

Summer 2013

GSBS NEWS

1963-2013

50

Years of Excellence


UTHealth[®]
The University of Texas
Health Science Center at Houston

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS
MDAnderson
Cancer Center

Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

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Artwork by Syd Moen

On the Horizon

The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Science at Houston will be celebrating its **50th Anniversary** with some major events during the 2013-2014 school year such as:

Thursday, October 3, 2013, 3-5p.m.: 50th Anniversary Kick-off Celebration: Onstead Auditorium and Forum, 3rd floor, George and Cynthia Mitchell Building, BSRB, 6767 Bertner, Houston, TX 77030. This event will feature remarks by The University of Texas Health Science Center President Giuseppe Colasurdo, M.D., and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center President Ronald DePinho, M.D.

Event activities will also include: a Texas-sized anniversary cake and the unveiling of **PlanetGSBS** — an original artwork by Bayou City Art Festival Featured Artist, Syd Moen, that morphs a 360° panoramic photograph of GSBS into a spherical body. (An example of her work is shown above.)

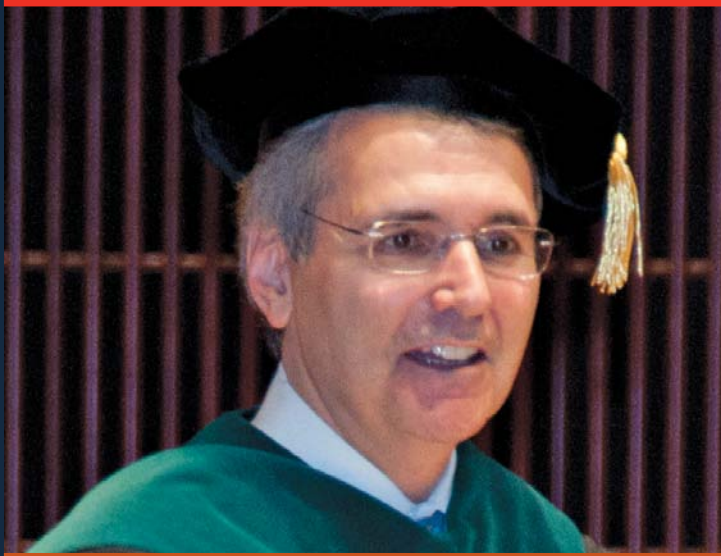
Get more details about anniversary events at gsbs.uth.edu/fifty

The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston is turning **50** and we want all our students, faculty and staff to help us celebrate this milestone. See page 21 for your invitation to our kick-off party!



Top 10 (11) Things We Did Last Summer...

11. Presided at our first commencement ceremony to launch 70 new Ph.D., M.S. and M.D./Ph.D. students off to new adventures (and jobs) in academia, industry and government.
10. Participated in the U.S. News STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Solutions Conference; made arrangements for a TED Talks connection to Houston/GSBS.
9. Identified a new tagline that reflects our strengths and roots in two institutions:
Synergy in Science
1963-2013, 50 years of excellence
in Ph.D. and M.D./Ph.D. training
8. Welcomed the largest number of top-ranked, new graduate students to date!
7. Developed and hosted an intense, first-ever Orientation Boot Camp for incoming students to develop their critical thinking and communications skills from the first day forward.
6. Created a Career Corner for all GSBS students, available on our website and e-newsletter, with tips on career development and opportunities.
5. In honor of the upcoming **50th Anniversary**, initiated conversations to find that \$50 million benefactor to name the Graduate School. Where are you????
4. Established Individual Development Plans (IDPs) for students to find their scientific and career passion early and actively plan their personal steps to achieve success.
3. Received the GSBS External Review Report by three national leaders in the biomedical sciences and initiated strategic planning for the future.
2. Invited students, faculty, staff and alumni to participate in a historic, panoramic photo shoot that will create **PlanetGSBS!**
1. **Geared up to celebrate the 50th Anniversary Kick-off on October 3, 2013!**



**2013 Commencement Speaker:
Ronald DePinho, M.D., President
The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center**

As you can imagine, being asked to serve as commencement speaker is a special honor — not only because it presents an opportunity to personally congratulate so many gifted scholars on a job well done, but also because it provides a unique opportunity both to reflect and to look forward.

In peering across this room to see the fresh faces of sharp-minded graduates in your scholarly attire, to see your beaming families and friends, to see your faculty advisors and supporters...I can't help but to do both — reflect and look forward.

On a personal reflective level, it seems like yesterday that I was dressed like you, in a seat like that, listening to a commencement address like this. I remember the feeling of accomplishment in completing my degree program. I remember the sense of pride in knowing that my parents and brother and sisters were proud of me for what I had achieved. I distinctly remember my late father's tears (an immigrant without education who lived the American dream). I distinctly remember optimism and eagerness to "get out there," to apply what I had learned, to make a difference. I imagine many of you are experiencing some of those same thoughts and feelings right now. Cherish the moment.

Beyond my personal recollections of graduation day — I also vividly recall the state of science and research at the time, the year was 1981.

It was the advent of recombinant DNA technology — cloning and sequencing of genes, transgenics was getting started the promise of understanding the genetic basis of disease was upon us, and an entire biotech industry was born to harness its power. Memorization of facts such as anatomical structures and biochemical circuits such as the Krebs cycle

gave way to an emphasis on understanding the mechanistic molecular basis of life processes and disease. In cancer, it was a time of the Nobel Prize-winning discovery of proto-oncogenes resident in normal cells, which gave way to the genetic paradigm that dominates our thinking in cancer today. It was a time of the first mutant cancer genes, the generation of the first cancer-prone transgenic mice and the advent of knockout technology, and the beginnings of computers to store and manipulate data. We were filled with optimism, we felt that there was nothing that could stop us, we were empowered to open new vistas through technology, and strive toward the true prevention and cure of disease. And indeed, over the last two decades, mortality due to cancer has declined by 20 percent despite escalating incidence of the disease due to the aging of our society.

To appreciate the excitement of the time, it is worth noting that the structure of DNA was discovered less than 30 years earlier, in 1953, that in the 1960s the field was still debating as to whether mutations in the DNA had anything to do with cancer. In fact, it is notable Peyton Rous of Rous Sarcoma Virus fame noted in 1966 that "what can be the nature of the generality of neoplastic changes." A favorite explanation has been that oncogenes cause alterations in the genes of the cells of the body, somatic mutations as these are termed. But numerous facts, when taken together, decisively exclude this supposition. There was a special irony in his view since his discovery of a cancer-causing virus harboring an oncogene led to the identification of proto-oncogenes resident in normal cells and thus served as the basis for today's dominant genetic perspective. Following the conceptual breakthrough of proto-oncogenes in the 1970s, the 1980s witnessed the molecular validation of tumor suppressor genes, a concept pioneered by Dr. Al Knudson — one of our own. The 1990s celebrated the human genome project and this past decade experienced the maturation of computer science and more.

