

## Welcome to our Incoming Class

We welcomed 8 new students into our University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program family in August as they traveled from all over the world to join us in Ann Arbor. Our academic year got off to a wonderful start including plenty of activities in the classroom, clinic, and community. We couldn't be more excited about the thoughtful and inquisitive conversations we've had with them in their genetic counseling classes. In the clinic, they have collectively observed over 260 cases over the fall semester. We've been particularly struck by how the cohort has come together to support each other and learn from each other during this journey through graduate school.

To learn more about our new students, see pages 5-6.



## Julie Culver is the 13th recipient of the Diane Baker Alumni Award



Julie Culver, MS, LCGC, CCRP graduated from the UMGCP in 1994, under the leadership of program director Diane Baker, MS, CGC, who served as Julie's mentor, teacher, and role model. Since her graduation from the UMGCP, Julie has made important educational, research, and clinical contributions in her work as a genetic counselor at the University of Washington, the City of Hope, and the University of Southern California (USC). Currently, Julie is a Clinical Instructor and

Director of Cancer Genetic Counseling at the USC Norris Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Julie's passion for research has led her to explore hereditary cancer panel testing, cancer risk perception, and medical decision-making following genetic testing. A sampling of her published work includes studying the use of multi-gene panels to assess hereditary cancer susceptibility, psychosocial outcomes following germline multi-gene panel testing, in an ethnically and economically diverse clinical cohort in Los Angeles County, the integration of universal germline genetic testing for all newly diagnosed breast cancer patients, and risk-reducing mastectomy decisions among women with mutations in breast cancer susceptibility genes. She is currently a co-investigator on the NCI-funded study - "Optimizing Engagement of Hispanic Colorectal Cancer Patients in Cancer Genomic Characterization Studies".

Julie has also served on the faculty for the City of Hope Intensive Course and taught cancer risk assessment to oncologists, surgeons, nurses, physician associates and genetic counseling students since 2004. Julie was highly honored to receive the prestigious Diane Baker Alumni Award and was delighted to interact with current genetic counseling students and faculty at University of Michigan's Department of Human Genetics during her recent visit back to Ann Arbor.

Missed the live presentation? A recording of Julie's seminar is available [here](#).



Molly Martin  
*Student Services Administrator*

We are delighted to introduce a wonderful new addition to the UMGCP: Molly Martin!

Molly is our new Student Services Administrator. Previously, she was the Student Services Administrator for the Department of Human Genetics and supported the Genetics and Genomics Ph.D. Program, the Genetics Training Program and the Human Genetics MS Program.

Molly brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to her position with the UMGCP, and we are thrilled to have her join our team.

## Updates to UMGCP Program Leadership

After a remarkable 20 years of outstanding leadership and vision, Beverly Yashar, MS, CGC, PhD stepped down from her role as the Director of the UMGCP. During her two-decade tenure as Director of the UMGCP, she provided mentorship, training, and support for over 120 students. Under her leadership, the program expanded to a two year curriculum and the class cohort size grew from 4 students to more recent cohorts of 8-10 students. In 2008, Bev partnered with Scott Roberts, PhD, Professor of Health Behavior and Health Education at the University of Michigan School of Public Health, to develop the MPH/MS dual degree program with the School of Public Health. This program has since graduated over a dozen alumni who are uniquely qualified to integrate clinical and public health approaches to the application of genomic medicine. Bev also established the highly successful research arm of the graduate program which has fostered the development of skills in research methodology, built productive collaborations, and made important contributions to scholarship in the field of genetic counseling. We are delighted that Bev will continue to work with the UMGCP as the Director of Research.



Monica Marvin, MS, CGC was appointed Director of the UMGCP in July 2022, after serving as part of the UMGCP Program Leadership since 2005. In her previous roles as Assistant and then Associate Director of the UMGCP, Monica provided mentorship and guidance to 17 student cohorts and made important contributions as an instructor and course director in the UMGCP curriculum. In addition to her role as Director of the UMGCP, Monica remains clinically active in the Rogel Cancer Center's Cancer Genetics Clinic and champions efforts towards the recognition of genetic counselors as independent providers within Michigan Medicine. We're excited to watch the UMGCP grow under her directorship.

