



THE LEADING EDGE

BCDB NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1 FALL 2007

WELCOME NEW STUDENTS AND FACULTY!

By Brett Israel

Please join in welcoming our new first years to the BCDB program. They are all very enthusiastic about getting started and will make a welcome addition to the program. Recently, senior students took the first years out for dinner and to play team trivia at Twisted Taco and they were formally introduced at the annual welcome reception.

If you see a new student in the hall, take a minute and introduce yourself and tell them about your lab because they will be choosing rotations in the very near future.

- Contact Brett T. Israel at bisrael@emory.edu



*Cheryl Young-
DePauw U.
2004



Tara Wabbersen
Augusta, Ga
Rollins College
2007



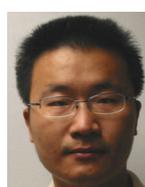
Emily Ryan
San Francisco, CA
UC, San Diego
2000



Andrew Bankston
New Orleans, LA
Georgia State 2007



Bing Yu
Changchun, China
China Agricultural
2007



Tuoqi Wu
Beijing U. 2007



Michael East
Kennesaw State
2007



John Lattier
Lilburn, GA
Georgia State
2007



*Brian Robinson
Redwood City, CA
UC, Davis 2004

* = MD/PhD

BCBD CALENDAR

- October 25th: BCDB Mixer
- December 12th: Classes End

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

By Anita Corbett

I can't believe that another summer has come and gone but given that it now takes me nearly thirty minutes to drive the two miles to my house,



it must be so. We welcome a new academic year as everyone cringes to realize that they are now a year farther along (i.e., a third year or whatever) and they have moved one row up on the BCDB locator. The new

academic year brings a new batch of first year students. Please make an effort to get to know them, interact with them, and offer them guidance as they figure out how to negotiate the first year. As mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter, the BCDB

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FOR THE STUDENTS—AN EXPLANATION OF THE EC

By Christy Larkins

As a student of BCDB, you've probably heard mention of the BCDB Director, DGS, or Executive Committee, but many of you have no idea who these people are, or what they do for our program. They are pretty important since they make decisions that affect us as a program, so it's time you learned who they are and what they do.



Christy Larkins

Student Representative

The Executive Committee is chaired

by the program Director, vice-chaired by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), and consists of six other faculty members with a student representative. The Committee reviews student progress and curriculum, administers the qualifying exam, approves your mentor choices, assesses faculty membership, and organizes recruitment. Basically, the EC oversees the running of the program as determined by the BCDB

guidelines, which is written and updated by the EC.

This year, Anita Corbett will begin her second term as Director. Her job is to oversee the Executive Committee and act as a liaison between our program and the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS).

Andy Kowalczyk will have the role of Director of Graduate Studies (DGS). Besides being the vice-chair of the Executive Committee, he is the fac-

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THE NEW, FALL IBS 559

"WHILE THE LARGE DIVISION COURSES (IBS 555/6) DO A GREAT JOB OF ESTABLISHING A BROAD FOUNDATION IN OUR DISCIPLINES, THEY ARE TOO LARGE AND CUMBERSOME TO PROVIDE THE DEPTH THAT OUR STUDENTS NEED."

By Rick Kahn

This Fall will see the premiere of a new 1st year course in the BCDB program, despite its adoption of the old name and course number, IBS 559 (aka "Topics"). The new course arose, in large part, as a response to repeated re-



quests from students for more depth in program-specific material than can be offered in IBS 555 and for more problem solving sessions. The course will meet

Wednesdays from 10 - 10:50 and Fridays from 1:30 - 3:30 in RRC 2133. The current plan for the course evolved

over the summer with the assistance of the Program Director (Anita Corbett), DGS (Andy Kowalczyk), the Curriculum Czar (Mike Koval) and the course directors of the other BCDB 1st year courses (Sho Ono for the Spring IBS 559 and Mike Koval for IBS 570 (seminar)). It seems pretty clear that while the large division

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RECENT GRADUATES

By Brett T. Israel

Over the last year, several students have bid farewell to BCDB and embarked upon post-docs and careers across the country. Here is a list of those that have moved on and where they are now. In future editions, look for letters from these students describing their new adventures.



