

U of T Biochemistry

[Biochemistry Website](#)

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

The Fall return to campus is normally an exciting time. The chance to re-connect with colleagues and meet new members of the department is invigorating and something I look forward to year after year. While this is still true this year, things will be more challenging as we face a fourth COVID wave. The University of Toronto has been preparing for this for months, starting with updating classroom ventilation back in May. Plans and procedures with regards to vaccinations and social distancing have been changing almost on a daily basis so I thank everyone for their understanding and patience while things have been in flux. The most up-to-date information can be found in the links found in the side bar on page 3 below.

Resumption of classes makes it busy for everyone, students, staff and faculty alike but September is particularly busy for faculty, many of whom are also working on grant applications. An extra big thanks to those who have volunteered to act as peer reviewers for their colleagues' CIHR grant proposals, making these reviewed grants eligible for a Temerity Faculty of Medicine Pathway Grant.

This year, the Biochemistry 'Retreat' will be held on September 23rd and 24th and I encourage everyone to attend. The Retreat organization team (Kate Lee, Jon Ditlev, Elaine Thai, Jim Wu, Kirsten Meyer and with input from Alex Palazzo and others) has been working hard to plan out the itinerary. While talks and poster sessions have been scheduled to be online, tentative plans for some social gatherings, COVID restrictions permitting, have been scheduled

For comments and feedback on the newsletter and to provide news to include in the next issue send an email to biochemistry.office@utoronto.ca. We are always happy to hear from you!

Liliana Attisano



UPCOMING EVENTS

BIOCHEMISTRY RETREAT 2021

The *Biochemistry Departmental Retreat* is back this year on **Thursday, September 23, and Friday, September 24th, 2021.**

There will be exciting talks from faculty and trainees, social events with food, and time dedicated to introducing rotation students to recruiting faculty. More details and registration links were emailed out to everyone the week of Aug 30th, so check you Inbox.

Details for abstract submission will follow in the coming weeks

Don't forget to register, below!

[Faculty Registration](#)

[Student Registration](#)



Graduate Updates

Rotations

We would like to welcome all the new incoming students. To help facilitate the rotations, please refer to the following schedule:

First rotation will be Sept 7 - Oct 8
Second rotation: Oct. 12 - Nov 12
Third rotation: Nov 15 - Dec 17

The first rotation placements have already been made. The remaining two placements will be arranged by the student with the faculty. Student may confirm their 2nd and 3rd placement any time *after September 24th*, and *no later* than 1 week before the start date of the next placement. Final lab placements should be confirmed between *Friday December 10th* and *Monday December 13th*.

Upcoming Student Seminars and Connell Lectures

The seminar schedule is out. Besides the excellent talks from our PhD graduate students, we have a fantastic roster of Connell Speakers including Shana Elbaum-Garfinkle (CUNY), Li-Huei Tsai (MIT), Agata Smogarzewska (Sloan Kettering Institute), Chang Liu (UC Irvine) and Michael K. Rosen (UT Southwestern).

We will begin on September 22nd, the day before the Department Retreat, with the introduction of the new rotation students. For the fall, all of the seminars and Connell Lectures will be online over Zoom, from **Noon to 1 PM on Wednesdays**. Please see [Student Seminar Schedule 2021-2022](#) for details.

In addition, please save the dates for our First Talk Symposium, where our 2019 incoming students present their work. It will be held next year from **April 4th to April 6th, 9AM to 11:15AM**. We are planning to have this over Zoom, however we may hold these in person depending on the status of the pandemic. Again, please see [Student Seminar Schedule 2021-2022](#) for details.

PhD Oral Seminars/Exams

All PhD exams are held online. Interested persons wanting to attend the oral seminar should contact the Students Advisor for approval.

Sisu Han's PhD Seminar/Oral Exam:

Wednesday September 8, 2021 @ 11:00AM - 2:00PM

Thesis Title: "*Proneural genes; old players with new functions in controlling neocortical neural progenitor cell behaviour*"

Supervisor:
Carol Schuurmans

Supervisory Members:
David Andrews
Joanne McLaurin

Brian Tsang's PhD Seminar/Oral Exam:

Tuesday September 14, 2021 @ 9:00AM - 12:00PM

Thesis Title: "*Studying the regulation and function of biomolecular condensates with in vitro reconstitution*"

Supervisor:
Julie Forman-Kay

Supervisory Members:
Avi Charkrabarty
Peter St. George-Hyslop

Awards & Fellowships

We are pleased to announce this year's Departmental Awards:

The **Connell Award for Top Graduate Student Publication of 2020** was awarded to **Eliza Lee** from the Palazzo lab for her publication "TPR is required for the efficient nuclear export of mRNAs and lncRNAs from short and intron-poor genes" *Nucleic Acids Res* 2020 48: 11645-11663.

