



Fall 2010 Newsletter

Welcome to the *first* issue of the **Biomedical Graduate Studies (BGS) Newsletter!** This newsletter will be issued on a quarterly basis and will include news from the seven (7) Biomedical Graduate Studies programs (BMB, CAMB, EPID, GCB, IMUN, INSC and PHRM). In this first issue, find out the latest news in BGS, upcoming events, alumni news, and much more!

BGS CONVOCATION

Tuesday, September 7, 2010

10:00 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

BRB II/III Auditorium

Featured Speaker:

Warren S. Pear, M.D., Ph.D.

“My Adventures with Blood Cells”



Incoming Student Welcome Reception
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.
BRB II/III Lobby

Letter from the BGS Dean and Director:

Dear BGS students, alumni, faculty and staff,



This year BGS is celebrating its 25th anniversary. In honor of this event, we

decided to start this quarterly newsletter to keep students and alumni updated about our current activities here at Penn and those of our graduates. In the 25 years since it started, BGS has graduated over 1500 Ph.D. students, many of whom are leaders in science. We are thrilled when we hear about the accomplishments of our former students and urge you to continue to keep us up-to-date about your careers. We also hope that you enjoy learning about the 700 students who are currently getting their Ph.D. degrees in one of our seven graduate groups (Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics, Biostatistics and Epidemiology, Cell and Molecular Biology, Genomics and Computational Biology, Immunology, Neuroscience and Pharmacology).

Penn continues to be a vibrant, exciting research community and BGS trainees play a vital role in our research endeavors. We hope that this newsletter will help to keep the current and past students as part of the same community.

Best regards,
Susan Ross, Ph.D.

Associate Dean of Biomedical Graduate Studies

NEWS & FACULTY AWARDS

Penn Scientist Selected as 2010 Pew Scholars in Biomedical Sciences



Aaron Gitler, PhD, Assistant Professor of Cell and Development Biology of the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, was recently featured in an article in *The Scientist*. The article highlights Dr. Gitler's research on the study of yeast, which he considers "a great model for studying development". To read the full article, please visit: <http://www.the-scientist.com/2010/8/1/54/1/>

Penn Geneticist Named 2010 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences

The Pew Charitable Trusts named **Zhaolan (Joe) Zhou, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Genetics at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, as a 2010 Pew Scholar in the Biomedical Sciences. The program enables scientists to take calculated risks, expand their research and explore unanticipated leads. Scholars receive \$240,000 over four years and gain inclusion into a select community of scientists that includes three Nobel Prize winners, three MacArthur Fellows, and two recipients of the Albert Lasker Medical Research Award. To read the full article, please visit:



http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/2010/07/zhou-pew-scholar/

Penn Researcher Receives Grant from Gates Foundation for HIV Study



James Shorter, MA, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics, received a \$100,000 Grand Challenges Explorations grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant will support an innovative global health research project titled "Unleashing Protein Disaggregases to Prevent HIV Infection." To read the full article, please visit: [http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/2010/05/gates-](http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/2010/05/gates-foundation-hiv-research-grant/)

[foundation-hiv-research-grant/](http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/2010/05/gates-foundation-hiv-research-grant/)

NIH Awards \$8 Million to Penn Medicine's Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology

The National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), has renewed its funding to the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine's **Center of Excellence in Environmental Toxicology (CEET)**. The new grant totals over \$8.3 million and extends CEET's mandate through March 2015. CEET was established in 2004 with a four-year, \$4.1 million grant from NIEHS to study the effects of environmental pollutants on human health. To read the full article, please visit:

http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/2010/05/ceet-nih-grant/

To include faculty news in future newsletters, please contact Jamie Lipford at: jlipford@upenn.edu

BGS STUDENT AWARDS & PRIZES



B&B/BMB 2010 Retreat Poster Prizes were awarded to:

Leslie Milk – 1st Prize for the Josh Wand Award

Kathryn Smith – 2nd Prize for the Josh Wand Award

Carlos Gay-Antaki – 3rd Prize for the Josh Wand Award



Recipients of the American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowships:

Elizabeth Sweeny and *Nick Bessman* (BMB)



The 2010 GSK Scholar Award for Best Entering Student was awarded to:

Elizabeth Handorf (EPID)



The 2010 ENAR Distinguished Student Paper Award was awarded to:

Rongmei Zhang (EPID)



