



2026 Outstanding Young Alumni Award Dr. Jordan Lewis, Class of 2017

The Outstanding Young Alumni Award recognizes a Winthrop alumna/us age 35 or younger whose service to Winthrop, service to the community and professional achievements have reflected positively on all alumni and the university.

Dr. Jordan Lewis, Class of 2017, is being honored with the 2026 Outstanding Young Alumni Award for his accomplishments in the field of biological sciences and ethics.

Dr. Lewis earned a Bachelor of Science in Biology and Environmental Sciences from Winthrop University in 2017.

He is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of South Carolina, where he teaches and conducts research in evolutionary ecology. This field examines how interactions among and within species drive evolutionary processes and how that evolution, in turn, shapes ecological patterns and population traits. He also has a keen interest in the ethical issues that arise in science and technology, and conducts research and biological ethics workshops for groups focused on these subjects.

At Winthrop, he served as an Eagle STEM scholar, Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate scholar, member of the Winthrop Honors College, ACAD 101 Peer Mentor, member and president of the Winthrop Ambassadors, academic success tutor, judicial committee member, allocations committee member, and brother of the Xi Phi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Incorporated. He found his passion for biological research as an undergraduate research assistant, investigating the potential impacts of coastal engineering projects on beach microbial communities. This work earned numerous undergraduate conference awards and laid the foundation for his participation in undergraduate summer research at the University of Notre Dame and his eventual matriculation to graduate school.

As an undergraduate student, Dr. Lewis was awarded a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship to fund his doctoral studies and subsequently enrolled in the Population Biology, Ecology, and Evolution Ph.D. program at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia. Dr. Lewis completed his doctorate in August 2022 and earned a doctoral certificate in bioethics from the Emory Center for Ethics. His dissertation used in-lab experimental evolution to investigate how host defenses change in response to bacterial infection under different host-parasite interaction dynamics. While at Emory, he continued his passion for student-community involvement and served in academic, outreach, and student government roles. Dr. Lewis served in multiple roles for the Laney Graduate School, representing the broader Ph.D. student community, including Social Programming Chair, Vice President, and Chair of the Graduate Judicial Committee.



2026 Outstanding Young Alumni Award Dr. Jordan Lewis, Class of 2017

He also served as an ambassador for the Emory Diversifying Graduate Education initiative (LGS-E.D.G.E.) for multiple years, including as a graduate fellow in 2020, where he helped address graduate student issues, represented the university at national recruiting fairs, and gave campus tours to student groups, including several cohorts of Winthrop McNair scholars. Dr. Lewis received the inaugural Nat C. Robertson Fellowship in Science and Society, which enabled him to teach interdisciplinary courses at the Emory Institute for the Liberal Arts. He was an organizing member of the 2020 Emory Conference on Social Disparities, Inequities, and Injustice, served as ethics coordinator for his graduate program, and served as assistant research coordinator for the Emory Health-Prep Undergraduate Summer Research program. In 2020, he was inducted into the National Edward Bouchet Honor Society. He also taught evolution at local churches as part of community outreach with his graduate advisor, aimed at reducing the perceived conflict between science and religion, and was a regular participant in the Atlanta Science Fair, where STEM professionals attend K-8 career days at Atlanta-area schools.

After earning his Ph.D. from Emory, Dr. Lewis was awarded a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Biology and moved to the Department of Ecology and Evolution at Yale University to continue his training. Soon after arriving at Yale, he received several awards recognizing his service and achievements during his doctoral work. The Population Biology, Ecology, and Evolution program named him Program Scholar of the Year, and the Laney Graduate School awarded him the Keith Wilkinson Graduate Student Service Award and selected him to serve as student marshal for the college during graduation ceremonies. Dr. Lewis continued his work investigating the evolution of host defenses and the trade-offs faced by populations, as well as the impacts of environmental disturbances on recreational water quality. He also began integrating his bioethics interests into his research in collaboration with the Yale Center for Phage Therapy and Biology.

Dr. Lewis received an outreach grant from the Society for the Study of Evolution to teach evolution to 6th-8th graders, with the goal of showing them the importance of ecology and evolution and introducing them to careers in science. This project has followed him to his current position, and he plans to regularly offer these seminars in the Midlands. During this time, he was also elected to the Access, Inclusion, and Community committee for the Society for the Study of Evolution, on which he now serves as co-chair. Dr. Lewis was awarded the Bridge to Faculty fellowship by the University of South Carolina in the spring of 2024 and moved to the University in the winter of that year, where he was employed as an Assistant Research Professor until he transitioned to Assistant Professor.



2026 Outstanding Young Alumni Award Dr. Jordan Lewis, Class of 2017

Since arriving at USC, he has continued to serve his profession and community, serving as the Biology Department seminar coordinator and as a judge for the Biological Sciences section of the Midlands area High School Science fair.

In 2024, he served as a panelist, and the first non-Winthrop faculty member, for the Winthrop College of Arts & Sciences Encore Distinguished Lectures. He presented, "Adaptation in a Changing World: Evolutionary Solutions to Urgent Problems."

Among all his activities, Dr. Lewis is most proud of his ongoing collaboration with the Winthrop McNair Scholars program. Since 2017, when he received his graduate fellowship, Dr. Lewis has led a summer research workshop to help students prepare for graduate and fellowship applications during their senior year. What began as a one-day pilot during his first year of graduate school has since grown into a multi-session program that has helped multiple Winthrop students secure nationally competitive awards to fund their graduate education. In addition, he has given back to Winthrop by lecturing in the Eagle STEM Scholars freshman seminar and by presenting in the Biology Department Seminar series and the summer research series. He is honored to assist the next generation of Winthrop Scholars in achieving their goals.

A native of Orangeburg, South Carolina, he attended Felton Laboratory School on the campus of South Carolina State University before graduating from Orangeburg-Wilkinson High School in 2013. He currently resides in Cayce, South Carolina, and in his free time enjoys weightlifting, hiking, cooking, watching sports, listening to true-crime podcasts, playing with his dog Zora and traveling to visit his partner Rachel.