

Welcome to our Incoming Class

In August we welcomed 9 new students into our University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program family. Our academic year got off to a wonderful start in the classroom, where they have been engaged, inquisitive, and incredibly hardworking. In the clinic, they have collectively observed over 230 cases and then discussed many of them in peer supervision. We've also had fun together creating vision boards, volunteering at our local Buddy Walk, and attending a largely rain soaked departmental retreat. To learn more about our new students, see pages 5-7.



Diane Koeller: 14th recipient of the Diane Baker Alumni Award



Diane Koeller

We're delighted to announce that Diane Koeller, MS, MPH, LCGC is the 14th recipient of the Diane Baker Alumni Award!

Diane graduated from the University of Michigan in 2016 with dual degrees including a Master of Science in Genetic Counseling and Master of Public Health in Health Behavior and Health Education. Since graduating, Diane has worked as a clinical and research genetic counselor with the Cancer Genetics and Prevention team at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

In her current position, Diane has been involved in a number of studies including: INHERIT (INvestigating HEReditary Risk in Thoracic cancers), which aims to better understand the role of germline EGFR variants in hereditary lung cancer; PROACTIVE (PROfile And Cancer gene Testing for IndiVidual Evaluation), a Dana-Farber institute-wide study that offers panel testing, whole genome and whole transcriptome sequencing for participants with a personal and/or family history of cancer. Her research pursuits cross international borders; Diane is also the lead genetic counselor for a pilot study of genetic counseling and genetic testing for individuals with breast or prostate cancer in Rwanda. In addition to her clinical and research efforts, Diane is a dedicated supervisor to genetic counseling students from multiple training programs.

Notably, Diane is also a passionate advocate for healthcare equity for members of the transgender and gender diverse (TGD) communities. From educating providers, organizations and graduate students about clinical and research equity for the TGD community to publishing extensive literature on this critical subject, Diane's efforts towards healthcare equity are impactful on many levels.

Diane returned to Ann Arbor on November 13 for the annual Diane Baker Alumni Lecture. We were grateful to welcome her back to campus!

Updated Educational Tool on Gender-Affirming Care

The University of Michigan Genetic Counseling Program is excited to announce an updated and combined educational tool on gender-affirming care for genetic counselors and genetic counseling students called "Amplify/Sprouted: Evolved." While Amplify/Sprouted: Evolved provides information on both the cancer and prenatal specialty, the majority of the concepts presented can be applied to all aspects of genetic counseling practice. We are very grateful to those who shared their life experiences as part of the development of these modules. In fact, Gabrielle Ernst (Class of 2022) and Nicole Huser (Class of 2021) et al recently published on their experiences developing these modules, "Learning from our patients: Utilizing the expertise of transgender and/or gender diverse educators to build an inclusive learning cycle." For information about how to access these password protected modules, please reach out to UMGenetics@umich.edu.

Welcome to Kari Branham: UMGCP Assistant Program Director

UMGCP is thrilled to have Kari Branham, MS, CGC join the leadership team of our graduate program as Assistant Director. In this role, she directs the research arm of the UMGCP.

Kari graduated from the UMGCP in 2002 and has worked for over 20 years as a genetic counselor at Michigan Medicine. She has been actively involved in clinical practice, education and research. Clinically, Kari is internationally recognized for her expertise in inherited retinal disease and is committed to providing exemplary, compassionate patient care. Kari is also a prolific researcher, actively contributing to clinical trials, gene discovery, investigations of genotype-phenotype correlations, and epidemiological research. As an educator, Kari has supervised students in the Inherited Retinal Dystrophy Clinic since 2006 and provides didactic instruction to genetic counseling students, medical students, fellows, and residents.



Kari Branham

We are also excited to share that Kari was awarded the 2023 NSGCares Community Engagement Award, which recognizes genetic counselors who have demonstrated outstanding engagement in their community, be it on a local or global scale. Kari was recognized for her dedication to the community of patients with an inherited retinal dystrophy.

Kari's wealth of expertise and knowledge as well as her collaborative and positive nature will be tremendous assets to the UMGCP.

Lori Williamson-Dean Receives Leader in Cultural Advocacy Award



Lori Williamson-Dean

Lori Williamson-Dean, MS, CGC (Class of 1991) has been awarded the 2023 NSGC Leader in Cultural Advocacy Award, which recognizes genetic counselors who have demonstrated significant dedication to cultural advocacy to patients, communities and stakeholders outside of the genetic counseling profession. She formerly directed the University of Oklahoma Genetic Counseling Program and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences Genetic Counseling Program, where she remains a faculty member. She has an interest in complementary and alternative medicine for genetic conditions, rural and public health, psychosocial issues and clinical supervision. Lori was also the recipient of the Diane Baker Alumni Award in 2016. Lori has exemplified the University's vision of developing the "Leaders and Best." Congratulations!

