The GDBBS has welcomed 58 new PhD students plus nine new MD/PhD students to our PhD programs. We are glad to have these new students with us, and look forward to helping them progress through their first-year courses and selection of their lab homes. At new student orientation on August 23, we took the opportunity to introduce the new students to our Division staff, and to make them aware of all of the great infrastructure that is in place within the Division and the Laney Graduate School to help ensure their success.

We also took a few minutes to remind them why they are here. The main focus for them is to achieve the following core competencies: gaining skills in critical thinking, gaining skills in problem solving, obtaining technical skills relevant to their area of interest, generating new knowledge, and gaining skills in communication to scientific audiences. Over time, our students also need to focus on professionalization, such as by learning about: time management, project management, team building, leadership, innovation, conflict management, communication to broader audiences, and the business and law of science. Accomplishing both of those goals (obtaining both the core competencies and professionalization skills) will prepare them for a wide variety of career opportunities within and outside of academia.

We suggested that as they move through the graduate school experience, the following concepts will help them achieve long-term success:

- **Work hard, from day one, including getting accustomed to the notion that grad school ≠ undergrad.**
- **Plan ahead, and pay attention to the ticking clock.**
- **Build up your sense of “resilience” by accomplishing milestones, getting data, making presentations, being “visible,” learning from everyone around you.**
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate. Reach out when you need help.**
- **Pay attention to “wellness” in whatever way works for you.**

At the GDBBS Awards Banquet on October 22, we celebrated our amazing students, faculty, staff, and alumni, all of whom contribute to making the GDBBS and our eight Programs the amazing places they are to receive state-of-the-art training and career development.

Together with our outstanding faculty, the GDBBS is working hard to help our students accomplish their career goals. Thanks for your continued support!
The Laney Graduate School convened the 4th annual Emory STEM Research and Career Symposium on September 18th-20th drawing over 115 students from across the country and from several international universities. Students were welcomed by Emory alumni Dr. Chad R. Jackson, a current AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, and Dr. Michael L. Lomax, President and Chief Executive Officer of the United Negro College Fund. The symposium, held at the Emory Conference Center, also featured breakout sessions, student oral talks, and two poster sessions.

For first year Emory PhD student Brent Allman (Population Biology, Ecology, and Evolution) the STEM symposium was a way to connect with a diverse group of young researchers, some he had met at previous conferences and was able to reconnect with. “It’s a way to build a community of students who care about diversity,” he said in a bustling morning poster session.

Undergraduate and graduate students presented on a wide breadth of research topics. Topics that ranged from brain imaging to vocal learning in songbirds and from geospatial mapping of methamphetamine labs in Georgia to wildlife-human Dengue disease dynamics. Similarly broad were the universities and organizations represented at the STEM Symposium. Students from historically black universities such as Spelman College, Morehouse School of Medicine, Clark Atlanta University, Tuskegee University, Xavier University of Louisiana, and Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland as well as Hispanic-serving Institutions such as the University of Puerto Rico presented posters and gave oral presentations. Students traveled across the country from institutions including Oregon Health & Sciences University, Purdue, University of California San Diego, and Texas A&M University to attend the symposium.

Connor Morozumi
Heather Goldsborough, an undergrad student at University of Maryland Eastern Shore, attended the symposium to get a better sense of Master’s programs that she might be interested in applying for soon after she graduates. She said she appreciated Dr. Jackson's keynote remarks about figuring out the purpose of attending graduate school before embarking on the endeavour.

Third year graduate student Binta Jalloh (Genetics and Molecular Biology) presented her research on intellectual disability in flies that was supported with assistance from the Emory NIH-funded Initiative to Maximize Student Development (IMSD Program). She remarked that there was high investment of faculty members at Emory in graduate studies and that being at Emory was as she put it, “a blessing.”

Breakout sessions included information about Emory’s graduate programs and several undergraduates presenting posters expressed interest in the MD/PhD program here at Emory. Sessions also included Research Opportunities for Undergraduates at Emory and Beyond, the Emory PhD Admissions Process, and Developing a Career Plan and Individual Development Plans.