Beth Dugan, MS, CGC was also promoted in July, 2022 and assumed the role of Associate Director. Beth has been involved with the UMGCP as Assistant Director since 2019, serving a variety of roles including course director, coordinator of clinical training, outreach facilitator, and research mentor. Prior to joining the UMGCP leadership team, Beth provided prenatal genetic counseling to patients in Detroit and at the University of Michigan Fetal Diagnosis & Treatment Center for over 15 years and made important contributions to the program as a clinical supervisor and course director.

## Welcome to Michigan Medicine's Newest Genetic Counselors



Anna Burton joined the Pediatric Genetics team at Michigan Medicine this past summer after graduating from the University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program. In her new role, she counsels patients and families in general pediatric genetics clinics, both in outpatient and inpatient settings. Anna is interested in implementing the results of her graduate thesis and exploring ways of improving clinical care for patients with limited English proficiency.

Next Steps? Anna is excited to gain more clinical experience, learn from the expertise of her new colleagues, and help patients and families navigate genetic testing and adapt to new diagnoses. In the future, she is looking forward to being involved in student supervision, teaching, and clinical research.



Jenna Damon is a 2022 graduate from the Boise State University Genetic Counseling Program who joined the Michigan Medicine Medical Genetics Clinic. Jenna's capstone project supported the creation of a storyboard to help pediatric patients with a diagnosis of epidermolysis bullosa manage the wound care process. Jenna received her B.S. in Biological Sciences from the University of La Verne in 2018. Following graduation she worked as a veterinary technician and a job coach for

individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In her new role in the Medical Genetics Clinic, Jenna is looking forward to working with and learning from her amazing new colleagues. She also shared that she is excited to become immersed in the UM community and to establish herself as a valuable member of the Medical Genetics team.

## GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM

[HTTPS://TINYURL.COM/UMGCPROGRAM](https://tinyurl.com/umgcpprogram)

### UM/ACGPD Outstanding Supervisor Award Recipient: Kelly Morse



**Kelly Morse**

The Association of Genetic Counseling Program Directors annually recognizes outstanding supervisors! UMGCP solicits nominations for this award from second year students and one supervisor is selected as an exemplar of outstanding supervision and mentorship. Students provide feedback on numerous areas of supervision, including supervisors' ability to form a working alliance and provide a positive learning environment, their skills in evaluation and the provision of feedback, their knowledge in clinical care, and the ethical and professional treatment of patients and students.

UMGCP is excited to announce the 2022 AGCPD Outstanding Fieldwork Supervisor Award winner: Kelly Morse! Kelly is a dedicated supervisor and clinician. With a great depth of clinical knowledge and expertise, Kelly serves as a role model for her students, regularly demonstrating the highest professional standards. Despite her demanding schedule, students note that Kelly prioritizes dedicated time to meet with them for case prep and to debrief while providing balanced, actionable feedback. Students also note that Kelly is extremely personable, welcoming them so that they feel like a valued member of the healthcare team. These sentiments are shared by the many UM students Kelly has supervised. The University of Michigan is so grateful for Kelly's thoughtful insight into clinical skill development and personalized approach to each student she supervises. We are grateful to have her as part of our GC community!

Kelly joins a national cohort of 43 winners from genetic counseling programs in the US and Canada. Also in this cohort is alumni Jessica Long, UMGCP class of 2009, nominated by the University of Pennsylvania Genetic Counseling Program.

### Congrats to Our Newly Certified GCs!

Anna Burton, MS, CGC  
Gabi Chen, MS, MPH, CGC  
Erika Chick, MS, CGC  
Gabrielle Ernst, MS, CGC  
Samantha Glowacki, MS, CGC  
Hailey Nielsen, MS, CGC  
Renata Thoeny, MS, CGC  
Lindsay Willard, MS, CGC

### The 2022 Neel Genetic Counseling Research Award

Congratulations to Nicole Cho, the 2022 James V. Neel Genetic Counseling Fellowship recipient! Nicole was selected for her proposal titled "Optimizing the working relationship between genetic counselors and medical interpreters for culturally competent care."



**Nicole Cho**

This Fellowship honors the legacy of James Van Gundia Neel, M.D., Ph.D., a pioneer in the study of human genetics and one of the first to foresee its importance in the diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions. During his 39-year career in the U-M Medical School, Neel established one of the first clinics to evaluate and counsel people with hereditary diseases, as well as the first academic department of human genetics in the United States.