So, where are we now and what will the future hold? What will some of you say decades from now as you give your commencement speeches? What will be the role of science in the future? Many express concern over the funding crisis for basic and clinical research from our federal government or from the private sector. What is the future of our scholars in academic medical centers, in biopharma, in governmental agencies? Will such careers be supported?

The answer lies in the reality of the most significant societal, political and economic driver of this coming century — the aging of the world population.

Over the last century, life expectancy has nearly doubled, from 42 to 74. By 2025, there will be 1.2 billion people over the age of 60 worldwide.

The significance of the changing demographics is grounded in the fact that every five years the incidence of age-related diseases such as cancer and Alzheimer's doubles, culminating in 45 percent of Alzheimer's disease (AD) by age 85 and the same for cancer. Currently, we spend close to \$1 trillion on cancer, dementia, AD and heart disease in the U.S. alone, and by 2030, there will be a 50 percent increase in cancer incidence. By 2050, it's estimated that we will spend nearly one trillion in today's dollars on just AD alone.

Today, much of the nation's debate has focused on managing our healthcare dollars through efficiencies and the delivery of more effective evidenced-based care. However, given the changing demographics, these measures will not result in a sustainable model that delivers the care that our nation expects from its healthcare system. The only answer to this situation is SCIENCE! To understand these diseases to a level that you prevent it in the first place or detect it early in real time where the cost of care is much lower, and if disease advances, render curative therapies guided by precision medicine.

Your role in solving these major humanitarian crises will gain increasing importance as society and legislators recognize the critical and essential role of science in driving the disruptive innovations needed to truly bend the health care curve.

Is this realistic? Do you have the potential to truly impact these complex diseases?

The answer is an unequivocal YES!

Just consider for a moment the technological prowess that your generation now enjoys — sequencing; cognitive computing; cancer atlas; the ability to control genes at will; to manipulation of the genetic make-up of cells and living organisms such as mice to create human disease states for drug testing, and so much more. No longer are we limited by acquisition of data or the analysis of big data sets but rather how to convert such knowledge into new drugs, new diagnostics, new public policies, new educational material that influences public health.

It is a time when you will secure an elemental understanding of life and the basis of disease and have, for the first time in our history, to control the very nature of the human condition; to increase the health span of the aged; to decrease the incidence of and mortality due to disease; to improve organ performance and even cognitive function; and to control the aging process itself or perhaps even reverse it through advances in regenerative medicine.

I believe this period of history, and particularly your generation, will be viewed as the most exciting period for the human race one that will be viewed

millennia from now with great admiration. A period when the structure of DNA was revealed, when the genetic basis of life was elucidated; one where such knowledge could be utilized to not only understand disease but also tame it; one that may very well re-define what it is to be human.

You will succeed because you have the courage to pursue the tough questions in medicine, you will succeed because you have the patience and endurance to unravel the deepest mysteries, you will succeed because you have creativity to see what no one has seen before.

In the face of all this technological prowess and positive personal attributes, the rudder that will guide you toward a truly productive and fulfilling career will be a devotion to something much greater than ourselves — our devotion to humanity.

Many of you don't toil excessive hours in the laboratory for salary or time off, you do it because you care; you do it because you love life and hate disease; you do it because you want to create a better world for your families, because you want to help countless patients you will never have a chance to meet. At MD Anderson, at UTHealth, you have come to appreciate that we are not just another institution, we are institutions in a rare position to contribute innovative solutions to improve the quality of care and to better manage our healthcare costs. It is because of your efforts, over the years, that we have built a research powerhouse of impact.

Life has blessed us, our institution and our country with great fortune. And so the world is counting on us to solve big problems. No other country is in a position to address the challenges of our time. Those of us who have been put in a position to serve in the laboratory, in the clinic, in the classroom, and beyond...all of us, can strive to value those things that brought us here together today — because we believe in something that is much greater than ourselves, and we believe in solutions through determination and innovation, and the belief that through our will we can have an enduring impact on countless individuals that we will never have the opportunity to meet.

And that's your mission, your calling — one I know you will embrace on behalf of patients and their families who are counting on you, on behalf of a future generation that will look upon you as the greatest of all time. This is who you are. You are GSBS. And I thank you. Congratulations.





Greeting from GSBS Faculty President
Kevin Morano, Ph.D.

On behalf of the 598 graduate faculty of the GSBS, I want to convey our congratulations to the graduates who are here before us today. I also want to convey our thanks to their parents, children, spouses, significant others, and good friends for entrusting them to us. Some of them were on loan to us for just a few years, some for a bit longer. During that time, maybe they were busy or exhausted in the evenings. Maybe they were in the lab all day on too many Saturdays. Maybe they were cranky after studying for hours or revising a paper draft for the eighth time.

For all these reasons, can I take a minute to thank you all on their behalf for your patience and understanding as they pursued their dreams and ambitions? For helping them through the rough spots during their master's or Ph.D. courses and thesis work? For being the support system that helped them in so many ways to get to this important day? The fact that you are all here today is just further evidence of this commitment.

For the graduates, I want to remind you that all this work and sacrifice will pay off and probably already has in ways you're not even aware of. Think back to when you started your graduate studies here at the GSBS. For some of you, that may be a long time ago! Compare the person sitting here now with that person who first listened to Dr. Knutson welcome you to Houston at orientation, or the first time you came to work at the Texas Medical Center and wondered how you'd ever find your way around, much less a parking space.

I think I can make a few generalizations. I bet you're a lot smarter, thanks to the amazing faculty you had teaching and training you. I predict you're more confident in yourself and your abilities, having overcome obstacles and challenges throughout your thesis studies. I have a feeling you're a better multitasker, and better organized, than when you started. And finally, I predict that you're more constructively critical of the world around you; of yourself, of your peers, and for what passes for fact

and knowledge. I know I speak for all my colleagues that if we've taught you nothing else over these years, we hope you've learned how to think like a scientist, how to tackle problems and identify solutions. This is the primary skill we emphasize here at our trade school, and it will serve you well no matter where your future career paths may take you.

I'm fortunate to have two of my own students graduating today, and numerous students whom I've taught in class, advised on committees, and schooled on the basketball court. They've enriched my life and I hope I've contributed in positive ways to theirs. They have earned the right to be here through hard work and creative independent thinking, and like all the families and assembled faculty here today, I wouldn't have missed it for the world. Congratulations to all of you.

Morano was also awarded the 2012-2013 McGovern Award for Outstanding Teaching. This award recognizes a GSBS faculty member who has significantly contributed to the education and training of GSBS students.

Morano is an associate professor in the department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at The University of Texas Medical School and has been a GSBS faculty member since 2000. He is affiliated with the Microbiology and Molecular Genetics; Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; and Cell and Regulatory Biology programs. He is currently serving an unprecedented second term as the GSBS faculty president.

This is the second McGovern Award for Morano who was previous honored with this distinction in 2007.

Listed below is an excerpt from his award acceptance speech.

