Dear colleagues and well-wishers,

I am delighted to welcome you to the CMB Fall 2021 newsletter. This Fall semester provided us with several opportunities to interact in person, safely and responsibly, after almost a year and a half.

The annual CMB picnic, held in August and attended by 70 or so CMB members, had special significance this year. The picnic celebrated Dr. Roberta Fuller’s many outstanding years as a scientist and CMB Director, with live music by Mad Pursuit, Dr. Fuller’s rock band, and food fresh from the grill. Several previous CMB Associate Directors spoke about all the positive ways in which Dr. Fuller’s leadership had influenced them. The cake, shaped as a budding yeast befitting Dr. Fuller’s research, was decorated by all in attendance. On behalf of CMB, I sincerely thank Dr. Fuller for her strong, caring, and dedicated leadership of CMB over the past decade. Dr. Fuller retired in September and will continue as a Professor Emerita of Biological Chemistry.

The CMB Annual Retreat was held in person, on a sunny October 22nd, at the Richard L.
From the Director (continued):

Postma Family Clubhouse. This was no small feat, considering the times. The retreat committee - CMB students Ariel McShane and Ashley Melnick - along with our wonderful staff Lauren Perl and Carolyn Walsh, organized an outstanding day of events. Everyone who attended was vaccinated and tested negative for COVID before attending. Dr. Denise Okafor delivered the Jessica Schwartz Keynote Lecture, where she described her brilliant work using ancestral sequence reconstruction and molecular dynamics to study hormone specificity. Dr. Okafor also spent time with the students discussing her career path with refreshing honesty and insight. The retreat included a pumpkin-decorating contest, which showcased the outstanding creativity and wit of our students, and many other group activities that gave nourishment to recover, at least a bit, from the year we had before. I am proud that the whole CMB community came together, respecting the vaccination, testing, masking, and distancing policies, to support and celebrate each other.

I congratulate Allyson Munneke and Sumin Kim for receiving the Outstanding Student Service award, for their deeply involved and exceptional efforts to continue to move CMB forward as a welcoming and inclusive program. Their efforts were key for the CMB DEI Task Force to continue their impressive efforts, including hosting an excellent seminar on (dis)ability in academia by Dr. Oluwaferanmi Okanlami. I also congratulate the 16 students who successfully passed their preliminary exams and were advanced to candidacy, and the 5 students who successfully defended their Ph.D. theses.

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Ariella Shikanov as our new Associate Director and Carolyn Walsh as our new Student Services Representative, bringing the CMB organizational arm back to its full strength. We also welcomed 3 new faculty and 18 new students who joined CMB from PIBS, MSTP, and other programs in UM. These students highlight the breadth of research, from molecular to in vivo and engineering approaches addressing biomedical problems, within CMB. Our admissions committee, chaired by Drs. Sue Hammoud and David Antonetti, are working hard to continue this trend and recruit an excellent and diverse student body. This year, to increase transparency, we invited Chris Pineda and Rosa Menjivar as student representatives to serve on the admissions committee. I am grateful to the entire committee for their dedication and hard work on this important front.

This is our 50th anniversary year. We will celebrate this special occasion through events spread out across the year, and through a special symposium in May at the end of the academic year. We are working hard to build a close relationship with the excellent alumni base we have built over the past 50 years. I encourage our alumni to please reach out to us via email or our social media outlets, and help us in this effort.

With warm regards,

Manoj Puthenveedu, MBBS, PhD
CMB In-Person Gatherings Resume

The Cellular and Molecular Biology Program is finally re-grouping in person after a long year of cancelled gatherings and Zoom meetings due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

On the evening of August 17th, the CMB Program held its annual picnic, which had been cancelled the previous year, in a pavilion at Island Park. Nearly 70 students and faculty members were in attendance and dined on hamburgers and hotdogs while they listened to live music from Dr. Roberta Fuller’s rock band. At the end of the evening, the attendees celebrated Dr. Fuller’s many years of service as the CMB program director. A budding yeast cake was provided along with ice cream from Washtenaw Dairy for dessert. The CMB students and faculty also signed a card for Dr. Fuller, and gave her gift certificates to see performances with The Ark and the University Music Society.

