



Bio/Bio News

October 2016

BIO/BIO FACULTY HONORED AT 2016 DEAN'S OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARD CEREMONY

It's always a great day when we see our faculty being recognized for all of their hard work. Our entire department celebrates with them in their accomplishments! Dr. Dave Peterson received this year's Dean's Outstanding Achievement Award in Administration and Dr. James (Jim) Hu received the Educational Enrichment and Innovation Award.

Dr. Peterson has been our Associate Head for Undergraduate Programs for 9 years and previously served as Associate Head for Graduate Programs for 5 years. And if those numbers don't blow you away, how about 35 years of service at Texas A&M University. Wow, impressive! Dr. Peterson has led the undergraduate program through two major transitions in the last few years. He led the Undergraduate Program Committee in comprehensively reviewing and revising the Biochemistry and Genetics Undergraduate degree plans. This was a major undertaking, since the degree plan had not been reviewed or updated in over 20 years. Needless to say, this transition took a calm, rational, and friendly leader to get this accomplished and Dr. Peterson did it in stride. Dr. Peterson also recently secured accreditation of our biochemistry degree plan from the American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB). Now Texas A&M is one of only 38 universities to successfully receive this recognition. Dr. Peterson is quick to listen and to synthesize a broad range of opinions among the faculty and at the same time gets the job done in a timely and effective manner. Dr. Peterson is simply a superb administrative leader who exemplifies selfless service every day and is highly deserving for being recognized for this year's Dean Outstanding Award in Administration.



Dr. Jim Hu has been a member of the department since 1992. He has developed several courses over this time period but his most innovative class was the creation of the Community Assessment of Community Annotation with Ontologies (CACAO). This course merges an unmet educational goal with



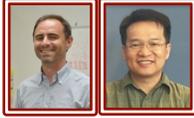
an important research goal: teaching students to critically evaluate scientific literature by accurately annotating the functions of genes and proteins. Sequencing genomic DNA is rapid and automated, but is separated from the determination of protein and gene functions, which requires experimental analysis of individual genes and proteins. In order for genome sequences to be useful, they need to be annotated with known experimental information. Automated methods to annotate gene functions are inaccurate for a variety of reasons, so it is essential to have human curators evaluate functional annotations. Because there is a vast amount of literature and a relatively small number of organizations with funding for professional curators, Dr. Hu designed a course that would employ undergraduates as biocurators, who scour scientific literature to annotate the functions of proteins using a defined set of terms called the Gene Ontology (GO) which has become the standard method for describing protein and gene functions in biology. Dr. Hu took this idea a step further. Instead of merely having undergraduates research topics of interest and provide the proper GO annotations, Dr. Hu set the course up as a competition. Students are divided into small teams, and they compete to see who can produce the highest quantity and quality annotations. Competition provides an extra incentive to the students. As a further step, Dr. Hu has exported the CACAO course to other universities, so that TAMU students compete with students at University College London, Swarthmore College, and many others. CACAO competitions have been held at 15 universities to date. The annotations supplied by each team are peer-reviewed by other teams and ultimately verified by experienced undergraduates, graduate students, postdoc, or instructors. Verified annotations are added to publicly accessible databases. Thus, the students make a concrete and substantial contribution to the scientific community. Other faculty clearly see this as a great model and hope that it will inspire innovative learning experiences for future undergraduates. Dr. Hu is highly deserving for being recognized as this year's Dean's Outstanding Award for Educational Enrichment and Innovation.

We are extremely grateful to Dr. Peterson and Dr. Hu who continue to enhance the mission and goals of the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics and the College of Agriculture and Life Science. They both have made a huge impact on supporting the education of our undergraduate

students and promoting excellence in academics at Texas A&M University.

TEXAS A&M FACULTY RECEIVE GRANTS FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Congratulations to two faculty members with the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, Dr. Jean-Philippe Pellois and Dr. Xiuren Zhang, who are among the seven faculty members from Texas A&M University have received grants totaling close to \$1.4 million from the Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas aimed at assisting their research projects studying cancer.



The researchers' projects include pre-screening for lung cancer, isolating antibodies and even a new form of treatment.