"You hear actors at the Oscars thanking their peers for recognizing them for their work, and for considering them worthy of the award. That's great, but in my opinion the McGovern Teaching Award does that one better, because it is recognition by the consumer. And our consumers are savvy — they know what they like and they know what they don't like. They know when the professor has invested time and effort into their lectures and when they're just phoning it in that day. Most of all, they know when the person standing in front of them loves what they do and has a mission that day of infecting the students with knowledge, understanding, curiosity and hopefully even spurring new thoughts in the process. I'd like to think this is what students were thinking when they selected me."

Todd Bartkowiak
Advisor: Tomasz Zal, Ph.D.

Jennelle Bergene
Advisor: David Followill, Ph.D.

Justin Bottsford-Miller
Advisor: Anil Sood, M.D.

Cameron Brand
Advisor: Carmen Dessauer, Ph.D.

Katerina Byanova
Advisor: Dianna Milewicz, M.D., Ph.D.

Kevin Casey
Advisor: David Followill, Ph.D.

Anuja Chandrasekar
Advisor: M. Neal Waxham, Ph.D.

Yi Pei Chen
Advisor: Laurence Court, Ph.D.

Catherine Claussen
Advisor: Nachum Dafny, Ph.D.

Allison Copeland
Advisor: Louise Strong, M.D.

Jessica Davis
Advisor: Kate Wilson, M.S.

LaKiesha DeBose
Advisor: John Hancock, Ph.D.

Katherine Dempsey
Advisor: Karen Lu, M.D.

Maryann Edwards
Advisor: Magnus Hook, Ph.D.

Arely Gonzalez
Advisor: Michael Lorenz, Ph.D.

Nathaniel Greeley
Advisor: Stephanie Watowich, Ph.D.

Claire Holley
Advisor: Keri Smith, Ph.D.

Singyi Hou
Advisor: John Spudich, Ph.D.

Luke Hunter
Advisor: Laurence Court, Ph.D.

David Iglesias
Advisor: Karen Lu, M.D.

Michelle McDougale
Advisor: Jennifer Czerwinski, M.S.

Nicole Mohrbacher
Advisor: Thereasa Rich, M.S.

John Morrow
Advisor: Shuxing Zhang, Ph.D.

Jared Ohrt
Advisor: Peter Balter, Ph.D.

Bincy Philip
Advisor: Craig Logsdon, Ph.D.

Roman Repchak
Advisor: David Followill, Ph.D.

Frederick Robinson
Advisor: Sadhan Majumder, Ph.D.

Bradley Rolf
Advisor: Marianna Raia, M.S.

Anupama Sataluri
Advisor: Eric Wagner, Ph.D.

Maryam Shariati
Advisor: Sendurai Mani, Ph.D.

Michael Silosky
Advisor: S. Cheenu Kappadath, Ph.D.

Kevin Vredevoogd
Advisor: Geoffrey Ibbott, Ph.D.

Yanran Wang
Advisor: John O'Brien, Ph.D.

Ameerah Wishahy
Advisor: Jagannadha Sastry, Ph.D.

Zhicheng Zhou
Advisor: Xin Lin, Ph.D.

Moiz Ahmad

Advisor: Tinsu Pan, Ph.D.

Midan Ai

Advisor: Zhen Fan, M.D.

Kadir Caner Akdemir

Advisor: Michelle Barton, Ph.D.

Simone Anfossi

Advisor: James Reuben, Ph.D.

Brandi Baird

Advisor: Jonathan Kurie, M.D.

Pearl Bakhru

Advisor: Chinnaswamy Jagannath, Ph.D.

Chad Bircher

Advisor: Yiping Shao, Ph.D.

Ronald Bozeman

Advisor: David Johnson, Ph.D.

Russell Braeuer

Advisor: Menashe Bar-Eli, Ph.D.

Amanda Brock

Advisor: Michael Galko, Ph.D.

Chunyan Cai

Advisor: Ying Yuan, Ph.D.

Deepavali Chakravarti

Advisor: Elsa Flores, Ph.D.

Catherine Charles

Advisor: Gordon Mills, M.D., Ph.D.

Laura Checkley

Advisor: Ellen Richie, Ph.D.

Chien-Hung Chen

Advisor: Dos Sarbassov, Ph.D.

Jiandong Chen

Advisor: Eric Wagner, Ph.D.

Xin Chen

Advisor: Dean Tang, M.D., Ph.D.

Evan Cohen

Advisor: James Reuben, Ph.D.

Charles Darkoh

Advisor: Herbert DuPont, M.D.

Proleta Datta

Advisor: Ruth Heidelberger, M.D., Ph.D.

Jessica De Orbeta-Cruz

Advisor: Jill Schumacher, Ph.D.

Amaury Dumont

Advisor: Dennis Hughes, M.D., Ph.D.

Jason Ford

Advisor: Jill Schumacher, Ph.D.

Jessica Galloway-Pena

Advisor: Barbara Murray, M.D.

Sara Gorjestani

Advisor: Xin Lin, Ph.D.

Julia Hill

Advisor: Pramod Dash, Ph.D.

Jiemiao Hu

Advisor: Shulin Li, Ph.D.

Nathan Ihle

Advisor: Garth Powis, D.Phil.

Sarah Jenkins

Advisor: Yi Xu, Ph.D.

Chunlei Jin

Advisor: Jean Pierre Issa, M.D.

Ana King

Advisor: Ambro van Hoof, Ph.D.

Callie Kwartler

Advisor: Dianna Milewicz, M.D., Ph.D.

Jing Lin

Advisor: Lin Ji, Ph.D., M.S.

Jinyun Liu

Advisor: Peng Huang, M.D., Ph.D.

Mo Liu

Advisor: Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D.

Gonzalo Lopez

Advisor: Dina Lev, M.D.

Li Lu

Advisor: Randy Johnson, Ph.D.

Elizabeth Mittendorf

Advisor: Jeffrey Molldrem, M.D.

Peter Park

Advisor: X. Ronald Zhu, Ph.D.

Liem Phan

Advisor: Mong-Hong Lee, Ph.D.

Xia Pu

Advisor: Xifeng Wu, M.D., Ph.D.

Dharanija Rao

Advisor: John DiGiovanni, Ph.D.

Rachel Reith

Advisor: Pramod Dash, Ph.D.

Steve Reyes

Advisor: Joseph McCarty, Ph.D.

Nilsa Rivera Del Valle

Advisor: Joya Chandra, Ph.D.

Sandra Saldana

Advisor: Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D.

Sarah Scarboro

Advisor: Stephen Kry, Ph.D.

Christine Shiang

Advisor: Francisco Esteva, M.D., Ph.D.

Lisa Shiue

Advisor: Madeleine Duvic, M.D.

Akanksha Singh

Advisor: Vidya Gopalakrishnan, Ph.D.

Hua Sun

Advisor: Ba-Bie Teng, Ph.D.

Lynnelle Thorpe

Advisor: Gary Gallick, Ph.D.

Pan Tong

Advisor: Kevin Coombes, Ph.D.

Mai Tran

Advisor: David McConkey, Ph.D.

Ning Tsao

Advisor: David Yang, Ph.D.

