

*Greetings* from the UConn Health Graduate School!

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 Innovative Investigator Program (YIIP).

#### Fall Semester Academic Calendar

- Mon. 8/28 *Fall semester begins*
- Mon. 9/11 *Last day to withdraw w/o a "W"; last day to add/drop courses without permission*
- Tues. 9/26 *Dean's signature required to add courses*
- Mon. 10/23 *Spring 2024 registration*
- Mon. 11/13 *Last day to withdraw; last day to change to/from pass/fail grading*
- 11/20-24 *Thanksgiving Break (no classes)*
- Fri. 12/1 *Last day for Master's/Doctoral degree candidates to upload final thesis/dissertation dissertation to Submittable & submit related paperwork to [degreeaudit@uconn.edu](mailto:degreeaudit@uconn.edu) for conferral of Fall '24 degree*
- Fri. 12/8 *Last day of Fall classes*
- 12/11-15 *Final Exams*
- Sun. 12/17 *Conferral date: SP'23 degrees; final exams for Plan B Masters & 6<sup>th</sup>-year Certif. Stu, must be completed*
- Wed. 12/20 *Semester grades due by 4 PM*

#### International Office Walk-In Hours

The International Office at UConn Health holds weekly walk-in advising for international students & scholars in the main building on **Thursdays from 2-3 p.m. in Walker Conference Room (AG-070)**. Walk-in advising is meant for **quick questions** (5-10 minutes) such as: travel advice, I-20/DS-2019 signatures, document drop-off, etc. If you have an issue requiring a more in-depth discussion, please contact Kaitlin Dornenburg to make an appointment ([dornenburg@uchc.edu](mailto:dornenburg@uchc.edu); 860-679-4472).

#### Student Behavioral Health Service

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

#### COVID Call Center Reminder

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



#### 2023-24 Incoming Class

The Graduate School welcomed over 100 students into our various degree programs this August!

(pictured above & below: Public Health student Orientation)

#### By the Numbers:

**Biomedical Science:** PhD: 24, Certificate: 1

**MD/PhD:** 8

**Clinical and Translational Research:** Masters: 2, Certificate: 4

**Master of Dental Science:** 15

**Public Health:** PhD: 3, MPH: 40, Fast Track: 12

**YIIP:** 4



## -Diversity Corner-

### SAVE THE DATE:

#### UConn Health Grad School DEI Committee Inaugural Seminar:

### *"The Science of Trust: Implications for DEI in Educational Settings"*



#### **Renata Schiavo, PhD, MA, CCL**

Senior Lecturer, Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health; Founder and Board President, Board of Directors, Health Equity Initiative; Principal, Strategies for Equity and Communication Impact (SECI); Editor in Chief, *Journal of Communications in Healthcare Strategies, Media, & Engagement in Global Health*

**Thursday, September 21, 2023**

**1:00 PM- Massey Auditorium**

*reception following in the Academic Lobby*

#### Learning objectives:

- List key determinants of trust and trustworthiness at different levels of society
- Discuss the impact of trust and mistrust on behavioral, social, and organizational outcomes
- Identify topics/action items that intersect with trust and may influence or be influenced by trust & trustworthiness
- Discuss implications of *The Science of Trust* for DEI in educational settings
- List preliminary action items/next steps to be implemented by students, faculty, and/or administrators to improve DEI in educational settings
- Provide a forum for sharing ideas and experiences on the topic

#### **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)).

### Fall/Winter

### Heritage Celebrations, Observances & Holidays

#### September

Suicide Prevention Month  
National Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month (9/15-10/15)  
[Krishna Janmashtami](#) (9/6-9/7)  
[Rosh Hashanah](#) (9/15-9/17)  
16<sup>th</sup>-[Trail of Tears](#) Remembrance Day  
[Yom Kippur](#) (9/24-9/25)

#### October

National Disability Employment Awareness Month  
Global Diversity Awareness Month  
Filipino American Heritage Month  
LGBTQ+ History Month  
10<sup>th</sup>-[World Mental Health Day](#)  
11<sup>th</sup>-[Indigenous People's Day](#)  
12<sup>th</sup>-[Dia de la Raza](#)

#### November

National American Indian and Native Alaskan Month  
2<sup>nd</sup>-[Dia de Los Muertos](#)  
12<sup>th</sup>-[Diwali](#)

#### December

1<sup>st</sup>-[World AIDS Day](#)  
10<sup>th</sup>-[International Human Rights Day](#)  
[Hanukkah](#) (12/7-12/15)  
25<sup>th</sup>-[Christmas](#)  
[Kwanza](#) (12/26-1/1)

## Upcoming Trainings/Seminars/Workshops:

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rainbow Center Symposium

**Friday, October 13, 2023, Storrs Campus**

The symposium is open to all UConn students, staff, faculty, and community members. For more details, to submit a presentation proposal or to register for the symposium, please visit the [event website](#).

