

Message from Roger Chalkley

The new academic year is off to a good start and by the time you read this newsletter, most new students should be well along in their plans for the first semester. Information will be going out shortly to all faculty providing details of access to the new student database. We expect that this new system will especially help program coordinators and DGSs, but individual faculty will have detailed access to all records of students whom they mentor.

All new students in VUMC-affiliated programs were welcomed on September 1st with the inaugural “From So Simple A Beginning” ceremony. About 40 friends and family members were also in attendance, at what proved to be a rewarding introduction to the institution and to the concept of joint professionalism. It was a great success.

In response to a number of requests we are instituting a lunchtime session on interviewing students, scheduled for November 4th. This session will hopefully provide lots of discussion about interview strategies as well as a session from students on “Interview Disasters & Other Awkwardness”...at other institutions, of course.

Finally, I would also like to welcome our new IGP coordinator, Erika Thompson and our new MSTP coordinator, Melissa Krasnove. Erika and Melissa have already interacted with many students and faculty in the first few days of this semester. Please join me in making Erika and Melissa feel like a part of the Vanderbilt family.



ERIKA THOMPSON
IGP COORDINATOR



MELISSA KRASNOVE
MSTP COORDINATOR

Incoming Students

The BRET office would like to welcome all students in the 2010-2011 incoming class. This year, doctoral students have started in the following departments or programs: Biological Sciences (7 students), Biomedical Informatics (2 students), Cell and Developmental Biology (2 students), Cognitive Systems Neuroscience (6 students), CPB (9 students), Epidemiology (3 students), Hearing and Speech Science (6 students), IGP (72 students),

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FOCUS OF NEXT ISSUE :

- ◆ Graduating Students & Exiting Postdoctoral Fellows

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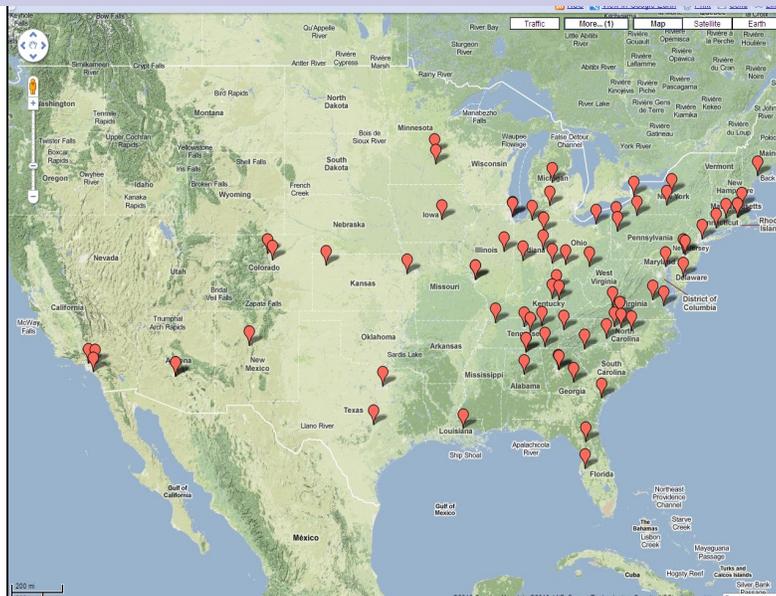
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Incoming Students cont...

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MSTP (14 students), Nursing Science (5 students), and Pharmacology (2 students). Students in the IGP, CPB, and MSTP programs come from 67 different colleges & universities in 29 different states and 3 countries outside of the United States. As with many biomedical science programs nationwide this incoming class has a higher proportion of female students (61%) than male students (39%).

Incoming PhD students completed undergraduate degrees in 36 different majors, including Animal Science, Biochemistry, Biology, Biostatistics, Cellular/Molecular Biology, Chemistry/Organic Chemistry, Cognitive Science, Genetics, Microbiology, Neuroscience, and Physics/Biophysics.



Locations of Colleges & Universities for IGP, CPB, MSTP students in the incoming class of 2010.

“From So Simple A Beginning” Ceremony

New students in VUMC-affiliated programs were recently welcomed by the inaugural “From So Simple A Beginning” ceremony, generously supported by over 60 faculty sponsors and the Vanderbilt Medical Alumni Association. The ceremony was brought about by Vice Chancellor Jeffrey Balser and Associate Vice Chancellor Susan Wente to celebrate the newest class of doctoral students and welcome them into the Vanderbilt scientific community. The title of the ceremony “...from so simple a beginning...” comes from the last paragraph in Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species*. This title was chosen by faculty leaders for its beauty, eloquence, and scientific significance.

