Dear fellow students and faculty members,

I hope the fall semester has treated you all well! With just a few weeks to go until the holidays, I know this time of year can get hectic, but please take a moment to read through this newsletter- BGSA members have put forth a lot of effort to get off to a strong start this fall by welcoming incoming students at the annual orientation picnic in August, and then hosting a very successful Research Symposium in November, among other events that brought together students from across the School of Medicine.

Looking ahead to next semester, some events in the line-up include our 2nd annual Student Writing Seminar (in conjunction with the WSMA), an expansion of our career seminar series, and our annual ski trip. Do you have an idea for an event you’d like to see? Visit bit.ly/BGSAInvolvementSurvey and let us know! Be sure to visit the (newly renovated!) BGSA website at http://bgsa.pitt.edu for continued updates on upcoming events (including a Google calendar you can sync to your devices), useful resources, and student accomplishments.

As always, graduate students are invited to attend the monthly BGSA meetings, typically held the first Monday of each month at 1:30 pm in BST 995. However, due to winter break, our January meeting will be moved to January 11th. I hope to see many of you there!

Aliyah Weinstein
BGSA President
Immunology training program

BGSA Orientation Picnic

On August 26th the BGSA held the annual Orientation Picnic to welcome the new cohort of graduate students in the School of Medicine.

The event was held at the Veterans Pavillion in Shenley Park. BGSA board members came early to begin grilling hotdogs and hamburgers, and making the sangria. This year we had three kegs of beer from East End Brewing Company and Italian Ice from Rita’s. Faculty and students began to arrive at 4:00. By 5:00 the pavillion was loud with conversation. Groups took to the lawn for cornhole, giant jenga, and other games. Others stuck to chatting around the picnic tables.

A good time was had by everyone, and we are excited to plan the event for next year. If you have any suggestions for the next BGSA picnic, let us know!

-Greg Logan

BGSA Post-Foundations Happy Hour

Come join us at Stack’d in Shadyside on Tuesday, December 15th at 5pm for appetizers and drinks. The party will be located upstairs and drink tickets will be handed out first come, first serve. See you there! -Ben Warner

Stack’d Shadyside
728 Copeland St

Contents

Letter from the President 1
BGSA Orientation 1
Foundations Happy Hour 1
Symposium 2
Fall Fest 2
Message from WSMA 2
Student Spotlight 3
Publications 4
Photos 5
BGSA Comic 5

Upcoming Events

December 11th 1-4pm
GPSG Coffee House

December 15th 5pm
Post-Foundations Happy Hour

January 11th 1:30pm
Next BGSA meeting (BST 995)

IBGP Interview Dates
January 8
January 22
February 5
February 19
March 4
BGSA Symposium

The 20th annual BGSA Research Symposium was organized by the Cell Biology and Molecular Physiology and Bioinformatics programs and was held on November 4th at the University Club. The new location was well-received by students and faculty alike. A day of science demonstrated the work being done by the School of Medicine students across all different disciplines. Six students were invited to speak to share their research, and the day was highlighted by this year’s Daisuke Nakada Memorial Lecturer, Dr. Atul Butte, MD. PhD. His lecture focused on big data and how to turn all this information into useful hypothesis and treatments. However, he also encouraged students to develop their own ideas and technologies, to ask unanswered questions, and to seek ideas. He advocated that trainees take control of their own education and to cross-train themselves. The Symposium came to a close with a talk by the Stephen L. Phillips Awardee, Christopher Barnes, and the presentation of the Most Well-Rounded Student Awardee, Mohini Dasari, and the Distinguished Mentor Awardee, Dr. Daniel Zuckerman.

Thank you to all the faculty judge and student volunteers who made this event possible. We’ll see you again next year with the Immunology program planning the Symposium!

-Chelsea Merkel

BGSA Hosts Fall Fest

Pittsburgh enjoyed some beautiful fall weather this year, and the BGSA took advantage of it by hosting Fall Fest on October 17th. Students from a variety of programs including IBGP, Immunology, Pathology, and MBSB gathered in Frick Park and explored their creative sides by decorating pumpkins. Check out the photos page to see some of the clever designs! For more than half of the attendees, this was their first BGSA event, and we were glad to have reached a new population of students. And thank you to Eat’ n Park in Squirrel Hill for donating snacks for the event!

