ON THE COVER

PlanetGSBS:
On Aug. 16, 2013, more than 300 GSBS faculty, staff and students participated in a unique art photograph shoot by artist Syd Moen. The original artwork was unveiled at the GSBS 50th Anniversary Kickoff Celebration on Oct. 3, 2013, at The Forum in the George and Cynthia Mitchell Basic Sciences Research Building.

GSBS student Vidyasiri Vemulapalli was the recipient of the 2014 Cure on the Colorado Fellowship, funded by the 2013 event. She is affiliated with the Program in Molecular Carcinogenesis and her advisor is Mark Bedford, Ph.D.

Benefactor News

Smithville fundraiser supports GSBS fellow: The Virginia Harris Cockrell Cancer Research Center at MD Anderson Cancer Center, Science Park, held its annual Cure on the Colorado Fundraiser on March 22 at Riverbend Park in Smithville. Proceeds from this event directly benefit education at Science Park by supporting the stipend of a graduate student for one year.

The 2014 Cure on the Colorado Fellowship (funded by the 2013 event) was awarded to Vidyasiri Vemulapalli, a student with the Program in Molecular Carcinogenesis. Her advisor is Mark Bedford, Ph.D.

The event was hosted by The Friends of Science Park, an appointed board established in 1984 that helps to further the mission of the Science Park by assisting with public relations and fundraising. All efforts are in concert with the objectives of MD Anderson.

New endowment to support M.D./Ph.D. Program: Alumna Mimi Cho-Rohlfsen, M.D., Ph.D., had the wonderful vision to begin something new this year. She established the first-ever endowment at GSBS that supports the M.D./Ph.D. Program. Further, she wanted to create something special to honor her mentor, Peter Davies, M.D., Ph.D., and current program director, Dianna Milewicz, M.D., Ph.D. In the endowment description she wrote: “I am eternally grateful for my education and the faculty that encouraged me at the University.”

Funds distributed from the endowment will be used to support the M.D./Ph.D. Program and will include support for program students, through scholarships, fellowships, scientific merit awards, teaching assistantships, student health benefits and travel awards; program development, including recruitment, admissions, outreach, new student orientation and new initiatives; and general program support designed to enhance the educational experience for students.

This long-desired resource for the program may be increased with other gifts from other people over the years to provide additional important underwriting. Thank you for your loyalty and insight Dr. Cho-Rohlfsen, the impact of your gift is immense!

Continued on Page 22
Coming full circle

**core**

noun, often attributive \ˈkȯr\  
- a central and often foundational part usually distinct from the enveloping part by a difference in nature…  
- an arrangement of a course of studies that combines under basic topics material from subjects conventionally separated and aims to provide a common background for all students <core curriculum>  
- a basic, essential, or enduring part; the essential meaning

Merriam-Webster, m-w.com

With the end of the 50th Anniversary Year for the Graduate School in sight, we are coming “full circle” by developing and promoting the educational philosophy of a “Core Curriculum” started by the School’s first permanent Dean, Paul Weiss, Ph.D.

The newest iteration of the Core Curriculum was catalyzed by recommendations from an external review panel of top administrators from prominent graduate schools of biomedical sciences across the nation. This “blue ribbon” panel was one element of our strategic plan as new deans (now two years in). The panel was charged with a mission to take a critical look and outline a set of actions that would help us move the School forward, make it even better and take it to the next level of scholarly accomplishment, scientific prominence and regard.

One of the panel’s key suggestions was to develop a Core Curriculum that would offer students a strong base of fundamentals, upon which to build the succeeding years of specialized programmatic training towards their Ph.D. or Specialized Master’s degrees. This training is ultimately directed toward innovative research projects that are translated into improved health. It would phase out duplicative courses and focus on a broad swath of scientific areas. Importantly the roster will include ethics, critical thinking, presentation and scientific writing, team and leadership skills, experimental design and data interpretation. These “soft skills” are so important not only in today’s academic research but will also better prepare graduate students for leadership roles in government, NIH and NSF, the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries, areas of intellectual property, scientific writing and specialized areas such as genetic counseling and medical physics.

The reviewers suggested the following areas/modules as “relevant themes that span modern biology:” genetics, biochemistry, cell biology, structural biology, genomics, immunology, neurobiology and quantitative biology as well as basic cellular processes, basic bioinformatics and statistical analysis.

A final benefit is that the Core Curriculum, designed for new students to take in the first semester, will encourage a community of graduate students that grows in friendship and collegiality even after they select programs and enter individual faculty members’ labs.

While much of this is relatively easy to describe, implementing it is a complex and exciting process, and the proof will be in the experience (experiment?). The plan is being developed by Associate Dean William Mattox, Ph.D., along with considerable input from faculty and students. Together with faculty member, Jill Schumacher, Ph.D., the two will direct this newest endeavor. Many thanks to all for the time and effort shared to this end.

We are looking forward to the outcome.

Speaking of full circle, the Closing Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary Year will take place on May 30, 4-7 p.m. This event is a premiere of GSBS, The Film and a closing of the first ever GSBS Time Capsule—in Onstead Auditorium with a celebratory reception to follow. This will be the conclusion and full circle for our golden anniversary, please join us.

