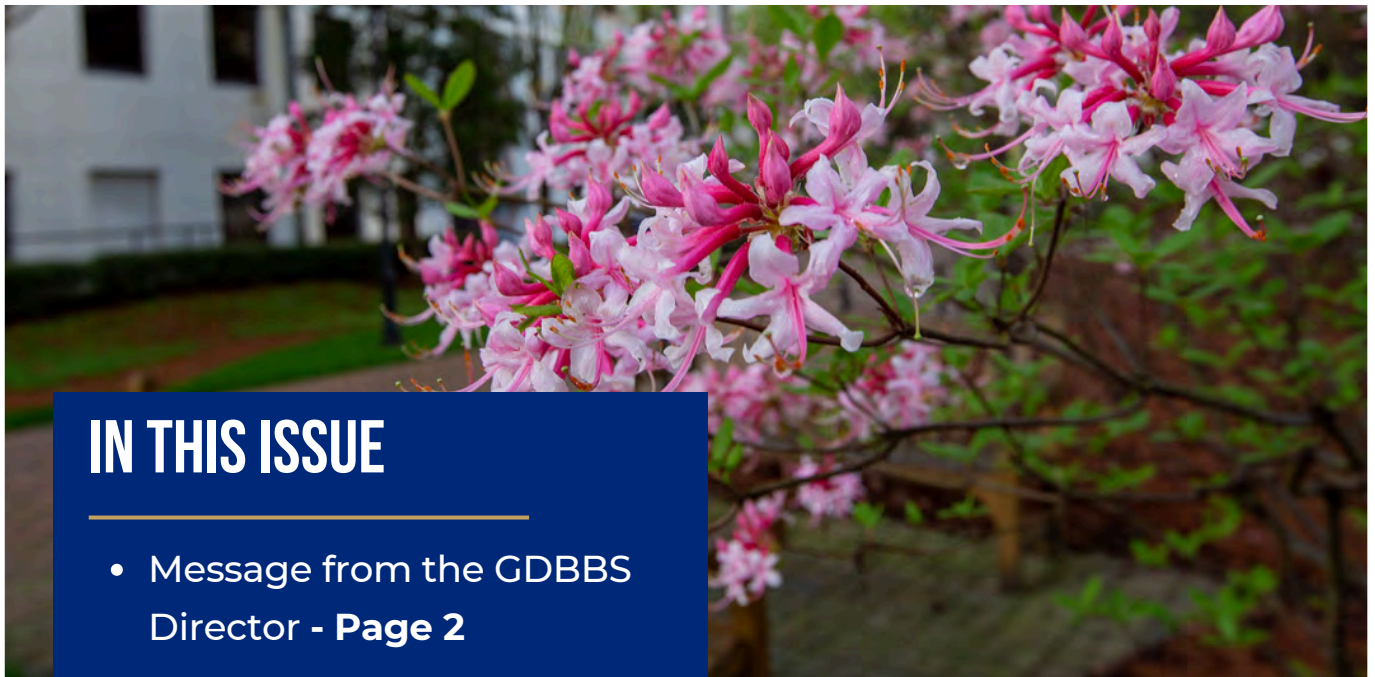


NEWSLETTER

Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences



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CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL OUR GRADUATES!



Our faculty and staff are incredibly proud of our amazing doctorates who have accomplished this task with their hard work.

*"The fruit of your own
hard work is the
sweetest."*

-Deepika Padukone

MESSAGE FROM THE GDBBS DIRECTOR



Dear GDBBS Community,

Happy Spring! As a human, spring is a time of renewal. There is something that is energizing about seeing the flowers and leaves emerge, seeing ants working hard to build up their nests after the winter, and seeing more people finding a nice sunny spot to enjoy their lunch outside with a friend.

As an academic, spring is just really, really busy! Thanks to all of you who attended numerous dissertation committee meetings, qualifying exams and recruiting events. Thanks to all of you who

mentored graduate students preparing talks and posters for the DSAC symposium (and, thanks to DSAC for organizing!). Thanks to all of you who volunteered at the Atlanta Science Festival Expo, did other STEM outreach, who organized program events and who mentored undergraduates. Whew, we did it!

Congratulations to all the GDBBS graduates. For those of you walking in graduation, we hope you enjoy the time to celebrate with family, friends and mentors. To all of you, we wish you all the best as you take your next professional steps.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nicole Gus".

“What lies ahead of you and what lies behind you pales in comparison to what lies within you.”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson

LGS AWARDS

Laney Graduate School (LGS) honored excellence across its community at the 2026 Awards Luncheon, held April 8 at the Carlos Museum. The annual celebration recognizes outstanding students, faculty, and staff whose achievements reflect the strength, dedication, and collaborative spirit of graduate education at Emory University. GDBBS students, faculty, staff and alumni represented well as recipients of some of these awards.



OUTSTANDING GRADUATE STUDENT AWARD FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

George Dangas, 2nd year graduate student in the Biochemistry, Cell and Developmental Biology program



INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE STUDENT AWARD

Tiara Tillis, 3rd year graduate student in the Biochemistry, Cell and Developmental Biology program



INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE FACULTY AWARD

Negar Fani, faculty member in the Neuroscience program



DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

Romesh R. Subramanian, 1995 alumni of the Molecular and Systems Pharmacology program



OUTSTANDING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR AWARD

Holley Butkovich, Program Administrator for the Cancer Biology and the Genetics and Molecular Biology programs
(see more about Holley on Page 34)



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

GDBBS STUDENTS WHO GRADUATED OR SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED - SPRING 2026

Katie Alexander (IMP)
Natalie Alvarez (MMG)
Olufisayo Aloba (NS)
Sydney Bergstresser (IMP)
Karanpreet Bhatia (CB)
Sunny Congrove (CB)
William Crandall (MSP)
James DuBose (PBEE)
Aziz Elbasheir (NS)
Elizabeth Feldman (GMB)
Mackenzie Hoogshagen (PBEE)
Yiqi Huang (NS)
Grace Jang (NS)
David Jimenez-Vallejo (PBEE)

Anuradha Korukonda (NS)
Isai Leguizamo (GMB)
Lester Manly (MSP)
Christina Niavi (IMP)
Thomas O'Haren (GMB)
Taylor Pio (NS)
Dormarie Rivera Rodriguez (IMP)
Maxine Robinette (NS)
Mariana Rocha Alvarez (NS)
Felipe Takaesu (BCDB)
Linzie Taylor (NS)
Katherine Westover (GMB)
Megen Wittling (CB-MD/PHD)

"Take pride in how far you've come. Have faith in how far you can go. But don't forget to enjoy the journey."