The **David A. Scott Award** for the best all-round Biochemistry graduate student, using as criteria performance at seminars, readiness and willingness to assist fellow graduate students and staff, and abilities as a teaching assistant, was awarded to **Simoun Icho** from the Melnyk lab.

The **Centennial Award in honour of Sela Cheifetz** given to the top Ph.D. student in the Biochemistry Graduate Program, was awarded to **Sungwon Hwang** from the Maxwell lab.

The **Connell Award for Best All-Round Postdoctoral Fellow** for excellence in research, leadership within the laboratory and the Biochemistry community, scientific communication and outreach, and contributions including presentations and intellectual property, was awarded to **Veronique Taylor** from the Maxwell lab.

The **Outstanding Ph.D. Thesis in Biochemistry Award** was awarded to **Anan Chen** from the Wilde lab for his thesis "Dissecting the biological roles of two actin networks during cytokinesis".

And **The Pfizer Graduate Scholarship** was awarded to Yifan Eva Wang from the Palazzo lab to pursue her work on the role of the nucleoporin RanBP2 in regulating the translation of cytokine mRNAs.

Here is a list of upcoming fellowships for graduate students.

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarship (CIHR, NSERC) 2022-2023. Deadline: Monday September 13, 2021

CGS Doctoral (CIHR / NSERC) Competition 2022-2023
Deadline: Friday September 24

For other awards and fellowship, please see the list at the SGS: <https://www.sgs.utoronto.ca/awards/>

EDI Announcements

Dear Biochemistry,

Details on The *Wellness and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (WIDE)* committee can be found [HERE](#)

Check out [Articles and Resources](#) by the Student Team

Any concerns or questions should be directed to nana.lee@utoronto.ca or any member of WIDE.

Looking forward to our Fall 2021!

Nana

U of T COVID Update

Check out the following links for the latest information regarding vaccinations, social distancing, masking and any other policy changes.

General Information: [Fall Planning – Welcome Back](#)

Guide to Fall 2021: [UTogether - Your guide to fall 2021 at U of T](#)

UCheck: [UCheck - Your guide to fall 2021 at U of T](#)

FAQs for International Students:

[COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students](#)

[COVID-19 Information for University of Toronto Students \(Vaccines\)](#)

FAQs for Students: [COVID-19 – Undergraduate Student FAQs](#)

Undergraduate Updates

One of the positive things to come out of the past several months has been the fostering of a collaborative and consultative spirit between the Life Sciences programs run by departments within the Faculty of Medicine. This has allowed us to face uncertainties together and to avoid zero-sum thinking when it comes to course offerings and program enrolment. I am pleased to report that the department enters the year with strong program enrolment and a set of instructional priorities designed to maximize our efforts where they will make the most difference to our students and our community.

Welcome new and returning students

This summer, the department recruited several new students to the Major program and Specialist programs. These were some of our largest cohorts in recent years and reflect positively on the strength of our community: 65 of the Majors and 27 of the Specialists are entering their second year. We thank them for the trust they have placed in us by joining our programs and congratulate them on their success thus far. Please join me in welcoming our new and returning students this fall.

Fall courses

We are also excited to have Dr. Muhammad Zaman join us as a sessional lecturer for the BCH377 laboratory course this fall. We thank his predecessor, Dr. Eden Fussner for her remarkable commitment to the course and our students over the past several years and for helping in the transition. We plan to deliver all of our laboratory courses, including BCH377, in-person this fall and thank the Division of Teaching Laboratories for their planning in this regard. Several of our students are also taking part in independent research projects. Thanks to those faculty and their labs who have offered to host students in the face of continued challenges to lab occupancy, finances, and bandwidth. With respect to our lecture offerings, these will be offered in a mix of formats (in-person, online-only, a mix). A reminder that online learning will be accommodated for the first two weeks of the term in all our undergraduate courses to provide students with flexibility as they return to campus. Also, as it was last year, students will be using a self-declaration form to communicate their absence from academic work. No additional information or documentation is required. Please continue to treat our students and the rest of our community with patience, empathy, and respect.

