

# U of T Biochemistry

[Biochemistry Website](#)

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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I am Liliana Attisano and I hope you enjoy reading about recent and upcoming events in our New Biochemistry Newsletter. This is the first issue and my first message to the department since stepping into my new role as Interim Chair, which I began on May 1, 2021. It is a great privilege to have been offered this position and I look forward to serving the Biochemistry Department. My figurative 'door' is always open for any comments and feedback.

First, thank you to our faculty and staff who have worked tirelessly to provide an excellent educational experience for our students, including the continuation of teaching and maintaining research activities during the COVID challenge.

I am especially proud of the dedication and resourcefulness of our faculty and their ability to shift to the virtual delivery of their courses, as well as the perseverance and commitment of our students in an online learning environment. I am confident in the resilience of our program because of our dedicated faculty, our hard-working students, and our supportive staff.

The start of the new Academic year is fast approaching, and we are delighted to welcome the new incoming graduate students as well as the undergraduates who have chosen our program. We are excited that you have decided to join our department.

As you may already know, U of T is formulating policies and procedures for the Fall start of the Academic year, and we will forward information as soon as it is available. Please keep an eye on your emails and take note of online resources listed below in our newsletter.

Again, this is our first newsletter, and is intended to provide updates for all things relating to the Biochemistry Department (ie. Undergraduate/Graduate updates, Research, EDI, announcements, and upcoming events). We welcome any



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**\*\*\* Biochemistry Departmental Fall Retreat. \*\*\***

*Details and date will be available soon.*

### PhD Oral Seminars/Exams

*All PhD exams are held online. Interested persons wanting to attend the oral seminar should contact the Students Advisor for approval.*

#### **Manpreet Malhi's PhD Oral - Wednesday August 11, 2021**

PhD Oral Seminar: 2:00 - 2:45pm

**Thesis Title:** *"Development and application of novel in vitro assays to advance drug discovery for arrhythmogenic cardiomyopathy and respiratory syncytial virus infection"*

#### **Justin Pogmore's PhD Oral - Thursday August 12, 2021**

PhD Oral Seminar: 5:00 - 5:45pm

**Thesis Title:** *"Signaling Mechanism and Pharmacological Manipulation of Bcl-2 Family Proteins in Apoptosis"*

## Chair's Message continued...

comments and feedback on how we can continue to make this a resourceful tool for everyone. Please send us your feedback and your news at [biochemistry.office@utoronto.ca](mailto:biochemistry.office@utoronto.ca). We are always happy to hear from you!

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## Graduate Updates

### Modifications to the MSc and PhD program

The University of Toronto Graduate Curriculum Committee recently approved modifications to the Department of Biochemistry graduate program. These include changes to the course requirements for incoming students with an MSc degree to standardize their coursework with students who reclassify into the PhD program. We have also phased out the old graduate modules (BCH2024 courses) and introduced a variety of new ¼ credit modules. For more details about the modified program, please check out the departmental website at [Graduate Program Courses](#).

### Student Seminar Series for the 2021-2022 Academic Year

We are planning on holding the seminar series online over Zoom for the 2021-2022 academic year. Again, student seminars will be held Wednesdays from Noon to 1PM. All students who would like to present must inform Carrie Harber by August 13<sup>th</sup>. Please include whether you need to give this by a certain date, and whether there are any dates that do not fit your schedule. To remind you we are no longer having a post-mortem.

## Departmental Awards

We are now accepting applications for Departmental Graduate Awards. **The deadline for awards submissions and all reference letters is midnight August 13<sup>th</sup>. All applications must be emailed to Carrie Harber ([carrie.harber@utoronto.ca](mailto:carrie.harber@utoronto.ca)).**

There are five awards for graduate students, and one for postdoctoral fellows.

## Sisu Han's PhD Seminar/Oral Exam:

**Wednesday September 8, 2021 @ 11:00AM - 2:00PM**

**Thesis Title:** "Proneural genes; old players with new functions in controlling neocortical neural progenitor cell behaviour"

## Brian Tsang's PhD Seminar/Oral Exam:

**Tuesday September 14, 2021 @ 9:00AM - 12:00PM**

**Thesis Title:** "Studying the regulation and function of biomolecular condensates with *in vitro* reconstitution"

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

### Courses for the Fall 2021 Semester

This upcoming semester we are offering the following courses:

- **BCH2101** Scientific Skills for Biochemists (Required for all incoming BCH grad students) **Course Coordinators: Alex Palazzo & Nana Lee**
- **BCH2111** Post-transcriptional Control of Gene Expression **Course Coordinators: Craig Smibert & Julie Claycomb**
- **BCH2114** Frontiers in Drug Discovery **Course Coordinator: Roman Melnyk**
- **BCH2123** Protein Structure Prediction and Homology Modelling **Course Coordinator: Gil Prive**

### **Connell Award for Top Graduate Student Publication of 2020**

The graduate student being considered for the prize must be the first author of the paper. Joint 1st authors will be considered if both authors are Biochemistry grad students, but the prize will be shared. The nominated paper must have been published in the 2020 and must indicate that the student is affiliated with the Department of Biochemistry.