The Symposium is part of the Laney Graduate School’s Diversity in Action initiative to increase diversity in the graduate population at Emory. Partners for the event included the School of Medicine, Emory College of Arts and Sciences, the Rollins School of Public Health, the Office of Postdoctoral Education and the Emory University Office of the Provost. GDBBS was one of seven major graduate training programs and divisions at Emory involved in the symposium. The successful three-day event showcased young researchers from diverse backgrounds sharing research presentations, mentoring, and networking with faculty members and alumni here at Emory.
Alyse Steves

The Emory University-Laney Graduate School STEM Research and Career Symposium, hosted by Laney Graduate School each year, brings a diverse background of undergraduate and graduate students to Emory’s campus. For two days students participate in poster and oral presentations, networking, recruitment, and career development seminars. This year the STEM Symposium hosted a special keynote speaker, Dr. Michael Lomax, the president and chief executive officer of the United Negro College Fund of the United States. He spoke to a crowd of hundreds on Monday night, recalling the past and the day Emory University enrolled its first African American student while also imploring students to push for a future where students with diverse backgrounds are no longer minorities in academia.

Dr. Lomax has a diverse background in education that includes positions at Morehouse College, Spelman College, Emory University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, the University of Georgia, and Dillard University in New Orleans, as well as twelve years as Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Fulton County.

During his speech, he highlighted the importance of minorities accumulating education, wealth, and power, particularly women of color. He beseeched the audience to aim high in their goals, make their name, and give back to their communities so that others can prosper from their generosity. Dr. Lomax stressed the importance of philanthropy in his speech, ending by asking others to make charitable donations to those in need and to always give back once you have succeeded to keep progress moving ever forward in STEM fields.
Dr. Chad Jackson Speech at the 2016 STEM Symposium: Eager Juniors Encouraged to Reach Out To Senior Scientists

Amielle Moreno

An ex-Uber driver walks into a party at the Turkish embassy...

Immediately feeling out of place, this high-power happy-hour soiree is foreign in every connotation of the word. The ex-Uber driver shakes off the perspiration of self doubt and approached the Turkish ambassador.

In this true story, Dr. Chad R. Jackson is following his own advice to undergraduate minority scientists; treat yourself as a business and invest in yourself. This year’s STEM symposium kicked off with Alumnus Chad Jackson advising the next generation of minority students on this and other lessons he’s learned throughout his scientific career. He spoke of his experience starting as a cocky incoming grad student, to failing his first graduate biochem test, a monetarily challenged post-doc, to an advisor in the office of Science and Technology Advisor to the Secretary of State. But what does this mean for you?

Alumni, Chad Jackson just pointed a room full of up and coming minority scientists to your inboxes. He told them to be persistent, become comfortable and resistant to failure and to seek out help from senior scientists. This rousing yet casual speech definitely had attendees googling alumni to ask for advice and they’re not going to settle for landing in your trash can.

A climate of undeniable melatonin-based oppression has brought the issue of minority rights to dinner tables as well as the forefront of American politics. This elicits a broad range of responses from the American public including a sense of helplessness. Facing a systemic problem, sympathetic individuals are feeling all the responsibility of change yet none of the direction on how to discuss and address issues foreign to their own experiences.

Dr. Jackson’s speech provided biological science alumni an avenue to effect meaningful change in the world.
While never addressed directly, the room of bushy tailed minority students at the STEM symposium narrowed their bright eyes on you. All alumni have to do is bridge the gap.

Dr. Chad Jackson praised a student who has e-mailed him for the past six months. “I should contact that young gentleman” he offhandedly remarked. It was a sad irony that a senior minority scientist, advising students to reach out for help, casually mentions ignoring a student not unlike those being addressed. This provided an example of how we can all improve by treating ourselves like businesses interested in assisting young scientists with the courage to reach out.

Personable and humble during his speech, Jackson shared a story about his time earning extra cash as an Uber driver during his post-doc. It was persistence and resistance to failure that provided Jackson the confidence to succeed, placing him in a position advocating for science in the State Department.

When Jackson approached the Turkish ambassador, this ex-Uber driver congratulated the ambassador on the recent investment in Turkish/American businesses, but asked “if he was considering cities like Detroit, Atlanta, St. Louis? Are you reaching out to American minorities to provide them opportunities?” Jackson hopes that his work inside the State Department will not only further American scientists but also encourage diverse perspectives through minority representation in the sciences. Now so should you.

