



Hello everyone & happy July!

As we transition into summer we have a lot of new things in the department-- a new chair, new students, new BSA members, new COVID guidelines, and a new newsletter. As always, feedback is welcome and appreciated if you would like to fill out our [anonymous google form](#). Have a great month!

- Lindsey and Kaitlyn

## DEPARTMENT NEWS

- A big congratulations to our new (permanent) chair **Dave Cortez**! I know we're all looking forward to an exciting future for the Biochemistry Department.
- The department had our first in-person celebration featuring a taco bar from Taco Mama. It was great to see everyone come out and celebrate after a long year of social distancing! A special shoutout to our new BSA President, **Sam Lisy**, for getting this celebration up and running. The university's updated COVID-19 guidelines can be found [here](#).
- We have a merch store! You can now order department gear including sweatshirts, t-shirts, and mugs [online](#) (our ever popular donut logo is also an option). Thanks for setting this up **Kate Clowes**!
- We have a new cohort of students who have joined the department this year. Welcome to **Emma Vontalge** (Dewar lab), **Vincent Yao** (Tansey lab), **Boden Vanderloop** (Lacy lab), **Nicky Eleuteri** (Tansey lab), **Lilia Merbourche** (Tansey lab), **Zoe Bryant** (Peck lab), **Jenny Tran** (Brown lab), **Sara-Catherine Conwell** (Dewar lab), and **Anna Johnson** (Merrikh lab)! We're excited to have fresh faces and ideas.

## STUDENT OF THE MONTH

**What year are you?** I'm a rising 4th year  
**Whose lab are you in?** I'm in the Ascano Lab.

**What do you like best about the biochemistry department?** I love the community and comradery. Whether I need to ask a scientific question, borrow a reagent, or just hang out, I feel like I always have someone in the department that I can go to. Additionally, I love the BSA and the interactions between the BSA and faculty.

**Any big plans as BSA president?** While there are no big plans set in stone just yet, we have an awesome group of new officers that I look forward to working with. I'm most excited to transition back to in person events. Notably, the social crew is looking to switch up our monthly social events, so stay tuned for developments on that! If anyone has things that they would like to see done, or any other questions/comments/concerns, feel free to reach out to me!

**What advice do you have for other students?** Cultivate a relationship with your PI that works for you! Relationships require work from both ends, and the split isn't always 50/50. One thing that I feel incredibly fortunate for is my relationship with my PI. Part of cultivating that relationship has been through very open and honest communication and setting of expectations. I often joke that I'm a "needy" graduate student, but I find that bugging him whenever I have either technical or more philosophical questions results in better outcomes, whether that be with experiment design and execution, or via writing. I truly believe that it is better to ask questions upfront than make preventable mistakes that result in the loss of valuable time and reagents. Beyond lab duties, open communication has also helped me express my needs and desires for how I like to be mentored, plans for my future, and personal situations. Cultivating productive communicative relationships requires work to be put in every day, self-advocacy, and is often uncomfortable (especially early on). I understand that every PI-student relationship is different, but hope that everyone can find a mentor of some capacity that they can rely on.

**What's your favorite place to go in Nashville?** This is hard! I love to go for runs or hammock at Shelby bottoms. But I also love food and Monell's has a very special place in my heart. When it comes to just hanging out, I love grabbing margaritas from Rosepepper, getting fun cocktails and vegan crunchwraps from Rosemary, or drinking steins at Von Elrods.

**What's your favorite experiment to run?** Any experiment that actually works! Jk (kind of). With respect to specific techniques, I most enjoy the satisfaction that comes from watching results develop in real time, like developing a silver stain or watching peaks form on an HPLC.



We all have aspects of science that we find... less than ideal... but are you in good company? Select your answer and like the good scientists we are, we will share our findings in the next newsletter. For this month,



### Would you rather...

- A) have to collect a time point every 12 hours for two weeks
- B) have to split your cells every Saturday for a year

Is there anything you're dying to know about your fellow department members? Send them our way and we may just add it next month.

## IN OTHER NEWS

- The 4th of July is approaching fast! Nashville has a ton of free events, including fireworks and a Brad Paisley concert, planned as part of its *Let Freedom Sing!* celebration. You can find more information, along with a full schedule of events [here](#).
- The Vanderbilt Farmer's market is starting back up. It will be once again on Thursday from 1:30 to 5pm in the courtyard area in front of Au Bon Pain. I know we all have missed the Laurel Mountain Farm sourdough bread!
- The Discovery Lecture Series will feature **Dr. Jennifer Doudna** on July 22nd at 2:35 pm. The talk will be presented via Zoom. Please register through this [link](#) for login information.

### Check it out!

**Places to go:** The Frist Art Museum-- the "Designing the New: Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the Glasgow Style" exhibition is available until September 12th, you can purchase tickets [here](#).

**Things to do:** Berry Picking-- Head over the [Kelley's Berry Farm](#) in Castalian Springs where you can pick strawberries, blackberries, AND blueberries. They're also selling at most of the farmers markets around town. Keep in mind that they are *cash or check only* if you decide to make the trip.

**People to see:** George Lopez-- He'll be bringing his stand-up comedy show to Zanie's, July 6th-8th. It looks like tickets are still available [here](#), for those of you interested.



### Congrats to...

- **Yi Ren**, who was recognized as a School of Medicine Basic Sciences Dean's Faculty Fellow. The award focuses on faculty in early career stages who have displayed strong track records of scientific accomplishment and are likely to continue producing high-quality science in their respective fields.
- **Breann Brown and Tina Iverson**, who published a [News & Views article](#) in *Nature Chemical Biology*.
- **Our new BSA officers**, Sam Lisy (President), Emilio Rivera & Mason Wilkinson (Colloquium Committee), Jessica Collins & Yelena Perevalova (Qualifying Exam Committee), Robert Mann, Jorge Rua-Fernandez, & Samika Joshi (Retreat Committee), Kate Clowes & Nicky Eleurti (Social Committee), Kaitlyn Browning & Lindsey Guerin (Social Media Committee), Sabrina Van Ravenstein, Verda Agan, & Anna Eitel (Wellness Committee). A big thanks to everyone who served on the BSA last year and all those who are doing so this year!
- **Houra Merrikh**, who was named one of 31 finalists for the Blavatnik National Awards for Young Scientists. This award is the worlds largest unrestricted prize honoring early-career scientists and engineers, the three winners will be announced July 20th.
- **Borden Lacy**, who was named Faculty Mentor of the Year at the 2021 Spring Postdoc Awards.

**Soliciting opinions...** If you have any suggestions for a speaker to invite for the student invited speaker series please fill out [this google poll](#).

## Wellness

**Mental Wellness:** The UCC is still offering its [drop-in Zoom consultation sessions](#) over the summer. This is a great resource if you need to talk confidentially to a counselor about a problem, or if you want to learn about the mental health resources available on campus. No appointment required! Drop-in for all students in the summer is available on Wednesday from 2 PM - 4 PM and on Friday from 10 AM - 12 PM.

**Physical Wellness:** Looking for a socially-distant fitness club outside of Vanderbilt? One option is [Camp Gladiator](#), which offers both outdoor workouts and virtual *workouts*. Another unique workout option is [Small World Yoga](#), a charity-based yoga studio that offers both indoor and outdoor classes, including one at nearby Centennial Park.



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