

*Welcome* to inaugural edition of the UCH Graduate School Newsletter!

We hope to regularly share information and news across our many and varied programs, which include the Biomedical Science PhD and Certificate; combined MD/PhD and DMD/PhD; Clinical and Translational Research Masters and Certificate; Dental Science Masters; Public Health PhD, Masters, and Certificate; and the Young Innovator Investigator Program (YIIP).

### 2022-23 Incoming Class Recap:

#### By the #s:

##### Biomedical Science

PhD: 22, Certificate: 4

##### MD/PhD: 8

##### Clinical and Translational Research

Masters: 2, Certificate: 4

##### Master of Dental Science: 13

##### Public Health

PhD: 3, MPH: 38, Certificate: 2

##### YIIP: 3

### Spring Semester Academic Calendar

Wed. 3/1	<i>Commencement Deadlines</i>
3/12-3/18	<i>Spring Break</i>
Mon. 3/20	<i>Fall '23 registration opens in Student Admin</i>
Mon. 4/10	<i>Last day to withdraw; last day to change to/from pass/fail grading</i>
Fri. 4/21	<i>Last day for Masters/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation dissertation to Submittable &amp; submit related paperwork to <a href="mailto:degreeaudit@uconn.edu">degreeaudit@uconn.edu</a> for conferral of Spring '23 degree</i>
Fri. 4/28	<i>Last day of Spring classes</i>
5/1-5/6	<i>Final Exams</i>
Sun. 5/7	<i>Conferral date: SP '23 degrees; final exams for Plan B Masters &amp; 6<sup>th</sup>-year Certif. Stu, must be completed</i>
Mon. 5/8	<i>UConn Health Commencement</i>
Tues. 5/9	<i>Semester grades due by 4 PM</i>

### Student Behavioral Health Service

For info. & confidential assistance, visit SBHS [here](#).

### COVID Call Center Reminder

COVID questions, symptoms, or positive test? Call 860-679-3199 for guidance.

### ~2023 Commencement Important Reminders~

UConn Health Commencement is scheduled for **Monday, May 8, 2023 from 1:00-2:30 pm** in the **Jorgenson Auditorium at Storrs**. If you are planning to graduate in May OR August 2023 and plan to participate in the commencement ceremony, you must be sure to complete the following **no later than Wed., March 1:**

>>**APPLY** for graduation via the Student Admin portal. Instructions on [applying for graduation may be found here](#). Dual Degree students **MUST** complete this step for **EACH** degree program (e.g., DMD & PhD, MD & MPH, etc.); After applying, the instructions ask you to submit a final plan of study; *this does not apply for the MD and DMD degrees*.

>>**ORDER** your cap and gown through the **UConn Health** Bookstore using this link: <https://health.uconn.edu/student-affairs/commencement/caps-and-gowns/>

IMPT: Do NOT order from the main campus at Storrs, as you will receive the *wrong color* for your regalia.

>>**ENTER** your degree (diploma) name in Student Admin. Using the instructions on entering your [degree \(diploma\) name can be found here](#). This entry will be used for ordering your diploma and also in commencement publications. Degree names should be entered *exactly how you want them to appear* on your diploma including upper and lowercase letters and punctuation. If you had or will have a legal name change prior to graduation, you **must** complete the [Biographical Update Request Form](#) and submit it with your documentation provided on the form's website addition to entering your Degree name.

>>**VIEW** UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT in Student Admin. All students are advised to review their unofficial transcript in PeopleSoft/Student Admin. You can [find instructions here on how to view your unofficial transcript](#). Any missing grades, documents, or discrepancies can result in a delay of degree conferral.

>>**FIND** additional information on the ceremony here:

<https://health.uconn.edu/student-affairs/commencement/> Please note that you are also encouraged to update a permanent email address to ensure future correspondence is received.

