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Bio/Bio News

June 2015

2015 COALS CONVOCATION

Each year, numerous students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences earn awards. Faculty members nominate both our graduating seniors and outstanding underclassmen to be considered as recipients for the awards. On Saturday, April 18, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences held their 59th Annual Convocation, and these awards were presented to very deserving students. This year six Biochemistry and Genetics students from the Department of Biochemistry were among the proud recipients of the Senior Merit, Alpha Zeta Award and the Gathright Scholar Award.



Award Recipients from the Biochemistry Dept, L-R: Aaron Griffin Yuhong Lin, Gabrielle Lessen, Jonathan Dawkins, Katherine Park and Anthony Andrade.

Senior Merit

Based on leadership, scholarship and service at the department, college and university level, the Texas A&M College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Senior Merit Award is the highest award given to undergraduates by the College. To be eligible for the award, students must be projected to graduate during the current calendar year. Among the winners of the 2015 Senior Merit Awards were three Biochemistry and Genetics majors:

Anthony Andrade BICH major
 Jonathan Dawkins BICH major
 Katherine Park BICH/ GENE double major

Alpha Zeta

The College also presents three Alpha Zeta Awards to an outstanding freshman, sophomore and junior. This is the highest award given to non-seniors. Two of the awards were presented to one Freshman and one Junior Biochemistry major:

Gabrielle Lessen, Outstanding Freshman BICH major
 Yuhong Lin, Outstanding Junior BICH major

Gathright Scholar

The Gathright Award was established in 1973 by student government in order to recognize superior academic achievement, and is sponsored by The Association of Former Students. Named in honor of the first president of the A&M College of Texas, this award recognizes outstanding scholastic achievement on a university-wide scale. Nominees are selected by the dean of their respective college on the basis of highest grade point average ratio and total number of hours completed in residence at Texas A&M. One Biochemistry/Genetics was a recipient of the award:

Aaron Griffin BICH/ GENE double major

COLLEGE CREATES NEW CLIMATE COUNCIL

By Angel Futrell

The newly created College Climate Council aims to improve the working and learning atmosphere for all employees and students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The Council was established to provide a new dimension of ensuring a supportive and inclusive climate for all to work, learn, and succeed.



Made up of department heads, faculty, staff, graduate students, and undergraduate students, the council will advise the dean in the following ways:

- Increase the visibility of climate and diversity in the College
- Provide insight and opinion on the current climate in the College
- Help in the development of policies and initiatives in the College related to climate and diversity.
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“To become familiar with the University’s current initiatives related to diversity, respect and inclusion, council members attended the Texas A&M Climate Matters Conference earlier this month as their first assignment,” Dr. Alan Sams,

executive associate dean for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, said.

The Council will meet several times throughout the year to provide both individual perspectives and group recommendations as representatives of the entire College. Council members represent many aspects of the organization and include:

- David Caldwell, Department Head, Poultry Science
- Leann Chmelar, Administrative Assistant, Soil and Crop Sciences
- Chanda Elbert, Associate Professor, Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication
- Dustin Grabsch, Program Coordinator, Dean's Office
- Trina Gregory, Academic Advisor, Biochemistry and Biophysics
- Luis Hurtado, Associate Professor, Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences
- Nancy Ing, Professor, Animal Science
- Kathleen Kavanagh, Department Head, Ecosystem Science and Management
- David Mattarita, Associate Professor, Recreation, Parks and Tourism Sciences
- Vicky Salin, Professor, Agricultural Economics
- Cherish Vance, Graduate Student, Biological and Agricultural Engineering
- Lorenzo Washington, Undergraduate Student, Bioenvironmental Sciences

Climate Council members, from left to right: Dr. Alan Sams, Mr. Lorenzo Washington, Dr. Vicky Salin, Dr. Luis Hurtado, Dr. Chanda Elbert, Ms. Cherish Vance, Dr. David Mattarita, Ms. Trina Gregory, Ms. Leann Chmelar, Dr. Katy Kavanagh, and Dr. David Caldwell. Not pictured: Dr. Nancy Ing, Mr. Dustin Grabsch, and Ms. Julie Wilson.