#### For Students:

DANG! (UConn Disabled and Neurodiverse Grads): Join the community by following their [Instagram](#) account here for news on upcoming events, advocacy, and virtual workshops.

### UConn Grad School Timely Topics for Faculty:

**Th, 10/12, 11 am-Noon, virtual**

*Neurodiversity & the Advisor/Advisee Relationship: Fostering Open Communication with Neurodiverse Grad Students*  
Register [here](#) for this **virtual** seminar

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

# Student Kudos!

## Student Awards and Achievements

>>Master of Public Health students **Nicholas Hall** and **Mary Looney** are two of seven Public Health students gaining hands on experience and insightful opportunities as part of their fellowship with the Connecticut Public Health Fellowship Program (CT PHFP) workforce development program managed by the Yale School of Public Health. The program was created in response to the slowly shrinking public health workforce over the last two decades in the U.S. Read more about the program [here](#).

>>In June, **Eishani Sokolowski** (Biomed Sci PhD, Genetics & Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Duygu Ucar) was selected to give an oral presentation of her abstract *Surveying Specific and Shared Responses of Human Islets to T2D-Associated Stressors* at the American Diabetes Association (ADA) 83<sup>rd</sup> Scientific Sessions in San Diego, CA under the Functional Characterization of Type 2 Diabetes Genetic Loci (With ADA Presidents' Select Abstract Presentation) session.

>>**Corie Owen** (Biomed Sci PhD, Cell Biology AoC, PI: Laurinda Jaffe) received the 1<sup>st</sup> place award for the Best Graduate Student Poster Presentation at the 82<sup>nd</sup> Annual Society for Developmental Biology Meeting in July.

>>The UConn Foundation and the Institute for Systems Genomics awarded **Rachael Massey** (Biomed Sci PhD, Genetics & Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Stefan Pinter) The Kenneth and Paula Munson Family Fund for Student Support in Health Sciences Fellowship in May.

>>**Saki Mihori** (Biomed Sci PhD, Immunology AoC, PI: Robert Clark) received an AAI Trainee Poster Award and ribbon of distinction for the 2023 AAI meeting in May in Washington DC. Her project focuses on understanding mechanisms involved in harnessing the gut microbiome to regulate systemic innate immunity.

>>**Alyssa Matz** (Biomed Sci PhD, Immunology AoC, PI: Beiyan Zhou) was selected as a Woman of Innovation Finalist by the CT Tech Council. Her project involves using computational approaches to decipher B cell function in obesity.

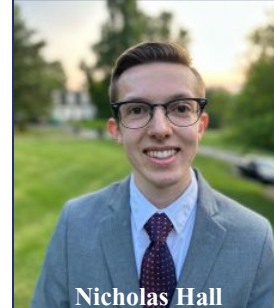
>>**Ziming Cao** (Biomed Sci PhD, Immunology AoC, PI: Zhichao Fan) was invited to present a poster at the Robert Gunn Student Award competition at the APS Summit 2023 in late April Long Beach, California, and won this award in the Physiology Society Cell & Molecular Physiology Section. Ziming is working on a project to use single-cell RNA sequencing to understand the heterogeneity of neutrophils in cherubic mice.

>>In August, **Nagham Khouri Farah** (Biomed Sci PhD, Genetic and Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Justin Cotney and James Li) won a poster award at the Cerebellum Gordon Research conference in Lewiston, ME. Her project studies the mammalian cerebellar development, with a focus on cerebellar hemisphere formation and expansion. Additionally, this June Nagham was invited to the St. Jude Future Fellow Research Conference; she was one of only 28 students invited from the 1,100 candidates.

>>**Rachel Gilmore** (Biomed Sci PhD, Genetic and Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Justin Cotney) was awarded the 1st Place Poster Prize at the 64th McKusick Short Course for Human and Mammalian Genetics and Genomics held at the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, ME in July for her poster titled "Identifying key underlying regulatory networks and predicting targets of orphan box C/D SNORD116 snoRNAs in Prader-Willi Syndrome."



