

# GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM

<https://tinyurl.com/UMGCProgram>

## Silver Linings: Learning, Growing, and Thriving During a Pandemic PART 4

In our April 2021 newsletter, we hoped fall term in 2021 would look more like a traditional semester on campus. To date, this vision has come to fruition! Our students are attending in person events including classes, clinical rotations, the Department of Human Genetics Retreat, the Down Syndrome Buddy Walk, football games and more.

As we have been transitioning back towards our “new normal,” we are considering what we want the new normal to look like. What are the silver linings from the pandemic that we want to retain? We were thrilled to have increased engagement with our alumni over the last 18 months-with many alumni participating in courses, the Diane Baker Alumni Lecture, and important milestones of graduate training, including thesis presentations and graduation festivities. Speaking of graduation, it was heartwarming to have friends and family of the graduates join us in our remote graduation ceremonies in 2020 and 2021-with over 100 attendees from around the country and around the world at each of these celebrations. At the other end of the lifecycle of our students, conducting virtual interviews of applicants to our graduate program allowed us to increase the number of applicants we interviewed by 10% and decreased financial barriers associated with the admissions process. We look forward to conducting all of our interviews virtually again in 2022.

We recognize that the pandemic has presented personal and professional challenges. We extend a heartfelt thank you to our clinical supervisors, instructors, support staff, students, and alumni for continuing to adapt and work with us!



## Janice Berliner is the 12th recipient of the Diane Baker Alumni Award



Janice Berliner

Over the course of Ms. Berliner’s career as a genetic counselor, she has made impactful contributions to the advancement of the profession as a clinician, educator, and thought leader. Since her graduation from the UMGC in 1988, she has held leadership positions and been an active contributor to all of the major genetic counseling organizations, including the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC), American Board of Genetic Counseling (ABGC), Accreditation Council for Genetic Counseling (ACGC), and the Association of Genetic Counseling Program Directors (AGCPD). Most notably, Janice served on the NSGC Board of Directors, served as co-chair of 2 national genetic counseling educational conferences, held varied editorial roles and served as a director on the ABGC Board and President of the then newly formed ACGC.

Clinically, Janice began the first decade of her career in the prenatal and preconception space before transitioning to the field of cancer genetics in 1998. Janice spent the next two decades of her career establishing and growing cancer genetic counseling services in health care systems in New York and New Jersey. Janice’s clinical expertise is nationally recognized, and she served as the first author on two important NSGC publications, most recently the 2021 Risk Assessment and Genetic Counseling for Hereditary Breast and Ovarian Cancer - Practice Resource of the National Society of Genetic Counselors.

In 2018, Janice accepted the position of Director of the Master of Science in Genetic Counseling Program at Bay Path University in East Longmeadow, MA. This innovative program offers a flexible hybrid format that includes online classes, clinical rotations at regional and national medical centers and on-site instruction in Massachusetts. Janice brings her enthusiasm and energy to her leadership of this unique graduate program. We look forward to welcoming Janice back to Ann Arbor on December 7, 2021 when she will give the annual Diane Baker Alumni Lecture at 1 pm. Stay tuned for more details.

### Congratulations to Our Newly Certified GC’s!

### Welcome to our Incoming Students!

### Save the Date!

HIAM ABEL-SALAM, MS, CGC  
FARID BARQUET RAMOS, MS, MPH, CGC  
NICOLE HUSER, MS, CGC  
ANDREW MCKEON, MS, CGC  
FRANCES RICHARDSON, MS, CGC  
AUSTIN WHITTED, MS, MPH, CGC



This fall, we welcome 9 new students to the UMGC! To learn more about our new students, see pages 3-5.

- Sunday, December 5, 2021  
• NMS Deadline
- Tuesday, December 7, 2021, 1:00 p.m.  
• Diane Baker Alumni Lecture
- Wednesday, January 5, 2022  
• UMGC Application Deadline

# UM/ACGPD Outstanding Supervisor Award Winner: Samantha Greenberg



Samantha Greenberg

We are thrilled to announce that the 2021 recipient of the University of Michigan/ Association of Genetic Counseling Program Directors (AGCPD) Outstanding Supervisor Award is Samantha Greenberg. Samantha is a 2016 graduate of the UMGCP, where she earned her MS in Genetic Counseling and Master of Public Health. Since graduating, Samantha has been working at the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Salt Lake City, UT. In spite of the 1600 miles that separate Samantha from Ann Arbor, she has provided clinical supervision to many UM genetic counseling students. In fact, she provided supervision to 3 members of the graduating class of 2021. All 3 of these graduates independently nominated Samantha for this award. Representative quotes include:

“As Sam’s first remote genetic counseling student, I can say she was a fantastic supervisor that was able to make a lasting impact...even from 1,600 miles away. In the remote space, Sam was able foster a positive and inclusive learning environment and went the extra mile to ensure I received the best experience possible. Sam worked closely with me every week to help me reach my goals...”  
“Sam was always cognizant of the clinical and professional goals and always sought to connect me with opportunities that paralleled these goals and interests...in our meetings [she] actively employed listening and affirming reflections to guide me in self-evaluating my skills...”

