

SPRING 2025

NEWSLETTER

Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences

Header Credit: Lauren Askew, 2025 BCDB Graduate and 1st Place 2021 DSAC Image Winner, "Tails from the Crypts"

Message from the GDBBS Director

Dear GDBBS Community,

Challenging. Unprecedented. Frustrating. There are many words we could use to describe academic science recently.

Encouraging. Motivating. Collaborative. And, there are also many words we can use to describe GDBBS students and their accomplishments.

Creative. Curious. Dedicated. But, there are many words we can use to describe members of our GDBBS community.

In this newsletter, we celebrate some of the many accomplishments and initiatives of our students, faculty, staff, and programs.

It is an honor to work with all of you and to see what we can do together, supporting each other as we build new scientific knowledge and find a path forward.

Thank you to Maureen Thomas for putting this new GDBBS newsletter together. Please reach out to her if you have ideas for features in the fall issue.

Sincerely,



Congratulations to the GDBBS Class of 2025!

You did it!

Your hard work and dedication have led you to this momentous occasion, and we are incredibly proud of your accomplishments.

We wish you all the very best in your future endeavors!



In This Issue:

Message from the GDBBS Director
PAGE 01

DSAC Symposium Highlights
PAGE 02

GDBBS Student
Accomplishments
PAGE 03

Neuroscience Program Updates
PAGE 06

LGS Awards Winners
PAGE 07

Faculty Spotlight
PAGE 08

GDBBS Student Organizations
Feature
PAGE 10

New Look for GDBBS Office
PAGE 13

Upcoming GDBBS Events
PAGE 14



DIVISION STUDENT ADVISORY COUNCIL
GRADUATE DIVISION OF BIOLOGICAL AND BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

22nd Annual GDBBS Research Symposium

March 26th, 2025

Dear GDBBS Community,

On behalf of the symposium organizers, we want to thank everyone who participated in and supported the 22nd Annual GDBBS Symposium. Your engagement, thoughtful discussions, and encouragement of our presenters made this year another success.

A special thank you to our presenters for sharing their research and to our faculty, staff, and attendees for continuing to foster a collaborative and supportive environment at Emory. Your enthusiasm and support continue to make this symposium a highlight of the year.

We would also like to recognize this year's presentation winners:

Oral Presentations:

- Meher Sethi – Infectious Diseases & Microbes session
- Anu Korukonda – Mechanisms of Pathology session
- Jordan Goldy – Cellular & Molecular Pathways session
- Emily Sullivan – Metabolic Pathways and Immune Function session
- Monica Reeves – Genomics and Gene Regulation session
- Jarildy Javier – Translational Research session

Poster Sessions:

- Sarah Webster – 1st place poster
- Ally Su & Luke Shoemaker – 2nd place posters

Congratulations to all our winners! We appreciate your contributions and look forward to seeing you at future our events.

Cheers!
DSAC



GDBBS Student Accomplishments

“Learn everything. Fill your mind with knowledge—it’s the only kind of power no one can take away from you.”

MIN JIN LEE



2025 Edward A. Bouchet Graduate Honor Society



Named after the first African American doctoral recipient in the United States (Physics, Yale University, 1876), Dr. Edward Alexander Bouchet, this Society acknowledges outstanding scholarly achievement and promotes diversity and excellence in doctoral education and the professoriate. It is a network of preeminent scholars who exemplify academic and personal excellence, foster environments of support and serve.

This year’s Bouchet Graduate Honor Society Scholars are:

- Lauryn Cureton (Genetics & Molecular Biology, 3rd Year)
- Yesenia Garcia-Sifuentes (Neuroscience, 5th Year)
- Christina Ramelow (Neuroscience, 5th Year)



2024-2025 Kharen Fulton Award

Genetics and Molecular Biology PhD candidate, Yemko Pryor, was presented with the 2024-25 Kharen Fulton Award for Diversity, Inclusion and Community Engagement in Graduate Education during the annual EDGE Diversity Reception.

Several students gathered for the event to celebrate and honor the legacy of Kharen Fulton, PhD, a longtime director of recruitment, diversity and admissions at the Laney Graduate School.