Melissa Geddie (Matsumura Lab)—Post-doc, Lindquist Lab, MIT, geddie@wi.mit.edu

Taryn O'Laughlin Gross (Matsumura Lab)—Clinical Editor, Clinical Care Options, tgross@clinicaloptions.com

Branch Craige (Faundez Lab)—Post-doc, UMass Medical School, Branch.Craige@umassmed.edu

Alyssa Tippens (Lee Lab) - Medical Writer, MedErgy Marketing, Inc., atippens@medergymarketing.com

Yuntao Chen (Feng Lab) - Post-doc, UT Southwestern Medical Center, Dept of Developmental Biology, yche14@mednet.swmed.edu

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LIFE AFTER BCDB

By Taryn O'Laughlin Gross



One of the first questions I often receive when I tell someone about what I do and how I got there is, “So, why did you get your PhD in biochemistry to do *that*?” After I get over my initial frustration with the question, I poise myself and explain the unique qualities I gained and skills I learned on my journey to obtain my PhD that are, I believe, imperative to doing my job well.

I am a medical editor. The company I work for, Clinical Care Options (CCO), LLC, provides physicians, registered nurses, pharmacists and other healthcare workers with online (and some print) content to keep them abreast of the latest scientific and clinical research. Indeed, these healthcare providers must acquire a certain number of continuing medical education, or CME, credits each year in order to continue practicing their specialties; CCO provides them with the means to obtain these credits. Some of the products we produce include:

- Capsule Summaries: concise, 1-2 page articles summarizing a single study
- Expert Recaps: narrated slidesets that provide commentary by a faculty expert on multiple related studies

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REVIEWING THE BCDB PROGRAM – A LOOK BACK AND AHEAD

By Rick Kahn

You might be surprised to realize that 10 years have passed since the BCDB program was created, from the fusion of the BMB and CDB programs. The program has continued to evolve throughout the intervening years, with the emergence of the division courses IBS 555 and 556 (spearheaded and still largely taught by BCDB faculty) as the foundation of 1st year classroom activities, various iterations of the Methods/Topics course (IBS559), and of course the establishment of the much lauded and equally dreaded Grants course (IBS522), originally in the Spring of 1st year but moved to the Fall of the 2nd year about 3 years ago.

With the 10th anniversary looming, being in the middle of the cycle of the training grant, and with plans for both internal and later external review of the entire GDBBS within the year, it seemed a good time to perform a self-evaluation of the program to optimally position the program. In response, the Executive Committee constituted the group of former Directors and DGSs of the program as the BCDB Internal Review Committee (BIRC); consisting of Judy Fridovich-Keil, Rick Kahn, Steve L'Hernault, Grace Pavlath, and Danny Reines. While strategic planning is all the rage at Emory, we have no real expectations of gathering additional resources but rather plan to take a look at our strengths and weaknesses and generate a series of recommendations for discussion by faculty and students and ultimately the Executive Committee for possible action.

After an initial planning meeting at the beginning of the summer, things got going in earnest toward the end of August with a meeting between the BIRC and a group of 12-15 current students. This session generated several ideas and helped catalyze the completion of a survey that was sent to all students and faculty in the program on August 27th. Results from the survey will be incorporated into the report that will go to the EC. We hope to have additional discussions with students and faculty before winding up, hopefully by the end of September.

I think our challenge was perhaps best voiced by a student at the meeting who pointed out that “our biggest strength is our broad multi-disciplinary approaches to science but that is also a potential weakness in making us appear diffuse and unfocused” (I paraphrase, but that was the gist of it). One solution is enhanced communication, and the idea of the newsletter was born. Many thanks to Christy and Brett for taking it from there...

- Contact Rick Kahn at rkahn@emory.edu

STUDENT RECRUITMENT IN BCDB



By Bill Kelly

Along with college football and leaf blowers, the recruitment season begins anew each fall. I thought that I would outline the how's and why's of this important component of our program. Graduate students contribute substantially to the success of scientific research and provide the core for its future at academic research institutions. All graduate programs compete for a limited pool of students that have chosen research as their future career. The "upper tier" programs must compete even further for the smaller proportion of this pool that meet the standards for admission to high quality graduate programs, such as BCDB. The success of our program is measured by the subsequent success of our students, and by any measure the students that enter the BCDB program are exceptional. This is also an indication of the historical success of our program's recruitment efforts to attract applications from students that are likely to succeed in science.