If you are interested in mentoring or just answering some questions from a young scientists who is not afraid to ask for help, please contact William Canon with Alumni Relations on the “Mentors on Call” program. His e-mail is wcanon@emory.edu
STEM Symposium Award Winners

Undergraduate Posters
1st: Nishone Thompson
2nd: Michelle Indarjit
     Asia Payne
3rd: Carolina Regalado
     Justin Thomas
     Noa Erlitzki
     Sarai Nwagbaraocha

Graduate Posters
1st: Theresa Gaines
2nd: Liza Burton

Oral Presentations
1st: Jaqueline Rojas Robles
2nd: Benem-Orom Davids
With the first cohort of students completing their internships, the BEST program here at Emory has a lot to share. During this past summer students got the opportunity to experience a wide array of activities from drug development in South Africa to white water rafting to build confidence. As a part of their summer experience, four BEST scholars continued the 8 year tradition of working South African inventors to strategize for new technologies to propel African life sciences and promote health innovation. For those who didn’t participate in the South Africa excursion, they faced a unique challenge of white water rafting on the Ocoee River. Scholars described the adventure as challenging and forcing them to overcome their fears and prevail.

The BEST (Broadening Experience in Scientific Training) program was established as an initiative to expose graduate students to careers outside of traditional academia. Graduate students are invited to apply to the BEST program in their third year of graduate school. As participants in the program, students are required to attend seminars associated with career tracks in entrepreneurship, communication, and outreach to name a few. As students progress throughout the curriculum, they gain valuable career advice and even the opportunity to get hands on experience in alternative career tracks.

I recently had the opportunity to sit down with Elizabeth Zoeller and gain a first hand account of all BEST has to offer its scholars. Upon hearing about all the BEST program had to offer from Dr. Bill Rice, GDBBS alumnus and donor, she didn’t hesitate to become involved with the program. Only having been exposed to the traditional academic career path, she was leery to pursue graduate school because she didn’t envision herself spending a lifetime as a professor. Once she heard about the BEST program, she immediately applied so she could learn about career options more fitting to her personality. When asked to sum her experience with the BEST program, Elizabeth felt the word “enlightening” was the best to describe her time with the BEST program because she’s been able to learn so much about career opportunities and career development. She credits the BEST program with her growth and development as a scientist and future career professional. Participation in the program has allowed her to not only learn about her own potential but also what skill set she possesses and how to utilize those skills to propel her career path.

The growth and experiences she’s gained doesn’t stop there. Elizabeth commends the BEST program because it has given her the opportunity to network and build communities with other students. Having differing career interests from the majority of students could be a bit isolating. However, through participating in the BEST program Elizabeth now has a sense of community to know that she is not alone. Based on her wonderful experience with the BEST community, she encourages other students to become involved with the program. For anyone interested in learning more about the BEST program, don’t hesitate to visit their website (http://www.best.emory.edu/index.html) or contact Tammi Hutto at best@emory.edu. The BEST program also releases periodic magazines (https://issuu.com/atlantabest) showcasing all the wonderful endeavors their students have embarked upon in the past semester.
MaKendra Umstead Receives Inaugural Kharen Fulton Diversity Graduate Award

Alessandra Salgueiro

Named in honor of the late Kharen Fulton, Laney Graduate School awarded the inaugural Kharen Fulton Diversity Graduate Award to Cancer Biology graduate student, MaKendra Umstead. Fulton served Emory for over 30 years as director of diversity, recruitment, and admissions. Throughout her time at Emory, she touched the lives of students, faculty, and staff alike through her encouragement and guidance. The recently graduated Dr. MaKendra Umstead personifies the Fulton Diversity Award with her service, outreach, and community building throughout her tenure at Emory. Fulton’s legacy is a call to action, inspiring award recipients and others to continue creating an inclusive community that breaks down barriers for underrepresented individuals.

For more information about the Kharen Fulton Diversity Graduate Award and how to support the award, follow this link: [http://gs.emory.edu/spotlight/fulton-award.html](http://gs.emory.edu/spotlight/fulton-award.html)
Jessica Shartouny

Laughter and energetic conversations floated over the putting green at Druid Hills Golf Club on September 22 where attendees of the 7th annual GDBBS Awards Banquet gathered for pre-dinner drinks and appetizers. As the early evening progressed, the back terrace filled with graduate students, faculty, and alumni greeting each other and noting how pleasant the late-summer weather was, especially compared to the rain of last year. Between updates on research projects and compliments on everyone's formal dress, congratulations abounded for those on the list of awardees.