Throughout their time at Emory, Pryor has been a vital leader across identity spaces and a force for systemic change in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Outside of Emory, Pryor is an active member of Southern Fried Queer Pride (SFQP), where they organize events that create safe and inclusive spaces for Black, Indigenous and QTPOC communities in Atlanta.

GDBBS Student Accomplishments

Nikki Boon Makes History at NCAA Indoor Track & Field Championships

Neuroscience graduate student, Nikki Boon, has achieved an outstanding accomplishment at the NCAA Division III Indoor Track & Field Championships. On March 14, she won the national championship in the indoor pentathlon, setting a Division III national record and championship meet record with a score of 4,061 points. This makes her the first woman in Division III history to surpass 4,000 points in the event and the first-ever national champion in the indoor pentathlon from Emory University.

[Check out Nikki's full story.](#)



Congratulations to 3MT Winner Jonathan Owen

Jonathan Owen, a fourth-year PhD candidate in Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, took first place in the Laney Graduate School's 3MT and Master's Showcase on March 4. His presentation, "How a Virus Makes Spaghetti," cleverly used the universal love of spaghetti as an analogy to explain his research on how flaviviruses rearrange host membranes. Jonathan's ability to transform complex scientific concepts into an accessible and captivating presentation truly impressed the audience and judges alike.

Congratulations also to [Nahara Vargas-Maldonado](#), fourth-year PhD candidate in Immunology and Molecular Pathogenesis, who was this year's runner-up in the competition.

"Research is formalized curiosity. It is poking and prying with a purpose."

ZORA NEALE HURSTON



GDBBS Student Accomplishments

External Fellowship Spotlight: Fall 2024-Spring 2025

American Heart Association

- Ananya Dash (IMP)
- Felipe Takaesu (BCDB)

Myotonic Dystrophy Foundation Research Fellowship

- Bethlehem Bekele (NS)

NRSA F31

- Lauren Cureton (GMB)
- Megan Martinez (MMG)
- Monica Reeves (GMB)
- Nicole Roos (GMB)

Success is not the result of making one good choice or taking one step. Real success requires step, after step, after step, after step. It requires choice after choice, it demands life-long education and passion and commitment and persistence and hunger and patience.”

JESMYN WARD

Congratulations to the GDBBS Students Elected to Serve on the Laney Graduate Student Council (LGSC) for 2025-2026



President
Enoch Ayamga (BCDB)



Vice President
Trinidi Prochaska (NS)



University Relations Officer
Hannah Barge (MMG)



Social Chair
Lauren Gao (NS)