Congratulations Samantha and thanks for your ongoing contributions and never-ending enthusiasm and energy.

We also want to recognize two other UMGCP Alumni that were awarded Clinical Supervisor Awards-Shenin Dettwyler (UMGCP Class of 2016) and Beatrix Wong (UMGCP Class of 2017) were recognized by the University of Pittsburgh and University of Cincinnati, respectively.

## The 2021 Neel Genetic Counseling Research Award Expanding our perspectives

The research component of the Michigan Genetic Counseling Graduate program is focused on helping genetic counselors to use their creativity and curiosity about the world of genetic counseling and clinical genetics to identify ways of positively impacting future practice.



Erika Chick

Over the years as the evidence base supporting genetic counseling practice has expanded, the types of research questions our students are asking have also grown. The research interests of the members of the Class of 2023 include providing culturally responsive care to diverse patient populations, understanding the impact of mental health on prenatal patient care and exploring the best ways to provide genetic testing outside of traditional clinical settings. A critical partner in the growth and success of UMGCP’s research program has been the support of the Department of Human Genetics. The Neel Genetic Counseling Research Fellowship which is awarded to one rising second-year genetic counseling student is an annual tangible measure of this support.

This year we are excited to announce that Erika Chick won the award for her research proposal “Genetic Diagnosis beyond the clinic: Exploring impacts in special education.” Her work will analyse the utility of knowledge about genetic conditions for special education teachers with the goal of improving interdisciplinary collaborations with genetic counselors.

## Welcome Heather



Heather Dornoff began work as the new Genetic Counseling Program Administrative Specialist this past August. Heather serves as primary administrative support for GCP needs, including student services, admissions, coursework and evaluations, financial aid, benefits, student awards, and events. A Michigan alum, Heather has an interdisciplinary bachelor’s degree in theater and film. She also earned an M.S. in Organizational Leadership Administration from Concordia University.

A long-time administrator at the University, she’s worked mostly in program management and community engagement in the arts and humanities and is super excited to join this amazing community.

## Welcome to Michigan Medicine’s Newest Genetic Counselors



Julia Martinez

Julia Martinez is originally from the Bay Area, California and joined the University of Michigan Cancer Genetic Clinic in July 2021. Julia earned her BA from UCLA in 2016 and her MS in Genetic Counseling at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in May 2021. Julia previously worked in clinical trial administration. She is most excited to be involved in teaching genetic counseling and medical students and is professionally interested in exploring the barriers faced by various underserved/minority populations to receiving genetic services.

Veronica Greves is a 2018 graduate of the University of Minnesota Genetic Counseling Program. She is originally from Whitehall, MI and returned to the state to join the University of Michigan Medical Genetics and Cancer Genetics Clinics in July 2021. Veronica previously worked at the HudsonAlpha Institute of Biotechnology in Huntsville, AL. She is excited to be working with great teams in both Cancer Genetics and Medical Genetics and to leverage the expertise and resources available at the University of Michigan.



Veronica Greves



Mallory Wagner

Mallory Wagner is originally from Troy, MI and graduated from the Wayne State University Genetic Counseling Program in 2019 and previously worked at Beaumont Health, Dearborn. This summer, Mallory joined us at Michigan Medicine where she is working in the neuromuscular genetics clinic and general pediatric genetics. Mallory is looking forward to the opportunity to explore her interest in the psychological impact of genetic testing on individuals as well as how the genetics community can better serve the LGBTQ community.



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# FALL 2021 NEW STUDENTS



**Amber Abram** earned her B.S in Biology with a concentration in genetics and minor in leadership from the University of Detroit Mercy. As an undergraduate, Amber was a part of the ReBUILDetroit program, where she gained exposure to STEM. Amber discovered and isolated a bacteriophage named Darionha as a part of the ReBUILDetroit first-year research curriculum, supported by the Howard Hughes Medical Institute's SEA-PHAGES program. She went on to research the etiology of root caries in geriatric populations at Detroit Mercy Dental. In addition to these activities, Amber was active in the surrounding Detroit Mercy Community. As a member of Campus Kitchen, Amber cared for a community garden that provided fresh produce to Lakeridge Village, a non-profit organization founded to provide safe, supportive, and affordable housing. Amber gained advocacy experience as an active volunteer for Seasons Hospice, where she offered caregiver relief to families in need within the surrounding Detroit community. Amber also served as a writing tutor, where she helped and encouraged students of all backgrounds to improve their unique writing processes in a one-on-one space.



**Nicole Cho** earned her B.S. in both Molecular and Cellular Biology and Community & Clinical Psychology with a minor in Chemistry from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. As an undergraduate student, she was a research assistant in the Mobility and Fall Prevention laboratory and studied the relationship between anxiety and prefrontal cortical activation in older women with osteoarthritis. She was also a James Scholar Honors student and volunteered as a peer mentor, assisting first year honors students in transitioning to college and developing their academic and social lives. Being a James Scholar also allowed her to participate in the university's REACT program where she led a group of fellow undergraduate students in teaching chemistry to elementary students in Champaign. Additionally, she was a NCAA Division I track and field athlete for the university and served on the team's Leadership Council. Nicole gained advocacy experience by working as a caregiver for the elderly in the Champaign community as well as volunteering as a Crisis Counselor for the Crisis Text Line.