In her welcome address Dr. Wente charged the students to use their training and knowledge to improve human health through rigorous scientific inquiry, a process that demands the highest level of professionalism, scientific integrity, and collegiality. To celebrate the event, students were given a personalized lab coat and laser pointer.

114 students from 10 different VUMC-affiliated admissions programs or departments took part in the ceremony. Participating doctoral programs included Biological Sciences, Biomedical Informatics, Cell and Developmental Biology, Chemical and Physical Biology, Cognitive & Integrative Neuroscience, Epidemiology, Hearing and Speech Science, IGP, Nursing Science, and Pharmacology.



Success in Graduate School: Academic Outcomes Metrics

Question: Recently the BRET office received a question regarding the academic outcomes of graduate students depending on whether they enter a PhD program with a prior Master’s degree instead of only a BS/BA degree.

Methods: We analyzed data on various outcomes metrics using unpaired t-tests to detect differences between the BS/BA and MS groups. Metrics examined were time to defense, PI rating of student, the total number of papers published at the time of thesis defense (includes all first author and non-first author papers as well as review articles), and the total number of talks or posters presented at national or international conferences. These metrics were collected via two separate surveys: (1) the Predoctoral Exit Survey, and (2) the Success in Research Questionnaire. The Predoctoral Exit Survey is given to every student within 1-2 weeks after their thesis defense date. To date, 220 students (BS/BA, n=184; MS, n=36) have completed the exit survey since its inception in January 2007. The Success in Research Questionnaire is sent to a thesis mentor after a student in their lab has successfully defended their thesis.

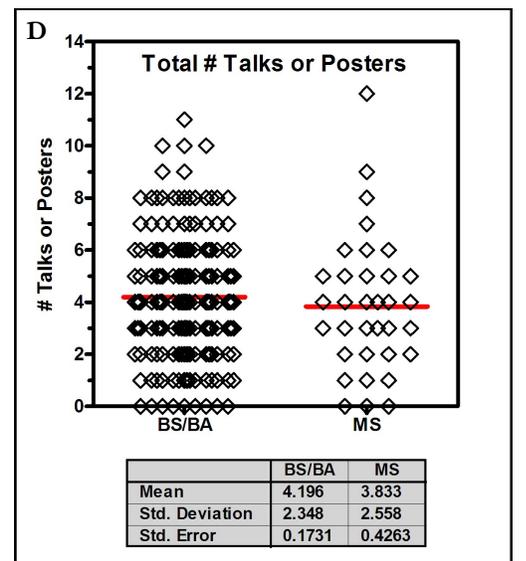
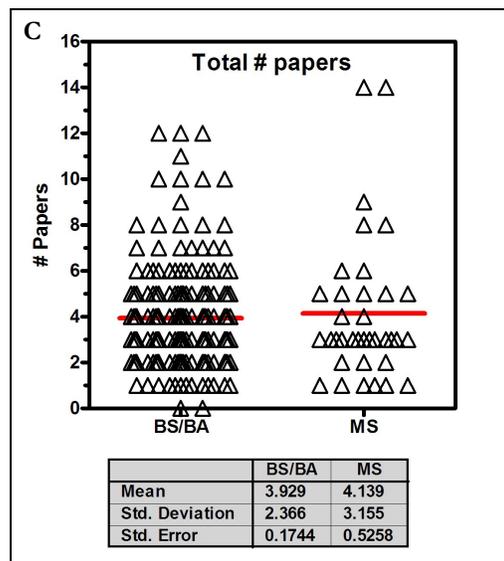
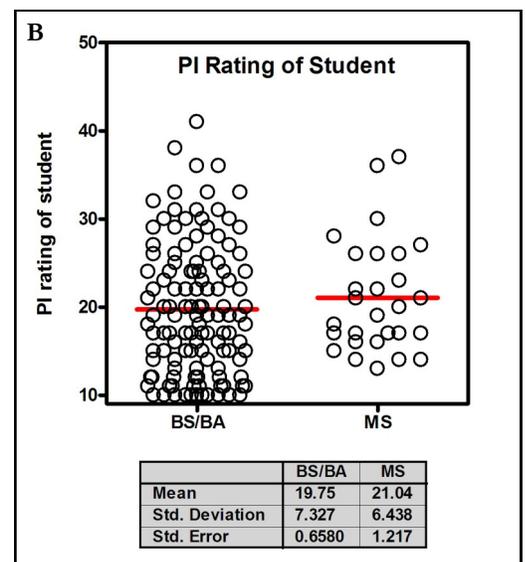
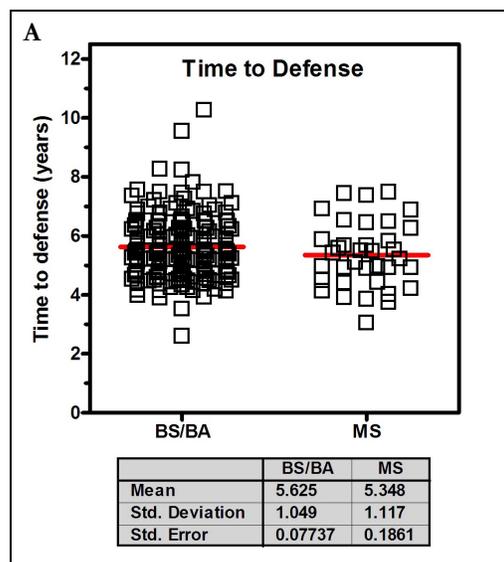
Results: The graphs (at right) show each student represented by a single symbol. Overall, all metrics for students entering with a BS/BA were similar to those for students entering with an MS:

A: Time to defense ($p=.153$)

B: Rating of students from 10 (best possible rating) to 50 (worst possible rating) by the thesis mentor ($p=.393$).

C: Number of papers published ($p=.647$)

D: Number of talks and posters presented at national conferences ($p=.405$)



Announcement: New Peer Review Videos from the NIH

Have you ever wondered what exactly happens when the NIH scientific review committee reviews fellowship or grant applications? The NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR) has recently released two new videos to help new applicants understand the NIH review process. In the first video, “NIH Peer Review Revealed”, viewers can watch a mock scientific review committee as the members review applications. Individuals who have never watched a scientific review committee meeting can learn what reviewers look for and how they discuss applications. The second video “NIH Tips for Applicants” offers tips from reviewers and NIH staff on how to get your application successfully funded. Both videos are available on the CSR website: <http://cms.csr.nih.gov/ResourcesforApplicants/InsidetheNIHGrantReviewProcessVideo.htm> .

Announcement: NIH Loan Repayment Program

The NIH Loan Repayment Program (LRP) is intended to encourage individuals to pursue careers in biomedical, behavioral, social, and clinical research. Recipients commit to conducting qualified research in one of the following areas:

- Clinical Research
- Pediatric Research
- Health Disparities Research
- Contraception & Infertility Research
- Clinical Research for Individuals from Disadvantaged Backgrounds

Applicants must conduct research funded by either a domestic nonprofit organization or a government agency. In return, the NIH will repay a qualified student loan debt up to \$35,000 per year. This loan repayment benefit is in addition to the recipient’s institutional salary or stipend. Interested individuals may apply for the LRP from September 1 through November 15, 2010. For more information and to apply online, visit the NIH LRP website: <http://www.lrp.nih.gov/index.aspx> .

Upcoming Events for Fall, 2010

- **Sept. 14, 2010 (12-1 pm):** VUMC Postdoctoral Association monthly meeting, 350 Light Hall [All postdocs are invited to attend.]
- **Sept. 20-24, 2010:** National Postdoc Appreciation Week
- **Sept. 23, 2010 (4-5 pm):** Discovery Lecture by Dr. Jacek Hawiger “The Joy of Crossing Borders”, 208 Light Hall
- **Sept. 23, 2010 (5:30 pm):** Annual Postdoc Picnic, Fannie Mae Dees (Dragon) Park
- **Sept. 28, 2010 (10:45-12:45):** Seminar by Dr. Donald Meichenbaum “How technology can help reduce stress and bolster resilience: A look into the future”, 415 A-D Light Hall
- **Sept. 24, Oct. 15, Nov. 19, Dec 3, 2010:** MSTP Interview days
- **Nov. 1, 2010:** Laboratory Rotation #2 begins for IGP Students

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