### **Connell Award for Best All-Round Postdoctoral Fellow**

The criteria used to judge the applicants will encompass excellence in research, leadership within the laboratory and the Biochemistry community, scientific communication and outreach, and contributions including presentations and intellectual property.

### **David A. Scott Award**

This award is for the "best all-round Biochemistry graduate student " using as criteria: performance at seminars, readiness, and willingness to assist fellow graduate students and staff, abilities as teaching assistant, and generally contributing to the departmental community.

### **Centennial Award in Honour of Sela Cheifetz**

The award is for the top Ph.D. student in the Biochemistry Graduate Program who is beyond their 3rd year.

### **The Pfizer Graduate Scholarship**

To be awarded to a graduate student in the first or second year of the PhD program in the Department of Biochemistry. The student's project must be in the areas of cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, inflammation and immunology, cancer, pain or vaccine research.

### **Outstanding Ph.D. Thesis in Biochemistry Award**

The award will be based on having a well written and scholarly thesis document that provides important contributions to new knowledge (not strictly publications) and outstanding performance at the oral defense.

Please visit the [Awards & Scholarships - Graduate Program website](#) for more information.

## BGSU News

Firstly, we would like to thank those who attended our virtual happy hours in the past few months. We hope that these small gatherings helped to alleviate any feelings of loneliness and provided you with a stronger sense of community throughout these difficult times. The happy hours have now officially ended, and we would like to congratulate Pramal from the Maxwell lab for winning our raffle draw! As restrictions loosen and more people become fully vaccinated, we hope to have a small in-person outdoor event in August. If you have any suggestions for activity and/or location, feel free to reach out!

Looking forward to the next academic year, our new international/out-of-province student representative, Chien-Yi, has been working tirelessly to prepare resources for incoming students from out of town to help them have a smooth transition to join our department. BGSU's Retreat Social Commissioner, Jim, has also begun preparations to plan the upcoming Departmental Retreat, so stay tuned for more information, either by checking your emails from Carrie or following us on Facebook or Twitter @yourbgsu.

If anyone has any questions or concerns, feel free to contact us at [yourbgsu@gmail.com](mailto:yourbgsu@gmail.com) or send us a message through our social media channels. Have a great summer, Biochem!

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## BUSS Updates

The BUSS team has been busy at work this summer prepping and holding events & resources for all students. With a newly released [course manual](#) and a "What is BCH?" Zoom programme having been wrapped up, our plans for August include a grad school application seminar, featuring a panel discussion from current graduate students offering advice on the process, and a mentorship program to connect newer biochemists with older students seasoned in the way of PCR and blotting. Keep an eye out for the end of August, and we look forward to seeing you (in-person, fingers crossed!) in September.

Contact Us at [uoftbuss@gmail.com](mailto:uoftbuss@gmail.com)



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## Post-doc News

The Biochemistry postdocs kicked off the academic year with distanced, outdoor after-work drinks at Queen and Beaver (35 Elm Street) on July 29th. Thank you to those who could join, it was great to get together and meet new people. We are looking forward to organising regular social events with safety in mind. More information on socials and professional events to follow, please keep an eye out for emails from Biochem Postdocs. We look forward to seeing you all soon.

## U of T COVID Update...

Check out [this U of T News story](#) about the strategy.

As more details emerge, there will be further communications regarding the vaccination initiative and any other policy changes.

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## Summer Student Program

This week wraps up the Biochemistry Undergraduate Summer Student program that included 28 students. On Thursday, August 5 from 11 AM to 2 PM the students will be participating in a joint Molecular Genetics and Biochemistry Virtual Poster Session on Spatial Chat where they will present their summer work. Please contact John Glover ([john.glover@utoronto.ca](mailto:john.glover@utoronto.ca)) if you are interested in attending.

## EDI Announcements/Updates

Dear Biochemistry,

Information about our WIDE committee can be found here: [Wellness and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion \(WIDE\)](#)

Our student team can be found here [WIDE @ Biochem WIDE @ BIOCHEM](#)

Our first [Biochemistry Outreach Day](#), organized by our student team.

If you haven't read it already, check out a Varsity article written by our very own Zaky Hassan - [Lonely in the lab: U of T STEM's Black representation problem](#)



In our inaugural partnership with [Community of Support](#), Biochemistry hosted two undergraduate students from the RASI (research application support initiative) program for summer research experiences.

Dr. Nana Lee (WIDE faculty member) has been Co-Chairing with Paula Smellie (Physiology) Dean's Trevor Young's Excellence through Equity on Graduate Admissions for the past seven months of brainstorming and discussions with a team of other faculty and learners about enhancing the admissions process with an EDI lens. The results of discussions and recommendations will be released to all Temerty Faculty of Medicine departments at a future date.



Dr. Nana

Lee also continues to speak and facilitate discussions about EDI in research science for various departments and institutions, particularly with the post-screening of "[Picture a Scientist](#)." For those who have not viewed this documentary, WIDE highly recommends this historical narrative to all scientists. You may access the film here [PICTURE A SCIENTIST](#) with your UTORid.