## *-Diversity Corner-*

### Meet Dr. Jeffrey F. Hines, UCH Chief Diversity Officer

Dr. Jeffrey Hines joined UConn Health in the Summer of 2022 as our campus' first Chief Diversity Officer. He currently serves on the Grad School DEI Committee in an advisory capacity. We asked him to take a moment to share his thoughts about joining UCH in general and about diversity in research and science specifically:

*What drew you to the CDO position at UConn Health?*

I'm a board-certified gynecologic oncologist with 27 years of practice experience. Inequities which drive gynecologic malignancy disparities has always been a scholarly interest. As my career progressed, I dedicated more time studying these inequities and disparities. I assumed a bigger role addressing institutional DEIJ initiatives as well. These initiatives were mostly in healthcare, but I did some DEIJ work in higher education at Brown University, at a local independent school in Atlanta, & some national work in the space of philanthropy. I followed the job at UConn Health for a while. I was impressed with the strong foundational work that UConn Health had done. This is an inaugural role & the opportunity to join a group already deeply engaged in this work & work together to build & co-design the next iteration of this work was incredibly exciting.

*Why do you think having a diverse mindset in research & science so important?*

Diversity in the learning environment of science & research is a critical driver of innovation & investigation. Cognitive diversity & the diverse mindset in this space drives critical thinking, problem-solving, organizational excellence, team building & teamwork. Cognitive diversity helps to create inclusive work environments that allows for science & research to address problems and test hypotheses that will impact our diversifying populations.

You can read more about Dr. Hines & his new role at UCH in the UConn Today article [here](#).

### Grad School DEI Committee

The UCH Graduate School DEI Committee was formed in 2021 from a group of like-minded Graduate School students, postdocs, faculty, & staff. In 2022, we launched our Diversity website, <https://health.uconn.edu/graduate-school/graduate-school-diversity/>, which contains pages on DEI news, resources, funding, research, & education.

Interested in being a part of the GS DEI Committee? We have several subcommittees exploring a variety of topics and activities. For more information & to learn how you can contribute, contact Committee Chair Dr. Leslie Caromile ([Caromile@uchc.edu](mailto:Caromile@uchc.edu)).

### Winter/Spring Heritage Celebrations, Observances & Holidays

#### February

Black History Month  
20<sup>th</sup> - World Day of Social Justice

#### March

National Women's History Month  
National Deaf History Month (3/13-4/13)  
8<sup>th</sup> - International Women's Day  
Ramadan (3/22-4/21)  
31<sup>st</sup> - Cesar Chavez Day

#### April

National Arab American Heritage Month  
5<sup>th</sup> - 13<sup>th</sup> - Passover  
9<sup>th</sup> - Easter  
21<sup>st</sup> - 22<sup>nd</sup> - Eid al-Fitr

#### May

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month  
Jewish American Heritage Month  
Haitian Heritage Month  
Older American Month  
Mental Health Awareness Month  
5<sup>th</sup> - Cinco de Mayo

### Upcoming Trainings/Seminars/Workshops:

#### UConn Grad School Timely Topics for Faculty:

Register [here](#) for seminars below:

**Th, 3/2, 1-2 pm, virtual**

*Neurodiversity & the Advisor/Advisee Relationship: Supporting and Empowering Neurodiverse Grad Students (in STEM & Beyond)*

**Th, 3/9, 11 am-Noon, virtual**

*Supervising Graduate Assistants*

*[find archived sessions in the Timely Topics series [here](#)]*

#### For Students:

The Center for Cell Analysis and Modeling (CCAM) is organizing annual Computational Cell Biology workshops, with an in-person workshop coming this June. These workshops are useful for students interested in the mathematical modeling of biological systems using two of the modeling software frameworks developed & maintained here in CCAM: Virtual Cell (<http://vcell.org>) & COPASI (<http://copasi.org>). For more info, contact Dr. Leslie Loew ([les@uchc.edu](mailto:les@uchc.edu)).