The crowd moved indoors when the dining room opened and divided amongst tables decked in blue and gold balloons. Just as the hungry audience started passing around their bread baskets, GDBBS Director Dr. Nael McCarty called attention to the stage with a warm welcome and some chuckle-eliciting jokes. Dr. Lisa Tedesco, Dean of the Laney Graduate School and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs then briefly took the microphone to thank the attendees. She underscored how thankful the graduate school is for the alumni, who not only support the graduate school with monetary donations, but also serve as role models for current students, showcasing many of the future paths and successes that are available to Emory graduates.

Dinner was served soon after, inviting lively conversations throughout the dining room. Monica Taylor, the GDBBS Director of Student Development and an integral organizer of the night's events, took time to visit each table in the room. She asked how the students and alumni were enjoying themselves and could be seen laughing among attendees as she caught up with their news.

As attendees finished up their meals, Dr. McCarty commenced the awards section of the night. The three endowed research awards were presented first, recipients and benefactors taking the stage together for photos. Next, the Distinguished Alumnus Award was presented by Dr. Haian Fu to Dr. Jing Chen, a 2001 graduate of Dr. Fu's lab in the Biochemistry, Cell and Developmental Biology program. Dr. McCarty then presented awards to the program scholars of the year, asking to hear noise from the students in the crowd as each program was called. This incited a small competition, with tables erupting with yells and claps and, in a couple instances, stomping and banging, as each name was called. The energetic cheering continued through the rest of the awards and recognition of students receiving fellowships.
Continued

Toward the end of the banquet, Dr. Edward Morgan took the stage to remember two previous GDBBS award winners who passed away within the last year. Charlene Wang, the 2015 Microbiology and Molecular Genetics Program Scholar of the Year, and Dr. Marion Sewer, the 2013 Distinguished Alumnus recipient, were both lost unexpectedly in the winter. Dr. Morgan spoke highly of both women’s accomplishments in science and their admirable character while some of their peers and friends stood respectfully. As Dr. Sewer’s mentor, he said he knew how she would respond to the grief of her friends and family. “She’d tell us to ‘buck up and put your big girl pants on,’” he said. “So we’ll keep trying.”

Dr. McCarty wrapped up the evening with many thanks, staving off competition for the centerpieces full of snack food by dictating that they would go to the person at the table with the nearest birthday. Nevertheless, while award winners and programs gathered around the dining room for group photos, spirited bargaining over the centerpieces continued. Bemoaning the end of the festivities, attendees gradually said goodbye to their friends and new acquaintances and filtered out into the warm evening.
2016 GDBBS Banquet Award Winners

Faculty Mentor Award:  Adam Marcus  
Graduate Career Award:  Marc Schureck  
Outreach/Community Service Award:  Christopher Lewis  
Student Leadership Award:  George Inglis  
Student Mentor Award:  Michelle Giddens  
Graduate Career Teaching Award:  Alicia Cutler  
Student Teaching Award:  Arielle Valdez  

Program Scholar of the Year:  
BCDB:  Paul Donlin-Asp  
CB:  Katelyn Ponder  
GMB:  Michael Christopher  
IMP:  Ryan Martinez  
MMG:  Lalita Priyamvada and Kendra Quicke  
MSP:  Scott Cordova  
NS:  Lukas Hoffman  
Pabee:  Carolyn Ayers
Why did you choose Emory GDBBS for your graduate training?
Dr. Chen says he chose Emory for his graduate training for several reasons, both personal and professional. In addition to choosing Emory for the location in Atlanta, he also chose to attend Emory due to its strong reputation in the field of basic research. More specifically, the program he applied to (Cell Biology and Developmental Biology) had a robust faculty research focus in signal transduction, which was his main interest upon entering graduate school.

How did your GDBBS experience prepare you for your career?
As Dr. Chen is now a Professor in the Department of Hematology and Medical Oncology, he says his experience in GDBBS prepared him in three core areas. The first area was the training in grant writing. Dr. Chen was one of the first students to participate in the grant writing course many GDBBS students are familiar with today. As a result of taking this course, Dr. Chen says he built his confidence to communicate science and write grant applications. This was valuable to him in his postdoctoral training and beyond. In addition to preparation for writing grants, Dr. Chen says the student seminars were helpful in encouraging and motivating him to present scientific data as a complete story for a broad audience. These type of student seminars fostered a good environment to present research. Since Dr. Chen now also fills the role of a mentor, he says his experience with his graduate mentor, Dr. Haian Fu, and committee members highlighted what it means to be a patient mentor with strong communication skills, along with how to adapt to different mentoring styles.

