THE DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY AND MOLECULAR GENETICS

News Letter #10 (February 2015-December 2015)

Faculty News

Funding Update:

❖ Congratulations to the following PIs for receiving new NIH grants:
  ➢ Dr. Caffrey – R21 AI121279-01 for 2 years
  ➢ Dr. Lau - 2R01 GM078492-09 for 4 years

❖ Dr. Lau received a 1–yr grant from Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program
❖ Dr.s Ackerman & Gaponenko received UIC Chancellor’s Innovation Fund Spring 2015 Proof-of-Concept Award. Seven finalists were chosen to submit full proposals and present their projects to a panel of venture capitalists and business leaders from the pre-proposal submissions. Of those seven, 4 proposals were chosen to receive funding.

❖ The following PIs received UI Cancer Center Pilot grant:
  o Dr. Colley, along with Dr. Gemeinhart (Biopharmaceutical Sciences).
  o Dr. Gaponenko, along with Dr.s Reddy (Pediatrics) and Jeffery (Biological Sciences).
  o Dr. Lavie, along with Dr. Lyubimov (Pharmacology).

Other News:

❖ Dr. Tyner was chosen to participate in Drexler University’s Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine (ELAM) program which is a year-long part-time fellowship for women faculty in schools of medicine, dentistry and public health.

❖ Dr. Lau was invited to the following conferences:
  o Invited Speaker and Session Chair – 8th International CCN Workshop, Nice, France, November 3-8, 2015.

❖ Dr. Hay was invited to the following conferences:
  o Invited Speaker - AACR conference on Cancer Metabolism, Bellevue, WA, June 2015
  o Invited Speaker - Science magazine Webinar on Cancer Metabolism, June 2015.
  o Invited Speaker - Mildred Scheel Cancer Conference, Bonn, Germany, June 2015
The 9th Annual Costa Memorial Lecture took place on April 9, 2015 and was presented by Dr. M. Celeste Simon from University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.

General News

New Employees

- We welcome the following new employees:
  - Archana Sekaran - Research Specialist (Kaplan Lab)
  - Christoph Freier - Postdoctoral Research Associate (Frolov Lab)

BMG Retreat

The 8th BMG Annual Retreat was held October 31–November 1, 2015, at The Abbey Resort in Lake Geneva, WI.

The Retreat presented us with an opportunity to get together as a department, with our closest collaborators. For new members of the department, this was a chance to learn more about science at the department in about 24 hours! 49 members of the department (faculty members, postdocs, graduate students and research assistants) attended the retreat. We also hosted guests from Department of Medicine and a representative from Nexcelom Bioscience. 13 general session talks in three different formats were presented. One of the formats was on new and evolving technology which included talks on the CRISPR system, the Fluidigm single-cell assays and a talk from Nexcelom on cell-based assays using image cytometers.

The most interactive session was the poster competition between students, research assistants and postdocs. Each presentation included demonstration of the poster as well as a short talk.

Congratulations to the following poster winners:

- 1st Prize Malgorzata Dobosz-Bartoszek, Simonovic lab, (contributing authors Zbyszek Otwinowski, Paul Copeland and Miljan Simonovic): “Structural and biochemical studies of the human selenocysteine tRNA-specific translational elongation factor eEFSec.”

- 2d Prize Darren J. Wozniak, Tyner lab, (contributing authors Andre Kajdacsy-Balla, Virgilia Macias, Wenjun Bie and Angela L. Tyner): “The protein tyrosine phosphatase activity of PTEN negatively regulates Protein Tyrosine Kinase 6”

Another organized competition was the 1st BMG Trivia Contest. The top team was awarded trophies! However, the largest & most fun contest was the Best Halloween Costume Contest!

A big ‘Thank You’ to Dr. Benevolenskaya for organizing it! She would like to thank everyone that helped set up the retreat and those who participated.

A few highlights……
Student News

We welcome the following new students:

- Majd Ariss
- Catherine Blaha (MD/PhD)
- Adam Didier
- Milicia Gilic
- Chunmiao Hu

- Milad Alasady (student from Univ. of Maryland, working in Hay Lab)
Awards:

- Kimberly Gao Laffey (Ackerman Lab) was awarded a Junior Investigator Travel Award to attend and give an oral abstract presentation at the "9th Biennial Meeting of the International Eosinophil Society", held in Chicago, July 14-18, 2015. Her oral abstract presentation was entitled: "DEVELOPMENT OF A NOVEL PEPTIDE NANOPARTICLE-BASED ANTAGONIST OF HUMAN CCR3-MEDIATED EOSINOPHIL MIGRATION IN ALLERGIC INFLAMMATION".

- Gaurang Bhide (Colley lab) won the Society for Glycobiology travel award for a poster presentation at the Society for Glycobiology Annual Meeting in San Francisco, CA.