— Michael Josephson

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

WINSTON LI, RECIPIENT OF BEST POSTER PRESENTATION

At the Emory University Department of Medicine 18th Annual David S. Stephens Research Day, investigators, trainees, and faculty gathered to showcase cutting-edge discoveries across basic, translational, and clinical research. Held on October 30, 2025, the event brought together more than 350 participants and featured over 170 poster presentations, oral sessions, and keynote lectures highlighting innovation across all ten divisions of the department.



Among this year's award recipients, **Winston Li**, a graduate student in the MSP program, received the Best Poster Presentation (Basic Science Research) for his work on microRNA-induced cardiac reprogramming and cardiac repair. His research highlights a novel regenerative strategy to convert cardiac fibroblasts into functional cardiovascular cell types, advancing efforts to restore myocardial function following injury.

This recognition reflects both the scientific impact of his work and the Department of Medicine's commitment to fostering interdisciplinary collaboration and translational innovation in cardiovascular research.

To read more about this story, click [here](#).

***"An investment in knowledge
always pays the best interest."***
— Benjamin Franklin

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

AN INTERVIEW WITH LUCY OUTTRIM

Lucy Outtrim, a 4th year graduate student in the MSP program, shares her story as a service dog trainer.

1. Can you tell us about the organization that you represent and how you got involved with them?

I am a volunteer puppy raiser for America's VetDogs (AVD) and The Guide Dog Foundation (GDF). These joint nonprofit organizations provide highly trained service dogs free of cost to individuals who are blind, have low vision, or are veterans/first responders with disabilities. My journey began during my time as an undergraduate at Georgia Tech, when my friend introduced me to raising through her dogs, Lennon and Willie. I started my PhD thinking I would simply help with the dogs occasionally (we call this "camping"), but four years and three dogs later, I have absolutely no regrets. As a puppy raiser, I receive the dogs at 8 weeks old and care for them until they are 14–18 months old, at which point I return them to the organization for formal service dog training. My role involves teaching foundational service dog skills, attending GDF/AVD classes, building confidence, and ensuring broad socialization to prepare them for a successful career as a service dog.

2. What inspired you to become a service dog trainer?

In my research, the possibility of helping patients can feel years away, so raising guide dogs offers me something rare and immediate, the direct opportunity to change someone's life. I even have a wall of "Lab Labs" in my office, a growing collection of photos of every dog that has joined me along my PhD journey, including some honorary poodles and goldens. Raising a future guide dog is a journey rooted in patience, consistency, and trust. These incredible dogs have taught me more than I could have imagined. They constantly remind me that growth doesn't happen overnight, but with steady encouragement, unwavering belief, and an unyielding love of life. This work requires daily effort, deep commitment, and inevitable heartbreak when it is time to say goodbye, but it has been one of the most meaningful parts of my graduate experience. Each dog I've raised plays a role in giving someone greater independence, dignity, and companionship. I am honored to be part of that mission and to be part of something bigger than myself.

3. How many dogs have you trained and what is Emory's role in supporting this service dog training program?

Over the past four years I have personally raised two dogs (Peggy and Heidi) and I am currently working with my third, Riley. In addition to full-time raising, I've provided short-term care or puppy camps to numerous dogs to support fellow raisers during vacations, emergencies, or schedule conflicts. I have taken over a dog's final month of AVD training after their original raiser was deployed early. I just recently helped with the transport of an 8-week-old puppy from Atlanta to its new raiser in Tampa, Florida.



Peggy was the 2nd dog my partner, Luke Pittner, and I raised together.



Heidi's graduation photo on campus before she left to go back to NYC for final training



Heidi, the first dog we raised!

The dogs I raise accompany me to Emory's campus every day, where they are exposed to a wide range of environments, people, and situations. This daily socialization is crucial for their development, but it also has a wonderful side effect: they bring joy to everyone they meet!

Whether it's students pausing to smile between classes, staff members stopping to say hello, or the faculty who now keep dog treats in their desks for their morning visits, these dogs help foster connection, comfort, and community wherever they go. Emory University has generously allowed these dogs to be raised on campus and in dorms alongside trained, responsible volunteers.

4. Can you share with us a little bit about your current service dog in training?

I am currently raising a 10-month-old male golden retriever named Riley. Riley is perpetually happy and ready to join me on any adventures. You may often see us around Atwood or trekking across campus to pick up samples. One of his favorite activities is going to Dr. Liotta's classes and helping the undergrads de-stress after a big organic chemistry exam! Please feel free to say hello to us on campus, just please ask first before trying to pet him as he needs to learn to stay focused so he can best serve his future partner as a seeing guide dog.



Riley knows he's the most popular on campus.



ATL Zoo training meeting with Riley!

5. What training methods do you use (e.g., reward-based, positive reinforcement)?

Our curriculum focuses on utilizing positive reinforcement methods and training techniques such as redirection to teach the puppy desirable habits and behaviors. Dogs learn through repetition and outcomes of behaviors. Dogs will associate a behavior, experience, or cue with its outcome. We want to create as many positive outcomes as possible for our puppies, so they build confidence in themselves and in making decisions. That is why you may hear me tell Riley “nice”, which is known as “marking” for good behavior, to communicate with him that he is acting appropriately in public.

6. How does the organization match a specific dog with a client's unique needs?

GDF & AVD look at all aspects of a handler's life to determine which dog would best suit their needs and lifestyle. We look at things like activity level, walking speed, work/school needs, and many other factors. The trainers working with each dog will provide input on their personalities, activity levels, and which tasks they excel at to ensure both the handler and dog can thrive in their new partnership!