As the semester began, the CMB student seminar resumed in-person. While some COVID restrictions such as masking remained in place, the CMB seminar was a success. In the Fall semester, both 2nd and 4th year students gave research talks, and some trainees gave seminars to introduce guest speakers for the CMB and Human Genetics Short Course. A DEI seminar on disability in academia was also held on November 8th, featuring guest speaker Dr. Oluwaferanmi Okanlami from the Michigan Medicine Department of Family Medicine.

The CMB program also resumed holding its annual retreat in person on October 22nd at the University of Michigan Golf Course’s Richard L. Postma Family Clubhouse. The day began with a catered breakfast, followed by a Welcome, Introductions, and Service Awards ceremony. Carolyn Walsh and Dr. Ariella Shikanov were both introduced as the new CMB Student Services Representative and CMB Associate Director, respectively. Dr. Ben Allen then took to the podium to award Sumin Kim and Allyson Munneke the CMB Student Service Award for their work in the CMB DEI Task Force. To conclude the opening ceremony, Dr. Allen acknowledged all of the graduate students who advanced to candidacy, and welcomed new CMB students and faculty into the program. Dr. Nicole Koropatkin and Dr. Costas Lyssiotis were the two new faculty members to join the CMB program.

The 3rd Annual Jessica Schwartz Lecture speaker, Dr. Denise Okafor from Pennsylvania State University, then gave her talk titled “Biophysical Mechanisms Driving the Evolution of Hormone Specificity.” Dr. Okafor fielded questions from the students and faculty after her talk and later joined the students for a career and development question and answer session.

In the afternoon, the CMB students divided into teams for a pumpkin-decoration contest. The winning pumpkin, named the “Central Dogma,” was the artistic handiwork of Margarita Brovkina, Emily Eberhardt, Josephine Wu, Shannon Miller, Hadrian Kinnear, Nick Vangos, and Kamya Gopal.

The attendees then split into groups for activities including: a hike through the Nichols Arboretum; a Planetarium show and a tour of the Natural History Museum at the Biological Sciences Building; a coffee break at The Drip House coffee shop; and board games and virtual games held at the clubhouse.

The Retreat concluded with dinner back at the clubhouse, and an announcement of the winners of the pumpkin decorating contest.
In-Person CMB, continued

“It’s really refreshing to start having in-person events again. I know a lot of people were really missing that face-to-face interaction, and we’ve had a lot of students and faculty say they would like to start seeing people again. Zoom fatigue is very real, and it seems there is so much more engagement in person,” said Lauren Perl, the CMB Program Administrator, when asked about how the Program has been making the transition back to in-person events as the pandemic becomes more manageable. “Of course, there’s still that anxiety that a lot of people have transitioning to in-person events again, so you do have to balance that, and also offer some safe options for those who may want or need them. Doing a hybrid format has been a challenge, but at least now we are better equipped to do it in the future if needed.”


#Trending in Academia
#AcademicTwitter

Zazu is a big fan of virtual conferences #CellBio2021 #dogsoftwitter #AcademicTwitter #phdlife #sciencetwitter

Taylor P. van Doren (10 minute version) @taylor_vandoren

I walked into my advisor’s office for a meeting and she took one look at me and said “Nope, we’re not doing this. You’re too stressed. Let’s go out for coffee and relax.” To be shown so much grace, to have an advisor who sees me, I could’ve cried. 😊

#AcademicTwitter @Momademia

Outside I look calm. Inside, I am a bird who forgot how to land

@OpenAcademics
#RNA_RNA_URC #phdchat #phdlife #TheStrugglingS4 #phdvoice #phdmeme
#gradschool #AcademicTwitter #TNQ

Sara Ishaq @saaafarrsaa

Me pretending to be extremely busy in my work whenever my supervisor visits the lab! 🤐🤔🤔

#phdvoice #AcademicTwitter #AcademicChatter

Suneel G Sathe

How I look presenting data to my committee

How I feel presenting data to my committee

2:01 PM · Dec 6, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

12:41 AM · Dec 6, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

3:39 AM · Dec 7, 2021 · Twitter Web App
In Fall 2020, Lauren Perl became CMB’s Program Administrator. We caught up with Lauren to talk about her career, role in CMB, and favorite things to do in Ann Arbor.

Describe your career path. What attracted you to the Cellular and Molecular Biology Program?