- The following students were awarded the CCTS PECTS fellowship for 2016-2017:
  - Gaurang Bhide (Colley lab)
  - Ben Hitchinson (Gaponenko lab)
  - Darren Wozniak (Tyner lab)

- Malgorzata Dobosz-Bartoszek ((Simonovic Lab) received an honorable mention at the WISE (UIC Women in Science and Engineering Program) Graduate Student Award Dinner.

Presentations:

- Navika Shukla, an undergraduate in the Colley lab, won first place in the UIC Student Research Forum (Undergraduate Life Sciences Division), for her poster presentation entitled "The identification of MG160 as a novel target of polysialylation". Navika's research is directed by Dr. Helena Palka-Hamblin.

- Milos Jovanovic, an undergraduate student in the Simonovic lab, presented a poster at the UIC Honors College Research Symposium.

Thesis Defense:

- Congratulations to the following students who successfully completed their Thesis Defense:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Lab</th>
<th>Thesis Defense</th>
<th>Current position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rachel French</td>
<td>Simonovic</td>
<td>February 24, 2015</td>
<td>Postdoc - Dr. Yuna Ayala lab, Saint Louis University, St. Louis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Shy</td>
<td>Merrill</td>
<td>May 26, 2015</td>
<td>3rd year medical student at UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaitlyn Holman</td>
<td>Simonovic</td>
<td>July 22, 2015</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priya Mathur</td>
<td>Tyner</td>
<td>July 31, 2015</td>
<td>Postdoc – University of Chicago, Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battuya Bayarmagnai</td>
<td>Frolov</td>
<td>October 22, 2015</td>
<td>Postdoc – Dr. Bojana Gilgorijevic lab, Temple University, Philadelphia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandra Vilkova</td>
<td>Benevolenskaya</td>
<td>October 28, 2015</td>
<td></td>
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**BYOB Discussion Hour:**

BCMG students initiated a monthly BYOB Discussion Hour in 2015 on Friday afternoons to provide a relaxed platform to enhance scientific dialogue and research-related problem solving by discussing with the others in the department, to foster departmental collaborations, and for the members to get to know each other better.

The BCMG student body would like to thank the faculty and staff that attended these discussion hours and for their generosity, support, and productive suggestions.

Please continue to support this wonderful discussion platform initiated by our students.

**BMG Alumni News**

- Tanya Stoyanova (Raychaudhuri lab) is an Assistant Professor at Stanford University, Stanford, CA.
- Brandon Nicolay (Frolov Lab), recently joined Agios Pharmaceuticals (Boston) as a Scientist (equivalent to an Assistant Professor).
- Sherwin Abraham (Gaponenko lab) has accepted a Senior Scientist position at North Carolina State University.
- Tanmay Chavan (Gaponenko lab) successfully competed against other Stanford postdocs to receive the Stanford Dean’s Postdoctoral Fellowship Award.
- Yu Zheng (Tyner lab) published his first Science paper as co-first author: RNA-Seq of single prostate CTCs implicates noncanonical Wnt signaling in antiandrogen resistance. Science. 2015 Sep. He is doing post-doctoral work with Daniel Haber, Director, Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center, Professor of Oncology, Harvard Medical School.
- Jessica Gierut (Tyner lab) finished her postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard and joined Dicerna Pharmaceuticals as a Scientist.
- Richa Bedi (Ackerman lab) has recently joined Therapeutic Proteins International, LLC, Chicago, as Senior Scientist, Analytical R&D and Quality Control.
- Nikolina Sekulic (Lavie lab) recently took a position as a Group leader at The Biotechnology Centre of Oslo, Norway and Adjunct Professor at The Department of Chemistry, University of Oslo.
- Renata Varaljai (former Research Specialist in Benevolenskaya lab) has been awarded highly competitive Marie Curie Fellowship to pursue her PhD degree at Universität Duisburg-Essen, Germany. The fellowship is awarded to young researches who have demonstrated excellence in science.
- Khademul Islam, Associate Professor, Dhaka University, Bangladesh (Dr. Benevolenskaya was co-director on his PhD thesis) received a 1.5 years grant from The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) for his studies of lymphoma. The program is intended to support high-level research projects for the advancement of science in developing countries.
Congratulations to the following proud parents!!!!

- Mary Truscott (Frolov Lab) and Klavs Dolmer (Gettins Lab) welcomed their daughter, Maya, born on August 30, 2015.

- Shuo Huang (Raychaudhuri Lab) and her husband welcomed their son, Luke, born on October 11, 2015.

- Amanda Mennie (Nakamura Lab) and her husband welcomed their daughter, Sophia Claire, born on November 28, 2015.
The brain is the most important organ you have according to the brain.

You are living, you occupy space, you have a mass. You matter.

NaCl
NaOH
The base is under a salt!

So, have you decided yet, Prof. Rivera?
Decided what?

Whether you're going to accept that job offer at another university and leave us!
Oh, that. I haven't decided yet.

But don't worry, if I do leave, I'm going to do everything I can to help you graduate as quickly as possible.

And if you stay?
I'm going to do everything I can to make you forget I just said that.

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