7. What is the average time involved in training a fully certified service dog?

The puppies are typically with raisers until they are approximately 14-18 months old before they go into formal training where they'll train for approximately 12-16 weeks for guide dogs or 12-24 weeks for service dogs. Service work is highly individualized for each handler which is why it can take longer. Once each dog has successfully completed a series of tests they are paired with a handler as a fully trained assistance dog!

8. What specific tasks (e.g., mobility support, PTSD, diabetes alert) do you specialize in training?

AVD and GDF are joint programs that share resources but are specialized for specific types of clients. The service dog programs of America's VetDogs were created to provide enhanced mobility and renewed independence to veterans, active-duty service members, and first responders with disabilities, allowing them to once again live with pride and self-reliance. America's VetDogs specializes placing highly-skilled service and guide dogs to individuals with physical injuries, PTSD, hearing and vision loss, and seizures. Whereas, for over 75 years, The Guide Dog Foundation provides seeing guide dogs to people who are blind or have low vision.



Peggy and Lemon going for a stroll on campus. Lemon was not vaccinated yet so she got to be shuttled around in her own personal stroller.

9. What does the organization do if a dog fails to meet the standards for service work?

When a dog is released or retired from any of our programs due to health, age, or any other reason, there is a process to ensure they will spend the rest of their lives in a happy home. If a dog is released and is determined to not be suitable for one of our programs, they first consider a “career change” with a carefully selected partner organization where they might be better suited for work. Examples of the other types of work our dogs may do include explosives detection, accelerate detection, hospitals, special needs schools, or assistance work that is outside the scope of our currently offered services. Some of our dogs will best thrive as family pets. If this is the case, the dog may be placed in a loving home with the puppy raiser family that raised it or with a family that they have referred.

10. How does a service dog change the day-to-day life of a client?

Things that are considered simple tasks for many people can be significantly more difficult, time consuming, and stressful for those with disabilities. Assistance dogs help to reduce the mental and physical load required for everyday activities. Our dogs provide greater freedoms for our clients and drastically increase the overall quality of life.

11. What is the hardest part of being a service dog trainer?

"I could never do that, how can you give them up?" This is almost always one of the first things people say when they hear I raised service dogs. Yes, saying goodbye is awful, the absolute worst. But at the end of the day, the impact these dogs make on someone's life makes all the pain worthwhile. After seeing the independence, joy, and confidence they gift their new handlers, there is no way I could ever hold them back from that. The smiles they bring to everyone around them make the inevitable heartbreak of saying goodbye worth it, and I am so proud of every single one of them.

12. Is there a high demand for service dogs?

Yes!! Our vet dog program has a waitlist of around a year whereas the seeing guide dog wait list can go out as far as 2-4 years. Volunteers are essential for helping cut down this wait time and help provide dogs for those that need them!

13. Is there a great need for service dog trainers? How can someone become service dog trainer and get involved with your organization?

There is a huge demand for volunteers to be able to keep up with our waitlist of clients waiting for their match. To learn more about the organizations you can visit <https://www.guidedog.org> or <https://www.vetdogs.org>. To get started volunteering you will need to fill out the form [here](#). You do not need to have previous experience with dogs, just patience and a willingness to learn. Another, equally valuable way to support these organizations is through donations; it costs between \$40,000-60,000 breed, raise, train, and place one service dog. All the dogs and services from GDF/AVD are provided at no cost to the individuals we are so honored to serve.

I currently am the group leader for all our Emory Volunteers and would be happy to speak with anyone interested in getting involved whether they be undergraduates, graduate students or faculty. Please feel free to reach out directly with any questions at eouttri@emory.edu.



The "Liotta Lab Labs" Wall!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

SOCIETY FOR NEUROSCIENCE (SFN) NEUROSCIENCE SCHOLAR'S PROGRAM (NSP) AWARD



We are thrilled to announce that **Aranís Muniz Pérez** has been selected as a recipient of the prestigious Society for Neuroscience (SfN) Neuroscience Scholar's Program (NSP) award!

This highly competitive program recognizes outstanding commitment and potential in the field of neuroscience. Please join us in congratulating Aranís on this exceptional achievement!

(Learn more about the program:

<https://www.sfn.org/initiatives/community/neuroscience-scholars-program>)

F31 AWARD

Ysabella Alcaraz was awarded an F31 in April 2026.

She is a 4th year GMB graduate student in Shonna McBride's lab.

Congratulations!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

A HILL WORTH CLIMBING: #MAKINGOURCASE AT THE US CAPITOL

By Amartya Pradhan, 3rd Year NS Graduate Student

In spring 2026, the Emory Laney Graduate School sponsored three graduate students to attend the AAAS CASE (Catalyzing Advocacy in Science and Engineering) program in Washington, D.C. It was an honor for me to be one of them. Walking into congressional offices, I wasn't just representing my own research, but representing Emory and the broader research community in Georgia. Together, we put the case for sustained federal investment in science happening right here in our city and the state.



I realize that research is only meaningful when embedded within the community, and given that most of the academic research is funded by taxpayers, we owe a responsibility to give back to our society. I see science advocacy and policymaking as two pillars that ensure rigorous evidence from labs and clinics is not just confined to journal articles, but also shapes decisions that impact health, technology breakthroughs, and social equity. As a neuroscience PhD student at Emory, this intersection of science, law, politics, and society is intriguing as it directly shapes research funding, government priorities, and drug legislation—aspects that influence the kind of research we can do. For instance, I work with stigmatized and heavily restricted psychedelic drugs that have the potential to treat neurological disorders. However, excessive regulations around their use pose barriers to conducting research and delay critical scientific breakthroughs. This is where science policymaking, in my opinion, would play a crucial role in making these drugs more accessible for research, while limiting the risk of drug abuse.

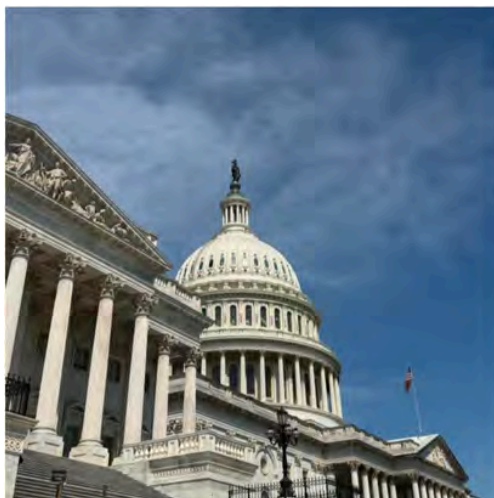
That realization is what the AAAS CASE program pushed me to confront, and I hope that through this article, I can motivate you to reach out to your local representatives and talk about all the cool stuff we do in our labs!