What advice would you give to current GDBBS students?
The major piece of advice Dr. Chen has for current students is to remember to learn how to ask broad scientific questions and how to develop them as individual projects. For looking beyond graduate school, Dr. Chen says don’t be afraid to explore other scientific fields outside the one you’re currently working in and don’t be afraid to create your own niche.
The Cancer Biology Graduate Program Announces the Convocation of Their First Two Graduates

Allison Lytle

In 2016, President Obama included a 215 million dollar investment into his yearly fiscal budget as part of a precision medicine initiative to focus primarily on oncology. The goals of this project were to advance biomedical research and provide clinicians the tools to offer cancer patients a treatment plan personalized for their disease. Physicians would have the ability to use molecularly targeted therapies tailored to an individual’s cancer based on genetic mutations as well as molecular changes.

The doctoral program in Cancer Biology (CB) here at Emory University has answered the call accepting their first class of students back in 2011. The CB program has recruited diverse faculty members with backgrounds in both basic science and clinical research, providing a learning platform for their students with excellent multidisciplinary training opportunities. The goal of the CB program is to produce exceptional leaders in the field, with a strong foundation in cancer biology and basic research techniques. The program is also based out of the Winship Cancer Institute, offering students outstanding opportunities to participate in translational research. Recently, the Cancer Biology program had the privilege of announcing the graduation of their first two doctoral candidates from the inaugural class of 2011.

Gina Alesi earned her undergraduate and master's degrees in biomedical engineering from the University of Michigan. With a personal connection to cancer, Dr. Alesi was motivated to pursue a career in research and joined the laboratory of Dr. Sumin Kang in 2011. She was a recipient of an NRSA award and has several middle author papers focusing on the molecular mechanisms of tumorigenesis and tumor growth. In April of 2016, Dr. Alesi published a first author paper in *Oncogene* focusing on microtubule dysregulation and its role in cancer cell invasion and tumor cell metastasis. She will be pursuing a career in the private sector and has accepted a consulting position at the prestigious firm The Boston Consulting Group here in Atlanta.
Scott Wilkinson received his Bachelor of Science degree from Berry College in 2009. He was also a recipient of an NRSA award and joined the laboratory of Dr. Adam Marcus who studies tumor escape and metastasis. Dr. Wilkinson has a first author paper in *Molecular Biology Of The Cell* that focuses on defective kinase activity and its role in cancer cell invasion, with a second manuscript currently under review. He is actively involved in cancer education through both the Biology department and the Pre-College Program here at Emory. Additionally, he volunteers for Students for Science, a community outreach organization that brings science education to elementary schools. Dr. Wilkinson has accepted a postdoctoral fellowship position at the NIH in the laboratory of Dr. Adam Sowalsky, focusing on genomic changes in prostate cancer that contribute to cancer progression and drug resistance.

Both Dr. Alesi and Dr. Wilkinson are exemplary of the hard work and effort the CB program has invested in their students. Their achievements and future opportunities reflect the outstanding research and training opportunities available to PhD candidates. We are excited to see what future graduates will achieve as they complete the Cancer Biology graduate program here at Emory.
Alumni Relations Update

Robin Harpak, Asst. Director, Development & Alumni Relations

The Graduate Program in Biology Academic and Professional Achievement Award has been made possible over the last 3 years thanks to generous donations and we have the opportunity, by the end of this calendar year, to have the award last in perpetuity. Liz Ann Amadei, this year’s very deserving recipient of the award says “scholarship support is enabling her to further her professional development by attending scientific meetings and exploring new research interests.”

We have a unique opportunity to match every dollar given between now and December 31 thanks to an anonymous donor to the fund. The fund currently has just over $27,000 in it. So, with the match, $11,500 will become $23,000 which will get us to the minimum $50,000 we need for endowment. Gifts of all sizes can add up to make a big difference and time is of the essence! Give now to support students like Liz Ann for generations to come.

We need you! The LGS offers over 60 professional development programs a year for our students: CV to resume workshops, Mentors on Call, mock interviews, Behind the Academic Curtain, Pathways Beyond the Professoriate, and more. If you’re interested in getting involved and giving back, contact rharpak@emory.edu.

Calling all golfers! On March 18 the LGS will host the inaugural Jones Legacy Golf Tournament at East Lake! For information visit www.bobbyjones.emory.edu or contact rharpak@emory.edu.