Greetings from the Chair

I am pleased to send you this ninth annual Department of Human Genetics Newsletter, and I look forward to seeing many of you at the alumni gathering to be held on Friday, October 30, 1998 during the American Society of Human Genetics Meetings in Denver.

Much of this past year was devoted to the planning of the major renovations of the Department’s research and administrative space. Linda Peasley, our Administrative Manager has done a heroic job in spearheading most of these efforts. I have been ably advised by a committee of faculty including David Burke, Jeff Innis, Jeff Chamberlain and Sally Camper in the planning of laboratories and other facilities. Sally played a key role in designing new mouse facilities, to be housed in the basement of the Buhl building, and Vince Keenan, our Senior Computer Systems Specialist has planned an outstanding state-of-the-art media laboratory. The downside of renovation, of course, is the evacuation of the people before the wrecking ball hits. The Kurachi, Tashian, Glover, Gelehner and Meisler labs have already, or will soon move into their swing space in the subterranean depths of Medical Sciences Research Building II.

Jeff Chamberlain’s exciting work on Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and the development of “gutted” adenovirus vectors for gene therapy was featured on this year’s Muscular Dystrophy Association Telethon; clinical gene therapy trials are on the horizon. Jeff is also the principal investigator on a large NIH program project grant, “Genetic Modulations of Striated Muscle During Aging,” awarded this year. Frank Probst, an M.D., Ph.D. student in Sally Camper’s Laboratory, celebrated, on the pages of Science, the birth of Sebastian, a mouse in which hereditary deafness had been cured by transgenic therapy. The work received considerable media attention including an interview with the BBC. Finally, the U.S. patent for “Viral Mediated Gene Transfer System” was awarded this past year to Mike Levine and to former Michigan faculty Bill Kelley and Tom Pellecchia.

Jeff Innis was promoted to Associate Professor of Human Genetics with tenure and to Associate Professor of Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases; Arand Swarnep was promoted to Associate Professor of Human Genetics.

This past June marked the union of Genetic Counseling and the Human Genome Project with the nuptials of Diane Baker and Francis Collins. Congratulations!

Comings and Goings

I am delighted to report the recruitment of John Moran, Ph.D. as Assistant Professor of Human Genetics and Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine. John comes from Haig Kazazian’s lab at Penn, and studies human transposable elements and how they affect complexity and stability of mammalian genomes. His recruitment was made possible by the new Biomedical Scholars Program, an initiative to recruit the very best investigators in a variety of disciplines and to provide the recruitment packages that will bring them to Michigan. John’s recruitment was a collaborative effort among several departments with support being provided by the Medical School, the Gene Therapy Program, and the Cancer Center as well as our Department. I anticipate that this cooperative and interdisciplinary effort will be the model for future recruitment of outstanding faculty to the University of Michigan.

Our search for a population/quantitative geneticist goes on... and on; but, I am newly optimistic this time. There is a plan to build a Center in Statistical Genetics and to begin a joint recruitment effort between the Medical School and the School of Public Health, focused in the Departments of Human Genetics and Biostatistics. The Center will be led by Mike Boehnke in Biostatistics, with the search committee co-chaired by David Burke.

Sharon Reilly Kardas, Assistant Research Scientist, has recently taken a new position as Assistant Professor of Epidemiology in the School of Public Health.

Dick Tashian attained Active Emeritus status during this past year, after 41 years on our faculty. A celebratory symposium honoring Dick, the “Tash Bash”, is scheduled for October 16, 1999. Please mark your calendars and plan to join us in Ann Arbor.

On a sad note, Henry Gerholdt, Emeritus Professor of Human Genetics died suddenly this past summer. Henry was a member of our faculty for 29 years, retiring in 1968. He will be missed.