Welcome to Michigan Medicine's Newest Genetic Counselors



Nicole Cho

Nicole Cho completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and attended the University of Michigan for her genetic counseling training. Her graduate thesis work was titled "Optimizing the working relationship between genetic counselors and medical interpreters for culturally competent care," which

explored the impact of culture bumps on the formation of a patient-centered working alliance. She is now a GC at the Michigan Medicine Rogel Cancer Center. Nicole is currently serving as a representative on the UMGCP DEI Committee.



Aidan Kennedy

Aidan Kennedy completed his undergraduate studies at Eastern Michigan University and attended Thomas Jefferson University for his genetic counselor training. His thesis was titled "An Exploration of Video-Assisted Genetic Counseling Sessions," exploring how patients and genetic counselors felt about including an educational video component to their visits in their own words. He is now a GC at the Michigan Medicine Rogel Cancer Center. Aidan is also currently serving as a representative on the UMGCP DEI Committee.

GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM

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

The 2023 Neel Genetic Counseling Research Award



Vedika Ramesh

Congratulations to Vedika Ramesh, the 2023 James V. Neel Genetic Counseling Fellowship recipient! Vedika was selected for her proposal titled "Evaluating Genetic Counselor Utilization of Sponsored Genetic Testing Programs."

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.

Vedika's thesis work will survey genetic counselors to better understand their awareness of and attitudes towards sponsored testing, the factors which influence the decision to offer sponsored testing to patients, and the information considered important to communicate when consenting patients to sponsored testing in order to guide best practices for the use of sponsored testing in patient care.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Wednesday, December 13, 2023

Deadline to Register for the [Genetic Counseling Admissions Match](#)

Friday, January 5, 2024

UMGCP Application Deadline

Tuesday, April 9, 2024

Rank Order List due to NMS

Wednesday, April 17, 2024

Match Results Released

UM/AGCPD Outstanding Supervisor Award Recipient: Patty Arscott



Patty Arscott

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.

Congratulations to Patricia (Patty) Arscott on being recognized for the 2023 AGCPD Outstanding Fieldwork Supervisor Award! Patty is a gifted clinician and supervisor, and numerous students have benefited from her dedication to their growth and development! She provides genetic counseling in the Cardiovascular Genetics clinic at Michigan Medicine. Patty consistently supervises students, and despite her challenging clinical demands, finds a way to prioritize their learning.

Students repeatedly remark on Patty's ability to encourage questions and provide constructive, positive feedback, creating an environment of open communication and collaboration with her students. As one recent student shared, "Patty has been instrumental in helping me find my own style as a genetic counselor. She has given me the freedom to explore my strengths and interests, providing guidance and support along the way." The University of Michigan Genetic Counseling program is grateful for Patty's generosity in sharing her knowledge, time, and support to the next generation of genetic counselors!



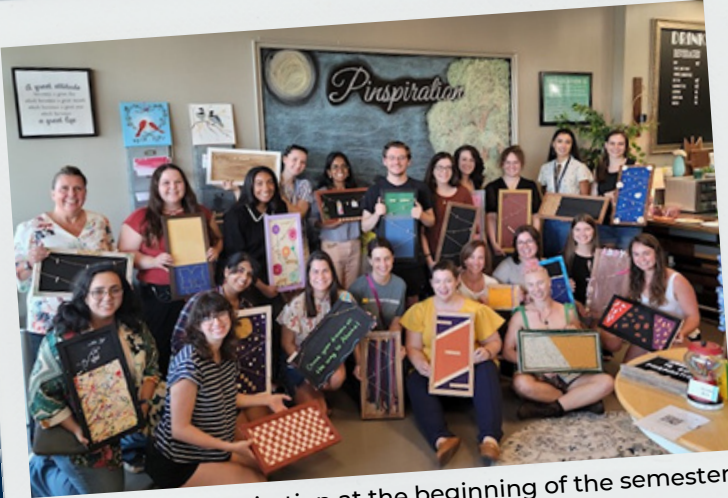
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Join our mailing list [here!](#)

In case you missed it, you can view the recording of our Open House [here](#)