Michelle Barton

[Signature]

[Signature]
To mark its 50th Anniversary, The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston hosted two major events: a Super Panel and 2013 Alumni Reunion featuring several Distinguished Alumni honored by the School on November 8.

The Super Panel, held in the afternoon at the Onstead Auditorium, gave current students and faculty members a chance to hear GSBS Alumni discuss their careers. While the evening panel held during the 2013 Alumni Reunion at the Asia Society Texas Center was a discussion on the past, present and future of biomedical sciences.

Panelists for Super Panel included:

Hugo Barrera Saldaña, Ph.D. (1982/Saunders): Barrera Saldaña is a specialist in Science and Technology Commercialization (IC²Institute-UT-Austin and ITESM, 1999). In Latin America he pioneered molecular diagnosis of several diseases, clinical trials on cancer gene therapy (prostate cancer), and internationally competitive research on the regulation, evolution, dysfunction and biotechnological use of growth hormone genes. In 1988, with colleagues from Genentech Inc. and the Universities of Texas and Washington, the team established the world record for the largest human gene manually sequenced. This accomplishment was considered evidence for the feasibility of the Human Genome Project. Barrera Saldaña has trained close to 100 scientists and built three leading biomedical research centers. He was named GSBS Distinguished Alumnus in 1998.
Cherie Butts, Ph.D. (2003/Freedman): Butts, after holding a postdoctoral fellowship at the National Institutes of Health and working at the US Food & Drug Administration, currently is associate director of Immunology Research at Biogen Idec Inc., a biotechnology company in Cambridge, Mass., where her work focuses on developing drugs for autoimmune and fibrotic conditions. She is a prior recipient of the Presidents’ Research Scholarship and the American Legion Auxiliary Fellowships.

Eugene Gerner, Ph.D. (1974/Humphrey): Gerner is highly regarded for his work in gastrointestinal (GI) cancer; formerly director of the GI Cancer Program at The University of Arizona Cancer Center and principal investigator of a GI SPORE; currently professor emeritus, Department of Cellular and Molecular Medicine at The University of Arizona. Gerner holds several patents related to cancer prevention therapies and theranostics. He co-founded the company Cancer Prevention Pharmaceuticals Inc. (CPP) to bring cancer prevention into clinical practice and serves as Chief Scientific Officer at CPP. He was named GSBS Distinguished Alumnus in 2003.

Cathy Wicklund, M.S., C.G.C. (1993/Hecht): Wicklund is the director of the Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling at Northwestern University where she provides clinical genetic counseling, and prenatal and pediatric genetic services. She served on the Board of Directors of the National Society of Genetic Counselors in multiple roles including president in 2008. She is an advocate, on the national level, for the Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act and the recognition of genetic counselors as providers under the Social Security Act. She is actively involved in policy issues as they relate to genetics; she is also a member of the Institute of Medicine Roundtable on Translating Genomic-Based Research for Health and the Discretionary Advisory Committee on Heritable Disorders in Newborns and Children. She was named GSBS Distinguished Alumna in 2010.

Suzanne Fuqua, Ph.D. (1982/Naso): Fuqua is widely recognized for her pioneering work on hormonal resistance in breast cancer. Her lab identified variant estrogen receptors in breast cancer tumors and has linked these mutations to hormone resistance and breast cancer progression by demonstrating their consequences in altering estrogen-binding and cell responsiveness in model systems. She has also made seminal observations on novel hormone therapy resistance mechanisms and metastatic drivers in breast tumor progression. Fuqua is an Associate Director of Cancer Education at Baylor College of Medicine. She was named GSBS Distinguished Alumna in 2007.

Panelists for Alumni Reunion Panel were:

From left to right: Moderator Bob Tillman, Ph.D. (with MD Anderson Cancer Center); Panelists Eugene Gerner, Ph.D.; Cathy Wicklund, M.S., C.G.C.; Cherie Butts, Ph.D.; Hugo Barrera Saldaña, Ph.D.; and Moderator Marenda Wilson-Pham, Ph.D. (GSBS Program Manager), prepare for the Super Panel discussion held during the afternoon of November 8 at the Onstead Auditorium.
Michael E. McClure, Ph.D. (1970/Hnilica): As Chief of the Reproductive Sciences Branch, National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, NIH, McClure led a broad national NIH research program in the Reproductive Sciences. His individual program focus was in the field of reproductive genetics and reproductive immunology. He played a major role in NICHD’s developing the NIH science policy related to cloning. He retired in 2003 as Chief, Organs and Systems Toxicology Branch, Division of Extramural Research and Training, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, NIH. He was named GSBS Distinguished Alumnus in 2000.

Danny R. Welch, Ph.D. (1984/Nicolson): Welch is an internationally recognized leader in the field of cancer metastasis. Professor and founding chair at The University of Kansas in the department of cancer biology. He is best known for his discovery of six of the 34 known metastasis-suppressor genes. Welch and his associate, J. H. Lee, are inventors of, and hold the international patent for, KISS1, a metastasis-suppressor gene. Recently, with colleague Scott Ballinger, he developed the MNX mouse, which provides a new way to study nuclear-mitochondrial gene interactions. He was named GSBS Distinguished Alumnus in 2008.