Numerically Speaking

Our faculty numbered 28 in 1997-98 including eight professors (three joint), eight associate professors (five joint), three assistant professors (all joint), three primary research faculty, one lecturer and two clinical instructors. Our twelve tenure track faculty with primary appointments in Human
Genetics were awarded $5 million in direct cost funding during this past year and have another $10.8 million pending. All of our faculty are funded and support, on average, 56% of their salaries on external funds. The department has 39 students including three in the Medical Scientist Training Program, seven in the Genetic Counseling Program and five Master's Students. Expenses for student tuition, stipends and Grad Care totaled nearly $600,000 for the past year. In addition to Human Genetics students, we have three CMB students, including one in the MSTP, performing thesis research in Departmental laboratories.

Administration

Linda Peasley and her staff continue to manage over 100 different accounts and enable our many research activities to function smoothly. The quality of our administrative support is the envy of the Medical School. Our office staff is incredibly computer savvy, a great help to those of us who are much less so, and Vince Kearan continues to expand and improve our Departmental computer facilities logarithmically.

Awards and Honors

Our faculty continue to serve on numerous editorial boards, advisory boards and study sections, are presenters of invited lectureships, seminars and speakers at meetings, and participate in community and outreach activities. Wendy Uhmann has just been chosen President-elect of the National Society for Genetic Counselors, an honor previously bestowed on Diane Baker and alumnus Barbara Bowles-Biesele. Jeff Limas was elected to membership in the Society for Pediatric Research and Eric Feareon to the American Society of Clinical Investigation. Gil Ormiston was inducted into fellowship in the American College of Physicians.

Based on academic performance, Igor Nasonkin was the recipient of this year's James V. Neel Fellowship and Lee Lawton, the Howard Cramer Family Fellowship.

Graduate Education

I am delighted to report that the Interdepartmental Genetics Training Grant, ably directed by George Brewer, was awarded five more years with its full complement of slots. George, Janet Miller, and all the others who worked hard on this program and the application deserve our thanks for retaining this critically important support for our graduate program.

Five Ph.D. students entered our program this fall, along with four genetic counseling students and two Master's degree students. Frank Probst was awarded a Rackham Fellowship; six of our students are supported on the Genetics Training Grant, and one each by the Reproductive Science Training Grant, the Organogenesis Training Grant, the Genome Sciences Training Grant, and a Rackham Merit Fellowship.

Four of our students completed their doctoral training during this past year. Nicholas Plummer (Meister Lab, "Neuronal Sodium Channel SCN3A: Genomic Organization, Alternative Splicing, and Role in Neurological Disease") is now a postdoctoral fellow with Andrew Patterson at Duke. Wonhee Kang (Meister Lab, "Transcript Characterization in the Region of the Mouse Neuromuscular Mutation rand2") is a postdoctoral fellow in Bioinformatics at the National Institutes of Health. Sharmila Basu (Bermelstein Lab, "The Genetics of Cataract Retardation: Modifiers, Morphology and Multiple Alleles") will be a postdoctoral fellow with Margaret Pericak-Vance at Duke. Finally, Carey Lumeng, an MSTP student, (Chamberlain Lab, "Characterization of Dystrophin and Urophin Expression and Identification of Novel Associated Proteins") will return to his clinical training at the Medical School.

Three genetic counseling students graduated in December. Heather Lee is in Reproductive Genetics at Hutzel Hospital; Diane Schmidt is at Kreger Hearing Research Institute; and Beverly Yashar is at the Kellogg Eye Center.

A major development in graduate education is the initiation of the Program in Biomedical Sciences, an interdepartmental program for combined recruitment and admissions to ten biomedical programs. Entering students will share a number of common curricular activities before selecting a departmental home by the end of the first year. PIBS will be directed by Dave Engelske, formerly director of the Cell and Molecular Biology Program, with Sally Camper as Associate Director. Human Genetics faculty will be well represented on the PIBS operating, curriculum, and admissions committees.

Sally Camper was awarded a Faculty and Graduate Student Seminar Program Award from the Office of the Vice President for Research and the Rackham Graduate School, which supported an exciting program of seminars on the genetics of complex diseases. Liz Petty was awarded the same grant for the current academic year and has already begun a seminar series on clinical genetics and counseling issues.