Laboratories within GDBBS programs also "compete" for the small number of students that are admitted to each program. Therefore, there is pressure to increase the number of students that are admitted so that every lab's probability of attracting a student rises. The limit of how many students is dictated, as is most of life, by money—how many student "slots" each program receives is limited by the total budget for student stipends, tuition, and health care costs. No scientist without (or perhaps even with) an MBA fully understands how a program's slot allocation is calculated, but suffice it to say that the more successful a graduate program is at successfully recruiting applicants, the larger the slice of the student "slot pie" it receives.

There are thus two overlapping goals for graduate recruitment: a) attract applications from a large pool of qualified students, and b) matriculate a large fraction of those students that we deem sufficiently qualified to accept into our program. Simple math dictates that not all students we accept will decide to come to Emory, so one strategy is always to increase the number of qualified applicants to increase the odds of filling our allotted slots. The question that applies to this strategy is: How can we attract a larger portion of the qualified prospective students to apply? We currently use an informative website, and seminars by faculty at undergraduate schools, but another productive tool is word of mouth. Keeping in touch with alma mater professors can be very productive—we have developed a program brochure to send to interested students. Will you help us by sending them along with a short note to former advisors and/or colleagues? Let us know. Do you have other ideas that may help capture the attention of prospective students? If so, we want to hear from you (see below).

Another strategy is to increase the percentage of students who accept our offers. The focus for the latter strategy clearly relies on persuading students with multiple offers to choose Emory, and ground zero of this persuasion effort is Recruitment Weekend. Recruitment Weekend itself is a relatively short event that actually culminates from literally months of work that occurs throughout the year. What can we do to make Recruitment Weekend even more successful? How do we draw a student's attention away from other, equally qualified programs across the country? The strategy is simple, and is no different than marketing efforts used by any business: *Effectively displaying our assets!* Our assets are, in order of increasing importance, location, facilities and people. Our students and our faculty are the most revealing and persuasive aspects of the quality of our program. It is thus critical that students and faculty play prominent roles during recruitment, and "display" themselves for the assets that they are.

Recruiting is a year round activity. We (your "recruitment team") have already been planning the recruiting weekend, designing a program brochure, contacting prospective students, and holding preliminary meetings to discuss all aspects of recruitment. We will soon be expending substantial effort to draw in the applications, screen through and select them, schedule and finance the weekend, sort through the feedback from the weekend, and get offers out in a timely fashion. We cannot, by ourselves, persuade the students who come to the weekend to come back in the Fall. This *active participation* by program faculty and students during recruitment events—showing up at events, conversing with the candidates, and displaying their research and interest in persuading the candidates to become colleagues in the Fall.

We need ALL students and faculty to keep their calendars clear for **Feb. 28-29** to spend time with the students we will have spent a lot of money, time and effort to bring to Atlanta as potential BCDB students. If you have ideas to help with any aspect of recruitment, please contact me. We are currently discussing some changes to Recruitment that we hope will positively impact an already successful process. We will be contacting students and faculty with more details as recruiting weekend draws near—so put these dates in iCal *now!*

-Contact Bill Kelly at bkelly@emory.edu

BCMB TRAINING GRANT

By Christy Larkins

BCDB proudly receives a training grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), one of the National Institutes of Health. NIGMS offers training grants in various fields in order “to provide trainees with broad access to research opportunities across disciplinary and departmental lines and to maintain high standards for intellectual rigor and creativity.” BCDB was awarded from the training program in Biochemistry, Cell, and Molecular Biology (BCMB). Training grants are issued to the institution, leaving it up to the administration to decide how the award is granted and how a portion of the funds are to be used.