Nicole's thesis work explores the impact of culture bumps on the formation of a patient-centered working alliance. Previous work by Anna Burton, UMGCP class of 2022, found that genetic counselors believe that language discordance makes it difficult to provide tailored genetic counseling and highlighted challenges in working with interpreters. Nicole will build on this study by exploring how GCs triangulate between the patient and the interpreter in language and culture discordant sessions. Ultimately this study will provide insights into ways of tailoring genetic counseling to improve the provision of culturally competent care to diverse patient populations.

### MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Thursday, January 5, 2023

UMGCP Application Deadline



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# Snapshots of UMGCP- Fall 2022



Barbara Harrison, MS, CGC gave a seminar titled "Sickle Cell Disease: Learning from the Past to Impact the Future"



Some of our students attended the Michigan Association of Genetic Counselors Annual Education Conference



We had dinner at The Original Cottage Inn Pizza with the GCs from Michigan Medicine to celebrate Genetic Counselor Awareness Day



UMGCP Reunion at the National Society of Genetic Counselors Annual Conference in Nashville, TN



We traveled to Roscommon, MI for the annual Department of Human Genetics Retreat



Some of our students volunteered at the Down Syndrome Support Team Buddy Walk



# FALL 2022 NEW STUDENTS

## GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM



**Alex Hurley (he/him)** graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in May of 2021 with a degree in Genetics and Genomics and a Certificate in Global Health. During his time as an undergrad, Alex served on the volunteer committee for the Undergraduate Genetics Association and helped to form the University's first Pre-Genetic Counseling student organization. Additionally, he spent time working in a research lab on campus in the Wisconsin Institute for Medical Research studying Hox genes and their role in development and disease. Following graduation, Alex moved to Columbus, Ohio to work as a Genetic Counselor Assistant in the Institute for Genomic Medicine at Nationwide Children's Hospital. In this position, he assisted Laboratory Genetic Counselors with their workflow and communicated with Clinical Genetic Counselors to help initiate genetic testing for patients. In Columbus, Alex also gained advocacy experience by volunteering with Crisis Text Line and Local Outreach for Suicide Survivors as a first responder.



**Morgan Hurst (she/they)** graduated from SUNY Purchase with a B.A. in Dance. They have worked as a professional dancer and educator for the last ten years in New York, Berlin, and Hong Kong. During Morgan's work as an artist and dancer, they did therapeutic movement work with neurodivergent, disabled, and elderly communities. Their background as a non-profit arts educator who advocates for institutional accountability and brings impactful education into NYC public schools has uniquely positioned them to combat systemic inequity, thus making their role in DEAI leadership a valuable part of their community partnerships and advocacy work. They have danced for several companies across the U.S. and led a community arts project at the United Nations NGO Commission on the Status of Women. Morgan worked as a Genetic Counseling Assistant at Montefiore Medical Center in NY and volunteered for Jewish Association for Services for the Aged as well as San Diego PRIDE. Having a background in the arts has served to offer Morgan a unique perspective as they've transitioned from arts and education to genetic counseling. They aim to amplify a commitment to diversity and equity within communities, educational spaces, and the intersectional spaces that are vital to our collective growth and development. They continue to teach yoga classes and work as a non-profit arts administrator in the NYC public schools.



**Emma Kelley (she/her)** graduated from Smith College where she earned a B.A. in Biology with highest honors. As an undergraduate, she researched the molecular basis of disease susceptibility in Caribbean reef-building corals, with the goal of identifying biomarkers for resilience. She also was a student academic advisor, helping underclassmen navigate the transition to college academics, and the president of the improv comedy club. After graduation, she worked in the Dries Lab at Boston Medical Center studying triple negative breast cancer and racial cancer disparities. As a hotline volunteer with the Boston Area Rape Crisis, she spoke with survivors of sexual violence, providing emotional support and helping to connect them to resources.



# FALL 2022 NEW STUDENTS

## GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM



**Alicia Polak (she/her)** graduated from Assumption College with a B.A. in Biology and Psychology. As an undergraduate, she worked as a Peer Tutor in the Assumption College academic support center and was a research assistant at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, where she studied the effects of nicotine on the medial habenula-interpeduncular nucleus circuit. She gained additional laboratory experience through a summer internship at the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation Therapeutics Laboratory in the next-generation sequencing (NGS) and gene editing departments. Additionally, she was the president of the Assumption College chapter of Psi Chi and a NCAA Division II cross country/track and field athlete. After graduation, Alicia worked as a Genetic Counseling Assistant at Igenomix and created a research project observing the presence of fragile sites in preimplantation genetic testing for aneuploidy (PGT-A) results. In her spare time, Alicia enjoys volunteering and has gained advocacy experience through crisis counseling for a parent stress line, tutoring ESL students, lobbying for anti-poverty initiatives through RESULTS, increasing awareness about current DEI topics through World Unity Inc., and serving as a scholarship review committee member for Education First.



