology and aging neuron research to advance new approaches in studying ALS, supported by the University of Arizona BIO5 Institute.

[READ MORE](#)

Upcoming



Celebrating 25 Years of BIO5

We're so proud of everything we've accomplished together — and even more excited about what's ahead. Here's to the next 25 years of discovery, collaboration, and community.

Stay tuned to our anniversary webpage for all upcoming events and stories in 2026.

[VISIT THE ANNIVERSARY HUB](#)

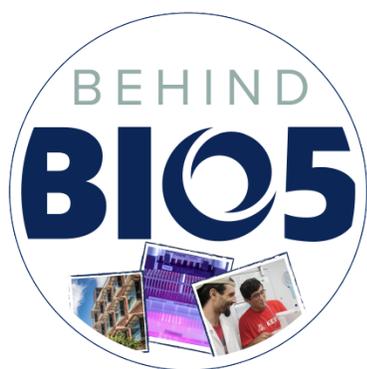


Voice of a Patient 2026

April 9, 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Health Sciences Innovation Building

Voice of the Patient is an official Arizona Bioscience Week event hosted by AZBio that brings patients, caregivers, researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders together to explore how lived experience shapes the future of health technology and bioscience.

[More Information & Registration](#)



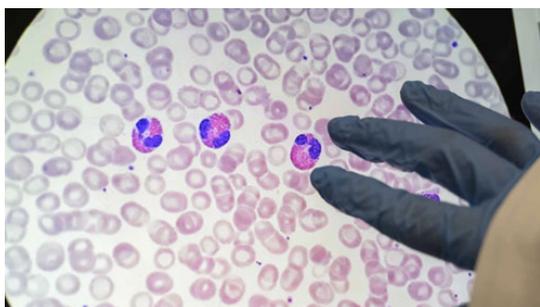
Behind BIO5 2026

April 9, 4:30 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Thomas W. Keating Building

Behind BIO5 offers a backstage pass to collaborative research at the University of Arizona, with hands-on demonstrations of scientists' newest innovations and fireside chats exploring the bioscience partnerships shaping our next 25 years.

[More Information & Registration](#)

In The News



Collaboration aims to accelerate personalized cancer therapy development

BIO5 member **Ryan Sprissler** co-leads a collaboration between the U of A Center for Advanced Molecular



Supporting the future of women in science

In celebration of International Day of Women and Girls in Science, BIO5 member **Melissa Herbst-Kralovetz** highlights how programs like the

and Immunological Therapies and Quantom Biosciences to develop personalized messenger ribonucleic acid (mRNA) cancer vaccines that use artificial intelligence to identify tumor-specific mutations, training the immune system to target and destroy cancer cells.

[Read in Research & Partnerships](#)



From loops to labs: How a bike group spurred a scientific collaboration

BIO5 member **Michael D. L. Johnson** turned a 100-kilometer bike ride into a new lab partnership, connecting College of Medicine – Tucson MD/PhD student **Ateh Zinkeng** from BIO5 member **Juanita Merchant**'s lab with Johnson's protein purification tools to test how high-fat diets may drive fatty liver disease and liver cancer risk.

[Read in College of Medicine - Tucson](#)

BIO5 Institute's KEYS Research Internship are creating early pathways for young women to engage in hands-on science, gain real research skills, and see themselves as future leaders in STEM.

[Read in IT News](#)



University of Arizona Superfund Research Center returns to College of Pharmacy with a focus on addressing toxic mine-dust exposure

BIO5 members **Alicja Babst-Kostecka, Yin Chen, Xinxin Ding, Julie Ledford, Raina Maier** and **Tyson Swetnam** are leading the renewed University of Arizona Superfund Research Center, backed by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, to study toxic mine-dust exposure and protect Southwest communities.

[Read in R. Ken Coit College of Pharmacy](#)

Behind-the-Scenes



Honoring decades of service at BIO5

It was a bittersweet moment as we celebrated **Scott Derigne**, **Uwe Hilgert**, **Nirav Merchant**, and **Kate Riley** for their decades of service to the BIO5 Institute and the University of Arizona.

More than 150 colleagues and friends gathered earlier this month to honor their impact, share memories and celebrate careers that helped shape BIO5's collaborative research community.

We are grateful for their leadership and lasting contributions, and we wish them all the best in what comes next. 🙌

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Land Acknowledgment