# Student Kudos!

## Student Grant and Fellowship Awards

**Keaton Karlinsey** (MD/PhD, Immunology AoC) and **Alyssa Matz** (Biomed Sci PhD, Immunology AoC), both studying with PI Beiyuan Zhou, received Predoctoral Research Awards from the American Heart Association. Alyssa will apply her newly developed computational program to decipher B cell function in obesity. Keaton will develop a supernetwork-guided prediction model for cardiovascular disease risks in the diabetic population. **Omar Omar - Moustafa Fathy** (MD/PhD, Cell Biology AoC, PI: Patrick Murphy) was also awarded a Predoctoral Research Awards from the American Heart Association for his research in understanding the role TDP-43 in the cerebral vasculature in neurodegenerative disease. **Annie Yao** (MD/PhD, Neuroscience AoC, PI: Riqiang Yan), **Nathan Gasek** (MD/PhD, GDB AoC, PI: Ming Xu), & **Rachel Cohn** (MD/PhD, GDB AoC, PI: Ming Xu) each were awarded an F30 NIH grant. Annie is studying of the role of beta-secretase 1 (BACE1) in modulating excitatory synaptic and circuit function and behavior; Nathan is investigating the role of p21-highly expressing senescent cells in Alzheimer's dementia, and Rachel is investigating cellular senescence at the single cell level.

**Keaven Caro** (MD/PhD, Neuroscience AoC, PI: David Martinelli) was awarded a position on the T32 Institutional Training Grant in Regenerative Engineering of Musculoskeletal Tissues. **Ryan Englander** (MD/PhD, Immunology AoC PIs: Karolina Palucka and Olga Anczukow) was awarded a position on the T32 Training Program in Precision Genetics of Aging, Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias (PGAD) through JAX.

## Student Awards and Achievements

>>At this Fall's [Skeletal Biology & Regeneration poster session & awards ceremony](#), **Rosalie Bordett** (Biomed Sci PhD, SBR AoC, PI: Sangamesh Kumbar) received the **Eric N. James Scholar Award** honoring emphasis to service to underrepresented groups, as well as scholarly & research achievement, especially by members of underrepresented groups. At the same event, **Laura Doherty** (DMD/PhD, SBR AoC, PI: Dr. Archana Sanjay) received the **William B. Upholt Achievement Award**, established to honor Dr. Upholt's impact on research & graduate education, as well as his lifelong personal commitment to human rights, civic activism, & the environment. Both Dr. James' family and Dr. Upholt's wife were in attendance at the awards ceremony.

>>In Sept., **Stephanie Chinwo** (2<sup>nd</sup> year YIIP Biomed Sci Masters, PI: Andrew Arnold) received the 2022 American Society for Bone and Mineral Research (ASBMR) **Young Investigator Award** for her abstract presentation *Molecular Analysis of AMBRA1 as a Candidate Tumor Suppressor in Sporadic Parathyroid Adenomas*.

>>**Timofey Karginov** (MD/PhD, Immunology AoC, PI:Anthony Vella) received the Charles Janeway Poster Award at the 2022 New England Immunology Conference held in Woods Hole, MA for his poster entitled "Splicing of ultraconserved poison exon elements in RNA binding proteins reprograms the T effector immune response."

>>At the Dec. 2022 International Conference on Biomaterials, Regenerative Medicine and Devices (BIO-Remedi) at IIT Guwahati, India, **Eric Orozco Morato** (Biomed Sci PhD, SBR AoC, PI: Lakshmi Nair) was awarded a certificate for Best Oral Presentation for his abstract *Intra-articular Delivery of Curcumin and Ropivacaine for Managing Osteoarthritic Pain*.

>> This just in! **Sarah Palko's** (Biomed Sci PhD, Neuroscience AoC, PIs: Royce Mohan and Riqiang Yan) first author paper in the Journal of Neuroscience has received the cover of the journal.



Stephanie Chinwo



Eric Orozco Morato



Sarah Palko



Rosalie Bordett



Laura Doherty



## Out and About!

As the pandemic eases its grip on the world, events are slowly but surely coming back. From inaugural retreats, to restarting annual in person events, and participating in statewide conferences, take a pictorial spin around some of our recent outings...