Mary Looney



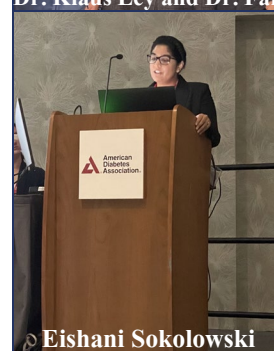
Nicholas Hall



Rachel Gilmore



Ziming Cao with  
Dr. Klaus Ley and Dr. Fan



Eishani Sokolowski

## Student Grant and Fellowship Awards

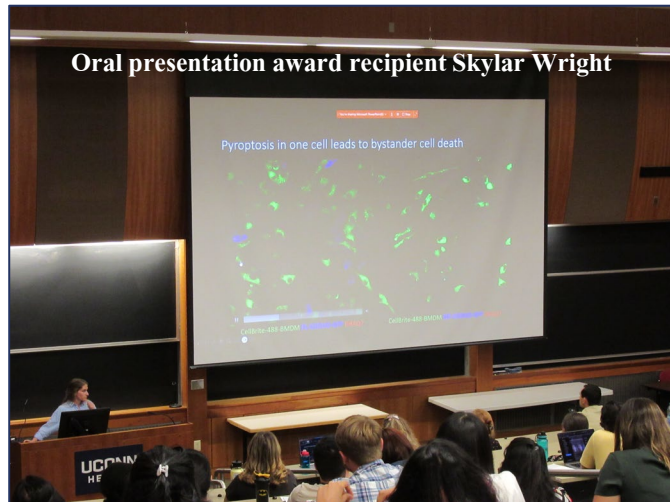
**Ryan Englander** (MD/PhD, Immunology AoC, PI: Karolina Palucka and Olga Anczuków) was awarded an NIH F30 fellowship grant through the National Cancer Institute entitled, *Alternative splicing as a source of shared neoantigens in a non-small cell lung cancer*. **Keaton Karlinsey** (MD/PhD, Immunology AoC, PI: Beiyan Zhou) was awarded an NIH F30 fellowship grant through the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute entitled, *Predicting Cardiovascular Outcomes Using Diabetes-Induced Transcriptomic Networks*. **Andreia Cadar** (Biomed Sci PhD, Immunology AoC, PI: Jenna Bartley) as selected as a Scholar renewal on Dr. Laurencin's T32 *Regenerative Engineering of Musculoskeletal Tissues: A Convergence Doctoral Training Program*; her project focuses on analyzing how senolytics modulate adaptive immune responses to flu vaccination during aging.

**Cullen Clairmont** (MD/PhD, Genetics and Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Ching Lau) was awarded a position on Dr. Lau's T32 grant project *Modeling intracranial germ cell tumors with primordial germ cells derived from genetically engineered human stem cells*. **Rachael Massey** (Biomed Sci PhD, Genetics and Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Stefan Pinter) was awarded a position on Dr. Pinter's grant project studying how females inactivate one of their X chromosomes (XCI), how some genes escape XCI, and how these genes contribute to sex differences and sex chromosomal disorders. **Isha Walawalker** (MD/PhD, Genetics and Developmental Biology AoC, PI: Olga Anczuków) was awarded a position on the T32 project *Elucidating the role of poison exons in modulating pluripotent transcriptomes via alternative splicing in the contexts of early development and aging*.

