

Perspectives

Why Did You Become a Scientist?



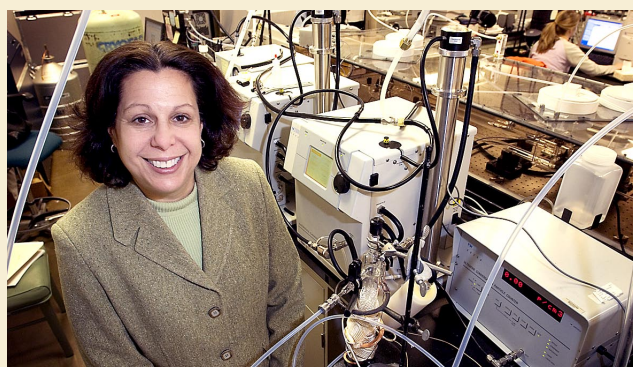
I can't remember not wanting to be a scientist, so I can't put my finger on a particular reason for pursuing a science career. I remember Mom would plunk me down in front of the TV to watch astronauts on the moon, and that made a huge impression. I saw my first dinosaur book in first grade, and the dinosaur fixation was immediate. I also remember seeing my first live garter snake at around the same age—I grew up in suburban Massachusetts, where snakes count as exotic wildlife, and I remember thinking it was the most beautiful animal I'd ever seen.

CHRISTOPHER BROCHU, assistant professor of geoscience, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences



I have early memories of asking “why” and “how” questions as a child. I value the challenge of my parents’ answer: “I don't know, let's look it up.” We had reference books—*Encyclopedia International*, *Our Wonderful World*, *Black History Encyclopedia*, *Physicians' Desk Reference*, and others that contained a wealth of information to explore. These experiences fostered my propensity for research, interest in learning, and desire to share information with others. In primary school, I studied Louis Pasteur and Edward Jenner and gave my dolls smallpox with small dots from a red marker for a school project.

TONYA PEEPLES, associate professor of chemical and biochemical engineering, College of Engineering



My first interest/love was numbers and mathematics, and it wasn't until my freshman year of college that I discovered the beauty of chemistry. I loved everything about it, including the concepts, the textbook, and the lectures. And I realized chemistry was something I was actually pretty good at. My continuation in the field of chemistry was driven by my desire to learn and know more. It is my hope that as a professor I can inspire students to pursue careers in science and chemistry that they are equally passionate about.

VICKI GRASSIAN, professor of chemistry, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, with joint appointments in the College of Engineering and the College of Public Health



I attribute my pursuit of a career in science to several things: my love of good mysteries and puzzles, exposure to many exciting areas of science in the classroom and on the farm, and a desire to work with people. I did not choose to be a scientist because I found science easy—science was one subject that I found a little difficult and challenging, and so I found tremendous gratification in overcoming or at least facing the challenge. I know that my work will never be done. But I hope to do my part to find a few pieces of the puzzle, build our knowledge base, and encourage others to keep asking questions.

AMY SPARKS, research scientist in obstetrics-gynecology, Carver College of Medicine