Public Health faculty, staff, and students at the 2022 CT Public Health Assoc. (CPHA) annual conference



The MD/PhD program held their 1<sup>st</sup> annual program retreat this summer



## Outreach

In addition to coming together, we've also been reaching out!

This summer, Molecular Biology and Biochemistry students mentored eight Farmington H.S. students as part of the Cutting Edge program.

In Public Health, Marina Creed (APRN, FNP-BC, MSCN) & Dr. Misti Levy Zamora visited the GSCA Brownie Troop at Bugbee Elementary School create DIY air purifiers (modeled after Buzzby, the school mascot) which were then donated to Bugbee as part of the UConn Indoor Air Quality Initiative CLEAN Program.



The Cutting Edge program



## New roles...

This past Fall, **Dr. Kimberly Dodge-Kafka** stepped up as the new director for the MD/PhD program. Dr. Dodge-Kafka has served as co-director for the last 5 years & takes over the position from previous director of 10+ years, **Dr. Carol Pilbeam**, who will be retiring in 2023. **Drs. Emily Germain-Lee & Yanlin Wang** step into co-director roles.



The Master of Science in Clinical & Translational research (MSCTR) program welcomes two new members to their Advisory Committee: **Dr. Nancy Redeker** and **Dr. Ian C. Michelow**. Dr. Redeker is a Professor & Interim Associate Dean for Research at the UConn School of Nursing. Her research program addresses the role of sleep & sleep disorders, & the effects of behavioral sleep promotion interventions in people who have acute & chronic conditions & those who are at risk due to health inequity. Dr. Michelow is Division Head of Pediatric Infectious Diseases & Immunology at Connecticut Children's & Professor at the UConn School of Medicine. His experience & interests span clinical, basic science & translational research topics with an emphasis on mechanisms of infection across microbial kingdoms, host-pathogen interactions & immune-mediated interventions. Stepping away from the committee is **Dr. Christopher Carroll**, a 2009 graduate of the MSCTR program & member of the Advisory Committee since 2016, who will be joining the University of Florida Health-Jacksonville, taking a position as Medical Director of their Pediatric Intensive Care Unit.

**Ms. Lana Angelo** joined The UCH Graduate School Office in August 2022. A longtime UCH employee, Lana brings vast knowledge and resources to her position in Biomedical Science program and Graduate Office.



## New faces...

Recent Graduate School Faculty Appointments at UCH include:

Dr. Eran Argmon, Biomedical Science PhD program, Systems Biology AoC  
Dr. Steven Chou, Biomedical Science PhD program, Molecular Biology & Biochemistry AoC  
Dr. Jessica Costa, Biomedical Science PhD program, Skeletal Biology & Regeneration AoC  
Dr. Jeremy Egbert, Biomedical Science PhD program, Cell Biology AoC  
Dr. Xiaoyan Guo, Biomedical Science PhD program, Genetics & Developmental Biology AoC  
Dr. Wendy Henderson, Clinical & Translational Research programs  
Dr. Jayesh Kamath, Public Health programs  
Dr. Ian C. Michelow, Clinical & Translational Research programs  
Dr. Masako Nakanishi, Biomedical Science PhD program, Cell Biology AoC  
Dr. Rachael Norris, Biomedical Science PhD program, Cell Biology AoC  
Dr. Sathish Padi, Biomedical Science PhD program, Molecular Biology & Biochemistry AoC  
Dr. Sophia Saeed, Master of Dental Science program  
Dr. Oscar Vargas-Rodriguez, Biomedical Science PhD program, Molecular Biology & Biochemistry AoC  
Dr. Eric Wang, JAX, Biomedical Science PhD program, Genetics & Developmental Biology AoC

## Recent Faculty honors

In January, **Dr. Cato Laurencin** received the [Shu Chien Achievement Award](#) from the Biomedical Engineering Society's BMES Cellular and Molecular Bioengineering Group

**Drs. Wolfgang Peti** (Molecular Biology & Biochemistry AoC) and **Anthony Vella** (Immunology AoC) were elected to the [newest class of fellows](#) of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS).