Getting expert advice: Starting clockwise, Super Panelists Barrera Saldaña, Wicklund, Gerner and Butts took time after the discussion panel to talk with students about their career goals and questions.

Photos by Dwight C. Andrews/UTHealth
MEMBERS REAPPOINTED WITH COMMENDATION
Mark Bedford, Ph.D.
Michael Galko, Ph.D.
Rebecca M. Howell, Ph.D.
Eugenie S. Kleinerman, M.D.
Subrata Sen, Ph.D.

MEMBERS REAPPOINTED WITH HIGHEST COMMENDATION
Michael S. Beauchamp, Ph.D.
John Byrne, Ph.D.
M. Neal Waxham, Ph.D.

MEMBERS REAPPOINTED WITH VERY HIGHEST COMMENDATION
Kevin A. Morano, Ph.D.

NEW EMERITUS MEMBER
Stephen P. Tomasovic, Ph.D.

NEW REGULAR MEMBERS
Gheath Al-Atrash, D.O., Ph.D.
Cesar A. Arias, M.D., Ph.D.
Chandra Bartholomeusz, M.D., Ph.D.
Jennifer E. “Piper” Below, Ph.D.
Darren Boehning, Ph.D.
Richard R. Bouchard, Ph.D.
Xiaodong Cheng, Ph.D.
Sang Hyun Cho, Ph.D.
Nicholas R. De Lay, Ph.D.

NEW ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
Michalis Aristophanous, Ph.D.
Carlos A. Carreno, M.D.
Pai-Chun Chi, Ph.D.
Alice Z. Chuang, Ph.D.
Molly S. Daniels, M.S.
Harry Karmouty-Quintana, Ph.D.
Rodrigo Morales, Ph.D.
Ines Moreno-Gonzalez, Ph.D.
Joanne V. Nguyen, M.D.
Ramiro Pino, Ph.D.
Xin Wang, Ph.D.

2013 Paul E. Darlington Mentor Award recipient: Richard Behringer, Ph.D.
Behringer, a professor in the department of genetics at MD Anderson Cancer Center, has been a GSBS faculty member since 1990. He obtained his Ph.D. in biology from the University of South Carolina-Columbia in 1986.

The Darlington Award provides an honorarium of $1,500 and was created to honor Paul Darlington, Ph.D., former GSBS Associate Dean, to recognize a current faculty member who has made an exceptional impact, as a mentor, on both students and faculty.
Jim Allison, Ph.D., was named the recipient of the 2014 Szent-Györgyi Prize for Progress in Cancer Research from the National Foundation for Cancer Research. He received the award for his work in discovering key elements of immune system T cell biology which led to the development of new cancer treatments.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science announced its 2013 Fellows which included GSBS faculty members: Michael Andreeff, M.D., Ph.D.; MD Anderson Provost and Executive Vice President Ethan Dmitrovsky, M.D.; Kim-An Do, Ph.D.; Kevin Morano, Ph.D.; and Richard Wood, Ph.D.

Mark Bedford, Ph.D., was named the Thomas Stull Matney, Ph.D., Endowed Professor in Cancer Genetics. Bedford has been a faculty member with GSBS since 2000. He is affiliated with the Program in Molecular Carcinogenesis and is also a member of the School’s Graduate Education Committee and the Academic Standards Committee. The Matney Professorship provides $5,000 per year of support to be used for research purposes, student support, or recruitment in the field of cancer genetics.

Nicholas Navin, Ph.D., received the T.C. Hsu Faculty Research Award. Navin has been a faculty member with GSBS since 2011. He is affiliated with the Program in Genes and Development and his research interests include cancer genomics, human genetics, cancer biology and computational biology.

The T.C. Hsu award was established in 2007 by Margaret Hsu, daughter of the late T.C. Hsu, renowned scientist in cell genetics. This is a ten-year commitment by Ms. Hsu of approximately $10,000 annually to honor and support an exceptional GSBS faculty member who is not yet tenured but on tenure track in the scientific areas of genetics or cell biology. The award may be renewed up to three years.

Theresa Koehler, Ph.D., professor and chair of the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics, was inducted into the new College of Science Hall of Distinction at Virginia Tech College of Science in Blacksburg, Va., on Nov. 1, 2013. The Hall of Distinction honors those individuals who best embody the Virginia Tech goals of enhancing well-being and development worldwide, and exemplify Virginia Tech’s motto Ut Prosim (That I May Serve).

Eleven GSBS faculty members were among the 16 recipients of the first R. Lee Clark Fellowships. This prestigious new award program established by The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in December 2013 recognizes and supports MD Anderson junior faculty members whose early excellence indicate future leadership potential. The program is named in honor of MD Anderson’s first president, R. Lee Clark, M.D. Each Fellow is awarded $100,000 to spend over one to two years.

Honorees from GSBS include: Lauren Byers, M.D.; Jichao Chen, Ph.D.; Francesca Cole, Ph.D.; Michael Galko, Ph.D.; Don Gibbons, M.D.,Ph.D.; Han Liang, Ph.D.; Hui-Kuan Lin, Ph.D.; Steven Lin, M.D., Ph.D.; Li Ma, Ph.D.; Samuel Shelburne, M.D., Ph.D.; and Xiaobing Shi, Ph.D.
Making ice cream and monster masks may not be textbook ways of teaching scientific concepts, but those were just some of the techniques used by GSBS Outreach Council members to ignite curiosity in children (and parents) at the organization’s Science Night held on February 15 at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center’s South Campus Building II Ballroom.