Snapshots of UMGCP- Fall 2023



We went to Pinspiration at the beginning of the semester to create vision boards



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



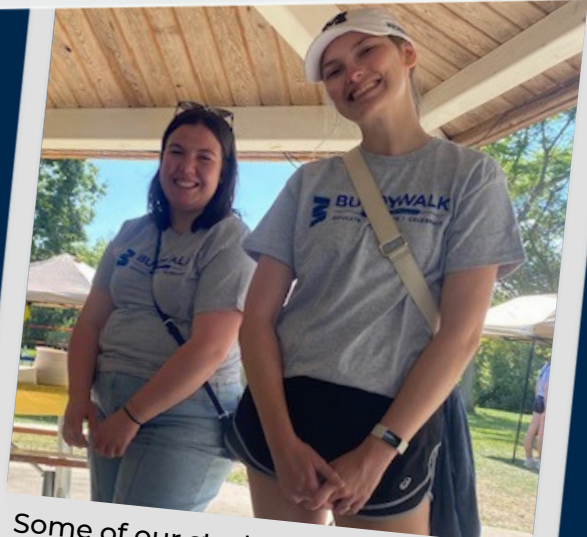
We had dinner at Aubree's Pizzeria & Grill with the GCs from Michigan Medicine to celebrate Genetic Counselor Awareness Day



UMGCP Reunion at the National Society of Genetic Counselors Annual Conference in Chicago, IL



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



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



FALL 2023 NEW STUDENTS

GENETIC COUNSELING PROGRAM



Emily Agen (she/her) graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 2022 with a B.S. in Molecular Biology and a minor in Chemistry, and she was an interdisciplinary honors student. As an undergrad, Emily studied the potential species diversification of Arkansas Orangethroat Darters by developing a project that generated DNA sequencing data using a cloning process from Arkansas Plains Darter DNA samples. During undergrad and after graduation, she gained valuable advocacy experience through her time volunteering at Crisis Text Line as a Crisis Counselor. Following her graduation, Emily worked as a Genetic Counseling Assistant at the Hemophilia Outreach Center of Green Bay, WI. She also simultaneously worked as a Clinical DNA Testing Laboratory Technician at Prevention Genetics in Marshfield, WI where she had lab responsibilities in the lab processes involved in both Sanger and NGS DNA sequencing.



Abby Anderson (she/her) graduated from Purdue University in 2021 with a B.S. in biology. As an undergraduate, she worked as a technician in a lab working to characterize the role of the *CHD5* gene in tumor suppression and development in zebrafish and extracted DNA from tissue samples as well as performed basic fish husbandry tasks. Abby was also a crisis counselor for the Crisis Text Line, communicating and collaborating with at-risk individuals, and was a member of the Pre-Genetic Counseling Club, interacting with different professionals in the field of genetics. After graduation, she began working as a genetic counseling assistant at an oncology genetics clinic at Community Health Network in Indianapolis, IN. In this role, she worked closely with a team of five cancer genetic counselors and carried out duties such as ordering genetic tests, intaking medical and family histories, building pedigrees, running risk assessments, coordinating patient sample collections, and disclosing negative and VUS genetic testing results.



Alyssa Dews (she/her) graduated from the University of Michigan in 2020 with a B.S. in Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Biology and a minor in Science, Technology and Society. As an undergraduate, Alyssa worked as a clinical research assistant on a project studying provider prediction of Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome and patient outcomes. Following this clinical experience, she worked on an independent research project as a Biomedical and Life Sciences Research Fellow through the University's Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP). Her project investigated the effects of SAM68 and QKI in Lipopolysaccharide induced alternative splicing using siRNA gene knockdown. Alyssa continued her involvement in UROP during the remainder of her undergraduate time serving as a Peer Facilitator, where she mentored and taught first- and second-year students about Health Sciences research. Following graduation, Alyssa worked as a genetic counseling assistant at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in the Clinical Genetics division. In addition, she worked as a clinical research assistant through the Michigan Medicine Child Health Evaluation and Research Center assisting on multiple studies regarding palliative care, pediatric health disparities, and pediatric critical care redeployment during the first wave of COVID-19. She gained advocacy experience by working in a COVID-19 vaccination clinic in her community and volunteering as a Crisis Counselor.



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Lydia Dunn (she/her) graduated from Ohio University in 2020 with a B.S. in Biological Sciences and a minor in Psychology. As an undergraduate, Lydia worked as a research assistant in a genetics lab. She first worked on a project investigating genetic interactions involved in the JAK/STAT pathway, and later transitioned to researching genes involved with age-related hearing loss in mice. Following graduation, Lydia worked at a foodbank in rural Southeast Ohio. She spent time doing outreach for food assistance programs throughout the region and later trained as a Community Health Worker (CHW). As a CHW, she worked for a community health program that provided food home deliveries and case management services to pregnant and postpartum individuals experiencing food insecurity. Additionally, Lydia volunteered as a peer counselor for Exhale text line, offering post abortion support, and as a sexual health educator for Planned Parenthood Chat/Text.