“[Cancer Prevention and Research Institute of Texas] grants deliver more than financial support for cancer researchers and their projects — they provide ample evidence that Texas A&M faculty members and their research teams are making substantial advances that bolster our state’s commitment to cancer research,” said Glen A. Laine, vice president for research at Texas A&M. “These and other faculty members at Texas A&M continue to produce significant innovations in cancer treatment and prevention that make the lives of Texans, the nation and the world a better place.”

The grants are among 35 that were awarded by the institute last week, totaling \$79.2 million in support of cancer research.

The seven faculty members who received the grants are: John W. Bevan, Department of Chemistry; Zhilei Chen, Department of Microbial Pathogenesis and Immunologies; Carl Gregory, Department of Molecular and Cellular Medicine and the Institute for Regenerative Medicine; Jean-Philippe Pellois, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics; Rachel Sitcheran, Department of Molecular and Cellular Medicine; Steven M. Wright; and Xiuren Zhang, Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics.

DR. JEAN-PHILIPPE PELLOIS RECEIVES PROMOTION

Dr. Jean-Philippe Pellois, faculty member with the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics was granted promotion as Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics with Texas A&M University, effective September 1, 2016.

Dr. Pellois joined the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics as Assistant Professor in the fall of 2006. Since joining the faculty at Texas A&M University, Dr. Pellois has been very active on the departmental as well as university level.

Dr. Pellois' research focuses on membrane biochemistry cellular transport and macromolecular delivery. He has authored 13 publications since his last promotion as Associate Professor in 2012, and 23 since joining Texas A&M. He has received grants totaling



more than \$4.2 million, of which more than \$3.1 million is attributable to him, including two R01 grants from the National Institutes of Health. He has developed a novel cell delivery technology, which is protected intellectually by a patent assigned to the Texas A&M University System, and which has unique therapeutic potential (currently under evaluation by three companies). His international exposure is highlighted by several invitations to speak at international conferences, by his role as a grant reviewer for European funding agencies, and by the coverage of his work in several international news outlets. Dr. Pellois teaches introductory Biochemistry to Biochemistry majors and honors undergraduate students as well as a graduate level Biochemistry course that he has developed. He has chaired eight graduate student committees and served on 46 other.

DR. JOHN ELLISON RETIRES FROM TAMU FACULTY OF GENETICS

Dr. John Ellison, Senior Genetics 301 Lecture in the Department of Biochemistry & Biophysics, recently retired from his teaching position. Dr. Ellison joined our department in 1984 after spending several years at the University of Texas in Austin.

As Dr. Reinhart put it so eloquently “Over the course of his more than 40-year career, Dr. Ellison always epitomized the best in University teaching practice – and always with an overriding passion for the subject material, and a sincere interest in and concern for the students' ability to learn the course material presented. Dr. Ellison strongly believed that learning equates with understanding how that material can be applied to problems the students will likely face in the future.

Since his arrival at Texas A&M, Dr. Ellison's focus had been on teaching. His specialty is genetics – a subject not always embraced enthusiastically by students in agriculture, particularly those whose majors are in the more applied fields of agriculture, yet it is precisely those students on whom Dr. Ellison focused his energies. Dr. Ellison taught the primary undergraduate course in genetics to virtually all life science undergraduates on campus except for genetics, biochemistry and microbiology majors (roughly 550 students per year). All who have taught large classes to non-majors, particularly classes covering a seemingly esoteric topic such as genetics, can appreciate how daunting the prospect is. However, Dr. Ellison always enthusiastically embraced the challenge, seeking ways to make the material relevant to the broad array of interests of his students while maintaining an appropriate level of rigor. He believed strongly in a problems orientation to the conduct of the course – students must be able to utilize the information to solve problems relevant to their eventual careers. This was achieved, in part, through assigning multiple problem sets throughout the semester – a non-trivial undertaking with the subject material of genetics, the large class size, and the fact that he had no teaching assistant help with the lecture portion of the course. He was a devotee of the Socratic method, as exemplified by the instructional style of his

own mentor, Dr. Robert Moore, and he did not shy away from the appropriate use of mathematics in problem solving.”