The Deming Student Scholar Award was awarded to:

Chia-Hao Wang (EPID)



2010 Saul Winegrad Award Winners for Outstanding Dissertations:

Joseph M. Laakso (BMB)

Robin Mogg (EPID)

Bu Yin and *Claude C. Warzecha* (CAMB)

Miler T. Lee (GCB)

Jacqueline G. Perrioue (IMUN)

Chi-Tat Law (INSC)

Peter Buckley (PHRM)

ALUMNI NEWS

In alumni news, the following BGS graduates have moved on to promising careers, and continue to receive distinguished awards and funding in the following fields of research:

~~~ APPOINTMENTS ~~~

David J. Calkins, PhD (Neuroscience - 1994)

Dr. Calkins is currently the Director of Research at the Vanderbilt Eye Institute and Associate Professor of Neuroscience, Ophthalmology & Visual Sciences, and Psychology at Vanderbilt University's School of Medicine. His laboratory focuses on neurodegenerative disorders of the visual system, with recent papers in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences and Journal of Neuroscience.



BGS Alumni Eric Lazear & Helen McGraw-Lazear, and BGS Faculty Member Claude Krummenacher

Justin R. DiAngelo, PhD (Cell and Molecular Biology - 2008)

Beginning Fall 2010, Dr. DiAngelo will be an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biology at Hofstra University in Hempstead, New York. His teachings will focus on cell biology and bioinformatics.

David Garbe, PhD (Cell and Molecular Biology - 2007)

Beginning this fall, Dr. Garbe will be appointed to the following positions: Teaching Fellow at Haverford College (undergrad teaching), Adjunct Professor at the University of the Sciences (Masters level teaching), and Research Associate in the lab of Dr. Amita Sehgal at the University of Pennsylvania.

Iris Jaffe, PhD (Cell and Molecular Biology - 1997)

Dr. Jaffe is currently an Assistant Professor of Cell, Molecular and Developmental Biology at the Sackler School of Biomedical Research at Tufts University School of Medicine. Recently, she was also a finalist for the Irvine Page Young Investigator Award from the American Heart Association.

Alexxai Kravitz, PhD (Neuroscience - 2003)

Dr. Kravitz is currently a postdoc at the Gladstone Institutes in San Francisco, CA and recently published a paper in Nature magazine entitled "Regulation of parkinsonian motor behaviours by optogenetic control of basal ganglia circuitry".

Judy Leatherman, PhD (Cell and Molecular Biology - 2003)

Dr. Leatherman recently accepted a faculty position at the University of Northern Colorado in the School of Biological Sciences.

ALUMNI NEWS

(Continued)

Kimberly Noble, PhD (Neuroscience - 2005)

Dr. Noble is now an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Columbia University where she received the Driscoll Award, given to junior faculty in pediatrics with outstanding research careers. As the PI on a \$125,000 pilot award, Dr. Noble is also doing research on following a large epidemiological birth cohort on the association between socioeconomic status and neurocognitive development.

Kerry Smith, PhD (Cell and Molecular Biology - 1992)

Dr. Smith is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Genetics & Biochemistry at Clemson University. His lab investigates acetate kinase, a key enzyme in bacterial metabolism that has been identified in a number of important fungal and protozoan pathogens.

Dr. Smith's spouse, **Cheryl Ingram-Smith, PhD (Cell and Molecular Biology - 1993)**, is also a Co-Investigator in his lab and a research professor.

~~~ AWARDS ~~~

**Darrick Balu, PhD (Pharmacological Sciences - 2008)**

Dr. Balu recently received a postdoctoral Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA).

**Jonathan Lifshitz, PhD (Neuroscience - 2002)**

Dr. Lifshitz was awarded a 5-year NIH RO1 grant for a research study on "Neural Circuit Disruption by Diffuse Brain Injury: Basis for Morbidity & Therapy". The proposal explores the behavioral, anatomical and molecular bases of the observed aberrant responses to whisker stimulation in diffuse brain injured rats.

**Heather W. Pinkett, PhD (Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics - 2004)**

Dr. Pinkett received a 2010 Pew Scholar Award in Biomedical Sciences. Pew Scholars awarded 21 scientists with awards for their research in cancer, Alzheimer's, Autism, Glaucoma, Parkinson's disease and birth defects.