I did my Bachelor’s degree in Public Relations, with minors in marketing and Spanish. Shortly after I graduated from college, I realized that marketing and PR weren’t for me. I wanted a career where I could help people, and I didn’t feel like this was the right field to do that. A co-worker of mine was a Resident Coordinator in a residence hall, and she introduced me to the idea of a Master’s degree in higher education. This was just what I was looking for – the chance to work with college students and help them be successful in school and their future careers. I applied for a number of Master’s programs, and Ohio University gave me an assistantship in Event Services overseeing students in the ticket office. This GA appealed to me as a musician since I was able to attend many university concerts and events, while also supervising undergraduates and doing practica in different student areas – student activities, admissions, academic advising, etc.

After I got my Master’s in Education (College Student Personnel), my experience at OU led to a job at the University of Michigan, as the ticket office manager in Student Life – where I helped student organizations plan their events and oversaw a staff of 18 student employees. From there, I decided that while I loved student affairs, I felt that I could have a larger impact on student success in academic affairs, by being an academic program coordinator. I was drawn to the CMB program by the huge variety of work I would be doing to support students and faculty in this position, and by the chance to help make a difference in students’ academic careers.

What is your role in CMB like compared to your previous work?

In some ways, it’s very similar. As the ticket office manager, I was the point person for any and all questions and concerns related to the office – I oversaw all student employees and events; did troubleshooting for technical problems; dealt with customer concerns; and worked with many constituents, like student organizations, concert promoters (e.g. Live Nation), and campus departments. In my job now, I am also the point person for any and all questions and concerns related to the CMB program – I also deal with a variety of people, from students and faculty, to campus departments, to outside vendors. In both positions, I provided strategic planning for the office – trying to interpret university policies and create new practices to streamline and improve processes.

One major difference is that most of my former students were undergraduates, and now, I work with graduate students. Many of their concerns are the same – from getting around campus and academic concerns, to mental health and community building. But graduate students are definitely more independent and research-focused, and they also have a very distinct set of needs, which was a bit of a learning curve when I started in CMB.

You worked with Patricia Ocelnik, the previous program administrator. Did she give you any memorable advice for your work?

She always told me to look ahead and be proactive, because our job entails so much planning for events that you need to start thinking about them way ahead of time. At any given time, there are events and milestones to plan for after the thing we’re currently managing, whether it’s reserving space for PIBS interview weekends 2 years ahead of time, or thinking about speaker arrangements in Fall 2021 for the Fall 2022 semester. Sometimes we would finish a big event like a retreat or symposium and she would already be planning the next event or workshop.

Now that the CMB program has hired a new student services representative, how will your work change?

Well, I’ve been doing both of our jobs for the last year or so, so frankly – I may start to see evenings and weekends again! Also it will be nice to catch up on some projects that have gone on the back-burner for awhile in order to make the program run smoothly. Carolyn is already learning things very quickly and will soon be able to take on several projects of her own, like the 50th anniversary symposium in the Spring.

What is the one aspect of your work you enjoy the most? Conversely, what is the biggest challenge of your job?

I really like when I can have some kind of positive impact on
students – whether it’s helping them find the information they need or empowering them on committees and watching them gain leadership skills. Probably the biggest challenge in this position is the “culture of busy-ness,” which really impacts everything from student and faculty engagement in program events, to responsiveness to emails and communication. Everyone has so much on their plates, that it’s really hard to keep asking them to do more, from committee membership, to planning program events, to providing us information we need to do our jobs.

What are your favorite hobbies?
I’ve played piano since I was 7, so when I actually take the time to practice, I really enjoy it. I also really enjoy tennis, kayaking and biking.

Where is your favorite place in Ann Arbor?
I love the Arboretum (“The Arb”), and also going to the general Main Street area downtown and people-watching. It’s always bustling with people, and there’s something about the excitement of people being out and about that I like, especially in the summer. Some of my favorite places to go for drinks or food are over there too – The Black Pearl, Raven’s Club, and Grizzly Peak for starters.

Where is your favorite place in Ann Arbor?

Carolyn Walsh joined the CMB Program this past September. Here she tells us a bit about herself and some highlights of working with the CMB students.

What are you from?
Pinckney, MI about 20 min from Ann Arbor!