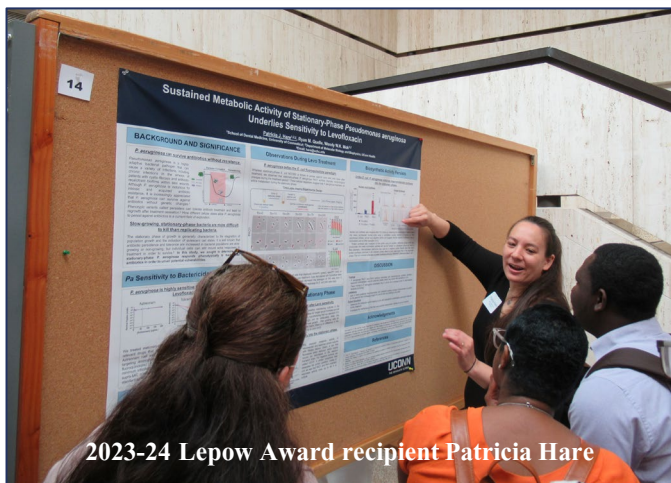


# 40<sup>th</sup> Annual Biomedical Science Graduate Student Research Day: August 23<sup>rd</sup>

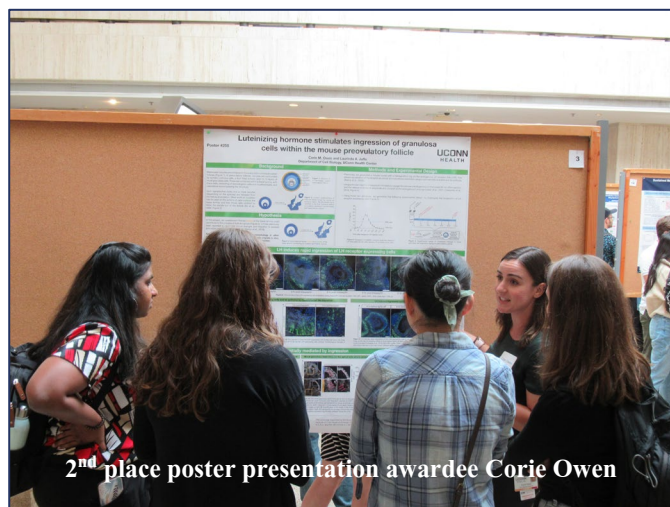
Biomedical Science GSRD was back in full swing this year, including the return of the student luncheon in honor of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this event! Read more about the day, including thoughts from our keynote speaker and a full list of this year's award recipients [here](#).



Oral presentation award recipient Skylar Wright



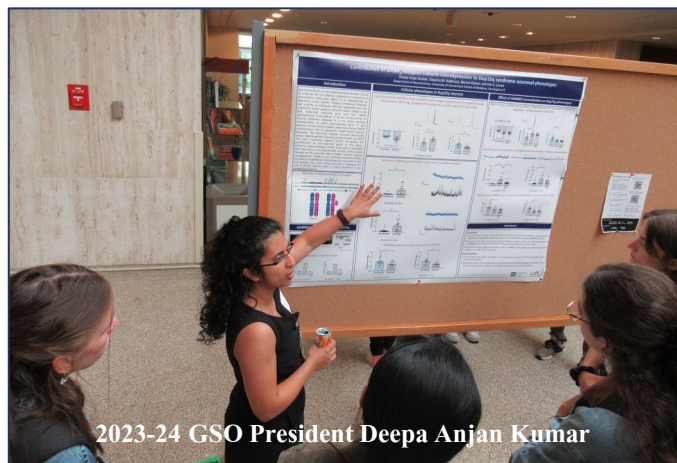
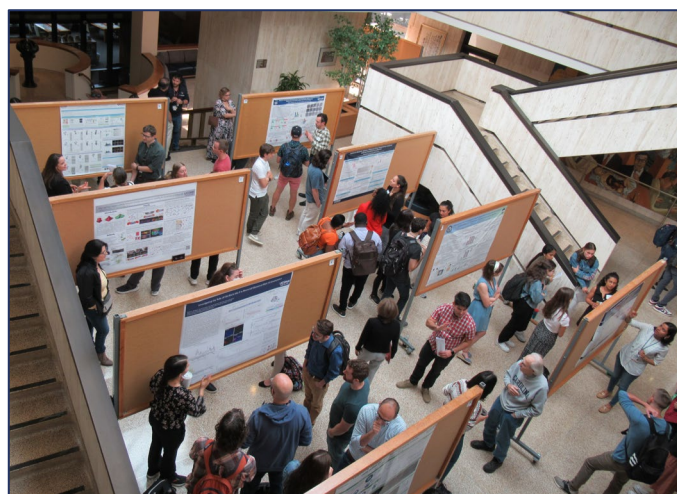
2023-24 Lepow Award recipient Patricia Hare



2<sup>nd</sup> place poster presentation awardee Corie Owen

## Our Alums Take the Cake!

Graduate Student Research Day dignitaries (and Biomedical Science PhD program alums!) Dr. Vanessa Scanlon (keynote speaker) and Dr. Pengyu Zong (Lepow Award speaker) helped cut the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary cake at the student luncheon.



2023-24 GSO President Deepa Anjan Kumar

## New roles...

**Ms. Diane Starosiak** transitioned this summer from her administrative support role in the Graduate School Office to the growing MD/PhD program, which has been supported for many years solely by program coordinator Ms. Tracy Dieli. Diane joined UConn Health in 2014, first in the School of Medicine and then in the Graduate School.



## Recent Faculty and Program honors



In August, the Intellectual Property Owners Education Foundation (IPOEF) awarded **Dr. Cato Laurencin** the prestigious [Inventor of the Year](#) award for his groundbreaking innovation in regenerative engineering. Dr. Laurencin's work has led to clinical systems for bone, cartilage, ligament, and tendon healing and regeneration.