Children from neighboring Houston-area schools, such as Condit Elementary, as well as families of UTHealth and MD Anderson faculty members, attended the event organized by the Council.

“One of the members of the Outreach Council suggested a night where the public can easily interact with faculty and students of GSBS. We thought this was a great idea and it developed further through many discussions within the Council,” said Heather Turner, GSBS student and Outreach Program coordinator.

“We had a lot of fun brainstorming ideas for this event because ultimately we wanted GSBS faculty and students to share not only their expertise but also their enthusiasm and passion for science, and hopefully demonstrate to young kids how fun science can be and inspire them to embrace their natural curiosity,” added GSBS student and Outreach Program Coordinator Amanda Herrmann.

Eight out of 13 GSBS programs and more than 50 volunteers participated in the event. Each table developed a concept or task that taught children about their specific field of study:

- Biochemistry & Molecular Biology Program displayed plated cells from different organs in the body and talked about their functions;
- Cancer Biology Program discussed different environmental factors that can increase cancer risks (sun exposure, smoking, etc.) and showed some cancer cells under a microscope;
- Experimental Therapeutics Program used a Play-Doh model of wound healing to discuss the importance of different...
kinds of cells needed in the healing process;
• Genes & Development Program built 3D replicas of flies out of paper using specific mutations which they could identify on a chart. The group also had a microscope with slides of fly wings;
• Human & Molecular Genetics Program had a table with supplies to make DNA strands out of pipe cleaners. They also showed visitors how to use genetics to create their own monster masks;
• Immunology Program showed videos of immune cells and vaccination;
• Neuroscience Program’s table compared plastic brains from different animals, had a sheep brain dissection, and had supplies to let children construct and color paper brain hats;
• Medical Physics Program displayed and explained the use linear accelerator parts as well as showed CT scans of toys (a Barbie doll). They also had a slideshow of radiation research and treatments.
• First-year students not affiliated with a program also had a table at the event. There they showed children how to make ice cream using ice and salt.

Before each child made their way to the ballroom, they were given a passport. After visiting a program’s table and learning about a particular scientific field, each child would receive a sticker verifying their participation at that table. Once they made their way through the room, the children were asked to turn in their passports, and were declared scientists.

"To see a crowd come to our event was extremely rewarding. The Council and GSBS administration put in so much work and we were all very excited in preparation for the event. We were all just praying that people came, and they did! I felt very, very proud of what we were able to achieve through our shared enthusiasm and hard work," said Turner.

“I really enjoyed Science Night. Once again our students stepped up and organized a great event that clearly had a significant impact on our local community,” said GSBS Dean Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., who brought his own children to the event. “I spoke with several of the children and parents who attended and they were really excited about the fun science they were seeing. You never know what might catch the attention of a young mind and our students did a great job of reaching out to inspire future scientists.”

“We were extremely impressed with the turnout! It was so nice to see so many bright eyes and interested young minds,” said Outreach Program Coordinator Nick Parchim. “I, personally, was pleasantly surprised that so many parents and children value science enough to join us in an afternoon of learning.”

“This event was such a great and fulfilling experience for me,” added Outreach council member Angie Torres-Adorno. “I realized how motivational it can be for children to have the opportunity to interact and learn from scientists, and continue growing their interest toward sciences!”

The Outreach Council, led by GSBS students Turner, Herrmann, Parchim and Dennis Ruder, hope to hold another Science Night next year in the spring of 2015.

Dean Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., attended the event with his children, Josie, middle, and Jeremy, right.

For more information about the Council, please email GSBS_OutreachProgram@uth.tmc.edu or visit the GSBS Outreach Facebook page (https://www.facebook.com/UTGSBSOutreach).
Madeline Farley, pictured above, received an Individual National Research Service Award (NRSA) from the National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) for the proposal: Remodeling of the postsynaptic density: A macromolecular signaling complex. Her advisor is M. Neal Waxham, Ph.D.

Aundrietta Duncan received a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award for Individual Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research for her proposal: TRIM24 may be an important oncogene in breast cancer. Duncan is affiliated with the Genes and Development Program and her advisor is GSBS Dean Michelle Barton, Ph.D.

Melissa Robinson received an F31 Predoctoral Fellowship Individual National Research Service Award (NRSA) from the National Institute for Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS). Her proposal: Oxidative protein folding of pilins and virulence in Gram-positive bacteria. Robinson is affiliated with the Microbiology and Molecular Genetics Program and her advisor is Hung Ton-That, Ph.D.

Zahra Timsah had a first-author paper published online at Nature Structural & Molecular Biology. The publication, which was senior-authored by Timsah’s advisor, GSBS faculty member John Ladbury, Ph.D., (The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology) identifies two proteins that compete for one binding site on a cellular growth factor receptor; one promotes metastasis, the other blocks it.