Describe your career before coming to the University of Michigan.
Before coming to the University of Michigan, I was the event planning intern at the National Cherry Festival in Traverse City, MI. The National Cherry Festival is an event that highlights the people and cherry farms in northern Michigan. I was involved with planning the 5,10,15K and half marathon foot races. Other events I helped with were the Blues, Brews, and BBQ event and Great American Picnic. These were ticketed events at the festival that were family friendly and highlighted the food around Northern Michigan. It was a great experience and I really enjoyed living in Traverse City.

Why did you choose to work for the CMB Program?
I chose to work for the CMB program because I enjoy working with students and helping them have a positive graduate school experience. The supportive culture of CMB is contagious and I wanted to be a part of the team to grow my skills and make a difference in the unit.

What has been the highlight of your time with CMB so far?
The highlight of my time with CMB has been planning the retreat in October. I really enjoyed working with the students and making it a successful event. Knowing that it was the first in person event in a long time made it special to be a part of. I really enjoyed planning an event for the students and faculty that provided a sense of community.
Introducing the Bioinformatics Black Student Union

Michael Pitter, a Ph.D. student in the Molecular and Cellular Pathology Department and a Masters student in the Bioinformatics Department, recently founded the Bioinformatics Black Student Union along with fellow Ph.D. students Gabrielle Dotson (Bioinformatics) and Maribel Okiye (Chemistry, Masters student in bioinformatics).

Here, Michael discusses the Union’s mission, describe recent events on campus, and future plans for the organization.

The Bioinformatics Black Student Union (BBSU) was formed in response to the need to increase diversity and representation in as well as access to bioinformatics studies, research and career lectures, tutorials on coding in a variety of programming languages and more.

As we are a new organization, we have only hosted a few events so far. In addition to our periodic group meetings, we invited a guest speaker, Dr. Camir Ricketts PhD, a bioinformatician who recently earned his PhD from Weill Cornell Medical College and who now works in the genomics sector at Nvidia in New York City. He shared his experiences as a PhD candidate and importantly his transition into his current career. This made for an exciting discussion among group members and left us all with important insight into the process of gaining employment in the bioinformatics field following PhD studies.

During this past summer, BBSU joined forces with the Association for Multicultural Scientists (AMS) and Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) in the hosting of a barbecue as a means to welcome students back to campus as well as to disseminate information about BBSU and our future plans.

Going forward, we aim to continue bringing bioinformatics enthusiasts together for the development of skills and relationships that will serve them in their computational work as well as in their career development. BBSU will continue to invite field experts for talks and discussions with our group members. Broadly, we will continue to promote social engagement, technical and professional development and access for students of color who want to excel in bioinformatics.
There and Back Again: Dr. Scott Leiser’s journey from CMB student to faculty member

Dr. Scott Leiser received his Ph.D. from the CMB Program in 2009, and then returned to the Program as a faculty member in 2016. In this unique alumnus interview, Dr. Leiser describes his time as both a CMB student and faculty member, his research interests, and his advice for students thinking about a career in academia.

Describe your career path. What led you to pursue a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan, and what drew you back to serve as a faculty member?

My career path sounds pretty straightforward (high school, college, grad school, postdoc, PI) but wasn’t as obvious as it may have seemed. I was very focused on athletics in high school and into college, unwisely turning down opportunities to go to some really good schools in order to play on a scholarship at UCDavis. I was a premed for ~3 years, and it was only after blowing out my knee in my 4th year that I realized that 1) I didn’t like doctors and didn’t want to be one, and therefore 2) I needed another plan. I found a position in a lab that year, extended my undergraduate career, and my PI convinced me to apply for PhD programs.

Even still, I’m not sure if I would have gone through with a PhD except that I graduated in 2002 in the heart of the dot com bust, and science jobs were not readily available without a PhD. I applied to 4 places, split between the west coast and the Midwest, and received 3 interviews (Stanford was unimpressed). Having lived in California my whole life, the main reason I applied here was my undergraduate PI was good friends with Dave Engelke, the former PIBS director, and he strongly encouraged me to apply and to leave California for the first time. The visits were the most telling, and I really loved my visit to Ann Arbor, primarily the friendliness of both faculty and students, and the food and feel of Ann Arbor. I very happily accepted the offer to come here. During my ~6 years here getting a PhD, I also met my wife, who is from the area, giving me more permanent Michigan ties. Upon finishing my PhD in 2009, I had the wonderful luck of the “great recession,” and jobs were once again scarce. I interviewed for several postdocs while looking for anything that fit around here, since my wife had a very good position in Lansing. I can thank her for my current position, as she gave up her job and pushed for me to take a postdoc at University of Washington instead of giving up on academia and grabbing whatever I could find in the area. We moved to Seattle and the postdoc went very well.

