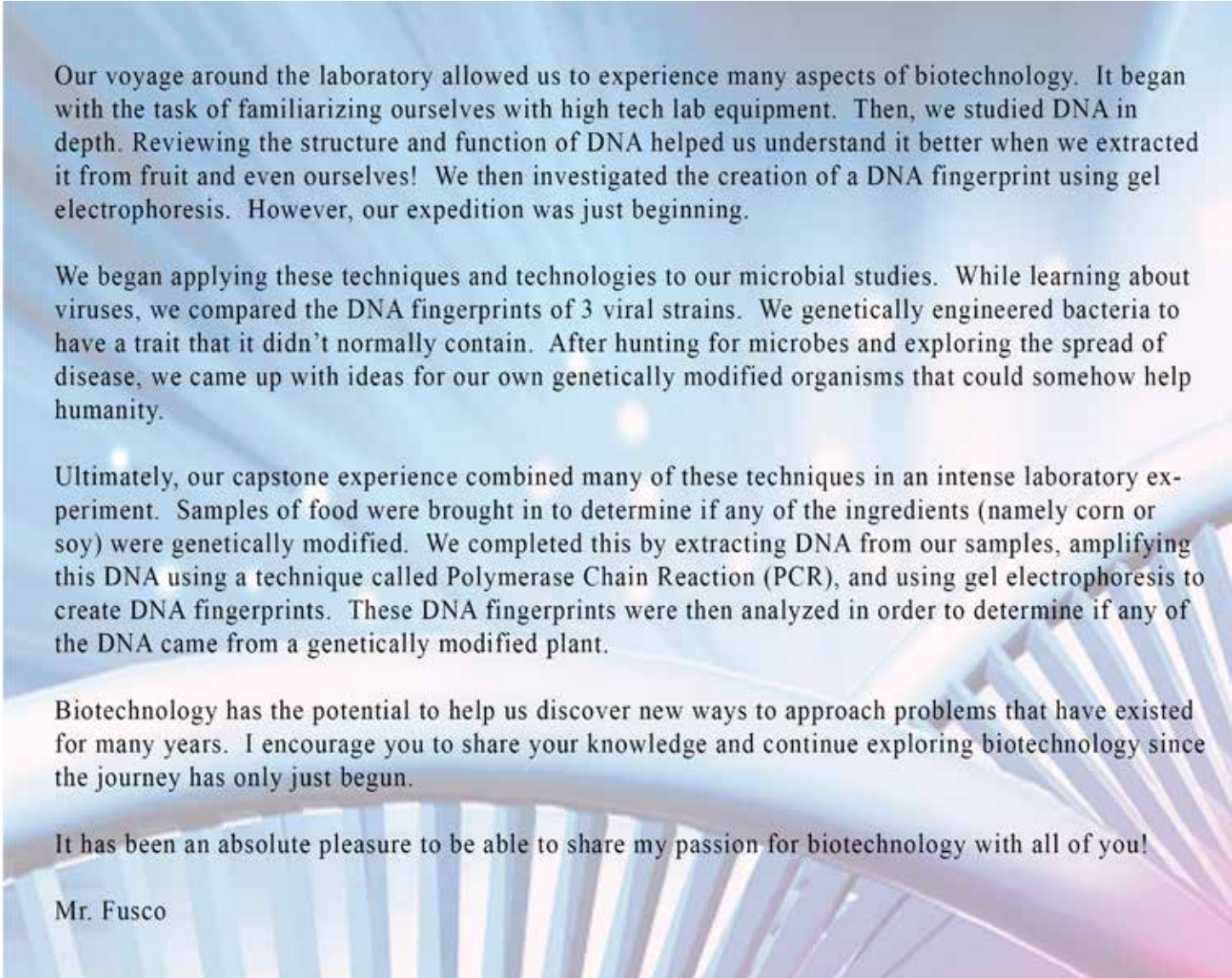




the stars
challenge

Explore
Biotechnology
Winter 2016





Our voyage around the laboratory allowed us to experience many aspects of biotechnology. It began with the task of familiarizing ourselves with high tech lab equipment. Then, we studied DNA in depth. Reviewing the structure and function of DNA helped us understand it better when we extracted it from fruit and even ourselves! We then investigated the creation of a DNA fingerprint using gel electrophoresis. However, our expedition was just beginning.

We began applying these techniques and technologies to our microbial studies. While learning about viruses, we compared the DNA fingerprints of 3 viral strains. We genetically engineered bacteria to have a trait that it didn't normally contain. After hunting for microbes and exploring the spread of disease, we came up with ideas for our own genetically modified organisms that could somehow help humanity.

Ultimately, our capstone experience combined many of these techniques in an intense laboratory experiment. Samples of food were brought in to determine if any of the ingredients (namely corn or soy) were genetically modified. We completed this by extracting DNA from our samples, amplifying this DNA using a technique called Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), and using gel electrophoresis to create DNA fingerprints. These DNA fingerprints were then analyzed in order to determine if any of the DNA came from a genetically modified plant.

Biotechnology has the potential to help us discover new ways to approach problems that have existed for many years. I encourage you to share your knowledge and continue exploring biotechnology since the journey has only just begun.

It has been an absolute pleasure to be able to share my passion for biotechnology with all of you!

Mr. Fusco



Our exploration of biotechnology began with identifying lab equipment that we would be using throughout the course, focusing on the proper use of the micropipette.



Cheers to our entire group, including course teaching assistants, Ethan (our TA from BTHS) and Erin (our TA from Monmouth U). What a fun group!