Lihe Chen, Germaine Agollah, Jennifer Herricks, Sarah Eagleman, Thuy Le and Claudia Jimenez-Lopez were selected as the 2013 Medical School Dean’s Research Scholarship Award recipients. The $2,500 scholarships are given to GSBS students who have achieved distinction in biomedical research.

2013-2014
GSBS Deans’ Cup Results

Thanks to all volunteers!
The yearlong, program-based volunteer competition came to a close in March and after three volunteer events, the Program in Cell & Regulatory Biology took home the trophy. Above are the complete results from the contest.

American Legion Auxiliary Scholarship Awards

Since 1971 the American Legion Auxiliary has provided scholarships for GSBS students involved in cancer research. The money for this funding is raised through a wide range of Auxiliary activities. To date the Auxiliary has raised more than $1,355,000 to present 132 renewable scholarships which currently are $5,000 each.

Students
Aundrietta Duncan
Jacquelyn Reuther
Marco Leung
Mimi Le
Landon Wootton
Margie Sutton
Adam Yock
Amber Mathews
Christa Manton
David Fried
Amanda Hanks

Advisors
Michelle Barton, Ph.D.
Ann Killary, Ph.D.
Nicholas Navin, Ph.D.
Ann Killary, Ph.D.
Sam Beddar, Ph.D.
Robert Bast, M.D.
Laurence Court, Ph.D.
Shao-Cong Sun, Ph.D.
Joya Chandra, Ph.D.
Laurence Court, Ph.D.
Khandan Keyomarsi, Ph.D.

Not pictured:
Kaitlin Reeh
Ellen Richie, Ph.D.
R. W. (Bill) Butcher Award

Sarah Baum
Advisor: Michael Beauchamp, Ph.D.
Established in 1997, the R. W. (Bill) Butcher Endowed Fund provides an annual award of $3,500 for students who demonstrate excellence in research, have a commitment to a career in biomedical research, and make a professional contribution to the community or have faced a particular challenge.

City Federation of Women’s Clubs Endowed Scholarship in the Biomedical Sciences

Vidyasiri Vemulapalli
Advisor: Mark Bedford, Ph.D.
Established in 2005, this $2,500 scholarship rewards an exceptional GSBS student who is working in an area vital to the biomedical sciences and is of particular current significance in that year’s national research perspective.

The Antje Wuelfrath Gee and Harry Gee, Jr. Family Legacy Award

Christin Ungewiss
Advisor: Don Gibbons, M.D., Ph.D.
This $4,500 endowed award was created by the Gee family to support exceptional GSBS graduate students in good standing who have yet to complete their third year at GSBS and who obtained all or part of their preparatory education in China, Germany, Mexico or the Philippines.

Gigli Family Endowed Scholarship

Emily Dominguez
Advisor: David Johnson, Ph.D.
This $1,000 endowed scholarship was created by Dr. Irma Gigli, GSBS faculty member and deputy director emerita of The Brown Foundation Institute of Molecular Medicine, to honor her parents. The scholarship is intended to help exceptional graduate students who are making excellent progress towards their degree, particularly those who are first generation in their family to enroll in graduate school.

Floyd Haar, M.D., Endowed Memorial Research Award in Memory of Freda Haar

David Rushworth
Advisor: Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D.
This $1,500 award is provided to recognize an exceptional GSBS student conducting critical research in the area of stem cells as it applies to leukemia, or the study of stem cells and their use in treatment of other cancers.
2013-2014 Student Awards

T. C. Hsu Endowed Memorial Scholarship
To remember Dr. Hsu and his remarkable research in genetics and cancer biology, his daughter Margaret established this memorial scholarship in 2003. Early supporters included MD Anderson Cancer Center Foundation, colleagues, faculty, friends and former students of Dr. Hsu. The endowment is a living testimony that acknowledges the stellar research accomplishments with a now $8,000 award.

Sangita Pal
Advisor: Jessica Tyler, Ph.D.

Investing in Student Futures Endowed Scholarship
This $4,500 scholarship endowment was established by Priscilla Saunders, Ph.D., in memory of her husband Grady Saunders, Ph.D., and increased by gifts of many others. This year, the award honored the memory of Frances Arrighi, Ph.D., with a special focus on cancer research.

Dhananjay Thakur
Advisor: Michael Xi Zhu, Ph.D.

Discovery Fellowships

Russell and Diana Hawkins Family Foundation Discovery Fellowship in Neurodegenerative Disease
Curtis Neveu  Advisor: John Byrne, Ph.D.  Natalie Sirisaengtaksin  Advisor: Andrew Bean, Ph.D.

These Discovery Fellowships provide full stipends to exceptional GSBS doctoral students whose research is innovative in neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson’s disease. The Fellowships may be renewed for up to three years.

Zilkha Family Discovery Fellowship in Neuroengineering
Brittany Coughlin  Advisor: John Byrne, Ph.D.  Stuart Red  Advisor: Anne Sereno, Ph.D.

These Discovery Fellowships provide full stipends to exceptional GSBS doctoral students whose research is innovative in neuroengineering. The Fellowships may be renewed for up to three years.

The Jacqueline T. Hecht Founding Director Scholarship
Elizabeth Baack  Advisor: Claire Singletary, M.S.  Shannon Mulligan  Advisor: Shahrukh Hashmi, Ph.D.