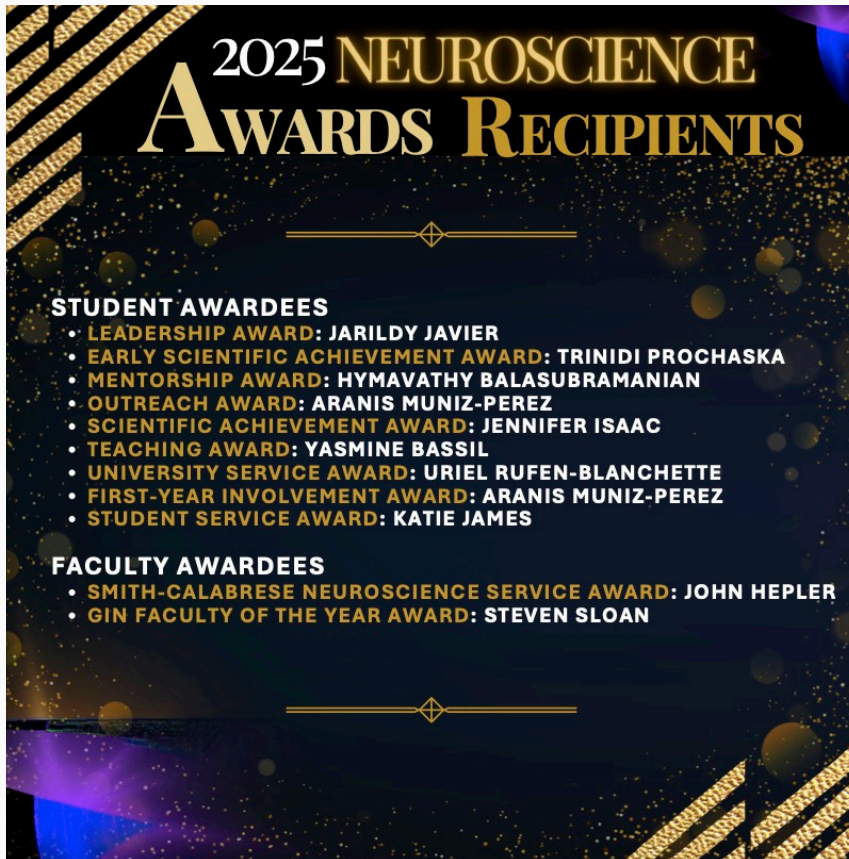


Social Chair
Breanna Johnson (BCDB)

Neuroscience Program Updates

Header Credit: Tina Tian, 2025 NS Graduate and 3rd Place 2023 DSAC Image Winner, "Burst of Sympathy"

On April 23rd, the Neuroscience program celebrated the remarkable achievements and contributions of their talented students, faculty, and staff. The recipients of this year's prestigious awards are named below. Congratulations to all of these deserving individuals!



This event was organized by Graduates in Neuroscience (GIN), a student-run organization comprised of the students in the Emory Neuroscience Graduate Program, which aims to promote neuroscience, provide peer-to-peer support, and build a sense of community among students.



Gordon Berman has been elected as the new Y1/Y2 Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) for the Neuroscience Graduate Program.

Dr. Berman brings a wealth of experience and dedication to this position and his leadership will greatly benefit the incoming and current Y1/Y2 students.

Sincere gratitude goes out to Dr. John Hepler for his dedicated service as the previous Y1/Y2 DGS. His contributions to the program have been invaluable.



GEORGIOS DANGAS

Outstanding Doctoral Student Award

Georgios Dangas, a fellow in Biochemistry, Cell, and Developmental Biology, demonstrates remarkable research productivity and versatility across scientific disciplines, signaling his strong potential for lasting impact in the field.



EMORY | LANEY
GRADUATE
SCHOOL

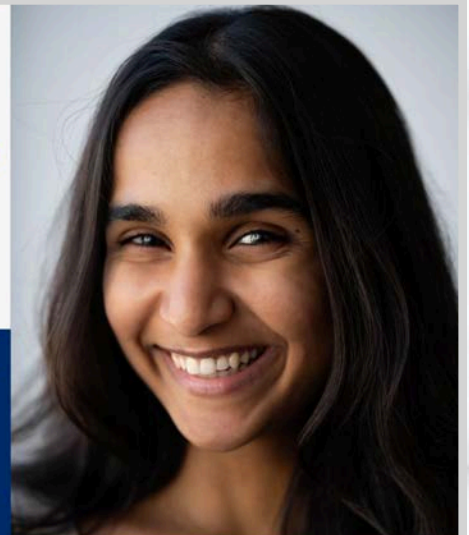
RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE

2025 LGS AWARDS

SHREYA RAVICHANDRAN

Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant /Associate Award

Shreya Ravichandran is a role model in the BCDB program, known for her adaptable teaching, dedication to student well-being, and impactful mentorship and leadership.



NICHOLAS SEYFRIED

Faculty Inclusive Excellence Award

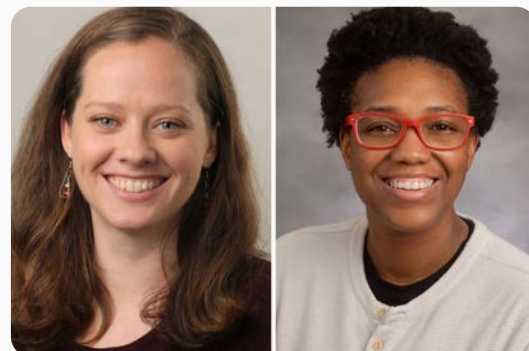
Nicholas Seyfried, a professor in the Biochemistry program, is an inclusive and visionary leader who fosters open communication, mutual respect, and mentorship centered on team well-being and success.