**Stay Connected with BGS Alumni Online!**



[www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=134723](http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=134723)



[www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=50730274218](http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=50730274218)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

## 2010 Graduate Group Symposia & Retreats

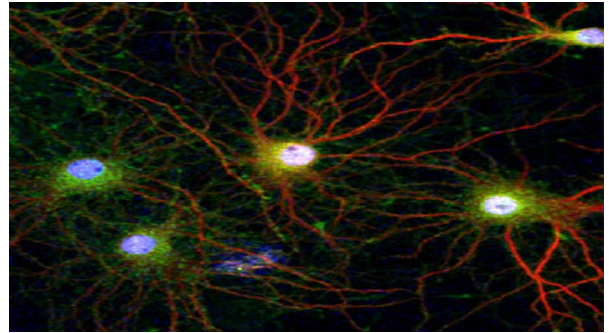
### **Pharmacology Graduate Group 27<sup>TH</sup> Annual Student Symposium**

Monday, October 11, 2010  
Academy of Natural Sciences

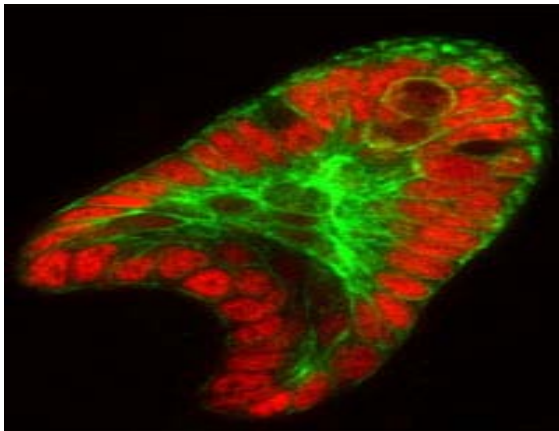
#### **Featured Keynote Speaker:**

**Dr. Vishva Dixit**

Vice President, Physiological Chemistry  
Genetech, Inc.



*Figures from Single Cell and Subcellular Genomics,  
Pharmacology Newsletter, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2009*



### **Cell and Molecular Biology Group 2010 CAMB Symposium**

Tuesday, October 12, 2010  
The Perelman Quadrangle

#### **Featured Keynote Speaker:**

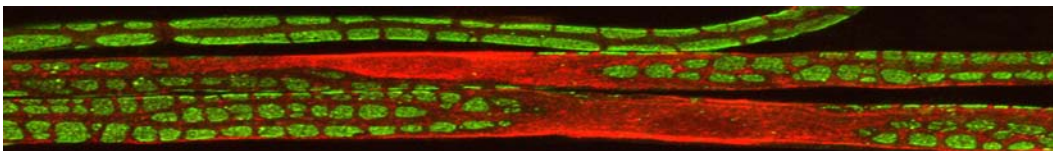
**Dr. Douglas R. Green**

St. Jude Children's Research Hospital

## **Immunology Graduate Group Retreat**

**November 5-7, 2010**

Willow Valley Resort & Conference Center  
Lancaster, Pennsylvania



# NEW BGS FACULTY MEMBERS

## Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics

- **Matthew J. Lazzara, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering, School of Engineering and Applied Science
- **Ravi Radhakrishnan, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Bioengineering, School of Engineering and Applied Science
- **Arjun Raj, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Bioengineering, School of Engineering and Applied Science

## Cell and Molecular Biology

- **Andy J. Minn, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Radiation Oncology, School of Medicine
- **Anna P. Malykhina, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Urology in Surgery, School of Medicine

## Epidemiology and Biostatistics

- **Joel M. Gelfand, M.D.**, Assistant Professor of Dermatology, School of Medicine
- **Despina Kontos, Ph.D.**, Research Assistant Professor of Radiology, School of Medicine
- **Craig A. Umscheid, M.D.**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine

## Immunology

- **Rahul Kohli, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine

## Neuroscience

- **Bassil M. Kublaoui, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, School of Medicine
- **Alice S. Chen-Plotkin, M.D.**, Assistant Professor of Neurology, School of Medicine
- **Samuel Todd Lamitina, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Neurology, School of Medicine
- **Samantha S. Soldan, Ph.D.**, Research Assistant Professor of Neurology, School of Medicine
- **Daniel H. Wolf, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, School of Medicine

## Pharmacological Science

- **Rahul Kohli, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor of Medicine, School of Medicine

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