Tips for Undergraduates

Are you interested in information on Undergrad courses and applying to grad school?

Recently graduated Biochemistry student, Zhuqi (Flora) Wang has prepared some useful tip sheets available through the links below:

[Transitioning to third/fourth year](#)

[Graduate School Applications](#)

BGSU News

Hello Biochem!

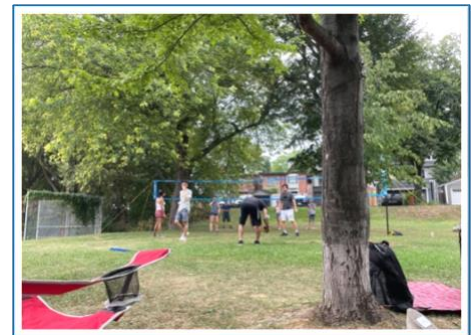
Thanks to everyone who made it and hung out at Ramsden Park with us; we hope you all enjoyed it! It was very nice to see everyone in person again and even meet some new faces that we've only been able to see online up until now. We would like to give Elaine Thai and Amy Wu a shoutout for planning a successful event. Below are some pictures from the event, so feel free to check them out. If you missed out on this occasion, no need to worry; we will have events like this in the future, so just keep an eye out in your email inbox or on our *social media on Facebook or Twitter* ([@yourbgsu](#)). While we all certainly prefer in-person social interactions, please be assured that we are still keeping the pandemic in mind and taking the necessary precautions to minimize risk as we plan our events.

We would also like to remind you about the Annual Biochemistry Departmental Retreat set to happen on Thursday, September 23rd and Friday, September 24th. Jim Wu has been leading the BGSU's planning efforts for the retreat and we really appreciate his hard work for organizing the event. The Departmental Retreat will consist of faculty talks, trainee award talks, and social events, with hopefully some in-person aspects (COVID regulations- and weather-permitting). It's gonna be tons of fun and we look forward to seeing you all there!

Lastly, as the new school year begins, there will be positions opening up on the BGSU executive team, as well as amongst the general members. If you are looking to take on a more active role in the BGSU or feel like you have ideas that you want to contribute and put into motion, please drop by our election on Wednesday, September 8th at 5pm (zoom link will be sent out closer to the date).

As usual, we hope that everyone is staying safe and having a good time. We wish you all the best in the new school year and may all your experiments be successful!!!

If anyone has any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at yourbgsu@gmail.com or send us a message through our social media channels. Have a great summer, Biochem!



BUSS Updates

Hey biochemists! We hope you've had a great return to school after a rock year of online learning. We know it's a bit of an adjustment moving back to in-person classes and having to interact with classmates and professors once again at reasonable hours, but BUSS is here for you should you ever need support. The BUSS mentorship program is about to begin, where upper years have a chance to give back to the BCH community by acting as mentors to younger years, who can sign up as mentees to be paired up with a seasoned biochemical veteran for any questions or inquiries they might have. Keep an eye out for registration and have a wonderful rest of your year!

Biochemically yours,
BUSS

Contact Us at uoffbuss@gmail.com



Transcripts News

Are you passionate about writing and science communication? Looking to join a group of fellow writers in the Biochemistry department?

Biochemistry's student blog, Transcripts, is recruiting new members for the coming school year! [The Transcripts blog](#) features a collection of pieces written by past and present graduate students from the Department of Biochemistry. We are looking for writers, editors, illustrators, and designers. We are also happy to take submissions at any time.

If you are interested in joining us, or if you have a piece of creative work that you want to share with our readers, contact us at emily.miraglia@mail.utoronto.ca or kate.jiang@mail.utoronto.ca. Our first meeting of the 2021-2022 school year will be **Wednesday, Sept. 29th at 5:30pm**: <https://utoronto.zoom.us/j/88965556355>

If you want to get an idea of what we do...

Check out our recent faculty interview with [Dr. Spencer Freeman](#)

Don't miss our new [Biochemistry Cartoon series](#), where PhD candidate Chloe Mitchell illustrates ongoing research projects in the department

We also put out [Short Stories](#) such as this chilling sci-fi piece

And we focus on promoting [equity, diversity, and inclusion \(EDI\) in science](#)

Follow us on Twitter [@transcriptsblog](#) for more updates on our works!

The logo for the Transcripts blog, featuring the word 'transcripts' in a lowercase, teal, sans-serif font.