The UConn School of Dental Medicine was recently awarded a [5-year, \\$2.7 million T90/R90 training grant](#) from the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research/National Institutes of Health (NIDCR/NIH) to continue to support research training for students in the combined DMD/PhD program and PhD students and postdoctoral fellows in Skeletal Biology and Regeneration. **Dr. Mina Mina**, professor and chair of the Division of Pediatric Dentistry, is the director of the DMD/Ph.D. program and serves as the principal investigator for this grant.



**Dr. Justin Cotney**, Associate Professor and Program Director of the Genetics and Developmental Biology AoC, will receive the Marylou Buyse Distinguished Scientist in Craniofacial Research Award next month at the annual meeting of the Society for Craniofacial Genetics & Developmental Biology! [Read more about Dr. Cotney's award](#), which recognizes his contributions to the craniofacial sciences.

## Postdoc Spotlight:

### ~POSTDOC RESEARCH DAY~

The seventh annual UConn Health/Jackson Labs Postdoc Research Day will be held on **Wednesday, September 20th** in the **Academic Rotunda**. The event will feature postdoc Speak4Science short talks, posters, and a reception. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Thomas Gonatopoulos-Pournatzis from the RNA Biology Laboratory at the National Cancer Institute.

Find the Program Book and Schedule of Events [here](#).

### POSTDOC AWARDS AND HONORS

**Dr. Yuanyuan Wu** was selected to receive the AAI Trainee Abstract Award and invited to give an oral presentation at the Block Symposium of *Cellular Adhesion, Migration and Inflammation* at IMMUNOLOGY2023™ in Washington, DC. Dr. Wu's project in Dr. Zhichao Fan's lab relates to using super-resolution stochastic optical reconstruction microscopy (STORM) and CRISPR-Cas9 to study the roles of kindlin-3 and talin-1 in beta2 integrin clustering on neutrophils.

**Dr. Tian Tian** received a travel award and was selected to give an oral presentation at the Keystone Symposia *Innate Immunity: From Innate Sensing to Adaptive Responses* held in Snowbird, Utah. Dr. Tian is a postdoctoral fellow in Dr. Jianbin Ruan's laboratory and her project focuses on elucidating the molecular mechanisms of innate immune signaling pathways that regulate Gasdermin (GSDM)-mediated pyroptotic cell death.

## UConn Health Off-Campus Housing Website

Did you know the new off-campus housing resource for the UConn Health campus launched this Spring? This site can be used by any UConn Health community member, including students, postdocs, staff, and faculty, to search for housing, post rentals and available apartments, or look for roommates.

<<Use the QR code to the left or the URL to check it out! At [offcampushousing.uconn.edu](https://offcampushousing.uconn.edu), campus specific features include a map-based housing search, sublet options, and renter need-to-know resources. The Roommate Finder feature is **password protected** using your NetID and password.

**IMPT:** This housing site is monitored & supported by Off-Campus & Commuter Student Services.

\*\*\*Please **do not use** the old Google Group for housing, as this is not a secure resource!\*\*\*

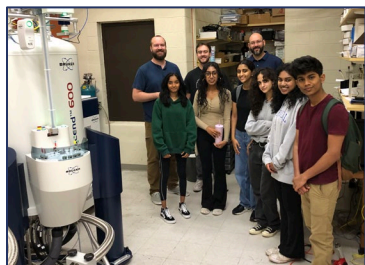


**UConn**  
OFF-CAMPUS AND  
COMMUTER STUDENT  
SERVICES



## FHS Students on the *Cutting Edge*

This summer, 18 Farmington H.S. students participated in the Cutting Edge program, which offers a combination of classroom seminars and hands-on research experience. The program was coordinated through the labs of Dr. Irina Bezsonova and Dr. Dmitry Korzhnev, and the participants were supervised by Biomedical Science students Justin King, Daniel Fairchild, Dane Geddes-Buehre, Annie Yao, Andreia Cadar, Vincent Graziano, and Levi Craft. Participants learned about a variety of topics and practiced various laboratory skills such as cloning DNA, using various chromatographic techniques, and detecting DNA & proteins by gel electrophoretic analysis.



And now for something  
completely different...



## We all scream...

for ice cream!

Students, faculty and staff enjoyed a tasty summer treat (and some beautiful weather in the courtyard!) courtesy of Ben & Jerry's during the Biomedical Science program Orientation week.



**Thoughts? Comments? Contributions for  
consideration in future newsletters?**

Email Stephanie Rauch, Grad School Newsletter Editor  
at [PhdBiomed@uchc.edu](mailto:PhdBiomed@uchc.edu)