Learning about DNA was fun as we made candy models of the double helix. But it was more exciting to extract DNA from bananas and strawberries.



With some time and patience, many extracted DNA! We also had a few students become fascinated with the vortex and the microcentrifuge along the way.



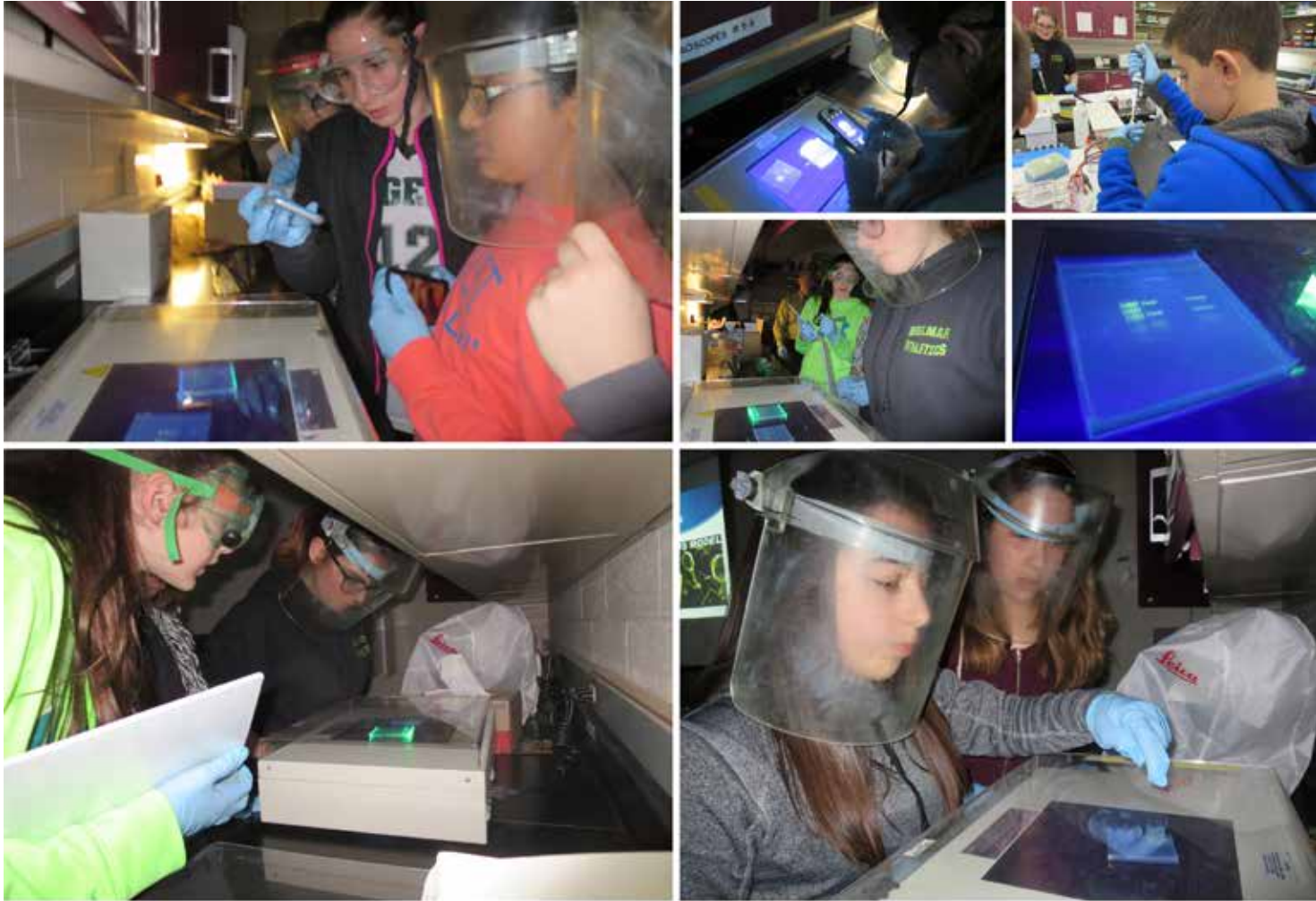
Now we were ready to extract our own DNA! We collected some cheek cells in an attempt to isolate our own DNA.



Our journey next took us to the land of gel electrophoresis! Using colored dyes, we learned how molecules may be separated by size and charge.



We applied this technique to our study of viruses in the next class. We compared the DNA fingerprints of 3 different viral strains using electrophoresis. Also, we made some 3D models of different types of viruses.



But, in order to view our results, we needed to use the UV transilluminator. It is important to protect our eyes with UV shields when around UV light! Our DNA samples glowed green.



The next stop on our voyage taught us how to work with bacteria! In our transformation experiment, we attempted to genetically engineer bacteria. We also swabbed random places to measure bacterial growth.



SUCCESS! We worked hard in order to make *E. coli* express a gene that would make it glow green under UV light. Then, we discussed the microbial growth that we found in various places.



After discussing microbes, we learned about epidemiology and the spread of disease. That activity led us to experiment on two different hand cleaning methods.



It was a bit disgusting to realize that we naturally have microbes living on our skin all of the time.

Table 2

Antibacterial Soap	
Sanitizer	
Inconclusive	



After analyzing our results, many students agreed that hand sanitizer is more effective than antibacterial soap.



We researched and explored various applications of genetic engineering. This allowed groups to create their own fictitious genetically modified organism.



For our capstone experience, we tested food products to see if they contained genetically modified ingredients.



This experiment made use of most of the lab equipment and techniques that we explored throughout the course!

