

## Featured Alumnus: Alyson Krokosky, Class of 2009



Upon graduating from the UMGCP in 2009, Alyson Krokosky accepted a position at Genetic Alliance in Washington, DC. Genetic Alliance is a nonprofit health advocacy organization that strives to promote an environment of openness centered on the health of individuals, families, and communities. Their network includes disease-specific advocacy organizations, universities,

private companies, government agencies, and public policy organizations.

Alyson was initially attracted to working at Genetic Alliance so that she could help develop resources for health care providers, including genetic counselors, individuals affected by genetic disorders and the general public. Alyson has been highly successful and was recently promoted to Assistant Director of Genetic Resources and Services. In this position she manages the day-to-day activities of the Congenital Conditions Program, works as a liaison to disease specific organizations and contributes to the success of powerful online resources, including Disease InfoSearch. Alyson also collaborates with many health partners that provide information on genetics and genetic conditions in an effort to harmonize their resources.

Alyson's position at Genetic Alliance provides an example of the diverse career opportunities available to graduates of the UMGCP. Alyson felt that her training at Michigan gave her important first-hand exposure to patients and families dealing with a diverse range of genetic disorders and congenital conditions. While in training, she developed essential skills that helped her become adept at problem solving, time management, critically reviewing literature and the development of educational materials.

But does Alyson miss seeing patients? In fact, Alyson continues to be intimately involved with individuals affected by genetic disorders. However, rather than counseling individual patients, she is involved in empowering these individuals through their advocacy work. Through her work she has had a wide-ranging impact on the lives of individuals with genetic conditions. For those who know Alyson, it will come as no surprise that she is also thriving in Washington DC, where she can network to her heart's desire.

As the Class of 2011 prepares to graduate, Alyson encourages genetic counseling students to have an open mind when considering (or even creating) career options. The skills of genetic counselors are relevant not just in the traditional clinical realm. When genetic counselors work outside of traditional patient care, we can continue to be powerful advocates for the provision of high quality genetic services. We look forward to Alyson's continued contributions to Genetic Alliance, our profession, and families affected by genetic disorders.

## Celebrating Our Alumni: The 2nd Annual Diane Baker Alumni Lecture!

We love celebrating the contributions the alumni of the University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program have made to the practice of genetic counseling. In fact, while our alumni reflect less than 5% of the current genetic counseling workforce:

- 20% of the research presentations at the 2010 National Society of Genetic Counselors Annual Education Conference were given by graduates of the Michigan UMGCP.
- 20% of the current board of directors of the American Board of Genetic Counseling are alumni of the University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program including Janice Berliner, Class of 1988 (Accreditation Chair) and Beverly Yashar, Class of 1997 (Secretary/Treasurer).
- Of 7 NSGC standing Committees, 3 are chaired by UM alumni including Monica Marvin, Class of 1994 (Access & Service Delivery Committee), Amy Sturm Class of 2001 (Communications Committee) and Liz Kearney, Class of 1996 (Nominating Committee). Liz also served as the 2010 NSGC President.
- One of the leading textbooks for all genetic counseling programs - *A Guide to Genetic Counseling* - was co-edited by members of our faculty, Wendy Uhlmann, Jane Schuette and Bev Yashar.

The Diane Baker Alumni Award honors this tradition of excellence in genetic counseling.

We need your help identifying the 2011 recipient of this award. In honor of Diane's excellence as a clinician and innovator, the recipient should have a (1) commitment to professional activism, (2) innovation in the practice of genetic counseling, (3) leadership, and (4) laudable scholarly achievement. The recipient of this alumni award will be invited to spend the day visiting the Michigan program where they will mentor current graduate students and share their expertise with our genetics community. Nominations will be accepted starting on June 1, 2011.

## Dates to Remember

**Monday April 25, 2011**

AGCPD Universal Admissions Offer Date

**Friday April 29, 2011**

Graduation UMGCP

(Reception at Bev's house Thursday 4/28/11 starting at 7:30pm)

**Friday June 3, 2011**

Joint UM/Wayne State Genetic Counselors Supervisors Workshop  
Ann Arbor, MI

**Wednesday, August 31, 2011**

Fall Orientation for incoming students begins

**Tuesday, September 6, 2011**

Fall classes start

**Friday-Sunday, September 23-25, 2011**

Department of Human Genetics Retreat  
Gull Lake, MI

**October, 2011**

UMGCP Gathering  
NSGC Annual Education Conference  
San Diego, California

## Class of 2011 Research Activities

**Gina Cowing** explored the impact of genetic counseling and genetic testing on health behaviors, coping, and cancer worry in a cohort of patients seen in the U of M Breast and Ovarian Cancer Risk Evaluation Clinic. Importantly, her data set includes information related to health behaviors (diet and exercise) and psychological health outcomes one year post counseling and testing and provides important insight into some of the longer term outcomes of genetic counseling and testing.

**Barbara Hamlington** utilized data collected as part of the REVEAL (Risk Evaluation and Education for Alzheimer's disease) study to explore the relationship between disease perceptions and health-promoting activities. The results of her research study are important in understanding how to effectively counsel individuals seeking genetic risk information for complex diseases.

**Rebecca Frysinger** completed a university-wide study of undergraduates that explored their interest in genetic testing. This study lays important groundwork in understanding the factors that this population considers when thinking about genetic testing and when and where they might pursue such tests.

**Darcy Huismann** developed a collaboration with the Congenital Muscle Disease International Registry and the Muscular Dystrophy Association, psychologists, neurologists and geneticists in order to explore the relationship between autonomy and quality of life in young adults with congenital myopathies and muscular dystrophies. These individuals are at a unique intersection of their lives where they are developmentally becoming more independent, but their condition may be causing them to be more dependent on others. The results of her work will help us adapt genetic counseling practices to meet the specific needs of this population.

**Jessica Ordonez** is passionate about exploring international perspectives in genetic counseling practice. In pursuit of this goal, her research is on parental communication in a Chilean genetic counseling setting. This qualitative study is seeking to describe the structure of the communication process in genetics encounters in Chile. The study also aims to determine the role of the communication process in parental coping with a child's genetic diagnosis. Insights from current genetic counseling practice in Chile will make valuable contributions to the expanding body of knowledge about transnational genetic counseling.



Pictured to the left (L-R):  
Gina Cowing,  
Darcy Huismann,  
Rebecca Frysinger,  
Barbara Hamlington,  
Jessica Ordonez.

## UMGCP Students Prepare for Summer Clinical Rotations

During the summer semester University of Michigan students complete two full time clinical rotations. One of these rotations is generally completed at a site, chosen by the student, outside of the University of Michigan system. This ensures that each student's clinical portfolio is both comprehensive and unique.

This summer, students are completing their offsite rotations in various locations across North America. Brittany Batte will be completing a prenatal genetics rotation at Hamilton Health Sciences in Ontario. Katya Brossart will be travelling to Evanston, Illinois for a rotation in Adult and Cancer Genetics at Northshore University Health System. We are thrilled that we will again be sending students to Ohio State University and Huntsman Cancer Institute where Heidi Dreyfuss and Lesli Kiedrowski, respectively, will be completing cancer genetics rotations with leaders in the field. Michelle Kluge will be in Marshfield, Wisconsin, where she will be completing a pediatric rotation. Finally, Andrie Klass will complete both of her rotations here in Michigan, at the UM Adult Medical Genetics Clinic and at Beaumont Reproductive Genetics.

Thank you to all of the supervisors for making these opportunities possible!