What is AAAS CASE?

The CASE program is an immersive workshop designed to prepare early trainees to learn about science policy and advocacy from experts, enabling them to become persuasive voices for research and be active participants in the federal policymaking process. During the four days, we learned the history of science policymaking, the structure and organization of the US Congress, how discretionary federal funding flows through appropriations, and tools for effective science communication. Through activities that simulate actual appropriations negotiations, we argued for scientific funding from this year's Presidential Budget Request (PBR) by roleplaying as representatives across the political spectrum. We also got a peek into how a congressional office functions from Hill staffers who work with both Democrat and Republican House representatives. Collectively, the first three days prepared us for the most important and exciting aspect of the program—the congressional visits.

On Capitol Hill

On the last day of the program, we all suited up and joined folks from Georgia Tech and the University of Georgia to meet with the house representatives representing the state of Georgia. Meeting with congressional offices belonging to both ends of the American political spectrum was equally nerve-wracking and galvanizing. I had prepared talking points, but what I wasn't fully prepared for was how much they wanted to hear from us. And yes, they want to know what impact our work has on our communities! Most representatives and staffers, especially those on science- and health-related congressional committees and caucuses, often come to the role because they care about those issues—what they lack is an outreach from our end.



United States Capitol Rotunda from outside (left) and inside (right).

During our Hill visits, we discussed the role of federal investment in biomedical research, especially the importance of NIH (National Institutes of Health) and NSF (National Science Foundation) funding, and the downstream health and economic returns these investments generate for our state, this country, and even beyond. Despite a huge reduction proposed by PBR, lawmakers from across the political spectrum support federal investment in research, even though they may have disagreements on how to go about it. I also brought up how increasing bureaucratic hurdles pose a barrier to scientific research and delay critical scientific breakthroughs. One such example is the Department of Justice's recent decision to place DOI, a psychedelic drug that many researchers, including myself, work with, on Schedule I. For decades, this previously unscheduled drug has been the backbone of emerging psychedelic research. It has been used to study the localization and function of specific serotonin receptors and how psychedelics can be used to treat a range of neuropsychiatric and neurological disorders. Scheduling of DOI will now delay and even deter important scientific inquiry because of governmental restrictions. It was promising to know that many representatives and their staffers acknowledge how such decisions would impact scientific progress and would support any legislation that would ease the process of doing research.

As a consequence of years of advocacy on easing restrictions on psychedelic research, on April 18, 2026 (two days after our Capitol Hill visits), the US President signed an Executive Order titled "Accelerating Medical Treatments for Serious Mental Illness", directing the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to accelerate access to psychedelic therapies and allocating \$50 million toward research. The President also directed the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to establish pathways to ease restrictions on specific psychedelic research. This is a powerful testament to what sustained science advocacy can accomplish, i.e., change is possible and it starts with you taking the first step.

What struck me beyond the meetings and congressional hearings was how visibly Emory's reach extended into those hallways. Many of the staffers I met across the table were Emory alumni. Having such a common ground changed the texture of the conversation immediately, and it served as a reminder of how finding something that brings us together is more powerful than what separates us—a key that seasoned science advocates use to bridge political divisions.



***“All dreams
are within
reach. All you
have to do is
keep moving
towards them.”
— Viola Davis***

***Emory students with Shea
Calhoun, Emory alumnus and
Legislative Correspondent with
Rep. Nikema Williams (D-GA-05)***

Key Takeaways

The biggest lesson was not about the policy mechanics; it was rather about the disconnect between scientists and policymakers. Given that a huge chunk of our research is funded by the taxpayers, it is our moral responsibility to communicate our findings back to the taxpayers and people who represent them. It is also our responsibility to translate the impact of our research using a people-first approach, i.e., talk about how your research impacts the local constituency who vote for these representatives. Science and mechanism come after.

I also learned that most bills are drafted by bipartisan committees and subcommittees, and over 70% of bills passed in Congress have bipartisan support, indicating that there is a higher consensus between our lawmakers than what we see in the mainstream media. So next time you want your opinion to be heard, make sure to call to your local representative (you can email them or ask for a meeting) and tell your story. You don't have to become a lobbyist or policy expert to do this. Such outreach counts and has more impact than you think.



Being selected as one of the three students to represent this institution is something I will carry for a long time. I am grateful to Emory and AAAS for believing that graduate students belong in conversations around science policymaking, and for making it possible for us to not just show up as budding scientists, but also as advocates for science.

Students from Emory University, Georgia Tech and University of Georgia with Hans Bjontegard, Legislative Director with Rep. Mike Collins (R-GA-10)



A bipartisan congressional hearing on legislative proposals to improve public health.

Resources

- Emory Office of Government and Community Affairs: <https://gca.emory.edu/index.html>
- Find and contact elected officials: <https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>
- AAAS CASE workshop resources: <https://www.aaas.org/programs/catalyzing-advocacy-in-science-and-engineering/workshop-resources>

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

FIELDWORK IN ACTION: PBEE MD/PHD STUDENT ANDREW SIEBEN TESTS ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS FOR SCHISTOSOMIASIS

By Rosalyn Lightfoot, Program Administrator for NS and PBEE



ARUSHA, TANZANIA — For many in rural Africa, the water that sustains life also carries a hidden danger.

Andrew Sieben, an MD/PhD candidate in the Population Biology, Ecology, and Evolution (PBEE) program, is working at the intersection of clinical medicine and environmental science to break the cycle of schistosomiasis, a parasitic disease that affects millions worldwide.

Schistosomiasis is caused by parasitic worms that infect humans through contact with contaminated freshwater. For rural communities in northern Tanzania, avoiding these waterbodies is often

impossible, as their livelihoods depend on them for drinking, washing, and livestock management. While medical treatments for schistosomiasis are widely available, the cycle of reinfection remains a persistent challenge for public health.