Having started a family while we were there, we targeted my faculty search to being closer to family members who might be able to help with the kids. Having gone to Michigan and loved the atmosphere, the science, and the people, it was an obvious top choice and easy decision to come back.

How has your perspective of the CMB program changed from when you were a student to when you became a faculty member?

That is a really good question. I suppose when I was a student I appreciated the diversity of science within CMB a little bit less. As a student, I liked CMB because it offered the opportunity to rotate and choose labs in just about any subject area, but once I had chosen, I struggled some to understand the research of my peers, since they were often in areas I was completely unfamiliar with. I always appreciated that CMB, despite being a bigger program, held events like the CMB picnic and CMB holiday party every year, and that we received advice from the director (at that time, Dr. Jessica Schwartz) every year as well. As a faculty, I still appreciate the social get-togethers and opportunities to interact with students, but now the breadth is much more fun. Having attended nearly every CMB 850 for several years while directing, I got to really see the breadth of exciting things happening in CMB and to learn a lot about different areas. Perhaps since I am more confident in my own area, it is easier to just relax and learn about an area I still may know little about.

Tell us about your research interests. What got you interested in the biology of aging?

As mentioned in the question, my lab studies the biology of
Dr. Leiser, continued

aging, focusing on stress response pathways, metabolism, and the perception of the environment.

I became interested in the biology of aging in high school, where I was in the minority of teenagers who was always concerned about my own mortality (and thus less ready to do dangerous things). This concern for well-being met my growing interest in biology and developed into interest in why people age. Having read about telomeres and the Hayflick limit in AP Biology in high school, it just seemed like a doable thing to slow or reverse aging, and the most efficient way to improve human health. Now, as it turns out, telomeres are a very minor aspect in the aging process and aren’t even an issue in many species, but by the time I learned this I also learned that we can and have slowed aging in lots of model organisms. Slowing aging remains an incredibly efficient way to positively affect human health, and I am more and more convinced that when aging is successfully slowed, it will benefit society.

What is the most exciting research finding from your lab so far? That is difficult, as I hate to choose a single finding as most exciting. I would probably say identifying a new endogenous target (tryptophan) for our favorite gene family (FMOs), if only because the finding connects both the metabolic aspects of the enzyme and the upstream signaling changes we see that lead to its induction. This gets us closer to a cohesive model for everything we are doing in the lab. Assuming we don't disprove our own finding in the future, it also brings us closer to understanding how organisms perceive their environment and change their metabolism and how these changes feed back into behavioral and health outcomes.

What advice do you have for current graduate students who are thinking about becoming a PI in academia? There are lots of strategies and small things that can help, but really, I’d say just do your best and focus on your passion for science. It sounds kind of simple and maybe naive, but I never thought “I am going to be a PI.” I had always assumed I would end up teaching high school biology and coaching football, and just stopped myself at every stage and thought “I’ll try and go as high as I can and however it works out will be fine.” There is absolutely some luck involved, but the people that work really hard and have a passion for science get noticed, and if the people you work for and with like you and respect you, you will have opportunities. It seems daunting now, but if you enjoy science, it has an element of fun as well. If you don’t enjoy science, I’m not sure why you’d want to be a PI anyway.

What are your favorite things to do outside of research? As a former athlete, I like playing sports (basketball and racquetball, these days) when possible, or watching football in the fall. As a parent, most of what I actually do involves hiking, reading, and playing games with my kids. In the coming years as the kids get older, visiting national parks and exploring the parks, especially those with mountains or caves, will be a personal and family favorite.