Diogo Veiga

Advisor: Gabor Balazsi, Ph.D.

Jacob Verghese

Advisor: Kevin Morano, Ph.D.

Yanyu Wang

Advisor: Kevin Morano, Ph.D.

Feng Wang

Advisor: Peng Huang, M.D., Ph.D.

Shanzhi Wang

Advisor: William Mattox, Ph.D.

Yucai Wang

Advisor: Lei Li, Ph.D.

Katelyn Weymouth

Advisor: Jacqueline Hecht, Ph.D.

Matthew White

Advisor: David McConkey, Ph.D.

Jillian Wise

Advisor: Felipe Samaniego, M.D.

Zizhen Wu

Advisor: Edgar Walters, Ph.D.

Feifei Xiao

Advisor: Ralf Krahe, Ph.D.

Chih-Chao Yang

Advisor: Georg Halder, Ph.D.

Qingshan Yang

Advisor: Varsha Gandhi, Ph.D.

Teresa Yiu

Advisor: Michelle Barton, Ph.D.

Zhiqian Yu

Advisor: Rajat Kudchadker, Ph.D.

Xiaofeng Zheng

Advisor: Shoudan Liang, Ph.D.

Amy Reid

Advisor: Dianna Milewicz, M.D., Ph.D.

Richard Wu

Advisor: Laszlo Radvanyi, Ph.D.

Commencement is a ceremony that many graduates look forward to and for 16 Master of Science and 54 Doctor of Philosophy Candidates May 18, 2013 was their day! Even though the traditional sights at a graduation feature flowers and balloons, GSBS graduates injected their own customs into the festivities, including gifts of good luck (a pineapple) and prosperity (a melon).



To watch the commencement video, please visit go.uth.edu/GSBS2013gradvideo







GSBS Faculty President
Kevin Morano, Ph.D.

MEMBERS REAPPOINTED WITH COMMENDATION

- Jeffrey A. Frost, Ph.D.
- Craig L. Hanis, Ph.D.
- Dennis Hughes, M.D., Ph.D.
- Roger Janz, Ph.D.
- Wei Zhang, Ph.D.

**MEMBERS REAPPOINTED WITH
HIGHEST COMMENDATION**

- Heidi B. Kaplan, Ph.D.
- Mong-Hong Lee, Ph.D.

NEW REGULAR MEMBERS

- Elmer V. Bernstam, M.D.
- Emily Corse, Ph.D.
- David R. Grosshans, M.D., Ph.D.
- Jian Gu, Ph.D.
- Brian P. Hobbs, Ph.D.
- Min Li, Ph.D.
- Chunru Lin, Ph.D.
- Steven H. Lin, M.D., Ph.D.
- Gabriel O. Sawakuchi, Ph.D.
- Samuel A. Shelburne, III, M.D., Ph.D.
- Min Sup Song, Ph.D.
- Roeland Verhaak, Ph.D.
- Jose-Miguel Yamal, Ph.D.
- Jiusheng Yan, Ph.D.
- Liuqing Yang, Ph.D.

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- Myla Ashfaq, M.S.
- Geoffrey A. Bartholomeusz, Ph.D.
- Wong-Ho Chow, Ph.D.
- Kirk S. Culotta, Pharm.D.
- Ting Gong, Ph.D.
- Mary A. Hall, Ph.D.
- Eva M. Zsigmond, Ph.D.

INCLUDES ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GSBS MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE IN APRIL AND JUNE 2013



Visitor to GSBS: Vietnam Education Foundation Executive Director Lynne McNamara, third from the left, poses with GSBS Associate of Graduate Education Dean Stephanie Watowich, Ph.D.; Dean Michael Blackburn, Ph.D.; and Dean Michelle Barton, Ph.D. during a recent visit to the school. The mission of the foundation is to provide opportunities for Vietnamese nationals to pursue graduate and post-graduate studies in these fields in the United States. Fall 2012 graduate Liem Phan, Ph.D., was a VEF fellow.



Faculty members **James Allison, Ph.D.**; **Guillermina Lozano, Ph.D.**; and **Kenneth Tsai, M.D.**, received awards from the American Association for Cancer Research at the organization's annual meeting held in Washington, D.C., in April. Allison, Immunology department chair, was the inaugural recipient of the AACR-CRI Lloyd J. Old Award in Cancer Immunology; an award established to honor the memory of the late Dr. Old that recognizes an active scientist whose outstanding and innovative research in cancer immunology has had a far-reaching impact on the cancer field. The award includes an honorarium of \$10,000. Lozano, Genetics department chair, was the recipient of the 16th Annual AACR-Women in Cancer Research Charlotte Friend Memorial Lectureship award. Tsai, an assistant professor of Dermatology, was the 2013 grantee of the Landon Foundation-AACR INNOVATORS Award for Cancer Prevention. Tsai will receive a two-year grant for \$100,000 over the grant term.

Faculty members **Isaiah Fidler, D.V.M., Ph.D.**; **John Mendelsohn, M.D.**; **Louise Strong, M.D.**; and faculty emerita **Margaret Kripke, Ph.D.**, have been named Fellows to a new academy launched by the world's oldest and largest organization dedicated to cancer research, the American Association for Cancer Research. Other Fellows include Alfred G. Knudson Jr., M.D., Ph.D., former dean of GSBS (1970-1976).

GSBS faculty member **Gregory Lizee, Ph.D.**, has released a song entitled *Hold On* as a message of hope for cancer patients. The official video can be found on the GSBS Facebook page.

In June, **Sarah Noblin, M.S.**, was promoted to Associate Program Director for the Genetic Counseling Program and **Jennifer Czerwinski, M.S.**, was appointed to the program's position of Assistant Program Director.

GSBS Dean Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., along with scientists from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) and University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus, was awarded a Program Project Grant (PPG) of nearly \$10 million by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health. The five-year grant is being used to advance the development of therapies based on the molecule known as adenosine. The grant runs through May 31, 2018.

Along with this accomplishment, Blackburn also received the 2013 UTHealth President's Scholar Award for Research.

GSBS faculty and donor part of MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital history: GSBS faculty member Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D., poses with Texas American Legion Auxiliary founding member Myra Hester at the MD Anderson Children's Cancer Hospital preview event on May 1. In the case is the shovel that was used at the groundbreaking of the original children's wing supported by the ALA. The book in Hester's hand is about Frances Goff, an MD Anderson employee and an early leader of the ALA who helped with fundraising for MDA and cancer research. GSBS faculty members who are part of the Children's Cancer Hospital team: Joya Chandra, Ph.D.; Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D.; Vidya Gopalakrishnan, Ph.D.; Dennis Hughes, M.D., Ph.D.; Eugenie Kleinerman, M.D.; Dean Lee, M.D., Ph.D.; Shulin Li, Ph.D.; KuoJen Tsao, M.D.; and Patrick Zweidler-McKay, M.D., Ph.D.