This $1,000 scholarship created in 2010 to honor Dr. Jacqueline T. Hecht, Founding Director of the Program in Genetic Counseling, is to be used to help recruit exceptional new students or to award outstanding current students in the Genetic Counseling program.

T. C. Hsu Endowed Memorial Scholarship
Sangita Pal
Advisor: Jessica Tyler, Ph.D.

To remember Dr. Hsu and his remarkable research in genetics and cancer biology, his daughter Margaret established this memorial scholarship in 2003. Early supporters included MD Anderson Cancer Center Foundation, colleagues, faculty, friends and former students of Dr. Hsu. The endowment is a living testimony that acknowledges the stellar research accomplishments with a now $8,000 award.

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Dhananjay Thakur
Advisor: Michael Xi Zhu, Ph.D.
Robert W. and Pearl Wallis Knox Charitable Foundation Scholarship

Nadeeka Dias
Advisor: Scott Lane, Ph.D.
Established in 2007, this $3,000 scholarship from the Knox Foundation supports students whose interests are research in the areas of AIDS and other infectious diseases in humans.

Alfred G. Knudson, Jr., Ph.D., Outstanding Dissertation Award

Deepavali Chakravarti
Advisor: Elsa Flores, Ph.D.
Established in 1997, this $1,000 award honors Dr. Knudson and his landmark contributions to the field of genetics. The award recognizes original research conducted by Ph.D. student and acknowledges the important scientific supervision that MD Anderson faculty members provide for GSBS students.

Marilyn and Frederick R. Lummis, Jr., M.D., Fellowship in the Biomedical Sciences

Kaitlin Reeh
Advisor: Ellen Richie, Ph.D.
Dr. and Mrs. Lummis made a generous gift to GSBS to create this award given for scientific excellence and innovation in any area of biomedical research. This $25,000 stipend award given each year is intended to encourage novel research with a high potential to impact the particular field of study and ultimately human health.

Dee S. and Patricia Osborne Endowed Scholarship in The Neurosciences

Deepna Devkar
Advisor: Anthony Wright, Ph.D.
Established by the Linda and Ronny Finger Foundation in 2001-2002, this endowed scholarship honors former University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Development Board president, Dee Osborne, and his wife Patricia. In 2006, the Ralph H. and Ruth J. McCullough Foundation made an additional generous gift in support of this award. Through the endowment, an award of $2,000 is provided to the winning presenter in the graduate student category at the Annual Neuroscience Scientific Poster Session, and an additional $500 allotment is given for travel to a scientific meeting.
Presidents’ Research Scholars

Through generous funding from The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston President Giuseppe N. Colasurdo, M.D., and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center President Ronald A. DePinho, M.D., recognition is given to advanced GSBS students who have demonstrated excellence in research. This year’s recipients each received a cash award of $5,000.

The Fadine Jackson Roquemore Scholarship in Cancer Research

Ji-Hyun Shin
Advisor: Mong-Hong Lee, Ph.D.

Established in 2012 by a longtime supporter of GSBS graduate students, this $2,000 scholarship encourages and rewards a very promising graduate doctoral student.

Sam Taub and Beatrice Burton Endowed Fellowship in Vision Disease

Mehmet Cihan Kadipasaoglu
Advisor: Nitin Tandon, M.D.

Mary Wright and her sister, Joanna Ross, established this $3,500 endowed fellowship in 2004. The Sam Taub and Beatrice Burton Fellowship in Vision Disease honors their grandfather and great aunt and supports excellence in the research of eye and sight-related problems and the potential therapies.

Tzu Chi Scholarship Award for Excellence

Germaine Agollah
Advisor: Eva Sevick, Ph.D.

John Morrow
Advisor: Shuxing Zhang, Ph.D.

The Tzu Chi Foundation provides this $1,000 scholarship to recognize and assist outstanding GSBS doctoral students. Successful applicants demonstrate both excellence in academic achievement and persistent community involvement. Students must be in a Ph.D. program; in good academic standing in GSBS; and making timely progress toward completion of their degree.
President James T. Willerson, M.D., Endowed Scholarship in Genetic Counseling

Stephanie Thompson
Advisor: Andrea Harbison, M.S.
This scholarship was established in honor of former UTHealth President James T. Willerson, who was a longtime supporter of the GSBS. The endowment provides a $1,000 scholarship for genetic counseling.

Nancy Beamer Willerson Endowed Scholarship in Genetic Counseling

Caiqian Wu
Advisor: Claire Singletary, M.S.
This scholarship was established in honor of Nancy Beamer Willerson, a longtime supporter of the GSBS. The endowment provides a $1,000 scholarship for genetic counseling.

Roberta M. And Jean M. Worsham Endowed Scholarship in the Behavioral and Neurosciences

Brittany Coughlin
Advisor: John Byrne, Ph.D.
This endowed scholarship of $1,800 fosters exceptional students working in the fields of the behavioral sciences or neurosciences particularly in the areas of addiction or obsessive/compulsive behavior.

