

MPB GSA NEWSLETTER

Winter 2016

Molecular Physiology & Biophysics Graduate Student Association

The purpose of this newsletter is to serve as a resource for MPB students to get to know the department better.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Apr 13th: MPB Student Selected Speaker - Dr. Alyssa Hasty

May 4th: Seminar by Dr. Dr. Sudha Biddinger - this year's Student Invited Speaker! Find out more about her research at <http://www.biddingerlab.org>

Celebrating 90 Years

By Peter Kropp

It has been a very exciting year for MPB that has given us the opportunity not only to progress our research and professions, but also the opportunity to look back on the past and celebrate our 90th anniversary. Few departments around the country can tout such a history, so every opportunity to reflect on the important events and individuals that have lasting impressions is important. Many have asked why our department celebrated the 90th anniversary rather than the 100th, and that is a reasonable question. To paraphrase our department chair, Dr. Roger Cone: our current faculty still contains many people who either directly contributed to some of the most significant advances and discoveries that have come out of MPB, or had a direct connection with those who did. Our collective memory goes back much farther than just the tenure of individual faculty members, and as such it is a great time to celebrate many of our momentous achievements.

There were many events over the past few months that allowed us to commemorate the 90th anniversary. The opening of the new Mouse Metabolic Phenotyping Center was a fantastic time to appreciate the capabilities of research and collaboration at Vanderbilt, and to take pride in the fact that our department is home to one of the most sophisticated phenotyping centers in the nation. We learned about the power of the mouse as a model at the annual MPB Retreat. Talks from all of the esteemed speakers drew in a number of attendees from outside of our department demonstrating the influence of our department and the common interests we all share.



MPBers enjoying the 90th anniversary Christmas Party

We were also lucky enough to take part in the induction of new members into the Circle of Distinguished Faculty to recognize a number of people who have contributed to the history of MPB. Still more, the holiday party was a time where we all enjoyed delicious food and drink while enjoying the company of our colleagues. To top off an already excellent evening, each of us was fortunate to receive a copy to the new history of our department written by Dr. John Exton. Now, at the flip of a page, we can learn more about the scientific and social history of which we are a part.

So, while many may have asked about the importance of a 90th anniversary, it is clear to most us in the department that there was great significance to this celebration. As we all continue moving forward writing grants, preparing presentations and advancing projects, we can look back on the greatness of our department and be thankful to be part of the legacy that is Vanderbilt Molecular Physiology & Biophysics. «»

Annual MPB Relay Race

By Christian Marks

With the Piston lab no longer competing, the title for the fastest MPB lab was up for grabs this year at the annual department 4x6 relay race that took place on September 11th. The race did not disappoint those who came to watch the competition for the coveted teapot. The Cone lab sported matching t-shirts for the event, and set a standard for lab coordination. Each team was composed of six people: a PI and five lab members with at least two women per team. The PI's began the race together and set the pace for the rest of their team members. The laps were close with the Jacobson, Venters, Hasty, Madhur and Cone labs all competing. Brian Venters' team was victorious with a mix of members from the Venters, Weil, Hawiger, and Lim labs, truly showcasing the collaborative spirit of MPB. Venter's dream team earned the title and the teapot for 2015, but 2016 will reveal whether Venter's recruiting skills can help him to maintain his bragging rights and title. <>>



The Venter's team with the teapot after their victory

MPB Halloween

By Bethany Carboneau

It was another spooktacular year for the annual MPB Halloween party. A record number of participants made for fierce competition in this year's costume competition. It seems like everyone took a break from grant writing to put their mental energy toward finding the most creative costumes to date. Costumes ranged from The Magic School Bus to immune cells to salt & pepper shakers to the entire Addams Family. The real belle of the ball, however, was Roger Colbran dressed as Little Bo Peep. Little Bo Colbran and his flock of sheep secured the first place group costume prize, beating the other equally fangtastic groups. Ray Pasek, with the help of his adorable daughter, stole first prize in the individual costume event dressed as Ash Ketchum and Pikachu. Overall, it was a great afternoon of full of merriment and hair raising fun in the 7th floor atrium. Be sure to attend the 2016 Halloween Party – you never know what sort of hocus pocus might ensue. <>>



Changes to the Qualifying Exam - A Message from the DGS

By Alyssa Hasty



The Graduate Education Committee put forth a proposal to change the format of the MPB Qualifying Exam. The new format was voted on and approved by the MPB faculty and will go into effect immediately for students who are currently in the Spring Tutorials class. The major changes are:

- The new QE will be on the student's own project and the student can obtain input on their hypothesis, specific aims, and experimental design from their mentor.
- In addition to the NRSA-style proposal on their own project, the student will also develop an additional "exploratory" aim – without any input from their mentor.
- Preliminary data are allowed.