Dr. Ellison and his wife Sherry are making plans to travel – Hawaii, Australia, Singapore – but of course the most important destinations will be to Meaux, LA to visit his prized grandchildren, (second only to his lovely wife Sherry, and his loyal Border Collie “side-kick” Happy). He certainly has plenty of plans in store for those two beautiful children – Mike, beware – pay-backs are rough when you have a Dad like John Ellison!

We love you Dr. Ellison and will miss you terribly in Bio/Bio – but we wish only the best for you and Sherry in the days to come!

WELCOME NEW GENETICS FACULTY MEMBERS

Dr. Carol Vargas Bautista has been appointed as Postdoctoral Research Fellow, for the Faculty of Genetics, beginning September 1, 2016. Dr. Vargas is no stranger to the department having earned her Ph.D. in Biochemistry while a graduate student in the laboratory of Dr. Paul Straight, Associate Professor with the Department of Biochemistry.



Dr. E. Jane Pishko has been appointed Lecturer for the Genetics 302 labs, beginning September 1, 2016. Dr. Pishko had been employed previously as Lecturer for the Genetics 302 Labs, and after a leave taken to be with her family has returned to TAMU.



Dr. Megan Reynolds, former Genetics 302 Lab Instructor, has been appointed as Lecturer for the Genetics 301 class, upon the retirement of Dr. John Ellison, August 31, 2016. Dr. Reynolds earned her PhD in Genetics from Texas A&M University in 2000, and shortly was appointed to the Genetics 302 Lab Instructor position.



ACCOUNTING OFFICE HAS A NEW STAFF MEMBER

The Bio/Bio Accounting Office has a new “family member”, as of Monday, October 10. We join the Accounting Office in welcoming, Christa Dixie to the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics.

Christa Dixie comes to Bio/Bio from Utility and Energy Services here on campus, where she was an Accounting Assistant. She previously has worked for Michaels Stores Inc. as Category Administrative Assistant and Product Coordinator. Christa has a BS degree from the University of North Texas. Christa will be responsible for issuing purchase orders, accounts payable, Stockroom aging accounts receivables, and reconciling Texas A&M Foundation accounts.



Christa is the first smiling face you will encounter as you enter the accounting office, in the area formerly occupied by Shelly Pasket. Christa’s email is cdixie@tamu.edu and her phone number is 845-4983. When you pass by the Accounting office feel free to stop in and welcome her to the “Bio/Bio Family”.

DR. JOSEPH NAGYVARY PUBLISHES BOOK *VIOLENCE AND VIOLINS – THE MAKING OF A HUNGARIAN REFUGEE*

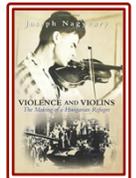
Dr. Joseph Nagyvary, Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry with the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics at Texas A&M University, recently published the story of his life from his life in Hungary and the pursuit of his passion – science and the violin.

He studied chemistry in his native Hungary at the University of Budapest and was a participant in the 1956 student uprising. Nagyvary later escaped to Austria and ended up in Switzerland. He earned his doctorate at the University of Zurich and completed his postdoctoral work at Cambridge University. After Cambridge, Nagyvary immigrated to the United States in 1964. He taught biochemistry at Texas A&M University from 1968 to 2003. He won a prize from the Swiss National Foundation in 1962, a career development award from US Public Health in 1967, and the Gold Medal of the Japanese Society for Industrial Physics in 2005.

Overview

Joseph Nagyvary's father, János, was the only survivor of his division with Hungary's 2nd Army. When he came back to his family after the horrors of World War II, his mission for God clashed with the atheistic Communist state in Hungary.

Growing up, young Joseph has two passions in life: science and music. He is particularly enamored of the Stradivarius violin. His fascination with the violin will lead to a lifelong pursuit, but his childhood gives him no opportunity to play any kind of musical instrument. Joseph chooses to pursue his other dream and enrolls as a chemistry major at the University of Budapest. He finds escape from the harsh reality of the communist terror by daydreaming of being the biblical Joseph, singing Wagner operas, and playing a Stradivarius.