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' Climate Council is a segment of [Texas A&M University's overall initiative](#) to strengthen, sustain, and promote diversity efforts. In 2010, the university embarked on an ambitious [diversity plan](#) to enhance accountability, climate, and equity. Since then, the university has seen an increase in numbers of Black and Hispanic undergraduate student applications, the creation of the ADVANCE Center, and demonstrable progress by more than 15 units across campus.

"The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has made an emphasis on diversity one of its top priorities," Dr. Sams continued. "As a College, we are making great strides in our diversity efforts and are achieving great results in comparison to our peers across the country. These efforts not only make this a more welcoming and professionally supportive environment, but also make us a more productive organization as a result."

Research shows that diverse working and learning environments lead to a more holistic experience for both employees and students.

"Just about every learning and problem solving situation is improved by having a variety of perspectives," Dr. Sams said.

"The College seeks to be inclusive and supportive of all its people while also drawing on their many perspectives in our learning, educational, research, professional and community environment."

SUMMER 2015 REU June 1 – Aug 5, 2015

The Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics extends a warm Texas A&M "Howdy" and welcome, to our 2015 Summer REU students. You will be seeing the faces of the students pictured throughout the department where they will be spending their summer break from regular classwork, and spending their vacation in our labs. The students are under the leadership of Drs. Mary Bryk and Gary Kunkel, but will be working directly with various PIs doing "hands on research". On August 5 the culmination of the research done by the students will be presented in their final group meeting, where they present their work to their peers, in a seminar like atmosphere.



With support from the NSF-REU grant program and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics offers an opportunity for undergraduate students to participate in a 10-week intensive summer research program during the summer. Under the direction of our faculty, students will join a laboratory team to conduct research in modern biochemistry, with wide-ranging possibilities in structural biology, molecular genetics, genomics, enzymology or biophysics ([faculty research](#)). Students will participate in weekly meetings in order to explore the diversity of research opportunities in this vibrant field, gain experience in critical reading of biochemical research papers, discuss research ethics and to learn effective oral and written presentation skills. In addition, opportunities for social activities away from the laboratory will be provided on weekends. Financial support will include a stipend of \$5250 in addition to living expenses on campus, and some assistance with travel expenses.

The REU program is open to pre-baccalaureate undergraduate students majoring in biochemistry, chemistry, genetics, biology, or any life science. Preference will be given to candidates who have finished their third year and already taken organic chemistry and biochemistry courses. However, outstanding students who have completed their second year of college work will also be considered. This program is committed to provide research opportunities for students from groups that are underrepresented in the sciences.

COMMENCEMENT SPRING 2015

The Spring 2015 Texas A&M University COALS Hooding and Commencement ceremony was held on Friday, May 15, 2015, at 9:00 a.m. at the Reed Arena. Degrees were presented by Dr. Mark A. Hussey, Dean.

Among those graduating from the Department of Biochemistry & Biophysics were six Candidates for Doctoral

Degrees in Biochemistry & Biophysics and three Candidates for Doctoral Degrees in Genetics.

Biochemistry & Biophysics Candidates	Chair
Suhua Fu	Dr. Sing-hoi Sze
Bobby Wayne Laird	Dr. Gregory D. Reinhart
Xianzhou Meng	Dr. Geoffrey Kapler
Manoj Rajaure	Dr. Ryland Young
James Nicholas Vranish	Dr. Ryland Young
Jeremy Scott Weaver	Dr. Hays Rye
Hengyi Zu	Dr. Dorothy Shippen

Genetics Candidates	Chair
Hao-Ching Hsiao	Dr. Sarah Bondos
Amanda Marie Hulse-Kemp	Dr. David Stelly
Hengyi Xu	Dr. Dorothy Shippen

Candidates for Master's Degrees in Biochemistry & Biophysics in the Collage of Agriculture and Life Sciences were presented their degrees by Dr. Mark A. Hussey, Dean.

Biochemistry

Chanda Ramesh Bhat, Arielle Lea Brooks and Ryan Patrick Murray.