–Aliyah Weinstein

A Message from WSMA

WSMA has been active in providing opportunities for students to network with female physician scientists as a part of a new coffee hour series launched this year. Many students have expressed the desire to interact with faculty and potential clinical and scientific mentors in an informal setting. As a result, we hold a monthly “Coffee Hour” series, which is an hour-long informal gathering of 10-15 trainees and an invited physician, scientist, or physician scientist. The goal is provide a comfortable environment where students and faculty can speak freely about navigating the training path and unique obstacles encountered by women in science and medicine.

The feedback we have received has been wonderful. Our first coffee hour was with Dr. Grace Lim who is a T32 Scholar in the Department of Anesthesiology, specializing in obstetric anesthesia. We discussed clinical research, work-life balance and details about her training pathway. The second coffee hour was with Dr. Annie Im, Assistant Professor of Medicine in the Department of Hematology/Oncology. Dr. Im’s research interests include acute myeloid leukemia, stem cell transplant, and graft-versus-host disease. We discussed some of the unique aspects of Dr. Im’s research appointment and some of the rich resources and opportunities available in academic medicine. Many students stay after to catch up and discuss their own training and progress. This informal setting has helped to foster student communication and peer mentoring in addition to learning from our local faculty. The Coffee Hour series will continue throughout the year, and we encourage students to reach out to WSMA with recommendations for faculty who they would like to meet with! Please email ajm197@pitt.edu with suggestions! Please follow WSMA on Twitter and Facebook: @PittWSMA
Coyne Drummond
4th Year Graduate Student
Carolyn Coyne Lab
Mol. Virology and Microbiology

Coyne developed a new three-dimensional cell culture technique in my laboratory to model enterovirus infection of the human gastrointestinal (GI) tract. This is a significant technical development in the study of enterovirus-GI tract interactions and was recently published in the new American Society for Microbiology (ASM) journal mSphere. Coyne will also be interviewed by Vincent Racaniello for the This Week in Virology (TWiV) podcast in December to highlight this paper.

Stephen Godin
Senior Graduate Student
Kara Bernstein Lab

Stephen is truly extraordinary in both his stellar publications (first author in Nature Communications (2015), Genetics (2015), and Nucleic Acids Research (2013)) but also enjoys extra curricular activities. Stephen is known for his cooking and baking. For example, Stephen once cooked every single recipe from a cookbook and came in with interesting exotic food each day. Stephen has an additional 2 first author paper in review and is writing an invited review with me right now. Stephen is graduating in December and starting a post-doc at MIT doing aging research.

David Punihaole
Senior Graduate Student
Sanford Asher Lab
Mol. Biophysics/Structural Bio.

David is pioneering the use of UV Resonance Raman (UVRR) spectroscopy as a tool to understand the aggregation of polyglutamine-rich (polyQ) peptides that are implicated in at least ten neurodegenerative diseases, including Huntington’s. His work has been scientifically excellent and of great breadth. David’s work has already resulted in six important publications, including two first-authored papers. In addition, David recently submitted another first-authored paper and a co-authored paper. He has also presented his work at eight conferences through oral presentations and posters. Evidence of his large scientific impact was recently demonstrated by his invitation to speak at the Fall 2016 SciX meeting on his work on the side chain structures of polyQ fibrils. He is an emerging superstar in Biophysics.
Cellular and Molecular Pathology


Computational Biology


Baumgartner MP and Camacho CJ. On Choosing the Optimal Rigid Receptor for Docking and Scoring in the CSAR 2013/2014 Experiment Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling Just Accepted Manuscript DOI: 10.1021/acs.jcim.5b00338


Immunology


Molecular Biophysics and Structural Biology


Molecular Virology and Microbiology

Drummond CG, Nickerson CA, Coyne CB. 2015. A three-dimensional cell culture model to study enterovirus infection of polarized intestinal epithelial cells. mSphere 1(1):e00030-15. doi:10.1128/mSphere.00030-15


Center for Neuroscience


Photos

Research Symposium

Meet the Chair: Immunology

Fall Fest

BGSA Comic

Photocredits:
Beth Dahlburg
Aliyah Weinstein
Agustin Cruz