GSBS faculty members **Carrie A. Cameron, Ph.D.**; **Steven J. Norris, Ph.D.**; **Gary C. Rosenfeld, Ph.D.**; and **Naoto T. Ueno, M.D., Ph.D., F.A.C.P.**, were awarded The University of Texas System Board of Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award (ROTA) for 2013. This honor, among the most competitive in the nation and one of the largest monetary teaching recognition programs in higher education, recognizes faculty members at UT System institutions who have demonstrated dedication to innovation and advancing excellence. Each faculty honoree will receive an unrestricted check for \$25,000.

Several GSBS faculty members were named recipients of the Dean's Teaching Excellence Awards from the UTHealth Medical School. See the complete list of awardees, please visit med.uth.edu/news/2012-13-deans-teaching-excellence-awardees.

Graduate Student Association Officers



Thanks for your service: GSA Officers 2012-2013
 From left: Vice President Adam Yock (Radiation Physics); President Tre' O'Brien (Biochemistry & Molecular Biology); and Secretary Patty Dimarco (Biochemistry & Molecular Biology)



Welcome aboard: GSA Officers 2013-2014
 From left: President Katherine Dextraze (Medical Physics); Vice President John Morrow (Experimental Therapeutics); and Secretary Prexy Shah (Experimental Therapeutics)

GSBS student Nupur Lala was featured in a news article by KHOU 11 about her past as the 1999 National Spelling Bee Champion. Her advisor is Dennis Hughes, Ph.D.



Six GSBS students participated in The John P. McGovern Award for Presentation Skills Contest on May 15. The event is part of an oral presentation competition based on the students' current research project. This year's finalists were: **Rita Sirrieh, Lindsey Minter, Samuel Fahrenholtz, Brittany Parker, Chris Conner and Jessica Chacon.** Competition winners were: 1st: Lindsey Minter; 2nd: Rita Sirrieh; 3rd and People's Choice: Brittany Parker.

Joey Cheung and Brittany Parker were named 2013 Student Intercouncil Scholars. Cheung is affiliated with the Medical Physics program and his advisor is Laurence Court, Ph.D.; and Parker is affiliated with Neuroscience program and her advisor is Wei Zhang, Ph.D.

Jia Shen has had a first author paper accepted by *Nature*. The paper identifies a mechanism that under hypoxia conditions can suppress microRNA maturation. Shen's advisor is Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D.

2013-2014 Jess Hay Chancellor's Graduate Student Research Fellowship



Jia Shen
 Advisor: Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D.

This fellowship of \$10,000 is awarded each year to only two graduate students in the UT System. It is based on outstanding research accomplishments as well as the student's potential to have a transformational impact on their field.

Sjoerd Steunebrink Scholarship Endowment

This award rotates among the six UTHealth campuses and this is the first time to GSBS students. Award amounts range from \$1,000 to \$1,500. The 2013-2014 recipients are:

- Student**
 Andrea Lewis
 Jacqueline Mersch
 Aarti Ramdane
 Kayla Vaughn

- Advisor**
 Miguel Rodriguez-Bigas, M.D.
 Jennifer Litton, M.D.
 Jennifer Czerwinski, M.S.
 Claire Singletary, M.S.

The Pauline Altman-Goldstein Foundation Discovery Fellowships



David Rushworth

Advisor: Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D.

Kshipra Gharpure

Advisor: Anil Sood, M.D.

These first two Fellows are pioneering trainees in the labs of GSBS faculty participating in the MD Anderson Moon Shots program. These awards provide full stipend underwriting and are the first Discovery Fellowships established by MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Aaron Blanchard Research Award In Medical Physics



Kevin Casey

Advisor: David Followill, Ph.D.

Named in memory of Aaron M. Blanchard, a GSBS student in the Medical Physics Program who succumbed to brain cancer in 1998, this \$500 cash award recognizes a Medical Physics graduate (M.S. or Ph.D.) for completion of an outstanding thesis or dissertation judged to make a significant contribution to cancer therapy or diagnosis.

Harry S. and Isabel C. Cameron Foundation Fellowship



Swarna Ramaswamy

Advisor: Vasanthi Jayaraman, Ph.D.

This fellowship provides \$20,000 for one year and is awarded to an exceptional post-candidacy student working in research fields related to Alzheimer's or cardiovascular diseases.

Barbara L. Kennedy Memorial Scholarship



Jessica Davis

Advisor: Kate Wilson, M.S.

This \$1,000 scholarship was established in 2002 for a student in the Specialized Masters Program in Genetic Counseling. The winner is selected by a review committee appointed by the WINGS Chapter of the American Business Women's Association.

P.E.O. Scholarship



Kaitlin Reeh

Advisor: Ellen Richie, Ph.D.

This scholarship was established in 1991 with a focus on assisting women in U.S. and Canada who are pursuing a graduate degree, or undertaking advanced study or research. Since then, more than 1,000 women have become P.E.O. scholars. Each year the "A.C." Chapter of the group, from Houston, nominates a student to receive this highly competitive, prestigious and valuable (\$15,000) award.

The Schissler Foundation Fellowships

These fellowships emphasize basic science projects with the greatest likelihood of translational application to human health, and require that all students receive a broad exposure to the biomedical sciences. These prestigious awards give significant help to research studies that will most likely make major contributions to the therapies and cures of common human disease through genetics. In 2012-2013 The Schissler Foundation provides \$25,000 stipend funding for four Schissler Foundation Fellowships with at least one expressly designated for a student working on cancer research with faculty at MD Anderson.



Sarah Klein
Advisor: Juan Fueyo, M.D.



Prasad Phatarpekar
Advisor: Dean Lee, M.D., Ph.D.



Kaitlin Reeh
Advisor: Ellen Richie, Ph.D.



Avinashanarayan Venkatanarayan
Advisor: Elsa Flores, Ph.D.

Andrew Sowell-Wade Huggins Endowed Scholars, Professor and Fellow Cancer Answers/Sylvan Rodriguez Scholar, Sylvan Rodriguez Foundation Scholarship honoring George M. Stancel, Ph.D.

These scholarships represent the culmination of more than 20 years of determined support and growth of the Cancer Answers charitable organization through two founding mothers, Joann Sowell and Marcia Huggins Jahncke, their families, cancer survivors and contributing foundations including the Vivian L. Smith Foundation, Sylvan Rodriguez Charities, and especially Bo and Amy Huggins. Since 1991 more than 70 scholars and six sets of professor/fellow teams (renewable up to three years) have been honored with awards ranging from \$3,000 scholarships up to \$20,000 in stipend support. The 2012-2013 Sowell-Huggins Endowed Scholars are:

Student	Advisor	The Cancer Answers/Sylvan Rodriguez Scholar:	
Drew Deniger	Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D.	Qingshan (Carly) Yang	Varsha Gandhi, Ph.D.
Brian Pickering	Dihua Yu, M.D., Ph.D.	Sylvan Rodriguez Foundation Scholar honoring	
Daniel Robertson	Sam Beddar, Ph.D.	George M. Stancel, Ph.D.:	
Andria Schibler	Sharon Dent, Ph.D.	Marco Leung	Nicholas Navin, Ph.D.