In the only shooting war of the Cold War in 1956, Joseph's life is forever changed. He will face enemy soldiers and have to choose whether or not to destroy them. Join him in this harrowing story about faith and peace amid paranoia and violence.

Nagyvary has received international recognition for his research into the Stradivarius violin, inspired by a childhood passion for classical music. Nagyvary lives in Jonestown, Texas, with his wife, Mary Ann. He has four children.

2016 DEPARTMENTAL FALL EXTRAVAGANZA EVENTS ARE UNDERWAY

Each year for the month October, the Administrative Staff of the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics hosts a Fall

Extravaganza within the department, to raise funds for the Departmental Flower Fund.

Thus far the fund-raisers have been very successful in accomplishing raising support for the flower fund. In past years, activities such as Hula Hoop Contests, Door Decorating Contests, Costume Contests, Hair Painting and Kiss the Pig in which “votes” \$\$\$ for the winners of the contest, have been contributions into the contestant’s decorated coffee cans. The contestant(s) with the most “votes” (money) have been the “willing” participants in the contest. There is always a lot of enthusiasm and fun to be enjoyed by all during the fund raising events.

The funds collected during the month of October will be used throughout the year to purchase flowers (and/or fruit baskets) for our faculty, staff and students who may experience a hospitalization, birth, adoption or loss of a family member.

So far this month, the staff has held two successful events, and are preparing for another Baked Potato Luncheon in the foyer of the Bio/Bio building **Friday October 14**. **Every Tuesday** during the month of October the staff will host a **Pancake Breakfast** at 8:30AM in the foyer; **Wednesday October 19** a **Bake Sale** will be held in the foyer – time TBA. On **Friday October 28**, the staff will be serving up their famous Departmental Specialty – **Taco Soup Luncheon**, beginning at 11:30AM in room 106A. Everyone is invited to participate with the staff toward the success of our fund-raising this October. Sign up sheets are provided for each activity in room 103, if you would like to help out.

The best part of all will be the part that **YOU** play in the activities. Labs are invited to participate in the Door Decorating Contest again this year. We had some beautifully decorated doors in the past and we know this year will be just as successful. Doors should be completed by Friday, October 28, and be sure and take a picture and send it to Betty blcotton@tamu.edu to let her know that your lab is entering the contest.

Our annual Hula Hoop contest will conclude on Monday October 31 at 12:30 in the foyer of the Bio/Bio building with the top four contestants competing for the “2016 Hula Hoop Champion” of Bio/Bio! The contestants will be determined by the top four who have collected the most money in their cans during the various activities. Your donation is your vote for the contestant you would most like to see compete in the contest! So VOTE for your choice by making donations!

We don’t want to forget about our Costume Contest. Prizes are being collected for the winners of each event – so if you come up with the best costume in a given category you could be the winner of one of the prizes! This is a time of fun for the entire department – everyone is invited to participate – and for such a wonderful cause – All funds raised during our Fall Extravaganza will go to the Departmental Flower Fund to buy flowers for faculty, staff and students! Everyone benefits!!!!

Thank you in advance for the many hands that will help us raise money again this year for our Departmental Flower Fund! We couldn’t do it without YOU!

UPCOMING EVENTS IN BIO/BIO

Door Dec. Judging	Oct. 28
COALS Tailgate	Oct. 29
Hula Hoop Contest 12:30pm	Oct. 31
Faculty Meeting, N127, 3:30PM	October 31
Honors Society Fac Social 4pm	Oct 26
Legacy Leadership Banq	Nov. 18
Thanksgiving Holiday	Nov. 24-25
COALS Commencement 2pm	Dec. 16
Bio/Bio Holiday Celebration 6pm	Dec. 19



BAYLOR S&W FLU SHOT CLINICS



The U.S. Centers for Disease Control recommends everyone over six months of age get the seasonal influenza vaccine.

Protect your family by attending this walk-in flu clinic. Vaccinations are available for children and adults.

For dates and time the clinics will be open please visit their website: <http://www.sw.org/event-search-result?fullTextSearch=&cids=Flu+Clinics&locations=College%20Station&toWhen=>

To learn more about the flu, vaccinations and other area flu clinics, visit <http://flu.sw.org>.