The Biochemistry & Genetics Undergraduate Office announces that 27 Biochemistry majors and 19 Genetics majors were presented with their Bachelor of Science degree by Dr. Mark A. Hussey, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, during ceremonies held on Friday, May 15 at 9AM in Reed Arena.

Based on the commencement program the following students received their Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry and/or Genetics.

Biochemistry

Anthony John Andrade	Sherly Lie
Gabriel Lucas Apfel	Catherine Elizabeth LoCaste
Jordan Marie Baumgartner	*Chase Matthew Miller
*Mallory Sue Brown	Hnin Mwei Mwei
*Kaira Adriana Church	Dat Tien Nguyen
Jonathan David Dawkins	Kathleen Xuan Thu Nguyen
*Saad Karim Dawoodi	Brennan Thomas O'Brien
Sabareesh Ganesh Babu	*Adedayo Olumuyiwa.
*Natalie Michelle Garza	Okanlawon, Jr.
*Kyuwon Hwang	*Katherine Elizabeth Park
Jasmine Lache Irvin	*Jonathan Alexis Solis
*Jacob Colton Lancaster	Thomas Clayton Speer
Simon Shinwoo Lee	Shrishiv Avanti Timbalia
*Roxann Alexis Lerma	Dain Yi

Genetics

Isabella Barrientos	Nytish Dwip Shah
Bryan R. Calk	Justin Parker Shaw
Terrence Tom Currie	Emily Suzanne Shuchart
Emma Marie Howard	Brianna Eve Sisson
*Aneesha Kulkarni	Byron Dove Stauffer
Joshua Alexander Lindsley	Melissa Claire Stuebben
Melissa Mae Mynes	Rebecca Marie Whisler
Andrew Ashraf Nassralla	Christopher Martin White
*Austin Reed Prater	Stephanie Fay Yamashita
Edison Gerardo Salazar	

*Double Major



**PARKING PERMIT REGISTRATION
APRIL 15 - JULY 7**

Registrations must be completed by July 7 to be assigned a permit with the first distribution. Registrations completed after the July 7 deadline will be assigned on a first come, first served basis based on the remaining availability.

**NEW TAMU UNIVERSITY
SCHOLARS ANNOUNCED**

Once again one of our 2014-15 Freshman Biochemistry majors have proven that the Biochemistry/Genetics Undergraduate students are among some of the very best at the University! The Department of Biochemistry & Biophysics is proud to announce that one of our Biochemistry majors, Gabrielle Lessen has been selected by the Honors & Undergraduate Research (HUR) as a recipient of one of their very elite scholarship programs, University Scholars! University Scholars selects no more than twelve freshmen annually to join their most prestigious Honors program.



Over the next three years, these Scholars will participate in small seminar courses to explore a variety of topics (past courses focused on space, music, current events, food, etc.) and will be challenged to grow both personally and professionally. Additionally, the HUR Scholars represent the Honors & Undergraduate Research department as student ambassadors at events like Aggieland Saturday and Parents' Weekend.

University Scholars are extremely successful in a variety of areas both in the HUR office (many serve as research ambassadors or peer advisors to Honors freshmen) and across the university.

We are incredibly proud of the excellence that the HUR students have already demonstrated in the intensive application and interview process for the program. Their resumes, transcripts, and essays reflect their high levels of achievement and critical thought, both in their academics and their extracurricular activities. The Honors & Undergraduate Research program will be instrumental in guiding the development of the scholars, throughout their college careers. Congratulations Gabrielle!

PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM PHISHING

From the Desk of Ed Evans



More than 200 billion emails are sent and received worldwide each day.ⁱ That represents a lot of opportunity for phishing scams, in which scammers distribute emails that appear to come from legitimate organizations or individuals and try to entice the recipient into clicking on malicious links or attachments. Spear-phishing is a more targeted type of phishing in which a specific organization or person is the target. The typical goal of phishing attacks is to get the victim to give up sensitive information such as a Social Security number or financial information. Phishing is also used as a way for attackers to get inside an organization's network for cyber espionage or other malicious activity.