Andrew Sowell-Wade Huggins Professor/Fellow team:
Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D./Aarthi Goverdhan



Pictured above are the 2013 Scholars with Marcia Huggins Jahncke, left, and Joann Sowell, far right. Next to Huggins Jahncke: Mien-Chie Hung, Ph.D., Andria Schibler, Marco Leung, Aarthi Goverdhan, Brian Pickering, Carly Yang, Drew Deniger, Daniel Robertson.



Francis Anthony San Lucas

Advisor: Paul Scheet, Ph.D.

This \$4,000 award honors former GSBS Dean George Stancel, Ph.D., (1999-2012) and was established by members of the Graduate School's Advisory Council, 2010-2011.

Rosalie B. Hite Fellowships

Established in 1997, this fund provides an annual award stipend of \$31,400 to students who demonstrate excellence in research, have a commitment to a career in biomedical research, and make a professional contribution to the community. The 2013-2014 recipients are:

- Juliana Bronk**
- Lawrence Bronk**
- Nahir Cortes-Santiago**
- Jaquelyn Reuther**
- Howard Rosoff**
- Kin Man Suen**
- Maitri Shah**
- Xian Zhang**

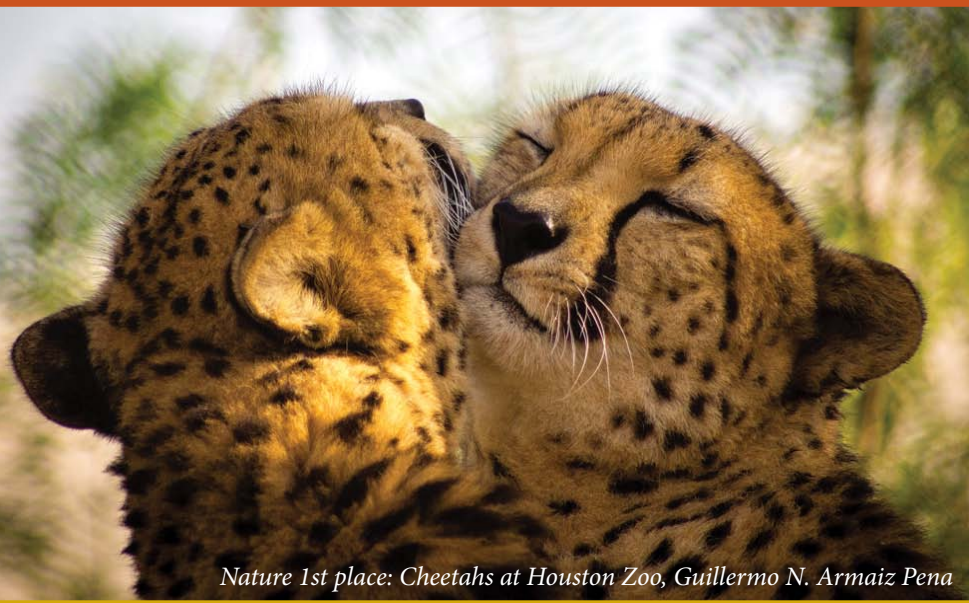
- Advisor: George Calin, Ph.D.**
- Advisor: Renata Pasqualini, Ph.D.**
- Advisor: Candelaria Gomez-Manzano, M.D.**
- Advisor: Ann Killary, Ph.D.**
- Advisor: Dean Lee, M.D., Ph.D.**
- Advisor: John Ladbury, Ph.D.**
- Advisor: George Calin, Ph.D.**
- Advisor: Hui-Kuan Lin, Ph.D.**



Giving back: Several GSBS students took some time away from the lab to help out at the SVDP Vincentian Services Center in southeast Houston on July 27. With their help the center was able to sort, hang and tag almost 900 pieces of clothing. The center is part of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Galveston-Houston, a grassroots, volunteer-based, direct-aid organization that helps people in need get back on their feet. The event was organized as part of the Deans Cup, a yearlong, program-based volunteer competition.



Abstract 1st place: Beautiful evening glow of Houston, Jaeil Han



Nature 1st place: Cheetahs at Houston Zoo, Guillermo N. Armaiz Pena

Capturing the world around GSBS

Seen here are three awarding-winning pictures from the Graduate Student Association's 3rd annual photography contest held in June. The competition was open to students, postdocs and faculty members of UTHealth and MD Anderson, and prizes were awarded in three categories: Nature, Abstract and People. These artworks will be on display at the GSBS administrative offices.



People 1st place: Son at Children's Museum, Guillermo N. Armaiz Pena



GSBS Outreach continues to make the grade with Project GRAD Program

For two weeks of their summer break students with Houston's Project GRAD program explored their interest in science by participating in the Biology Academy at The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston.

For these 32 students from Wheatley, Sam Houston, Davis, Reagan and Yates High Schools, this program lowers their fears of biology and raises their enthusiasm for the subject through course work and laboratory experience. They extract DNA from strawberries, watch a dissection of a sheep's brain and learn the basis of structural biology. The program is aimed at students who are at risk for not completing high school but are likely to qualify for advanced placement Biology.

GSBS Outreach created and operates Project GRAD's Biology Academy, a program that was started in 2007 and is part of the School's active outreach initiative that serves Houston and Harris County. It is one of the more popular programs with non-profit organization Project GRAD and enrollment is capped at around 30 participants.

The overall goals of the outreach program are: provide a service to the community; encourage and improve student interest and performance in science; support teachers and educational programs in science; provide GSBS students with an opportunity to serve the community through teaching; and increase community visibility of the Graduate School.

This project along with several others has been undertaken in response to community needs for support of science education. GSBS faculty, graduate students and alumni drive this volunteer-based effort with more than 150 volunteers contributing over 700 hours to the community in the last four years.

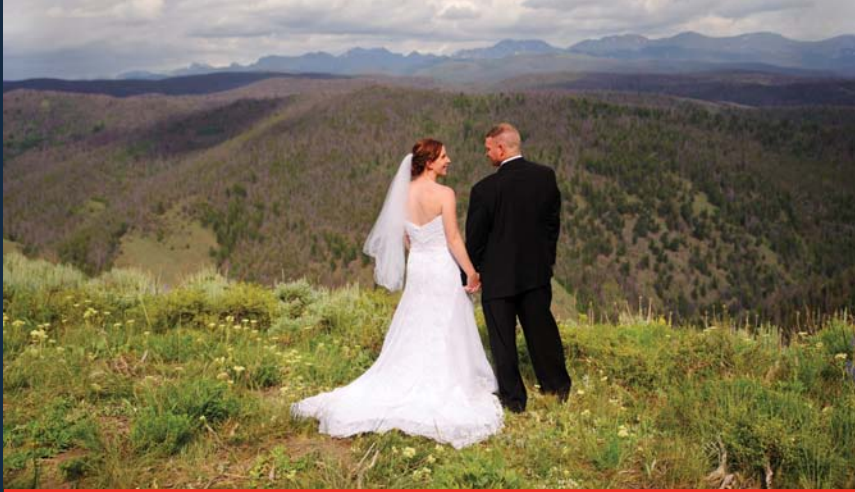
On the last day of the Biology Academy, GSBS Deans, Michelle Barton, Ph.D., and Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., commended the students on their participation in the program.