Disrupting the Habitat

Sieben's research investigates whether a physical intervention in the waterbodies themselves can break this cycle. His project tests whether removing nutrient-rich, manure-laden soil can reduce the population of parasitic worms that infect humans.

The ecological logic is straightforward: manure runoff provides the nutrients that support the snails acting as intermediate hosts for the parasites. By removing this sediment, Sieben aims to disrupt the habitat necessary for the worms to thrive.

Tracking the Impact of Livestock

In addition to soil removal, the study examines how livestock movement influences the threat of schistosomiasis. By tracking how cattle move across the landscape, Sieben aims to understand how animal migration patterns intensify the parasite's presence in communal water sources.



Ultimately, this research led by Andrew Sieben could provide a vital blueprint for integrated public health strategies, demonstrating how targeted environmental interventions can effectively shield rural communities from persistent parasitic threats.

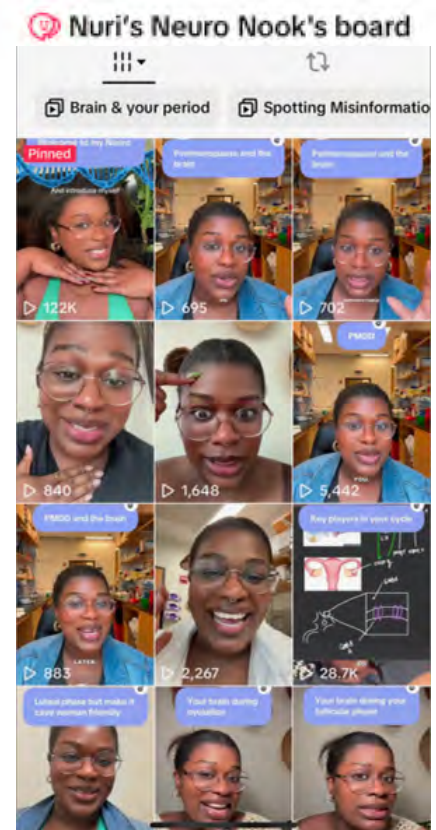
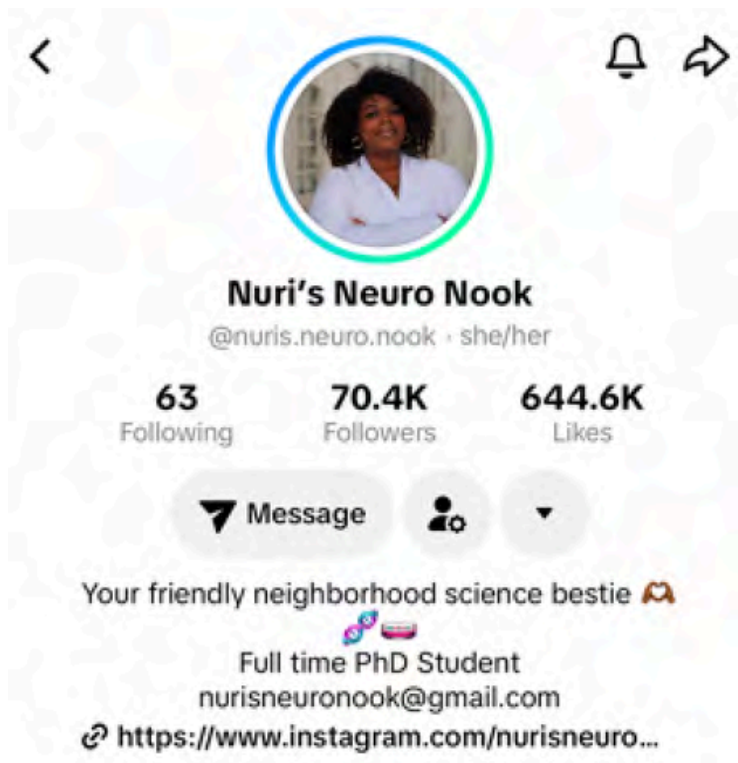
STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

NURI'S NEURO NOOK

By Holley Butkovich, Program Administrator for BCDB, CB, and GMB



Nuri Smith is a 4th year GMB student who launched a TikTok account “Nuri’s Neuro Nook.” She uses her knowledge and research to break down difficult science to educate the masses. She has addressed some really complex topics to share science of the brain, women’s health, chromosomes and genetics. She also shares her experiences as a minority woman in science working on her PhD. I stumbled upon her account and was immediately hooked! I love her take on how she breaks down some pretty heavy topics to make it relatable and understandable to the public without dumbing things down. Her passion for understanding and teaching comes through so well on her channel and she is one of my favorite academics to follow!



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

EDWARD A. BOUCHET GRADUATE HONOR SOCIETY SCHOLARS

Three GDBBS students were inducted into the Edward Alexander Bouchet Graduate Honor Society, which is named after the first African American doctoral recipient in the United States (Physics, Yale University, 1876), Dr. Edward Alexander Bouchet. The Society acknowledges outstanding scholarly achievement and promotes inclusive excellence coupled with access and opportunity 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.



Trinidi D. Prochaska,

3rd Year Neuroscience Graduate Student

Trinidi completed her undergraduate degree in Biology: Neuroscience at Washington University in St. Louis in 2023, where she received the WashU Impact Award. She was an undergraduate fellow for the Enhancing Neuroscience Diversity through Undergraduate Research Education Experiences (ENDURE) and Maximizing Access to Research Careers (MARC) programs and served as an Aspirational Peer Mentor,

where she mentored first-generation, low-income freshmen throughout their college transition.