For BCDB, the BCMB training grant is awarded to second year students who are selected based on undergraduate institution, GPA, GRE, graduate GPA, performance on Part 1 of the BCDB Qualifying Exam, and a nomination letter from the student’s mentor. Some of the funds from the training grant are used to sponsor our weekly journal club and the Research Symposium in the spring, both of which are organized by the training grant recipients. Both the journal club and the symposium allow enrichment of scientific knowledge for all students in the program who choose to participate. The training grant also provides the benefit of relieving BCDB of the stipend of seven students, giving the program extra funds to increase the number of students that can be supported in the next entering class.

NIGMS provides grants to 250 programs, and supports more than 3,000 PhD and MD-PhD students. This year, the stipend allocation for BCDB was increased allowing seven students to be supported. In the past, the training grant provided funding for six.

This year’s training grant recipients are: Connie Arthur, M.K. Findley, Jenn Jackson, Bryn Lipovsky, Lee Anne McGaha, Dana Tucker, and Stephanie Zlatic.



Connie Arthur
Cummings Lab
2nd Year



M.K. Findley
Koval Lab
2nd Year



Jenn Jackson
Pallas Lab
2nd Year



Lee Anne McGaha
Faundez Lab
2nd Year



Dana Tucker
Kowalczyk Lab
2nd Year



Stephanie Zlatic
Faundez Lab
2nd Year



Bryn Lipovsky
Doetsch Lab
2nd Year

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

(Continued from page 1)

program is taking a good hard look at what works and what might not work so well. We appreciate the time that everyone is taking for this introspection. As we await the outcome of the internal review, we have a new BCDB executive committee in place that brings some new people on board (See Christy's article on the who and what of the BCDB executive committee) and hopefully some new ideas. This new executive committee has already implemented a couple of changes worth mentioning. First, there is increased effort for the BCDB executive committee, particularly the curriculum tsar, to oversee the first and second year curriculum to make sure that key topics are covered sufficiently and that overlap among syllabi is minimized. Second, a new Mentor Agreement form has been created that spells out the requirements for both the Mentor and the Student. Both Mentor and Student will have to initial next to these requirements (such as provide extensive feedback in the Grants course etc...) to acknowledge that they understand what they are getting themselves into. As we begin a new year, I want to encourage everyone to be engaged in the program. Participation from both faculty and students provides the energy that makes the program go. On that note, thanks so much to Brett and Christy for taking the lead with this newsletter and providing a forum for the BCDB program doings.

- Contact Anita Corbett at acorbe2@emory.edu

THE NEW, FALL IBS 559

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courses (IBS 555/6) do a great job of establishing a broad foundation in our disciplines, they are too large and cumbersome to provide the depth that our students need.

The new course will shadow IBS 555 in topics and will consist of student chalk talks with discussions on key methods on Wednesdays and problem solving sessions on Fridays, involving former IBS 555 and BCDB qualifying exam questions. While I am quite comfortable with the first and fourth modules in IBS 555 (Proteins and Membrane traffic) I am less so in the DNA and RNA modules so would welcome any help from faculty or senior students willing to assist in the new course.

Because the new course developed over the last few months, we did not have time to get approval from the registrar for a new course. This is the reason we co-opted the old name and number. The Spring IBS 559 course will again be directed by Sho Ono and you will have to wait for word from him, hopefully in the next newsletter, on plans for that course, which in the past has used a different format.

- Contact Rick Kahn at rkahn@emory.edu



RECENT GRADUATES

(Continued from page 2)

Paula Checchi (Kelly Lab) - Southern Polytechnic, pchecchi@spsu.edu

Matt Palmer (Boss Lab) - MSTP, Emory, mbpalme@learnlink.emory.edu

Robert Collins (Cheng Lab) - Post-doc, Lambricht Lab, Program in Molecular Medicine, UMass Medical School, Collins.r.e@gmail.com

LIFE AFTER BCDB

(Continued from page 3)

-Expert Analyses: written material summarizing the discussion of 3 or more faculty experts on multiple related studies

-Interactive Case Challenges: series of questions on how to manage a patient with a certain condition

So, what did BCDB teach me that helps me in my current job? Well, a lot. First, through the writing of grants (I know, the dreaded grants class!), journal articles, committee updates and other miscellaneous pieces, I learned how to be a better writer, which is imperative to taking the next step as an editor. Secondly, I learned how to be unbiased, or at least to make every effort to do so. Most of the pertinent research that physicians need to learn about involves new pharmaceuti-

cals, which are most often produced by drug companies. Since pharmaceutical companies cannot produce the content themselves, for fear that the data would be skewed in their favor, our job is to provide nonbiased, factual information. One lesson I learned from the lab was that no matter how much I wanted my experiments to ‘work’, or how much I wished for that band to show up on a gel, in the end I had to rely on what was really there.