Faculty Spotlight

Two GDBBS Professors Receive U.S. government's Highest Honor for Early Career Scientists

GMB faculty member Dr. Elizabeth Leslie-Clarkson (left) and MSP and NS faculty member Dr. Dionna Williams are recipients of the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers. Read the full story [here](#).



Dr. Dionna Williams Featured on the Cover of The Pharmacologist

Dr. Williams was also featured on the cover of The Pharmacologist, in honor of Black History Month. She joined ASPET in 2022 and is a member of the Division for Drug Metabolism and Disposition. Read the article [here](#).

Sloan Foundation Awards Fellowship to Emory Neuroscientist

Dr. Malavika Murugan, Assistant Professor of Biology and NS faculty member, is Emory University's newest recipient of a Sloan Research Fellowship. Read the full story [here](#).



Dr. John R. Hepler Elected Secretary/Treasurer of ASPET



Dr. John R. Hepler, Professor and Vice Chair for Academic Affairs in Pharmacology and Chemical Biology, was elected Secretary/Treasurer of the American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics (ASPET). This position on the society Executive Council is for a 3 year term and, as Secretary/Treasurer-Elect, Dr. Hepler will begin his service in June 2025. He has been an active member of ASPET for 26 years, serving previously as Chair of the Molecular Pharmacology Division and was honored by selection as a Fellow of ASPET (FASPET) in 2024. Dr. Hepler is also a faculty member in the MSP and NS programs.

Faculty Spotlight

GDBBS Faculty Named as Fellows of the American Association for the Advancement of Science

Two GDBBS faculty, Drs. Edmund K. Waller and Ilya Nemenman, were among the seven Emory faculty selected as 2024 AAAS Fellows. They will receive the AAAS gold rosette pin (representing science) to commemorate their election and be celebrated at a D.C. forum in June. Read the full story [here](#).



Dr. Edmund K. Waller
(CB and IMP)



Dr. Ilya Nemenman
(NS and PBEE)

Cheryl L. Maier Receives American Society for Clinical Investigation Young Physician-Scientist Award



Dr. Cheryl L. Maier, assistant professor, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, medical director for the Special Coagulation Laboratory, Emory School of Medicine, has been awarded the American Society for Clinical Investigation (ASCI) Young Physician-Scientist Award (YPSA). The YPSA recognizes physician-scientists who are early in their first faculty appointment and have made notable achievements in their research.

Dr. Maier is also a BCDB faculty member.

GDBBS Faculty Tenured and Promoted During 2023-24 Academic Year

Emory College of Arts & Sciences (ECAS)

John Lindo, Associate Professor of Anthropology (GMB & PBEE)

Michael Treadway, Professor of Psychology (NS)

Gonzalo Vazquez-Prokopec, Professor of Environmental Sciences (PBEE)

Rollins School of Public Health (RSPH)

Todd Everson, Associate Professor of Environmental Health (GMB)

School of Medicine (SOM)

Michael Borich, Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine (NS)

Steven Bosinger, Associate Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (IMP & MMG)

Candace Floyd, Professor of Emergency Medicine (NS)

Thota Ganesh, Associate Professor of Pharmacology and Chemical Biology (MSP)

Trisha Kesar, Associate Professor of Rehabilitation Medicine (NS)

Elizabeth Leslie-Clarkson, Associate Professor of Human Genetics (GMB)

Zhiyong Lin, Associate Professor of Medicine (MSP)

Vasiliki Michopoulos, Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences (NS)

Machelle Pardue, Professor of Ophthalmology (NS)

Carlos Sanchez Moreno, Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine (CB & GMB)

Richard Wainford, Professor of Medicine (MSP)

Jindan Yu, Professor of Urology (CB & GMB)

These GDBBS faculty
were among 84
Emory faculty who
were honored in
February 2025.
Read the full story
[here](#).

