Mohamed Noor wants to answer one of the greatest unsolved questions in biology: how constant evolutionary change produces the discontinuous groups known as species. As technology improves Dr. Noor’s work gets closer to the answer. Recently, his research team used fruit fly species to understand the causes and evolutionary consequences of variation in rates of genetic recombination. Now, his team is working to determine the genetic features and evolutionary processes that allow hybridizing species to persist. From reframing foundational principles of biology to applying modern approaches like whole-genome sequencing, Noor explores a wide range of scientific topics to figure out what makes organisms similar and at the same time unique.

Dr. Noor’s innovative techniques are not limited to his research. He has developed a popular online course, “Introduction to Genetics and Evolution,” and uses the ‘flipped classroom’ technique to deliver traditional lecture material online so that his class can discuss the material the next day. This allows Noor to interact with his 400 students and to address specific topics during his precious class time. In 2012, Dr. Noor was the recipient of the ADUTA award for teaching excellence, a student-nominated and selected award, given by the Duke Alumni Association.

Dr. Noor has received several awards for research and mentoring as well as teaching. He has been active in the scientific community, including serving as president of the American Genetic Association and the Society for the Study of Evolution. He also served as chair of the NIH study section in Genetic Variation and Evolution and as editor of the journal Evolution.