Additionally, I learned how to think critically, how to ‘talk science’ and how to quickly read and understand journal articles, abstracts and research presentations. Finally, and this may seem strange, but a hugely valuable skill that I only recently learned I have is how to use Powerpoint!

I love my job; I get to keep learning about the latest re-

search on HIV, which has always been my passion, I get to chat with leading faculty members in the field, I get to travel and attend major scientific congresses...and...oh yeah, I get to work in my pajamas if I want—my job is based from home! Ironically, however, one thing I didn’t learn in BCDB until very late in my graduate career and mostly due to my own investigation was that this job they prepared me so well for exists.

- Contact Taryn O’Laughlin Gross at tgross@clinicaloptions.com

KNOW YOUR EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE!



Andy Kowalczyk
DGS



Scott Devine
Student Progress and Committee Meetings



Yue Feng
Student Rotations

EC REPORT

(Continued from page 2)

ulty member that students can go to with problems regarding the program. Feel free to chat with him about program concerns.

The names and roles of the remaining members are: Scott Devine—reviews student progress and committee meetings, Yue Feng—oversees student rotations, Victor Faundez—oversees part one of the qualifying

exam, Bill Kelly—organizes recruitment, Mike Koval—responsible for student curriculum, Russ Price—reviews faculty membership, and the student representative Christy Larkins (me)—doesn’t let the faculty forget who’s most important.

Hopefully, this clarification of our program’s intricacies will let you know who to go to with specific problems, and give you an idea of just what goes into running our program.

-Contact Christy Larkins at clarkin@emory.edu



Mike Koval
Student Curriculum



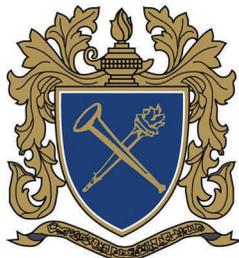
Russ Price
Faculty Membership



Victor Faundez
Student Rotations



Bill Kelly
Recruitment



EMORY

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THE LEADING EDGE
BCDB NEWSLETTER
BRETT T. ISRAEL—EDITOR
CHRISTY LARKINS—STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

VISIT THE BCDB WEBSITE
HTTP://WWW.BIOMED.EMORY.EDU/
PROGRAM_SITES/BCDB/

BACK PAGE

Welcome to the first edition of the brand new BCDB newsletter, *The Leading Edge!* We hope this newsletter will be a fun way to keep everyone informed of events in our program.

In the coming issues, expect to find articles and essays written by BCDB students on a wide range of topics; science in our everyday lives, interviews with new faculty, changes and updates to the program and information on cool events around town.

If you would like to be a part of this newsletter, all you have to do is say so! One goal of this newsletter is to create a forum where students interested in science writing can display their skills for the entire program. If you've got an idea for an interesting science essay, we'd love to hear it.

Thanks again and we hope you enjoy *The Leading Edge!*

- For questions, comments or concerns, please contact Brett Israel at bisrael@emory.edu.

AROUND TOWN

By Brett T. Israel

After long hours spent in the lab, treat yourself to some fall fun in Atlanta. Here are a few upcoming events that you may enjoy:

North GA State Fair—Sept 20-30, Marietta, GA

Atlanta HorrorFest—Oct 4-7, Lenny's Bar

Taste of Atlanta—Oct 13-14, Atlantic Station

Little 5 Points Halloween Parade—Oct 20, L5P

Fright Fest—Oct 6-28, Six Flags Over GA

Macy's Great Tree Lighting—Nov 22, Lenox Square



Peach Bowl Parade—Dec 31, Downtown Atlanta

New Year's Eve Peach Drop—Dec 31, Underground Atlanta

SUDOKU!

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