Featured GDBBS Student Organizations

Student Organization Achievement and Recognition Awards

Emory recently celebrated the contributions of student leaders and their advisors who help student organizations thrive. The Student Organization Appreciation BBQ was held on April 16 on McDonough Plaza.

The celebration continued with the Student Organization Achievement and Recognition (SOAR) Awards, which recognized key players in organizational and leadership development across campus for their outstanding achievements and service.

This year, Aspiring Medical Science Liaisons at Emory (AMSLE) was the recipient of the SOAR Rising Star of the Year Award.

AMSLE, the only trainee-led professional development and Medical Science Liaison (MSL) organization at Emory University, is dedicated to empowering PhDs and Postdocs with a passion for the MSL profession! Their mission is to provide a supportive platform that equips aspiring MSLs with the resources, knowledge, and connections necessary to successfully transition into this dynamic field. Their goal is to empower individuals with the skills and confidence to excel in scientific communication, develop strong relationships with key stakeholders, and make a significant impact in bridging the gap between healthcare and industry. Whether you're seeking guidance on breaking into the MSL career path, looking to expand your network, or eager to gain valuable insights from seasoned MSL professionals, AMSLE is here to support you every step of the way. They offer a wide range of free resources, including expert-led webinars, industry insights, and informative workshops, tailored specifically to the needs of PhDs and Postdocs at Emory University.

AMSLE

AMSLE Executive Board:

President - Olivia Mistretta (NS)

Vice President - Lexi Snyder (BCDB)

Post-doctoral Liaison - Abby Bartlett

Financial Officer - Jonica Brown (MSP)

Internal Communications Coordinator - Bri Silver (GMB)

“Whenever you are going through life’s challenges, remember that for iron to be cast into its desired form, it must first go through intense heat.”

— idowu koyenikan

**Curious about AMSLE?
Instagram @amslemory
LinkedIn @ Aspiring
Medical Science Liaisons
at Emory (AMSLE)**

GDBBS Bridge International Network (GBIN)

The GDBBS Bridge International Network (GBIN) has had a dynamic start, successfully hosting welcome events, a Black History Month movie screening, and a panel on international PhD career pathways.

ABOUT GBIN

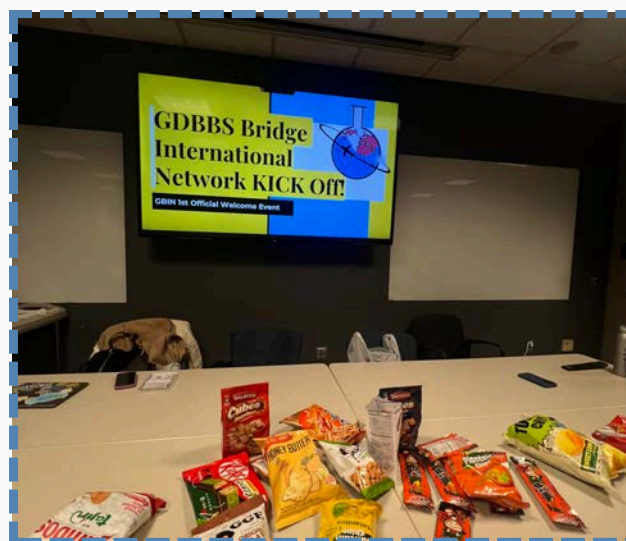
Founded in April 2024, GBIN is a student-led organization dedicated to supporting international PhD students in biomedical and biological sciences. It focuses on career development, networking, and community building. As GBIN approaches its first anniversary, we look forward to celebrating with an alumni panel on international PhD career pathways.

Since its official launch, GBIN has grown to over 54 members and has successfully hosted several events aimed at building connections and supporting international students.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

GBIN Kickoff & Welcome Events

GBIN's inaugural event featured Mediterranean cuisine, an assortment of international snacks, trivia games, and raffle prizes.