Summer/Fall Thesis Defenses

Stephanie Crilly
(Manoj Puthenveedu, mentor)
“Membrane Trafficking and Signaling of the Delta Opioid Receptor within the Biosynthetic Pathway”

Hadrian Kinnear
(Ariella Shikanov, mentor)
“Reproductive Impact of Testosterone Therapy in a Transgender Mouse Model”

Jennifer Kunselman
(Manoj Puthenveedu, mentor)
“Regulation of Opioid Receptor Trafficking and Signaling by Opioid Peptides”

Molly Kuo
(Anthony Antonellis, mentor)
“Defining the Role of Cysteinyl-tRNA Synthetase (CARS1) in Human Recessive Disease”

Lindsay Moritz
(Sue Hammoud, mentor)
“Revisiting the Role of Sperm Protamine Proteins in Organismal Development and Fertility”
Faculty and Student Interview: Dr. Kaushik Ragunathan and Melissa Seman

This semester we had the opportunity to catch up with both Dr. Kaushik Ragunathan and his third-year doctoral student, Melissa Seman. Both of them describe how they became fascinated with science, research in the Ragunathan lab, their involvement with the Chromatin Club that Dr. Ragunathan co-founded, and what they like to do outside of their busy lab schedules.

Describe your career before coming to the University of Michigan.

Kaushik Ragunathan (KR): I grew up in a coastal city called Madras in India. Surrounded by beaches and the bustle of a big city, there was rarely a dull moment. I really enjoyed asking questions and realized that being a scientist was a job where you also get around to being able to answer some of them. Prior to coming to the University of Michigan, I was a graduate student in Biophysics at the University of Illinois and a postdoc in the Department of Cell Biology at Harvard Medical School. I admittedly am a very “distracted” scientist and my career trajectory is certainly a testament to this. It is very easy to get me excited about a lot of different areas of research!

When did you decide you wanted to pursue a Ph.D. in biomedical sciences?

Melissa Seman (MS): As many other people in the sciences are, I have always had an interest towards science. However, I come from a rural area in Wisconsin so the option of getting a PhD wasn’t apparent to me until I was in college. I started undergrad interested in Chemistry, but I was quickly drawn to the life sciences. When I started a research position in my sophomore year, I instantly fell in love with being in the lab and just the process of doing science. As I gained a better understanding of research, I quickly realized I wanted to continue doing it as a career. It wasn’t until I worked for a year as a lab tech, that I realized that pursuing grad school and getting a PhD was the right option for me.

How did you become interested in your area of research? What is the most exciting finding your lab has uncovered?

KR: I believe that most people can do a lot of different kinds of science and the science we get to do is just a series of fortunate accidents. Viewed through this lens, epigenetics was certainly not a calling for me! Nevertheless, I am absolutely fascinated by how all life starts off being a single cell that develops to give rise to an extraordinary number of cell types. How do cells remember who they are and what they are supposed to be? Using yeast as a model system, my lab studies how cells establish and maintain gene expression states at an unprecedented level of molecular detail.

It is nearly impossible to name a single finding in my lab as exciting since they are all collectively pieces of an extraordinarily complex puzzle. As an allegory to Dali’s famous painting, sometimes the collective looks like swans and at other times you realize they are merely reflections of elephants!

What drew you to join the Ragunathan lab?

MS: I initially was drawn to the Ragunathan lab because I have an interest in epigenetics. I decided to join the lab because of the lab culture. Dr. Ragunathan is an amazing, supportive mentor and has pushed me to do experiments that are creative and groundbreaking while putting value in my own opinions and expertise. Additionally, I have a great support system in the group of scientists that make up the lab.

What has been the most exciting experiment you have done in his lab so far?

MS: The most exciting experiment I did was a genetic screen to find deletions that allow for epigenetic silencing in the absence of a key heterochromatin protein, HP1. With this screen I have 67 hits and have been enjoying all the different avenues the research is leading me down such as learning about DNA polymerases.
Chromatin Club, we prioritized the “people not projects” philosophy of doing science. The goal wasn’t collaboration, but it was more about finding new ways to create community and seeing what emerges when people get together and talk about ideas that interest them. The results were striking! My lab now collaborates with Uhnsoo Cho on using yeast to purify endogenous nucleosome associated protein complexes for structural biology. We also collaborate with Sundeep Kalantry to isolate chromatin associated complexes that catalyze H3K9 methylation from an early developmental lineage in mice.

Are you involved with the Chromatin Club in any way? If so, how has that affected your research?

MS: I attend the Chromatin Club seminars monthly. These seminars are a great way to learn about all the research about chromatin occurring across the University. Chromatin Club has been an excellent platform for me to brainstorm ideas.

What is your favorite aspect of mentoring graduate students? How would you describe your mentoring style?