Scammers will use spoofed email addresses, phony websites with legitimate logos, or phone numbers to fake customer service centers operated by the scammers. Last year phishing attacks cost organizations \$4.5 billion in losses.ⁱⁱ

Common Phishing Scams

When it comes to phishing, the best line of defense is you. If you pay attention to potential phishing traps and watch for telltale signs of a scam, you can minimize your risk of becoming a victim. Here are some scenarios you may encounter:

- An email appearing to be from a bank, credit card company, or other financial institution requests that you “confirm” your personal account information. Supposedly, your information has been lost, or your account is going to be closed, so it is “urgent” that you respond immediately.
- A phony email from the “fraud department” of a well-known company asks you to verify your information because they suspect you may be a victim of identity theft.
- An email may take advantage of a current event, such as the Anthem data breach, which scammers used to send phishing emails with malicious links for “free credit reporting.”
- An email claiming to be from a state lottery commission requests your banking information to deposit the “winnings” into your accounts.
- A scammer pretends to have a large sum of money and needs “someone trustworthy” to help access it. The scammer promises to share the wealth in exchange for your help - specifically, your financial information.

Easy Tips to Protect Yourself from Phishing

- Do not send any sensitive personal information via email. Legitimate organizations will not ask users to send information this way.
- Visit banking or financial websites by typing the address into the address bar. Do not follow links embedded in an unsolicited email.
- Only open an email attachment if you're expecting it and know what it contains. Be cautious about container files, such as zip files, as malicious files could be packed inside.
- If you want to verify a suspicious email, contact the organization directly – but don't call the number which is provided in the email.
- Use discretion when posting personal information on social

media. This information is a treasure-trove to spear phishers who will use it to feign trustworthiness.

- Use antivirus software to detect and disable malicious programs, such as spyware or backdoor Trojans, which may be included in phishing emails. Keep your Internet browser updated with the latest security patches.

For More Information

- Anti-Phishing Working Group: www.antiphishing.org
- Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3): www.ic3.gov/default.aspx
- Federal Trade Commission: <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/articles/0003-phishing>

DON'T FORGET TO GET YOUR WELLNESS CHECKUP



If you have BlueCross BlueShield, don't forget **to avoid a \$30 increase in your premium** by you and your spouse having a wellness exam by June 30. Upon completion of the annual wellness exam incentive, employees will be eligible for the lower wellness premium rate on health insurance premiums for the upcoming 2015-16 benefit plan year (9/1/15 – 8/31/16). **To verify that you have done this (and your doctors office recorded your procedure correct) follow these steps:**

To verify that your exam has been recorded by BlueCross BlueShield:

1. **Go to the Blue Cross Blue Shield website at www.BCBSTX.com.**
2. **Go to the tab on the far right labeled "Log In" to access your Blue Access for Members account.**
3. **(If you have not set up your Blue Access for Members account, you will need to do so now.)**
4. **Click on the (blue) "My Coverage" tab near the top of the page.**
5. **In the (gray) "My Coverage" box in the upper left corner, click on "Incentives" (last link in the box).**
6. **In the center of the page, click on "Visit Site", (in blue).**
7. **Hover over the (blue) "My Activities" bar at the top of the page and click on "Completed Activities".**
8. **The activity entitled "Employer Specific Program Completion" refers to the completion of your physical/wellness exam.**

You will have to have your spouse login (create their own account) to check their status.

Grad Assistant who are NOT enrolled in the A&M Care plan are exempt from this provision.

Children of any age are exempt from this provision.

Any specific questions you might have, please call BlueCross BlueShield at 866-295-1212.

NEW MEDICAL BENEFIT FOR TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM EMPLOYEES

At a press conference in College Station, Chancellor Sharp announced a new medical benefit to make it easier and quicker for eligible System employees, retirees and their dependents to obtain a second medical opinion at no additional cost to them.

This free benefit will give you access to an optional second opinion from some of the finest doctors in the country. The Texas A&M University System has partnered with 2nd.MD, a Houston-based company, to provide access to more than 300 nationally-recognized, board-certified medical specialists from institutions such as the Mayo Clinic, Johns Hopkins and the Cleveland Clinic. The Texas A&M System is the first public entity in the nation to offer 2nd.MD to its employees, retirees, and their dependents.