Trinidi has contributed to impactful initiatives that enhance inclusive excellence and nourish diversity within academia. As a member of the Grady Trauma Project (GTP) Community Advisory Board (CAB), Trinidi curated scientific newsletters that disseminated GTP research back to participants and the broader Atlanta community. She also served as the Events Lead for the Advancing Experiences and Opportunities in the Neuroscience Graduate Program (AXON) Committee, where she promoted inclusive scientific research and organized workshops to enhance financial literacy among graduate students. Trinidi also served as the Laney Graduate Student Council Vice President and Student Ambassador for the Flourishing at Laney Initiative, highlighting her immense leadership skills. Ultimately, Trinidi aims to become an independent investigator studying neurobiological mechanisms of risk and resilience in women's mental health and to mentor underrepresented students within academia.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

EDWARD A. BOUCHET GRADUATE HONOR SOCIETY SCHOLARS



Uriel Rufen-Blanchette, 3rd Year Neuroscience Graduate Student

Uriel Rufen-Blanchette is a neuroscience Ph.D. candidate at Emory University's Laney Graduate School. Her research focuses on uncovering the intrinsic mechanisms of human neurodevelopment, with an emphasis on the molecular cues driving astrogenesis from neural stem cell progenitor populations using human-based, in vitro models. Uriel earned her Bachelor of Science in Psychology at Spelman College and completed postbaccalaureate training at New York University's Neuroscience Institute. She has presented

her doctoral work at the European Meeting on Glial Cells in Health and Disease, has earned authorship on two high-impact publications from her postbaccalaureate research (*Nature*, 2021; *Cell Reports*, 2025), and contributed to a pre-print currently under review from her doctoral research (*bioRxiv*, 2025).

On campus, Uriel strives to create space for all. She served as the president of the Laney Graduate Student Council, where she collaborated closely with deans and administrative leadership to effectively serve the Ph.D. and master's student body by developing programming focused on professional development, community building, and cross-program unification. Uriel also serves as outreach chair of the Black Graduate Student Association, where she created a program bringing local middle school scholars monthly STEM lessons. For her academic and altruistic strides, Uriel has been awarded the Dana Foundation Grant, the National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, the Emory University Centennial Fellowship, and the Emory Neuroscience Graduate Program's Service Award.

Uriel's career goal is ultimately to ensure that underrepresented groups no longer encounter barriers to STEM and to create space for representation, equity, and inclusive excellence in higher education.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

EDWARD A. BOUCHET GRADUATE HONOR SOCIETY SCHOLARS



Kory J. Wells

5th Year Cancer Biology Graduate Student

Kory Wells is a doctoral candidate in the Cancer Biology PhD program at Emory University, where his research focuses on the development of nanoparticle-based strategies to enhance CAR-T cell function in solid tumors. His work integrates immunology, nanotechnology, and in vivo modeling to address challenges in cancer immunotherapy. Kory has contributed to peer-reviewed research, presented at national conferences, and secured funding to support his research and professional development. He is known

for his collaborative approach, mentorship of undergraduate and graduate trainees through structured mentoring programs and outreach initiatives, and dedication to creating spaces where students feel supported, heard, and empowered to succeed.

Beyond research, Kory is actively engaged in leadership and service across campus. He has served in multiple leadership roles, including President of the Division Student Advisory Council and representative for the Cancer Biology Program, acting as a liaison between graduate students and institutional leadership. In these roles, Kory has facilitated town halls, contributed to policy discussions, and supported initiatives aimed at improving student wellness, engagement, and graduate training environments. Kory is also a member of several diversity, equity, and inclusion committees at the departmental and institutional levels, including the Winship Cancer Institute DEI Steering Committee and the Cancer Biology Program at Emory. Through these efforts, he advocates for equitable access to mentorship, inclusive training practices, and community-building within biomedical research.

As a first-generation scholar, Kory aspires to continue strengthening academic and research environments that enable scholars from all backgrounds to thrive and contribute meaningfully to the scientific enterprise.

CANCER BIOLOGY BOWLING NIGHT

Hosted by the Student Cancer Researchers

The results are in for the CB program return to Bowling! Dr. Tyler Beyett was crowned our new champion but there was a close competition between former champ, Kory Wells and first year Jonathan French. Looks like we have some new blood on the floor. Thank you Student Cancer Researchers for keeping the tradition and social interaction alive!!!



DSAC SYMPOSIUM

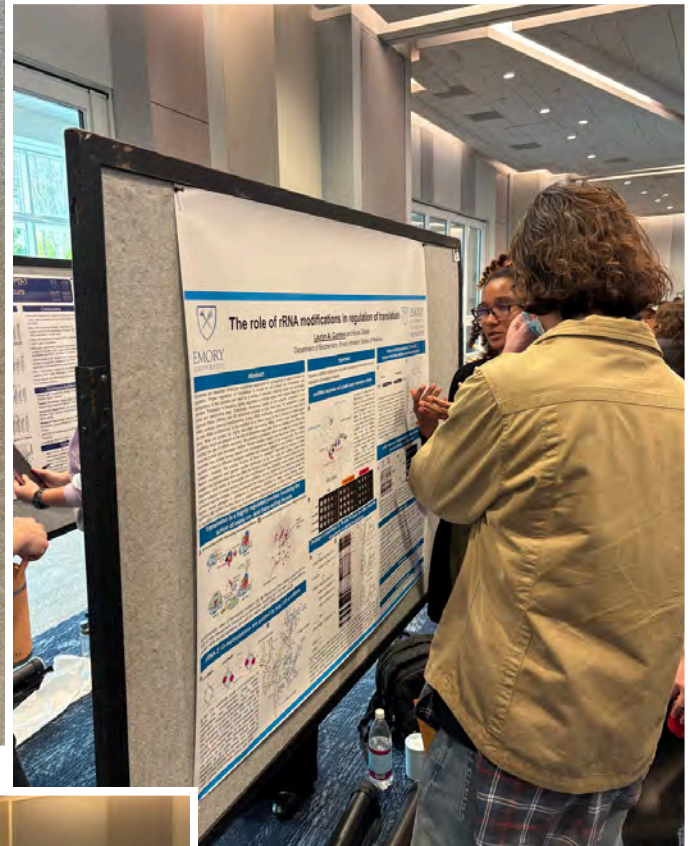
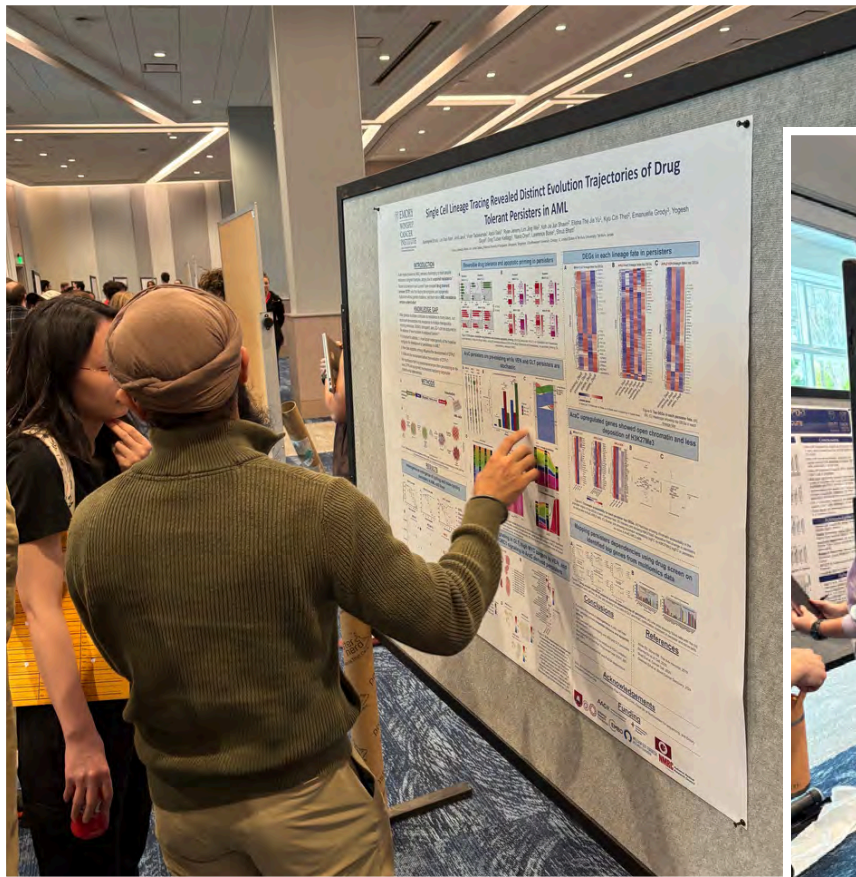
The 23rd Annual GDBBS DSAC Student Research Symposium took place on March 25, 2026 at the Emory Student Center.