The Wei Yu Family Endowed Fellowship

Donghyun Joo
Advisor: Xin Lin, Ph.D.
This endowed fellowship of $2,500 was established in 2011 as a thank you to GSBS for providing Dr. Wei Yu with his Ph.D. education and to provide support for post-candidacy students who work in the broad area of virology.
Matthew Lewin, M.D., Ph.D., (1999/Walters) has garnered recognition from several media outlets, including NPR, for his work on snakebite treatment research which includes a breakthrough concept of nasally delivered anti-paralysis drugs to reverse the effects of a large group of deadly snake venoms.


Cheri Turman, Ph.D., (Strobel/2006) became vice president of quality at Coats Aloe International Inc. located in Dallas.

Ruoning Wang, Ph.D., (Kuang/2007) became an assistant professor at The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center–Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Solove Research Institute in Columbus, Ohio.

Marenda Wilson-Pham, Ph.D., (2007/van Hoof) GSBS Program Manager, had her research published in Nature Journal. Her work discovered a novel role of the Pif1 DNA helicase during a DNA repair pathway named “break induced replication” (BIR) and crossover recombination.

Surprise visit: GSBS Alumna Jane Kirscher (aka Jane Pakkai Lee), one of the first graduates from GSBS, dropped by the School unexpectedly on Sept. 19, 2013. Kirscher obtained her M.S. in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology in 1970, and her advisor was Bruno Jirgensons. What a great surprise during our 50th year!

GSBS has teamed up with the Biology Department at Houston Baptist University, chaired by alumna Jackie Peltier Horn, Ph.D. (Arlinghaus/1981), to offer current students the opportunity to gain university teaching experience in an undergraduate setting.

In this program, HBU will provide mentorships as well as options for students to observe both lectures and labs, as well as give GSBS students the chance to lecture and assist in teaching a course.

This venture—championed by GSBS Deans Michelle Barton, Ph.D., and Michael Blackburn, Ph.D.—has had involvement from several alums including Horn; Hannah Wingate, Ph.D., (Keyomarsi/2007) and Brenda Whaley, Ph.D., (1995/Barber).

For its pilot launch in the fall of 2013, neuroscience student Caleb Robinson (pictured left with Horn, far left, and Wingate, middle) was selected to participate in this program.

Applications for this program are being accepted now for the fall of 2014.
Alumni Spotlight

In Memoriam

Barnet Levy, Ph.D., (1917-2014): GSBS Faculty President (1982-83); faculty member (1968-83); A charter member of The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston faculty and served as oral pathology consultant to The University of Texas MD Cancer Center and the Veterans Administration Hospital.

Recruited by GSBS Dean Sumter Armin, Ph.D. (1966-70), Levy came to The University of Texas School of Dentistry at Houston as professor of pathology in 1957 and became the founding director of the school’s research arm, The University of Texas Dental Science Institute (DSI) in 1964. In 1987, Levy was named Professor Emeritus by The University of Texas System in recognition of his long, distinguished career.

Levy was also a noted artist and was commissioned to create 12 contemporary stained glass windows for The Congregation Brith Shalom of Houston’s sanctuary on Bellaire Boulevard. He was buried beside his wife, Henrietta, in New Jersey.

Karin Christiane Cibula Loftin, Ph.D. (Levy/1979)

I have very fond memories of my days at GSBS; days which were often very challenging. I earned a master’s degree (Putrescine Metabolism in PHA-Stimulated Lymphocytes) in biomedical sciences in 1973 and a Ph.D. (Periodontal Reaction to Naturally-Occurring Dental Plaque in Plaque-Sensitized Monkeys) in 1979, with a specialization in microbiology (infectious diseases) and cellular immunology (inflammation).

Born in Hamburg, Germany, I immigrated to Michigan in junior high school. As a high school and college student, I was always interested in both Veterinary and Human Medical Sciences, but early experiences in medical technology lead me to pursue a career in biomedical research. Ironically, when I first chose this career, biomedical science programs were not common. Most graduate schools had only the classic programs in cell biology, zoology, microbiology, physiology, but GSBS provided the opportunity to broaden this basic research scope and provide a bridge between the clinical medical sciences and these basic science programs. GSBS had just the program I was seeking in 1971, which provided me with a career in a variety of venues for biomedical research.

Author of numerous papers, reports, and presentations that span a variety of disciplines, the height of my career was working on Space Station planning and environmental physiology related to space walks as a research scientist for KRUG/Wyle Life Sciences, a contractor at the NASA/Johnson Space Center. I also served as a microbiologist in an arbovirus surveillance program in a high containment biosafety level three laboratory in Virginia. GSBS provided me with the flexibility to contribute in a number of related, but still diverse areas of research and development. Flexibility was the key for me to be successful in biomedical sciences research.

I married R. Bowen Loftin, currently Chancellor at The University of Missouri, in 1972, and we have two grown children, Elisabeth and Benjamin, son-in law, Timothy, and three grandsons. I see my role at MU to support Bowen’s goal to promote Mizzou in academics, sports and in the community. I’m fully retired from the Office of Research Compliance and Biosafety at Texas A&M University. I am pictured above with my Hanoverian horse, Feragamo (affectionately, Fritz), and daily devote time to the equestrian sport of dressage.

Taeha An, M.S., (1968-2013): GSBS alumnus, research scientist with Novartis in Cambridge, Mass. He died at Miriam Boyd Parlin Hospice Residence in Wayland, Mass., after a battle with cancer. An graduated from GSBS in 1997 with a Master’s in Cell Biology. His advisor was Eugenie Kleinerman, M.D.