The specialists can offer a second opinion, whether it's for a recent diagnosis, when considering surgery, or evaluating a change in treatment or medication, usually within 72 hours of contacting 2nd.MD. After a specialist reviews a patient's health records, the patient can consult the doctor at an agreed upon time either by phone or video conference.

Employees, retirees and their dependents covered by the A&M Care Plan, J Plan or 65+Plan will receive the new benefit.



Who can use this new service?

2nd.MD is available to eligible members, including all employees, retirees and their covered dependents enrolled in the A&M Care, J Plan and 65+ Plans.

Do the A&M Care plans require a second opinion?

No, the A&M Care plans do not require a second opinion. Use of 2nd.MD is completely optional and there is no cost to members.

When can/should eligible members use 2nd.MD?

Eligible members can use 2nd.MD when they have been diagnosed with a new condition and have received a plan of treatment, if they are facing a possible surgery, or even if they are considering a medication change.

How does it work?

First, the member will go online or call 2nd.MD to activate her account. During this process, it will ask for the person's medical question or concern. Asking a question is not necessary, but does begin the case.

Then, 2nd.MD assigns a trained doctor/nurse to handle the case. They recommend specialists who are a best fit for the case, selected from their network of world-renowned, U.S. medical specialists that cover over 120 subspecialties. 2nd.MD employs a rigorous selection process for its physicians, evaluating a physician's training, professional achievement, research, board certifications, recognitions, etc. Physicians can apply, but must be invited to join the network. 95% of 2nd.MD physicians work or were trained at a U.S. News & World Report's "Best Hospitals" designated medical center.

Once a specialist is selected, they schedule a video or phone consultation providing direct access to the best doctors available, regardless of the member's location. In addition, they help retrieve medical records and provide them to the chosen specialist ahead of time, so that the specialist has time to review the files prior to the consultation.

After the consult is completed, the specialist will provide written notes to the member. Referrals for top local doctors who accept the member's insurance are available, as well as referrals to top institutions that are best equipped to carry out

the treatment.

Are members required to follow the advice provided by the 2nd.MD specialist?

No. The patient may choose to follow the specialist's advice or not. Patients may choose to share the information with their own local physicians or not. Those choices are up each patient.

Is 2nd.MD HIPAA-compliant?

2nd.MD service is compliant with the latest privacy and security requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Assurance Act, as well as the refinements made by the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health Act (HITECH) under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These Legislative Acts have laid down guidelines for the protection of health insurance coverage of workers and their families, and created national standards for electronic health care transaction. Any and all communications on 2nd.MD's networks promise confidentiality. 2nd.MD also makes maximum effort to release only the minimum required information for any transaction requested.

What security measures are taken to protect the physician and consumers?

2nd.MD respects the privacy rights of its members and doctors and is committed to protecting their personal information. 2nd.MD protects against anticipated threats and hazards to the security and integrity of customer information and personal records by blocking unauthorized access. All information on 2nd.MD is kept encrypted and secure. Information is never shared with third parties or the public. Your information is encrypted using SSL secured web pages. Chats take place on a secure connection. Safety, privacy and security are paramount at 2nd.MD.

How is 2nd.MD different from its competition?

Members need not wait months for an appointment or take off from work to travel to a specialist, because they are now able to receive cutting edge medical advice from anywhere via video or phone.

What equipment is required for 2nd.MD users?

For a video consultation, an internet connection, a microphone and a web cam are required. Video consults are also available via mobile devices. 2nd.MD works directly through all major browsers including Firefox, Safari and Chrome.

A phone alternative is also available. Members uncomfortable with video chat or who may not have the necessary equipment or those with unreliable Internet speeds can still enjoy access to an expert physician from home via phone. For international or non-English speaking members, 2nd.MD offers a free optional translator add-on where a translator will join a video consult with the doctor and patient.

UPCOMING EVENTS IN BIO/BIO

Faculty Meeting, N127, 3:30 PM	July 20
COALS Com. Su 2015 Friday Aug.15	9AM
Welcome New Grad Student Week	Aug, 24-28
Annual Baseball Game & Picnic, 5PM	Aug, 28
1st Day Fall 2015 Classes	Aug. 31