Katie Finnegan (she/her) graduated from Wartburg College in 2022 with a B.A. in Biochemistry and a Minor in Leadership. Throughout her undergraduate career, she studied the role that the gelatinase MMP-9 plays in the metastasis of ovarian cancer. Additionally, as a rising senior she spent a summer in Sioux Falls, SD, at Sanford Research, studying the efficacy of islet-cell-specific CAR (chimeric antigen receptor) regulatory T cells for use in novel type 1 diabetic therapies. At Wartburg, Katie worked as a Certified Pharmacy Technician and chemistry tutor while pursuing various extracurricular activities including Student Ambassadors, the Wartburg Scholars Program, Chemistry Club, service trips, choir, and theater. Following graduation, Katie used her gap year to gain advocacy experience through her work as a Domestic Violence Intern and Shelter Program Assistant at Waypoint Services, and her volunteer experience through the Iowa Crisis Text Line.



Camille Giacobone (she/her) graduated from Kalamazoo College in 2018 with a B.A. in Biology. As an undergraduate, she volunteered at Ascension (Borgess) Hospital in Kalamazoo as a patient representative and worked to characterize the genetic mutation associated with the 'zombie' mutant zebrafish phenotype for her thesis at Western Michigan University. She was also a member of Sisters in Science, a club at Kalamazoo College that aims to inspire young girls to pursue careers in STEM. After graduation Camille pursued a research fellowship in the Mechanisms of Genome Dynamics Laboratory at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences where she studied the accumulation of somatic mutations in healthy human fibroblasts for two years. Camille has subsequently worked in various biotechnology roles towards the development of a diagnostic test for Preeclampsia, analyzing patients' COVID-19 PCR test results, and the development of a novel NIPT assay. She gained advocacy experience through co-facilitating weekly support groups for grieving children who have lost loved ones at Ele's Place.



FALL 2023 NEW STUDENTS

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Erika Hanson (she/her) graduated from Smith College in 2009 with a BA in Biochemistry. She has worked in genetics core facility laboratories at The Cleveland Clinic and the University of Chicago preparing and running samples on Sanger sequencing, microarray, and next-generation sequencing platforms. She was a study coordinator for sponsored and investigator-initiated oncology trials in lung and renal cancers at The Cleveland Clinic including leading the lung cancer study coordinator team and training new coordinators. Most recently, Erika has been at the University of Michigan in a variety of roles. She initially joined the lab of Dr. Goutham Narla as a clinical research coordinator assisting a large basic science laboratory with clinical applications including coordinating with clinical collaborators on projects typically outside of the research questions investigated by the rest of the lab. In addition to her role in the laboratory, she has added two more, one as a genetic counseling assistant in the Medical Genetics Clinic and another as a study coordinator for a U01-funded grant looking to expand cancer genetic testing in the state of Michigan. Erika gained advocacy experience by volunteering with SafeHouse Center first in the playroom with children staying in the shelter and for the past year as a co-facilitator for the sexual assault support group.



Rose Kemmerling (she/her) graduated from Olivet College in 2020 with a B.A. in biology and a minor in psychology. As an undergraduate, she played both volleyball and tennis, was a leader for the student athlete advisory committee (SAAC) and established a breeding population of zebrafish for future student research projects. As a rising senior, Rose interned at Flower Hospital with the cancer genetics clinic and collected data for their cancer registry project. Following graduation, Rose gained advocacy experience as a behavior technician where she helped a child with autism learn effective communication skills. She then transitioned to a genetic counseling assistant role where she supported both the cancer genetics and adult medical genetics clinics at Michigan Medicine. During this time, Rose earned her Master of Public Health degree from the University of Toledo, graduating in 2022. While there, she was part of a research team that surveyed students to determine their perception and knowledge of direct-to-consumer genetic testing. As her capstone project, she created a program design and evaluation plan for a mobile genetic counseling clinic. She was also a hospice volunteer at a local nursing home, and a Legacy Builder, where she would reach out to older adults via telephone to learn more about their life story.



Maya Vaishnaw (she/her) graduated from Wesleyan University with a B.A. in Molecular Biology & Biochemistry and Psychology. After early research experience studying therapies for Phenylketonuria, as an undergraduate Maya studied the structure and function of mutagenized enzymes with therapeutic applications with Wesleyan's Taylor Lab. As a rising junior, she interned with the Undiagnosed Diseases Network. She also volunteered with Wesleyan Science Outreach, and enjoyed leading undergraduates through Biology Lab instruction and learners around the world in Social Psychology through a "Massive Online Open Course" or MOOC. Following her graduation, Maya worked in clinical research with the Massachusetts General Hospital Faustman Lab, studying an accessible therapy for Type 1 Diabetes, in addition to the genetic underpinnings of Type 1. Maya also has a background in patient advocacy in the rare genetic disorder space.