Outreach Activities

Our faculty and students continue to be active in outreach programs covering a broad spectrum of audiences ranging from inner city middle school students to alumni at Camp Michigan in northern Michigan. Pam Biont-Baker, for the second year in a row, received the Excellence in Education Outreach effort for her impressive efforts in this area.
In Closing

The "rush" of last year's commitment of significant resources for renovation of our Departmental facilities has now given way to the arduous task of planning and actually carrying out these essential changes. This past year also saw the successful renewal of our Genetics Training Grant, the admission of a fine class of students, and continued impressive progress in the research arena. The new Biomedical Scholars program has enabled us to recruit an outstanding new faculty member and will serve as a model for future institutional recruitment's. We have just had our annual retreat, this time in Ann Arbor, which reminds me, again of the many strengths of our Department in all areas. We appreciate your continued support, both financial for the Neel and Cramer Endowments, and your help in directing students to our programs.

I am pleased to share news of the department with you and I hope to see many of you at the American Society of Human Genetics meetings in Denver.

With Best Regards,

Sincerely

Thomas D. Gelehrter, M.D.
Professor and Chair

Faculty Activities

George Brewer was elected to the Council of the Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine, and continues to serve on the Board of Directors of the International Society for Trace Element Research in Humans and the American College of Nutrition. He is the Associate Editor of the American Journal of Hematology, and serves on the Editorial Board of Progress in Clinical and Biological Research, The Journal of Trace Elements in Experimental Medicine, and Biochemical Genetics.

Margit Burmeister was appointed to the Editorial Board of Mammalian Genome and is the chair of the Mouse Chromosome 10 Committee. She was a speaker at the 11th International Mouse Genome Conference in Florida.

Sally Camper was an invited speaker at the 1997 Gordon Research Conference on Hormone Action and at the 1998 Annual Endocrine Society meeting. She is a member of the HUGO Mouse Genome Committee and of the NIH Mammalian Genetics Study Section. Sally serves on the Editorial Board of Molecular Endocrinology, Genomics, Mammalian Genome, and Current Biology. She continues to direct our outstanding Transgenic Core Facility that has provided 2500 founder animals to 62 investigators.

Jeffrey Chamberlain was an invited speaker at the International Symposium on Gene Therapy for Hemophilia and at the American Society of Human Genetics meeting in Baltimore, as well as presenting seminars in England, Italy and Japan. Jeff serves on the Editorial Board of Gene Therapy, Genome Research, Human Molecular Genetics, Neuromuscular Disorders, and Genetic Medicine.

Eric Feorin, Associate Director for Basic Science of the U of M Comprehensive Cancer Center, serves on the Editorial Boards of seven journals, including serving as an Associate Editor of Cancer Research, Journal of Clinical Investigation, and of Clinical Cancer Research. He is a member of the Board of Scientific Advisors of the National Cancer Institute and on the Science Advisory Committee of the Damon Runyon-Walter Winchell Cancer Research Fund. He has also served as an ad hoc member of the NIH Pathology Study Section.

Thomas Gelehrter was awarded a grant from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science to present lectures in Tokyo and Kyoto. He is a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of Biological Chemistry, a member of the ASHG ad hoc Committee on Eugenics, and was elected to the Council of the International Society for Fibrinolysis and Proteolysis. This fall he begins a three-year term, his third, on the Executive Committee of the Medical School.

David Ginsburg was an invited speaker at the American Society of Hematology and at the 23rd International Congress of the World Federation of Hemophilia. He is a member of the Board of Scientific Counselors of the National Human Genome Research Institute and of the Scientific Review Committee of the National Hemophilia Foundation. He is the Deputy Editor of the Journal of Clinical Investigation, and serves on the Editorial Board of Human Mutation, Blood, Biology of Blood and Marrow Transplantation, Proceedings of the Association of American Physicians, and the American Journal of Medicine.