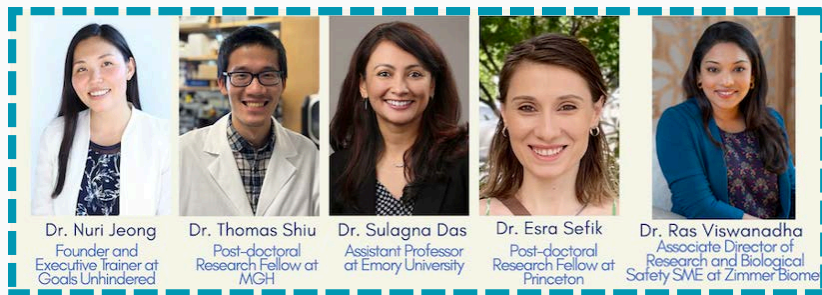
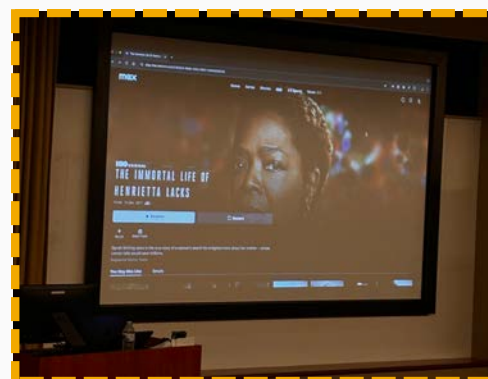


Black History Month Movie Night

In honor of Black History Month, GBIN hosted a screening of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*.

International Alumni and Faculty Career Panel

In April, GBIN hosted an online panel featuring international alumni and faculty from GDBBS, focusing on career development and planning for international PhD students.



GDBBS Involved in Volunteerism at Emory (GIVE)

GIVE's mission is to foster civic responsibility and engagement from the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS) community through outreach activities organized by faculty, staff, and students. The activities planned by this organization hope to foster a spirit of altruism and the development of deeper connection within our communities by donating our time, efforts, talents, leadership, and service skills.



Atlanta Community Food Bank:

In the spring, students came together to volunteer with the local Atlanta Community Food Bank. Nearly 5,704 pounds of food, equating to 4,757 meals, were organized within the facility to be distributed to communities across the city.

Hot Chocolate Run:

Early this year, GIVE volunteered with Hot Chocolate 5k and 15k Run. Volunteers helped register volunteers and provide hot chocolate to runners and fans alike.



Every year, GIVE hosts their annual GIVE Day, where students, faculty, friends, and family come together and volunteer for different organizations across Atlanta. GIVE Day 2025 will be hosted this summer, sign up [here](#) to learn more!



Free Bikes 4 Kids:

In March, volunteers came together to help bring free bikes for kids in the community. With Free Bikes 4 Kids, GIVE helped clean, repair, and restore bikes to be gifted to the kids in Atlanta.

“Celebrate your victories. Even the small ones. And don’t let the setbacks discourage you. Life is too short to dwell on failures.” – Unknown



The GDBBS Office Has a New Look!

Taking the vision of GDBBS Director, Dr. Nicole Gerardo, to create a more usable space within the GDBBS office, we transformed the main office area and break room of Suite 314, in the 1462 Clifton Road Building, into a more open and spacious environment. While the staff will have their own dedicated space for meetings and gatherings, we encourage our grad students to utilize this space as well whenever the need arises. We have snacks, soda, water, coffee, and tea, if you need an afternoon pick me up. Feel free to stop by any time!





**“There are
always
periodic
opportunities
to give up,
while every
single
moment is an
opportunity
to persevere.”**

DEAN F. WILSON

**“Every PhD student's journey is a long
one. The key is to keep climbing, no
matter how steep the mountain
seems.”**



Upcoming Events:

- GIVE Day, July 19, 2025
- GDBBS Awards Celebration, October 2, 2025

Next Newsletter: Fall 2025

Have a suggested feature for a future issue of the GDBBS Newsletter? Complete this [Submission Request for GDBBS Newsletter Form](#) or contact Maureen Thomas at maureen.thomas@emory.edu.