Thanks to all the presenters for sharing their research and to the faculty, staff, and attendees for continuing to foster a collaborative and supportive environment at Emory.

We are looking forward to your participation again next year!



DSAC SYMPOSIUM



"Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today."

— Malcolm X

DSAC SYMPOSIUM



DSAC SYMPOSIUM

23RD ANNUAL GDBBS SYMPOSIUM

PROGRAM WINNERS

ORAL PRESENTATIONS

MEREDITH SHEPHARD	Session 1: Infectious Disease and Microbes
IAN PYNE	Session 2: Mechanism of Pathology
ESTEFANY BOCANGEL GAMARRA	Session 3: Metabolic Pathways and Immune Function
ALLY SU	Session 4: Translational Research
ALEXANDER GULKA	Session 5: Genomics and Gene Regulation
SAAHJ GOSRANI	Session 6: Cellular/Molecular Development and Pathways

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

MONICA REEVES	1ST PLACE
LISETTE BAHENA ANNA WILLIAMS CHRIS TOY	2ND PLACE TIE

Congratulations to all the winners!

GIVE DAY

On Saturday, April 18th we had our annual GIVE Day! Over 15 graduate students volunteered with three Atlanta organizations: **Unearthing Farm & Market, Rescue Cats, and Free Bikes 4 Kidz**. Volunteers at Unearthing Farm helped move and prep raised garden beds to help the farm continue supplying our community with fresh produce as they go through a soil remediation process. Twenty kittens at Rescue Cats got clean cages and lots of love and attention from our volunteers! And at Free Bikes 4 Kidz we assembled 15 bikes that will be donated directly to kids in our community. After a full morning of volunteering, we all returned to campus for lunch together. Be sure to join us next year!



**Unearthing
Farm
& Market**



GIVE DAY

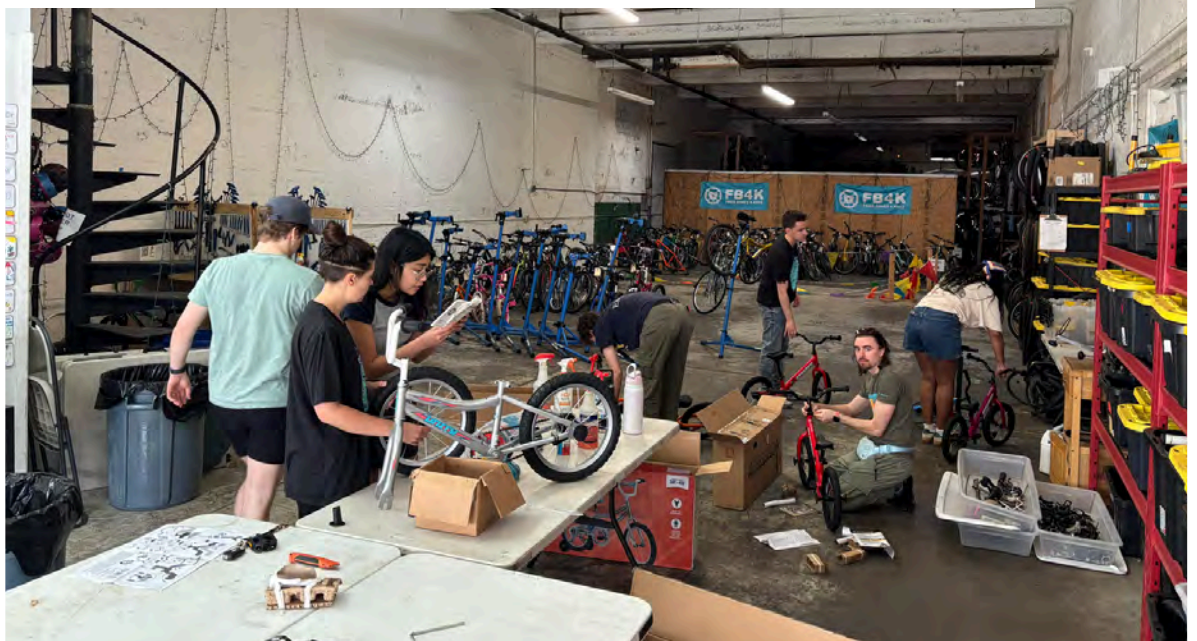
Rescue Cats



Volunteers are
the gifts that
keep on giving.

