

Kayla Rihani, MS

Senior Biology Instructor | Educational Innovation Specialist
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Professional Summary

Technology-driven senior biology instructor with 25 years of educational experience. AI-integrated pedagogical innovator for traditional, hybrid, and online environments. Recognized for driving student success through inclusive, technology-integrated teaching methodologies, cost-saving curriculum redesign, and significant contributions to educational development.

Core Competencies

- Advanced biological sciences instruction
- Student-centered learning design
- Innovative educational technology integration
- Online and hybrid learning pedagogies
- Curriculum modernization and course development, including cost savings
- Learning Management Systems (LMS) expertise
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)** methodologies
- **AI-driven** curriculum personalization and pedagogical design

Technical Competencies

- Learning management systems: D2L, Brightspace, Blackboard
- Educational technology platforms: MasteringBiology.com, CourseHero.com
- **Digital teaching tools:** Hypothesis, AI enhanced pedagogical tools (Generative AI for student engagement and brainstorming)
- Accessibility technologies: Screen reader expertise, inclusive design tools
- Collaborative platforms: Online meeting and collaboration software

Education

Master of Science in Microbiology and Immunology | University of Illinois at Chicago | 2001

- Magna Cum Laude

Bachelor of Science in Biology | Olivet Nazarene University, Kankakee, IL | 1998

- Magna Cum Laude 3.89 GPA
- Minor in Chemistry and Psychology

Professional Experience

Full Time Senior Instructor-Biology | Northeastern Illinois University | 2001-Present

Transformed biology curriculum at a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) through pioneering online and hybrid teaching methodologies, enabling seamless academic continuity during COVID-19 pandemic

- Instructed a diverse range of biology and laboratory courses including Introduction to Biology, Environmental Biology, General Microbiology, and Pathogenic Microbiology
- **Coordinated the BIO 100 course** with laboratory across multiple sections taught by 5-10 fellow faculty members for more than 10 years
- Pioneered early online and hybrid teaching methodologies
- **Led biology department faculty workshops** in online teaching methodologies during the COVID-19 transition
- Achieved **exceptional student evaluations** (>90% “excellent” rating) for 20+ years
- Received a 4.9/5.0 rating on RateMyProfessor.com with 100% recommendation rate over 60 reviews
- **Reduced student course material costs** in all courses taught by nearly 100% through strategic course redesigns
- Served as **Faculty Senator** and member of the Ad-hoc Committee on Student Belonging
- Developed three new specialized biology courses (BIO 342, BIO 109M, BIO 442)
- Consistently sought professional development in the areas of AI, DEI, and accessibility
- Mentored biology majors and helped them progress towards their professional goals

Part Time Adjunct Faculty | Robert Morris University | 2000-2003

- Instructed Introduction to Biology and Environmental Science courses
- Science and Technology Enrichment Program (STEP) educator for inner city elementary aged students

Part Time Adjunct Faculty | Triton University | 2001

- Instructed the Introduction to Biology course

Educational Publications

- **Co-authored** the *Instructor Guide for Environmental Science: Toward a Sustainable Future* | Pearson Higher Education | 2009-2011
- Online media contributor for *Environment: Science Behind the Stories* | Pearson Higher Education | 2010
- MasteringBiology.com **product development** team member | Pearson Higher Education 2013-2015

Awards and Recognitions

- Awarded the competitive (one of six) Instructor **Educational Leave Award** | NEIU | 2024
 - Developed a First Year Experience (FYE) lab science course
 - Passed the course through shared governance

- Senior instructor designation | NEIU | 2020
- Recipient of two **faculty excellence awards** | NEIU | 2005, 2021, 2025
 - Rewarded for innovations and exceptional accomplishments in teaching
 - Awarded for the development of programs and course materials
- American Heart Association competitive **pre-doctoral Fellowship** | 1999-2001

Professional Certifications

- Magna Quest DEI Certification | Magna Publications | 2025
- Accessibility Academy | D2L Brightspace Learning Center | 2024
- Hypothesis Certified Educator | Hypothesis.is | 2024
- Fostering Student Mental Health Certification | United Educators | 2024
- Designing Your Online Course Certification | Quality Matters | 2023
- Undocumented Student Ally Training Certification | NEIU | 2021
- Anti-Racist Professional Development Certification | NEIU | 2021
- Online Teaching Certification | NEIU | 2015

Professional Development

- Online course DEI strategies
 - Inclusive learning design, inclusive classroom, equity and inclusion online, the liquid syllabus, designing your online course
- Online course accessibility
 - Accessible presenter, inclusive writer, screen reader expertise, supporting students with low vision
- Ongoing AI and large language model for use in pedagogy training
 - Teaching with AI Book Club, When the Horse is out of the Barn: Educators Embracing AI Enhanced Learning, The Importance of Truth, Honesty and Pedagogy in an AI World, When AI Is a Liar and a Cheat: Re-Imagining Authentic Assessment in the Age of Open AI, In the Driver's Seat: Preparing Students for AI-Enhanced Workplaces, AI EmpowerED: Navigating Generative AI in Higher Education

Professional Contributions

- Featured in CourseHero.com article on Best Practices in University Teaching
- Faculty Senate contributor to institutional policy and student support initiatives
- Co-Chair, Instructor Departmental Personnel Committee, focusing on equitable teaching practices
- NEIU excellence awards presidential review committee
- NEIU Years of service celebration committee

References available upon request