Jill Corrine Sawyer, M.S., (1971-2013): GSBS alumna who spent her career as a genetic counselor in Dallas. She obtained her Master’s in Genetic Counseling in 1995. Her advisor was Stephen Daiger, Ph.D.
Goldstein-Altman Foundation Discovery Fellows: Betsy Goldstein wanted to honor her mother, Pauline Altman, who was a teacher with a strong belief in the power of education. Last fall Mrs. Goldstein met her first Discovery Fellows and their award is named with her mother in mind. With immense generosity, Mrs. Goldstein committed to sponsoring a team of two innovative Graduate School scientists-in-training with full fellowship support for the next five years.

The specially selected students, who became the first Pauline Altman-Goldstein Foundation Discovery Fellows, are helping to lead the charge, along with their faculty mentors, in the Moon Shots program at MD Anderson Cancer Center. One is Kshipra Gharpure (Anil Sood, M.D., is her mentor) and she is working on ovarian cancer; the other, David Rushworth, (Laurence Cooper, M.D., Ph.D., is his mentor) is working to fight leukemia.

Mrs. Goldstein, we are deeply indebted to you, your family and your mother for this support—it does indeed educate, as well as increase the momentum of pioneering research. Thank you.

GSBS co-hosts Cullen Trust for Higher Education 6th Annual Translational Research Symposium

Each year, two top incoming M.D./Ph.D. students in each program are provided full stipends during the medical training portion of their education. Further, these Fellows are afforded the opportunity to complete their research training at any of the three sponsoring institutions. The Cullen Trust Fellowship program reflects an unprecedented collaborative effort and intellectual resource for M.D. /Ph.D. students in the Texas Medical Center.

The two M.D./Ph.D. programs jointly host an annual symposium for the dual purpose of showcasing outstanding translational researchers in the Medical Center and attracting the highest caliber undergraduates throughout the nation to the M.D./Ph.D. programs in Houston. The Cullen Trust for Higher Education grant underwrites the Symposium and provides Travel Awards to selected students to attend the talks, tours, and a day of M.D./Ph.D. career and application workshops.

The 2013-2014 Cullen Trust for Higher Education Fellows are Deborah Silverman, left, from GSBS and Emma Watson, Baylor College of Medicine.
Special Thanks and Gratitude

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Youping Xiao
Edward Yeh
Kun Zhang
Wenzheng Zhang
Zhaoyang Zhao

Admit One
GSBS Opening Night
May 30, 2014
4-7p.m.
Onstead Auditorium
3rd Floor, BSRB
Mitchell Building

To wrap up the second leg of the GSBS 50th Anniversary celebratory year, The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston is hosting a red carpet event for the premiere of GSBS, The Film, a documentary that chronicles the Graduate School. Event will also feature the closing of the first GSBS time capsule.

This event, being held at the School (6767 Bertner Ave., Houston, 77030), is open to all GSBS alumni, faculty and students.

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

August 17, 2013 - April 15, 2014

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

Finally, spring is here. I want to bring you the news about several things: first and foremost, please mark your calendars for Friday, May 30, 2014 from 4-7 p.m. for the “world premiere” of GSBS, The Film. It captures the highlights of the 50th Anniversary Year, where GSBS is today and a few plans for the future. The closing of the Time Capsule will complete this red carpet event which will take place in Onstead Auditorium, located here at the Graduate School on the 3rd floor—I hope some out-of-town alumni as well as our “locals” will join us for the show and toasting reception immediately following.

Inside are photos from the 50th Anniversary Alumni Reunion. It was wonderful to have so many of you with us including six Distinguished Alumni: Hugo Barerra Saldaña, Ph.D.; Suzanne Fuqua, Ph.D.; Gene Gerner, Ph.D.; Michael McClure, Ph.D.; Danny Welch, Ph.D.; and Cathy Wicklund, M.S., C.G.C. They were all outstanding panelists, along with Cherie Butts, Ph.D., (2003/Freedman)—not a distinguished alumni yet, but definitely a star. Speaking of stars, watch for Dr. Gerner in our upcoming GSBS, The Film.

Thank you to outgoing president, Dianne Hammond, Ph.D., for doing a terrific job leading the reunion and throughout the year. I want to congratulate Alumni Association Steering Committee member, Chris Singh, Ph.D., on his election to vice president. And, I welcome our newest Steering Committee member, Anne Netek Hart, Ph.D., to this energetic group including Drs. Sol Bobst, Jackie Peltier Horn, Steve Lott, Joy Marshall, BethLynn Maxwell and Melissa Adams-Singh.

Two final dates to note: come salute our newest alumni at the Graduation Celebration on May 8, 5-7 p.m. in the GSBS Commons and look for news about a career lunch planned that will offer alumni career path expertise to GSBS students on May 16. That’s it for now—I welcome your news and your thoughts, mmcgahren@mdanderson.org AND THERE IS STILL TIME TO SUGGEST AN ITEM FOR THE TIME CAPSULE!

Mollianne McGahren Murray, Ph.D. (2007/ Keyomarsi)
GSBS Alumni Association President
2013-2014