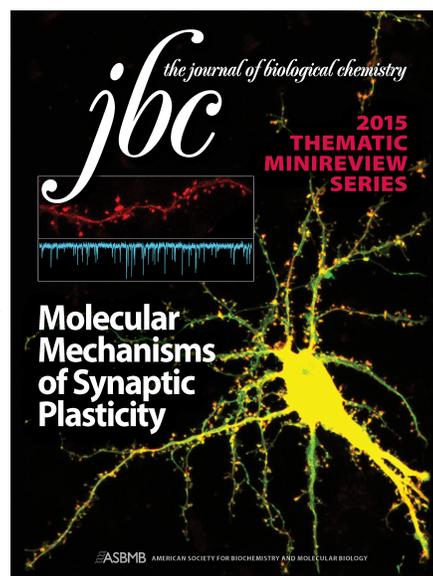
- The mentor will still NOT be in the room during the exam.
- The exam will be administered by the student's chosen Dissertation Advisory Committee plus one GEC member. Either the DGS (Hasty) or AED (Cobb) will also sit in on all examinations.
- There is no limit on the number of references allowed in the written document.
- There is an outcome of "Exemplary Pass" in addition to the previous outcomes of "Pass", "Conditional Pass", and "Fail"

We are very excited about this change, and hope that it will allow our students to begin thinking about and working on their dissertation projects with more intensity and sooner than they have been able to in the past. I am very grateful to the GEC for all of the time they have spent in developing this document with me, to Drs. Cone and Colbran for their contributions to this process, and to Drs. Colbran and Stein for modifying our Spring Tutorials class to accommodate this change. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask. <>

Congratulations, MPB!

The MPBGSA would like to say congratulations for all of the achievements to our MPB! We have a very talented bunch, so we are taking a moment to highlight some of the accomplishments over the past year. We apologize to any students that we may have missed. <>

- Kim Montaniel won 2nd place in the Vanderbilt 3 Minute Thesis competition
- Adrian Cadar was awarded the Levi Watkins, Jr. M.D. Student Award for his commitment to diversity at VUMC. <http://news.vanderbilt.edu/2015/10/myers-delivers-watkins-lecture/> and was a co-author on a paper published in Circulation Research. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26429802>
- Data from the Colbran lab was featured on the cover of The Journal of Biological Chemistry.
- Christian Marks received an NRSA from NI Mental Health titled "Reciprocal mGlu5-CaMKII regulation"
- Bethany Dale received a VICTR grant and published a paper in Current Opinion in Nephrology and Hypertension <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/26717315>



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Faculty Spotlight: Sachin Patel, M.D., Ph.D.

By Christian Marks

Sachin Patel

The Patel lab studies stress-related psychiatric disorders.

We would also like to say congratulations to Dr. Patel on receiving the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers!



What are the major interests of your lab?

We are interested in understanding the neural mechanisms by which environmental stress can lead to pathological states related to mood and anxiety disorders. We are currently heavily focused on understanding the role of the brain's endogenous cannabinoid signaling system in the brain's response to stress, and determining whether harnessing the anti-stress properties of this neuromodulatory system may be a new approach to the treatment and prevention of stress-related psychiatric disorders.

What influenced you to pursue a scientific career and stay within academics?

The research experience I had during my undergraduate education basically sold me on science. Since then, can't remember anything I seriously thought about pursuing other than a career in experimental science. The main reason I was drawn to academic science was the freedom and creativity it supports and values. I was also drawn to academic research for the

value academic institutions place on basic discovery as an end in itself, and for the opportunity to work with great colleagues who have the same passion and dedication for exploration and creativity. I also enjoy cultivating the passion and curiosity of young scientists in the lab and in the training programs I am a part of.

What is your most memorable moment in science?

Tough to decide. There are so many that stand out, the first time I gave a talk at a meeting of 300 people as a grad student is certainly something I won't forget; looking at the score of my first grant, getting that first big paper accepted, hooding my first graduate student, are all things I hope I will never forget.

What was one of your favorite moments from your time at Vanderbilt?

One of my favorite times here was when I was starting up the lab, and put in my first order for some large pieces of equipment I needed. Everything finally became very "real"; all the hard work leading up to this point finally paying off, and the realization that I was now responsible for my own success or failure as a scientist.

What might someone be surprised to know about you?

This may not surprise everyone, but I was actually a pretty bad student in school and did horribly on my SAT's. So much for standardized tests!

What advice would you give to new graduate students and/or post-docs?

Work as hard as you can because you love what you do. Be curious about everything and question all current dogma. Always be reading papers. Don't be afraid of trying new things outside your comfort zone.

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Looking for an opportunity to show off your cooking skills? Join the Cancer Department on April 14th for their Iron Chef Competition!

The Cancer Biology Student Association invites you to

Iron Chef Competition 2016

'secret' ingredient:

Citrus Fruit

An Event Benefitting the **Philip J. Browning Memorial Scholarship Fund**

Details:

When: Thursday, April 14th, 2016 — 12-2:30PM

Where: North Lobby of Light Hall

Why: To benefit the Philip J. Browning Memorial Scholarship Fund

How: Bring a dish or drink containing **any citrus fruit** to share and show off your skills

\$5 to taste all dishes
 \$1 to vote for best dish
Top three dishes will win a prize

- Examples:**
- Pies Lemon orzo chicken
 - Cakes Ceviche
 - Popsicles Salads
 - Salsas Cilantro-Lime dressing
 - Smoothies Orange glazed salmon



For any information regarding the event or participation, please contact:
 Merrida Childress(CBSA Philanthropy Chair)
 Merrida.a.childress@vanderbilt.edu

We want to hear from you!

MPB students know how to get things done! Let us know of recent grants, awards and publications so we can feature it in the newsletter. Also, if you would like to contribute to the newsletter just let us know. You can submit articles to MPBGSA@vanderbilt.edu. It's a great way to improve your writing skills and would look great on your CV. Comments and suggestions are encouraged as well.



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