**Vedika Ramesh (she/her)** earned her B.S. in Genetics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. As an undergraduate, she was a research assistant in a population genetics lab analyzing olfactory receptor genetic variation in *Drosophila melanogaster* populations. Vedika was also an NCI fellow at Cornell University where she explored the relationship between obesity and breast cancer. Along with research, Vedika gained advocacy experience in Madison through the Dane County Rape Crisis Center, where she counseled survivors over the phone. Additionally, she volunteered at Madison West High School tutoring students with disabilities. After graduation, Vedika worked at Northwestern University with the All of Us Research Program, recruiting participants and conducting study visits for those joining the NIH study. She then went on to work as a Genetic Counselor Assistant with Cleveland Clinic. In this role, she worked closely with genetic counselors and geneticists to improve clinical administrative workflow and worked directly with patients to address their questions and concerns about the genetic counseling process.



**Jennifer Thompson (she/her)** graduated from the University of California, Los Angeles with a B.S. in Molecular, Cell and Developmental Biology and a minor in Biomedical Research. As an undergraduate and staff researcher in the Nakano Lab, she investigated the influence of maternal diabetes on congenital heart disease formation, specifically focusing on molecular and epigenetic changes induced by hyperglycemia. Jennifer has long devoted herself to improving health literacy efforts and making scientific information more accessible as a writer for Morning Sign Out. Through her work, she has also been able to teach about health literacy in schools and health fairs in areas of low socioeconomic status. Through her work with the American Cancer Society and the Relay for Life event, Jennifer was able to help advocate for cancer awareness along with raising money for patient services and cancer research. Over the pandemic, she began crisis counseling with the Crisis Text Line where she was able to support people struggling with a broad range of issues in their most vulnerable moments and find tools to help them cope.



# FALL 2022 NEW STUDENTS

## GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM



**Mallika Venkatramani (she/her)** graduated from University College Dublin in 2021 with a BSc (Honors) in Genetics. As an undergraduate, Mallika studied the effect of a gene knockout on protein processing in the endoplasmic reticulum using *Drosophila* models, which aimed to understand the molecular basis of Hereditary Spastic Paraplegia. She also volunteered at Dundrum Arch Club, a social club for individuals with Down Syndrome while she was based in Dublin. Additionally, she served on the editorial for University College Dublin's student newspaper, writing on science, art and lifestyle topics. As a rising junior, she interned at the Cancer Genetics Service of National Cancer Centre Singapore, where she contributed towards developing a study that delved into the informational needs of *BRCA1/2* pathogenic variant carriers in Southeast Asia. This study was published in *Hereditary Cancer in Clinical Practice* in October 2020. Following her graduation, Mallika returned to work at National Cancer Centre Singapore as a genetic counseling assistant. She gained advocacy experience by engaging elderly patients with chronic psychiatric conditions in enjoyable activities at Institute of Mental Health Singapore over a period of 6 years, as well as being a mentor on TeenHelp.org, an anonymous support platform for troubled teenagers and young adults.



**Setareh Zandihaghighi (she/her)** graduated from University of California, Irvine in 2021 with a B.S in Biological Sciences. As an undergraduate, she was a senior research assistant in the Neurocritical Care laboratory and investigated mechanisms underlying consciousness, coma, and global stroke with a focus on cardiac arrest and its effect on marginalized populations. Additionally, she joined a Prenatal Genetics Laboratory to further increase her knowledge about the field by conducting quarterly evaluations of patient's genetic counseling services. Being part of the Campuswide Honors Collegium, allowed Setareh to mentor upcoming transfer students which motivated her to co-create a club to further help underrepresented students transition to college and reach their full potential. Following graduation, Setareh gained clinical experiences working as a junior specialist in a Pediatric Genetics clinic, serving patients suffering from inherited diseases. She volunteered in Cancer and Pediatric Genetics departments in different hospitals and gained experience working with various healthcare teams. Additionally, she became the president of Genetic Counseling Prospective Students Network to help other prospective students find their way to graduate school and gain exposure to the field of Genetic Counseling.