KR: Mentoring graduate students in science is an incredible privilege and responsibility. My most favorite aspect of mentoring graduate students is how it helps me stay grounded and true to the process of what brought me into science in the first place- a sense of incessant curiosity to understand the living world. I would describe my mentoring style as one of “accompanying” students through their learning process. This helps me learn and collaborate with them as they make new discoveries.

What is your favorite part of graduate school at Michigan? What do you think is the most important thing you’ve learned, and what is the largest challenge you had to overcome?

MS: My favorite part of grad school is being surrounded by so many talented, intelligent scientists. I really enjoy learning what research others are doing, and I enjoy having productive conversations about my own research.

I’ve learned that it’s important to ask for help and admit when I don’t know something. No one can know everything and being able to quickly identify what I don’t know and seek out that information has been vital to my progress.

The largest challenge I feel like I face is how to balance everything that I need to accomplish. For example, learning how to balance writing an F31, GS'I'ing, doing experiments, etc., and having a personal life can be overwhelming at times. While this may be daunting, I am learning balance is key.

You are one of the organizers of the Chromatin Club on campus. Tell us a little about your role with the Club. Have there been any ideas for your own research that you’ve gotten because of this collaboration?

KR: I am one of five founding members of the Chromatin Club at the University of Michigan. As co-organizers, we have equal roles and are all deeply invested in its success. In founding the Chromatin Club, we prioritized the “people not projects” philosophy of doing science. The goal wasn’t collaboration, but it was more about finding new ways to create community and seeing what emerges when people get together and talk about ideas that interest them. The results were striking! My lab now collaborates with Uhnsoo Cho on using yeast to purify endogenous nucleosome associated protein complexes for structural biology. We also collaborate with Sundeep Kalantry to isolate chromatin associated complexes that catalyze H3K9 methylation from an early developmental lineage in mice.

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MS: I attend the Chromatin Club seminars monthly. These seminars are a great way to learn about all the research about chromatin occurring across the University. Chromatin Club has been an excellent platform for me to brainstorm ideas.

What are some of your activities outside of lab research? Are there any hobbies or issues you are particularly passionate about?

KR: I enjoy reading fiction, running, assembling 1000-piece jigsaw puzzles, trying new food, listening to music and learning to play the guitar. Some of these hobbies are a reflection of my science, such as the 1000-piece puzzle!

MS: Outside of lab, I like to read, hang out with my friends, travel, and spend time with my cocker spaniel, Maggie. Since winter is quickly approaching, I am looking forward to cross country and downhill skiing and ice skating as well as spending time with my family over the holidays.
Congratulations!

**F30 Grants:**
- Hannah Bell (mentor: Yatrik Shah)
- Ansley Conchola (mentor: Jason Spence)

**CMB Student Service Award:**
- Sumin Kim (mentor: William Dauer)
- Allyson Munneke (mentor: Scott Pletcher)

**F31 Grants:**
- Jeff Knupp (mentor: Billy Tsai)
- Shannon Lacy (mentor: Matthias Truttman)
- Rosa Menjivar (mentor: Marina Pasca Di Magliano)
- Madison Pletan (mentor: Billy Tsai)

**American Society in Hematology Minority Hematology Graduate Award:**
- Ginette Balbin-Cuesta (mentor: Rami Khoriaty)

**Rackham Predoctoral Fellowship:**
- Sumin Kim (mentor: William Dauer)
- Anna Michmurhuizen (mentor: Corey Speers)

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**Welcome New CMB Faculty!**

**Nicole Koropatkin, PhD**
Associate Professor, Microbiology and Immunology

**Kurt Hankenson, DVM, MS, PhD**
Henry Ruppenthal Family Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery and Bioengineering  
Associate Chair of Research  
Professor, Orthopaedic Surgery

**Costas Lyssiotis, PhD**
Associate Professor, Molecular and Integrative Physiology  
Associate Professor, Internal Medicine, Division of Gastroenterology  
Maisel Research Professor of Oncology  
Member, Rogel Cancer Center

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**CMB Newsletter Committee:** Chris Bidlack, Sarah Connolly, Kate Van Pelt

**Supporting Faculty and Staff:** Karl Desch, MD; Lauren Perl

**Contact:** Chris Bidlack, bidlackc@umich.edu

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