"I wish such programs were around when I was growing up! Project GRAD really helps the students gain self-confidence, which sows the seeds for success in any future career," said Dean Barton.

"Careers in science can be rewarding in many ways. Project GRAD does a wonderful job of engaging students and getting them excited about the scientific process," said Dean Blackburn. "Their efforts will help to inspire new generations of scientists that might not otherwise be aware of career options in this field."

Project GRAD is a national program that was founded in Houston by James Ketelsen, then Chairman and CEO of Tenneco Inc. in 1988. Today, Project Grad in Houston affects more than 51,000 students in 74 schools, and nationally serves more than 130,000 children on 185 campuses.

For more information about the GSBS Outreach Program, please email GSBS_OutreachProgram@uth.tmc.edu.



On top of the world: On July 5, Sarah Tudor, M.S., (2009/Boerwinkle) married Scott Hodgson at Granby Ranch (a ski lift ride to the top of a mountain) in Granby, Colo. Tudor (now Hodgson) works as a data analyst for the Colorado Hospital Association.

Rena D’Souza, D.D.S., M.S., Ph.D., (1987/Levy) was appointed as the first permanent dean at The University of Utah’s new School of Dentistry. Her post started on August 1.

Yasmine Haddad, D.D.S., Ph.D., (2009/McConkey) was named the 2013 recipient of the John Freeman Award for Outstanding Non-Clinical Teaching from the UTHealth School of Dentistry.

Anne Netek Hart, Ph.D., (2011/Byrne) was promoted to Program Manager, Neuroscience Research Center at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston

Auinash Kalsotra, Ph.D., (2005/Strobel) has received a two-year grant from The Roy J. Carver Charitable Trust for his research examining the functional role of RNA processing. Kalsotra is an assistant professor at The University of Illinois College of Medicine at Urbana.

Gary Meszaros, Ph.D., (1991/Farach-Carson) president of The Ohio Physiological Society (OPS), is proud to announce that the society is hosting 125th meeting with special guest Ferid Murad, M.D., Ph.D.

Mai Tran, Ph.D., (2013/McConkey) and **Russell Braeuer, Ph.D., (2013/Bar-Eli)** married this summer in the U.S. The couple is planning a second wedding in Vietnam with Tran’s family.



Roger Hewitt, Ph.D., (1937-2013): GSBS Faculty President (1975-1977); Acting Dean (1978-1979); Associate Dean (1979–1990); and was one of the founding members of the GSBS Faculty and a strong supporter of the UT Science Park in Smithville, Texas. Hewitt was born in Portland, Ore. He obtained a B.A. in Chemistry from Willamette University in Oregon in 1959; and a Ph.D. in Radiation Biology and Biochemistry from the University of Rochester in New York in 1963, the same year he started his postdoctoral fellowship at MD Anderson Cancer Center. Hewitt joined GSBS as a faculty member in 1967, and retired in 1994 as a professor of Molecular Genetics.



Gerald J. Tritz, Ph.D., (1937-2013): GSBS alumnus who taught Microbiology at the University of Georgia in Athens, Ga., and headed the sterility control laboratory for the U.S. Public Health Service in Cape Kennedy, Fla., from 1965-67. His job was to ensure the U.S. didn’t contaminate the surface of the moon. He was named researcher of the year at Georgia in 1974 and selected as outstanding researcher of the year in 1982 by Sigma Sigma Phi, national honorary organization of osteopathic medical students. Tritz received his Ph.D. in Human & Molecular Genetics in 1967. His advisor was Thomas Matney, Ph.D.



Darrell Neilsen Ward (1924-2013): GSBS Faculty President and former head of the Department of Biochemistry at MD Anderson Cancer Center. Ward graduated from Utah State University on the GI Bill, and then received his M.S. and Ph.D. degrees at Stanford University. In 1952, Ward moved to New York for a postdoctoral fellowship at Cornell University. In 1956 he joined MD Anderson where he did protein research. He served as the head of biochemistry for 21 years. His contributions to science include the unraveling of the structure of the luteinizing hormone, a complicated glycoprotein hormone vital to ovulation and conception.

GSBS wants you to be part of our 50th anniversary!

In 1962 there was a movement, led by then MD Anderson Hospital President, R. Lee Clark, M.D., to establish The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston. At that time there were 13 predoctoral students studying with scientists at MD Anderson who were enrolled through The University of Texas at Austin. Six MD Anderson scientists were special members, and four students were special associates, in the Graduate School Faculty at Austin. The following year, The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston was established on June 11, 1963, and activated by the Board of Regents of The University of Texas on September 28, 1963.

To celebrate 50 years of *Synergy in Science*, GSBS invites you to attend our **50th Anniversary Kick-off Celebration** and to **contribute to the time capsule**.

Attendees are asked to bring a GSBS keepsake to be considered for placement in the capsule. (Pictured are some examples of items.) The best items should be tangible, three-dimensional objects no bigger than 1' long by 1' wide. Since there is limited space in the capsule, not all submissions will be accepted, so please make sure your item is labeled with what it is, has a return name and contact information.

Date: Thursday, October 3, 2013

Time: 3-5p.m.