## Postdoc Spotlight:



**Binsheng Wang** received a prestigious \$60,000 Glen Foundation for Medical Research Postdoctoral Fellowship in Aging Research. He received one of only nine fellowships awarded nationally for his work on p21 highly expressing senescent cells.



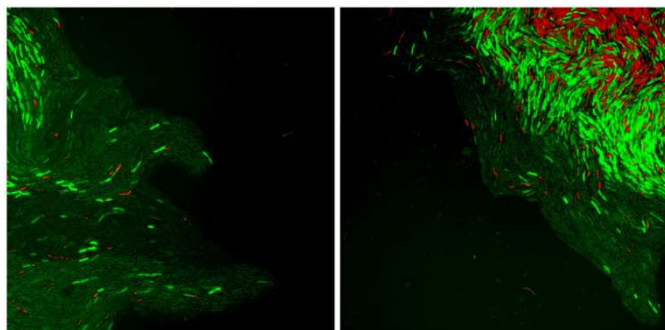
**Mehdi Samandari** received a Good Food Institute grant for \$250K to study meat biomanufacturing using tissue engineering. He also has had three first-author publications (Trends in Biotechnology, Advanced Materials and in Bioactive Materials).



**Lourah Kelly** recently received a K99/R00 award to develop her work on mobile health interventions for adults who struggle with binge drinking and thoughts of suicide.



And now for something completely different...



### Art Contest

MBB's Dr. Irina Bezsonova launched the 2<sup>nd</sup> Student SciART Contest in December. The panel of MBB judges selected Gianluca Ariana's (MD/PhD; PI: Dmitry Korzhnev) *Fire of Life* as the winning piece (above). Additional entries included (top left) Patricia Hare's "*It reaches out it reaches out it reaches out it reaches out...*" (DMD/PhD, PI: Wendy Mok) and (bottom left) Daniel Fairchild's "*Recreation of Starry Night (with Fluorescent Proteins)*" (Biomed Sci PhD, PI: Irina Bezsonova).

### Student Volunteer Opportunity

In October 2023 CCAM will be organizing the International Conference on Systems Biology (ICSB <http://icsb2023.bioscience-ct.net/>). This is the premiere international meeting for people interested in various computational topics, ranging from Fundamental Biological Sciences, Network Analysis, to Metabolic Engineering and Cancer Biology. The ICSB 2022 meeting brought to Berlin more than 500 participants from all over the world. CCAM was represented by 4 faculty members and one student (Joe Massison). The main venue is Hartford Convention Center, with some activities taking place at UCH Cell and Genome Sciences Building. **If you're interested in volunteering at the meeting**, please contact Dr. Michael Blinov ([blinov@uchc.edu](mailto:blinov@uchc.edu)).



### Lobsters Rock!

Patricia Hare (DMD/PhD, MBB AoC, PI :Wendy Mok) & Victor Yu (Biomed Sci PhD, MBB AoC, PI: Rebecca Page) presented their work and enjoy some lobsters at the Gordon Conference on Microbial Stress Response in South Hadley, MA.

### Coming soon!

A new off-campus housing resource for the UConn Health campus is in the works, courtesy of UCONN Off-Campus and Commuter Student Services. At [offcampushousing.uconn.edu](http://offcampushousing.uconn.edu) campus specific features will include map-based housing search, sublet options, and renter need-to-know resources.

<<The Roommate Finder feature is already active, and is password protected using your NetID and password. Use the QR code to the left or URL above to check it out!



**UConn**  
OFF-CAMPUS AND  
COMMUTER STUDENT  
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**Thoughts? Comments?  
Contributions for  
consideration in future  
newsletters?**

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