Thomas Glover was an invited speaker at the International Meeting on Genes and Environment in Cancer in Bonn, Germany. He is a member of the Research Advisory Board of the March of Dimes - Birth Defects Foundation, Associate
Editor of the *American Journal of Human Genetics* and of *Cytogenetics and Cell Genetics*, and serves on the Editorial Board of the *American Journal of Medical Genetics*.

Jerome Gorski is a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the National Incontinence Pigmenti Foundation and a member of the Michigan State Department of Public Health Genetics Advisory Committee. He is an Associate Editor of *Genetics in Medicine*.

Jeffrey Innis presented an invited symposium talk at the ASHG Meeting in Baltimore and was an invited speaker at the meeting of the European Teratology Society in Cannes, France. He is the Director of the Medical Genetics Residency Program at the University of Michigan.

Kotokura Kurachi presented invited seminars in Norway and Sweden. He is a member of the NIH Biochemistry Study Section and a member of the Editorial Boards of *Thrombosis and Haemostasis*, *BioScience, Biotechnology and Biochemistry*, and *Gene Therapy/Molecular Biology*.

Miriam Meisler is the President of the International Mammalian Genome Society and a member of the External Advisory Committee of the Mammalian Genome Database at the Jackson Laboratory. She is an Associate Editor of *Genomics* and on the Editorial Board of *Mammalian Genome*.

James Nccl spoke at the 16th International Congress of Nutrition in Canada and at the Second Nestle Conference on Nutrition in Mexico City. He was the recipient of the Colonel Harland Sanders Award from the March of Dimes – Birth Defects Foundation. He serves on the Editorial Boards of *Blood Cells, Molecular and Chemical, Gene Geography, Genetic Epidemiology, and Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*.

Gil Omenn, Executive Vice President for Medical Affairs, presented the keynote address at the First Annual Conference of Genetics and Public Health, State-of-the-Art Distinguished Lecture at the American College of Physicians Annual Meeting, and was the 1998 Commencement Speaker at the University of Michigan Medical School. He is an Editor of the *Oxford Textbook of Public Health* and an Associate Editor of *Environmental Research*, in addition to serving on the Editorial Boards of *Annual Review of Public Health, American Journal of Health Promotion, Japanese Journal of Human Genetics, Journal of Cellular Biochemistry*, and *Reviews in Molecular Research*.

Elizabeth Petty presented invited seminars at the Croatian Academy of Arts and Sciences in Zagreb, as well as serving as the keynote speaker for the University of Michigan School of Public Health Alumni Day. She is a member of the State of Michigan Governor's Commission on Genetic Privacy and Progress.

Diane Robins continues to chair the Molecular Biology-2 Study Section for the Army Breast Cancer Initiative, and is a member of the NIH Postdoctoral Fellows in Endocrinology Panel. She continues to serve on the Board of Women in Endocrinology and on the Editorial Board of *The Journal of Biological Chemistry, Steroids, and Genetics*.

Jane Schuette spoke on “Expanding Horizons for Girls in Science and Math” at the Exploration at Cranbrook Institute of Science.

Charles Sing was an invited speaker at the Ecological Society of America and at the NIH. He serves on the Editorial Boards of *Atherosclerosis and Thrombosis, Journal of Molecular Medicine*, and the *American Journal of Medical Genetics*.

Anand Swaroop was an invited speaker at Johns Hopkins University and serves on the Editorial Board of *Molecular Vision*. He is the Director of the International Resource for X-Linked Retinitis Pigmentosa, of the Foundation Fighting Blindness, and a member of its Genetics Committee.

Richard Tashian continues to serve as Associate Editor of *Biochemical Genetics* and Editor of *Molecular Phylogenetics and Evolution*.

Wendy Uhlmann presented educational workshops at the National Society of Genetic Counselors annual meeting. She is a member of the Professional Issues Committee of the NSGC.