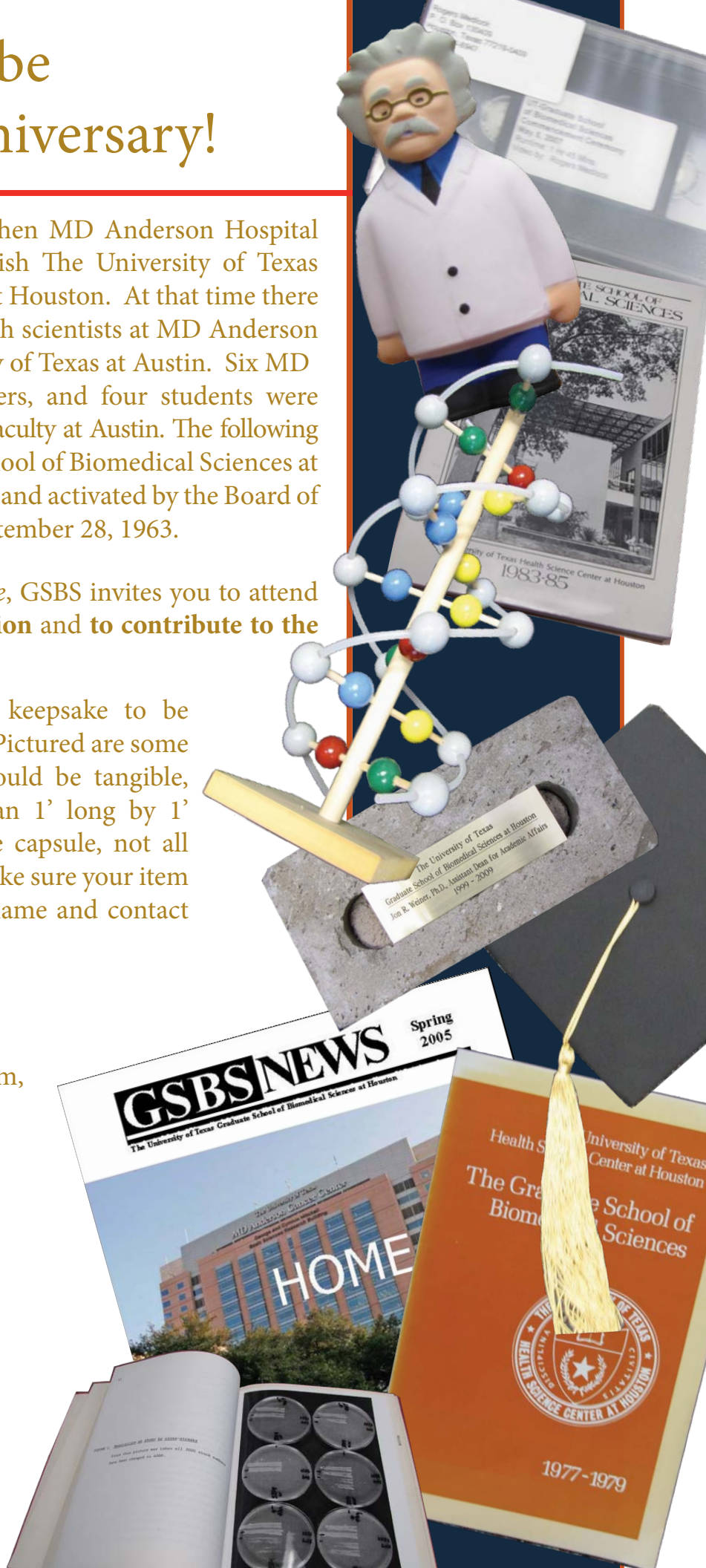
Location: Onstead Auditorium and Forum,
3rd floor, Mitchell Building, BSRB,
6767 Bertner, Houston, TX 77030

SYNERGY IN SCIENCE

From 1963 - 2013, 50 years of excellence in PhD & MD / PhD training



Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences





GSBS student Julianna Bronk, third from left, was named the first recipient of the Investing in Student Future Endowed Scholarship. Bronk was honored at a luncheon in April 2013 that included GSBS Deans Michelle Barton, Ph.D., left, and Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., right; and donor Priscilla Saunders, Ph.D. Bronk is working on a Ph.D. in Virology and Gene Therapy with her advisors Wadih Arap, M.D., Ph.D., and George Calin, Ph.D.

Investing in Student Futures Endowment update

Julianna Bronk is the first recipient of this newly established award. She was presented the scholarship at a spring luncheon honoring Priscilla Saunders, Ph.D., originator of the endowment in memory of her husband, noted scientist, Grady Saunders, Ph.D. Thank you Priscilla and many loyal friends.

Designed to ultimately provide a full fellowship, with the area of research criteria changing annually as decided by the Deans, the endowment continues to grow. While not yet at full fellowship level yet, it has reached \$115,000 and provided a scholarship of \$5,000 to its first honoree. Juliana is an outstanding student, mentored by Dr. Wadih Arap and Dr. George Calin, who is investigating a new method to monitor cancer progression and response therapy through a hybrid viral vector. Her research represents an important step in making human cancer both more visible and accessible to treatment.

One of our alumni, Peter Gray, Ph.D. (1970), who was a Grady Saunders student, not only has made current-use gifts, but has chosen to include the Investing in Student Futures fund in his estate plan. Dr. Gray, a successful researcher, and now a successful artist, and his wife Susan, were on hand to celebrate the occasion. Thank you Peter!

Altman-Goldstein Foundation Discovery Fellowships

will support two graduate students in full who are working on UT-MD Anderson's Moon Shot research (see the awardees and read more about the students on page 15). Special thanks goes to Mrs. Betsy Goldstein for her wish to remember and honor her mother, Pauline Altman, with these graduate student Fellowships dedicated to particularly innovative research. Mrs. Goldstein wanted to reflect her mother's long-held ideal of treasuring education and the difference it can make in someone's life. She and her family will be honored at a luncheon for these newest Discovery Fellows this fall. Thank you Betsy!

Edward F. Jackson, Ph.D. Graduate Education Endowment

Fund: Good News-Bad News. A new endowment is being established to recognize outgoing Medical Physics Program director and GSBS Alumni Steering Committee Charter member, Ed Jackson, Ph.D. (1990/Narayana). Dr. Jackson is leaving Houston for an opportunity to lead another top-ranked medical physics program, that of the University of Wisconsin. Thank You Ed for all that you have achieved for our students, faculty and School. Very best wishes as you head to your new post. We will miss you!

Special Thanks and Gratitude

March 16, 2013 – August 16, 2013

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An investment in education pays the best dividend — Benjamin Franklin

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70	5.8%	5.2%
75	6.5%	5.7%
80	7.5%	6.3%
85	8.4%	7.4%
90	9.8%	8.8%

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Deadline for news to be included in the next newsletter is Jan. 31, 2014

Hello Alumni,

Get ready to celebrate! The **50th Anniversary Year** for GSBS is almost upon us. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for some of the following:

Thursday, October 3, 2013, 3-5p.m.: 50th Anniversary Kick-off Celebration: UTHealth President Giuseppe Colasurdo and UT-MD Anderson President Ron DePinho will speak; alumni will have the opportunity to add their ideas of what to include in the time capsule, sample an anniversary cake, and enjoy the Planet GSBS artwork unveiling. Mitchell Basic Sciences Research Building; Onstead Auditorium and Forum, 3rd floor.

Friday, November 8, 2013, Noon-5p.m.: 50th Anniversary Super Panel: Noted alumni and faculty researchers will offer remarks about the past, present and future ideas in the biomedical sciences and field questions from current students and faculty. Mitchell Basic Sciences Research Building; Onstead Auditorium, Forum, 3rd floor.

Friday, November 8, 2013, 6:30-10p.m.: 50th Anniversary Alumni Reception and Reunion Dinner for alumni, early faculty, deans, notable others; Asia Society Museum, 1370 Southmore Boulevard, Houston, Texas 77004.

Special thanks to my team of intrepid fellow Alumni Association Steering Committee members and welcome to this year's newest member, Anne Netek Hart, Ph.D. (2011/Byrne). If any of you would like to be "honorary hosts" for this year's reunion, let me know (we've already signed up Keyi Zhu, Ph.D. (2007/McConkey). And, if any of you have new contact information for fellow alumni, please let me know that as well — we're still missing several alums, and we want all to be included in the **PlanetGSBS** reunion invitations. (Dianne.Hammond44@gmail.com)

Very best wishes,



Dianne Hammond, Ph.D. (1989)
GSBS Alumni Association President
2012-2013



Message
to Alumni

From GSBS
Alumni
President
Dianne
Hammond,
Ph.D.