GIVE DAY

Free Bikes 4 Kidz



FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

FOUR GDBBS FACULTY NAMED FELLOWS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE

Four GDBBS faculty were among the fourteen members of the Emory faculty who have been named by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) as Class of 2025 Fellows. The AAAS, publisher of the Science family of journals, announced the new class on March 26, 2026.

AAAS selects Fellows for their outstanding efforts in the advancement of science based on research, teaching, administration and technology, as well as communicating and interpreting science to the public. Becoming an AAAS Fellow is considered a lifetime honor. In addition to advancing research, Fellows play a crucial role in shaping public policy and influencing national and global perspectives on critical issues.

These new fellows join a distinguished list of AAAS fellows going back to 1874, including Thomas Edison, W. E. B. DuBois, retired astronaut Ellen Ochoa, former Secretary of Energy Steven Chu and actor and science communicator Alan Alda.



Thomas R. Gillespie, Professor and Chair, Department of Environmental Sciences (PBEE)

For significantly advancing our understanding of zoonotic diseases and their connections to biodiversity, and influencing global health, conservation, and policy initiatives



Robert C. Liu, Professor of Biology; Associate Director, Center for Mind, Brain & Culture (NS)

For establishing a computational neuroethological framework in rodents, revealing experience-dependent neuroplasticity in the sensory and social brain after natural social interactions during motherhood and pair bonding

Eric Anthony Ortlund, Professor and Vice Chair of Biochemistry; Scientific Director of the Emory Integrated Metabolomics and Lipidomics Core (BCDB & MSP)

For generating deep insight into how lipids and hormones allosterically regulate nuclear receptors and enzymes, and for pioneering studies to understand the evolution of new function within proteins



Lance A. Waller, Professor of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics; Professor of Population Biology, Evolution and Ecology (PBEE)

For transformative contributions to statistical science and public policy, leadership in the broader scientific enterprise, and methodological innovations with real-world impact



The new Fellows received an official certificate and rosette pin in Washington, D.C. on May 29, 2026.

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

THREE GDBBS FACULTY ELECTED TO ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN PHYSICIANS



Allan Levey
(NS)

Robert W. Woodruff
Professor of Neurology
Executive Director,
Emory's Goizueta Brain
Health Institute and
Alzheimer's Disease
Research Center



Guido Silvestri
(IMP)

School of Medicine Professor
and Chair, Department of
Pathology and Laboratory
Medicine
Vice President for Basic and
Translational Research,
Woodruff Health Sciences
Center
Georgia Research Alliance
Eminent Scholar



Jindan Yu
(CB & GMB)

School of Medicine
Professor, Department of
Urology
Fray F. Marshall Chair in
Biomedical Urologic
Research

The Association of American Physicians has elected **Allan Levey, Guido Silvestri and Jindan Yu**, among others, to join its prestigious medical society. Receiving membership is a defining moment in a physician's career, recognizing their visionary advancements in basic or translational biomedical research.

Only 70 members are elected each year internationally. Emory University accounted for almost 6% of this year's total class, which is the most Emory has ever elected. These Emory researchers will join 2,700 active members across the United States, Canada and the world.

Click [here](#) to read the full story.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

HOLLEY BUTKOVICH, RECIPIENT OF THE LANEY GRADUATE SCHOOL 2026 OUTSTANDING PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR AWARD



Holley demonstrates an exceptional commitment to student support and program excellence. She takes a proactive and thoughtful approach to ensuring that students clearly understand program expectations, milestones, and timelines. To this end, she developed comprehensive, easy-to-follow resource materials that outline key requirements and processes throughout the graduate program lifecycle. As a result, students are better informed, more confident, and more consistent in meeting program deadlines. She has also created parallel resources for faculty and program leadership, improving communication, efficiency, and consistency across programs.

In addition to her organizational strengths, Holley places a strong emphasis on building community and fostering a sense of belonging among students. She consistently seeks creative ways to connect with students and create welcoming, inclusive environments. Through small but meaningful gestures and intentional engagement, she helps students feel supported and valued. Her efforts have had a positive and lasting impact on student morale and engagement, contributing to a stronger sense of community within the programs she supports.

Holley is also an exceptionally generous colleague. She routinely shares the tools, templates, and best practices she develops with other Program Administrators and with the broader graduate education community. She actively participates in institutional events, meetings, and ceremonies and is always willing to assist beyond her assigned responsibilities. Because of her professionalism, reliability, and positive attitude, she is frequently asked to step into leadership-support roles when needed.

Holley now adds this award alongside her other awards: Emory Law Juris Master Leadership Award in 2015 and the Emory Presidential Award of Distinction in 2012.

STAFF SPOTLIGHT

GDBBS WELCOMES OUR NEW PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR!



Ivy Overcash joins the Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS) as the new Program Administrator for the BCDB and MSP graduate programs.

Ivy brings more than 13 years of experience in academic program coordination, student lifecycle management, and operational logistics. She has a strong background supporting complex academic environments and fostering collaboration among students, faculty, and staff. Notably, Ivy previously served for seven years at Emory University, where she developed deep familiarity with institutional systems and administrative workflows.

Throughout her career, Ivy has demonstrated exceptional skill in managing large-scale programs, monitoring student progress, coordinating events, and ensuring accurate records and reporting. In her recent role as Advisement Coordinator and Program Operations Lead at Duluth High School, she directed orientation and progress-tracking for more than 2,700 individuals annually and served as a key liaison supporting faculty and administrative stakeholders.

She holds a Master of Music in Choral Conducting from Emory University and a Bachelor of Music in Music Education from Appalachian State University, bringing both analytical rigor and creative discipline to her work.

We are excited to have Ivy join the GDBBS family and look forward to working alongside her!

**WELCOME ✨
to the TEAM**

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

- **May 9** - LGS Commencement Ceremony
- **May 11** - Emory University Commencement Ceremony
- **May 25** - Memorial Day - University closed
- **October 22** - GDBBS Awards Ceremony

Enjoy your summer!