**Charlie DeLuca** graduated from Michigan State University in 2021 with a B.S. in Molecular Genetics and Genomics. As an undergraduate, he was a research assistant at the Institute for Quantitative Health Science and Engineering studying type 1 diabetes. He simultaneously worked as a Strategic Support Associate at Jackson National Life, an annuity and life insurance company, and also as a pizza cook and busboy at his father's Italian restaurant. He volunteered as a crisis counselor and medical advocate at the Center for Survivors, an organization that works directly with survivors of sexual assault. He also assisted in contact tracing for the State of Michigan's Department of Health and Human Services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# FALL 2021 NEW STUDENTS



**Lara Grether** earned her B.S. in Biochemistry from Brigham Young University. As an undergraduate, she focused her studies on molecular mechanisms, and researched the chemical process of lateral flow immunoassays. With a small inorganic biochemistry team, Lara developed and patented the Simple Empowering Lateral Flow Immunoassay (seLFI) and Antibody Pen with hopes to make simple blood and urine testing more available in low resource settings. Following graduation, Lara gained advocacy experience as a Health Assistant at New Haven Residential Treatment Center, helping teenage girls learn to cope with past trauma. Later, she gained additional advocacy experience as the Volunteer Coordinator and a Weekend Houseparent at the Family Support and Treatment Center. Here, Lara provided trauma sensitivity training to incoming volunteers and provided emotional support to clients of all ages through difficult situations.



**Leah Hardy** earned her B.S. in Biology with a minor in Medical Anthropology from the University of Michigan. As an undergraduate, she worked as an academic peer advisor for incoming first-year and transfer students. She also volunteered in the Jewish Family Services specialty food pantry and was a member of Alpha Phi Omega, a co-ed service fraternity. In addition, Leah gained valuable research experience by studying hereditary breast and ovarian cancer in the Tainsky Lab at Wayne State University. After graduation, Leah taught at an IB elementary school and joined the SafeHouse Center Response Team where she supported survivors in person and by phone immediately after domestic violence and sexual assault incidents.



**Elizabeth (Liz) Hart** graduated from Colorado State University where she earned a B.S. in Biological Science with a focus on cellular, molecular, and genetic biology. As an undergraduate, she researched selenium accumulation and tolerance in *S. pinnata*, a selenium hyperaccumulator plant, versus *S. elata*, a related non-accumulator, with the big-picture goal of using *S. pinnata* in phytoremediation. In addition to research, Liz explored large-scale advocacy during her undergraduate studies by working as an organizer on a reproductive rights campaign with a nonprofit. After graduating, she continued to build upon her advocacy skills by volunteering on a Denver-based sexual assault crisis hotline and most recently by working as a Constituent Advocate with the U.S. Senate. Additionally, she gained experience in public health by completing an AmeriCorps VISTA program as a COVID-19 Case Investigator with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

# FALL 2021 NEW STUDENTS



**Braeden Hughes** graduated from the University of New Hampshire where she earned her B.S. in Genetics. As an undergraduate, she worked in developmental support services and volunteered as a Victims' Advocate for survivors of sexual assault. She also participated in research examining the connections, physical interactions, and co-expression of genes involved in both the immune system and schizophrenia. After graduating, Braeden worked as a Residential Counselor supporting individuals with severe and persistent mental illness. She additionally volunteered on a crisis hotline, supporting texters and helping them connect with resources related to a broad range of issues including mental health, substance abuse, and domestic violence.



**Amy Mook** graduated from Penn State University with a B.S. in Genetics and Developmental Biology. As an undergraduate, she worked as a research assistant for the Anthropometrics, DNA, and the Appearances and Perceptions of Traits 4 (ADAPT4) study and performed DNA extractions on human saliva. Amy also completed an independent research project which evaluated the National Institute of Health's protocol for extracting DNA from a strawberry. She completed an AmeriCorps service term during the COVID-19 pandemic to assist with efforts in supporting the local community and nonprofit organizations. Amy gained advocacy experience by working with Student Disability Resources and various organizations at Penn State on efforts related to accessibility and inclusivity of students with disabilities. She also served as a peer educator on topics of bias and discrimination to provide tools and resources for students across the University.



**Blake Summers** graduated with a B.S. in Biology from Truman State University. As an undergraduate, he worked as a student researcher in the Department of Physiology at A.T. Still University initially researching the structure and function of CFTR mutants. As a senior in the lab, he then began and led other students in an ongoing project investigating the use of varying CRISPR systems targeting CFTR in mammalian tissues. He gained advocacy experience by volunteering with Hospice for a short time prior to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, he has acted as a crisis counselor at the Crisis Text Line where he helped console texters through a variety of crises. In his free time, he enjoys socializing, playing video games, playing tennis, and listening to music.