PAY IT FORWARD

This edition of the newsletter reminds me of that important concept. The phrase, popularized by the 2000 movie starring Kevin Spacey and Helen Hunt, refers to our efforts to improve the lot of others in recognition of all we have received. However, it is not a new concept; Ben Franklin mentioned it in a letter to Benjamin Webb in 1784. It is striking how much community service and outreach is occurring and how different that is from my days in graduate school. And yes, it was after 1784!

This fall, we again gathered for our annual Awards Banquet. As the accompanying article by Katie Coakley, NHS, points out we honored students for their hard work and achievement. Many of those awards went for things that have benefited the faculty and don’t technically qualify as “paying it forward”. However, we also have recognized those “paying it back” with the outreach and community service activities of Christopher Nicholas Lewis, IMP, mentoring by Will Hudson, MMG, and teaching by Ashley Holmes, NHS and Callie Wigington, BCDB. These are becoming tradition at Emory, and well-deserved ones too. A second article by Alessandra Salgueiro, CB, takes a fanciful look at the GDBBS, interviewing senior, junior, and prospective members of our faculty.

In a feature, Brindar Sandhu, GMB, lauds the efforts of those who risked their lives to save those infected with Ebola. Emory has done its part, utilizing an isolation ward first developed for problems at the CDC to save the lives of four medical workers and inspiring two undergraduates to develop a quicker diagnostic test for the presence of disease.

Two articles by Ayush Kishore, MSP, describe what we usually think of as outreach. The 3rd annual STEM Research and Career Symposium gives underrepresented students, undergraduate and graduate, the opportunity to present their research and learn about future careers. This symposium attracts 125 students and mentors, most from a pool of students underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). It is widely considered a great success and we get to share our knowledge and experience with these budding young scientists. The second article describes the Atlanta Science Festival, a huge effort to “humanize” science and reach our youth with a dose of our excitement and enthusiasm for this career.

And last but not least, Atlanta’s BEST, a grant entitled “Broadening Education in Science and Technology”. Kristen Thomas, NS, a student benefiting from this exciting initiative, describes our efforts to prepare students for the myriad of career options they have. Emory was awarded one of the first ten of these NIH grants and it promises to change the success of our graduates and the campus culture as we step into the 21st century. As most students say when they learn we are offering the BEST, “It’s about time”.

Keith Wilkinson, Director of GDBBS
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This edition of the GDBBS Alumni Newsletter is the first to be published under the newly-revived Science Writers Association of Emory organization. SWAE has historically been involved with publishing both this newsletter and InScripto, a popular science magazine. The major goals of SWAE are to promote responsible communication about scientific topics to the public, to provide opportunities for graduate students in science to improve their communication skills, and to foster interest in scientific research in the Emory community. The role that SWAE plays in this particular publication is to help GDBBS students and alumni stay connected to the division by featuring major division events, achievements of alumni, and articles on topics of interest to members of GDBBS, past and present. For anyone interested in participating in SWAE or following publications, more information can be found at students.emory.edu/sciencewriters.

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Calling all alumni who have taken a career path outside of academia. In partnership with Georgia Tech, Emory is now running an NIH-funded program called Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training (BEST). The Atlanta BEST program is developing programming to assist PhD students and postdocs in scientific fields to explore careers beyond tenure-track faculty positions in the biomedical workforce. Career paths include science writing, law, business, consulting, industrial and governmental research, STEM education, policy, and many more. See the Atlanta BEST website (http://gs.emory.edu/sites/best/) for more information. Read more about the program and share your journey!

In addition to BEST, professionalization for all LGS students is a top funding priority. Alumni can help in these efforts by giving back. Donate to Professional Development Support funds. Be a mentor in our new “Mentors on Call Program,” or be a speaker in our “Pathways Beyond the Professoriate” or “Campus Connections” series. If you’re interested in leading a job skills session or want to learn more about professionalization opportunities for our students, contact Robin Harpak (robin.harpak@emory.edu) for more information.

Golf and Science. World-renowned golfer Robert “Bobby” T. Jones, Jr 29L was an extraordinary man of compassion and integrity who valued education. The Emory Libraries house Jones’ papers and memorabilia and will be launching a new exhibit on Feb 12 in the Schatten Gallery. But did you know that Jones also has a connection to science through Emory and the Georgia Tech Wallace H. Coulter Department Biomedical Engineering doctoral program? The Biomedical Engineering program is a unique collaboration offering a joint doctorate, awarded by both schools, that integrates life sciences and engineering. Gifts to the endowment for the Jones Biomedical Engineering Fellows will provide annual stipends for BME students pursuing doctorates in this nationally ranked program.

Biology alumni create a new fund for students in GDBBS. During Homecoming 2013, several Laney Graduate School alumni discussed the idea of creating an award to honor the fellow graduate students, faculty, and staff from the original biology program between approximately 1960 and 1991, just before the program became part of the interdisciplinary structure in the Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences. They agreed that these early days of research and teaching in masters and doctoral biology were memorable times at Emory and in their own lives, and they wish to commemorate them, now, in significant, lasting ways. Thanks go to those who have already contributed to the Graduate Program in Biology Academic and Professional Achievement Award. Just a year after establishing this fund we were able to present our first recipient with this prestigious award. Amanda Pierce, from the Population Biology, Ecology, and Evolution program, studies monarch butterfly population genetics and could not be more deserving of this award. We hope you will consider supporting this award so we’ll hit the $50,000 endowment level and honor students like Amanda in perpetuity.

A special thank you to Wells Fargo for its ongoing sponsorship of the Laney Graduate School’s new student orientation and the annual Graduate Students with Families event.
The Atlanta Science Festival is a highly collaborative effort by school districts, post-secondary institutions, museums, businesses, civic and community groups to educate, entertain, and impassion children and adults about science and technology. The week-long celebration of all things science will take place March 21-28, 2015. A complete listing of events will be available on the festival’s website in February. However, some examples of last year’s events include; a website design contest for middle school students, a guided tour of Fernbank Forrest by the Atlanta Audobon Society, and a robotics design challenge, to name just a few.

An event that is sure to attract a lot of attention is the “Evening with Neil deGrasse Tyson” at the Fox Theatre at 7:30 pm on March 24th. The prominent astrophysicist will be accompanied by author and oncologist Dr. Siddhartha Mukhergee for an advance screening of the PBS series Cancer: The Emperor of All Maladies. To receive a 10% discount on tickets for this event use promotional code ATLSCIENCE.

The festival will culminate in the Exploration Expo on Saturday, March 28th from 11-4 pm at Centennial Olympic Park. The Expo is free and open to all but will especially appeal to families with children aged 8-13. A list of exhibits can be found on the festival’s website (http://atlantasciencefestival.org/expo). Last year the festival attracted over 30,000 participants, including 16,000 at the Exploration Expo. The Atlanta Science Festival was founded by Emory University, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and the Metro Atlanta Chamber. Volunteers are needed for every event and also for the weeks leading up to the festival. To register as a volunteer, visit the volunteer page of the festival website at ‘http://atlantasciencefestival.org/volunteer’. The Atlanta Science Festival is sure to be an exciting experience for all. Please spread the word on social media and make sure to participate in the festivities!

Ayush Kishore
Molecular and Systems Pharmacology

Get Involved with Atlanta’s BEST Program

The Atlanta BEST (Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training) Program welcomed its second cohort this fall. The joint Emory/Georgia Tech Program is among the first funded by the new NIH initiative to train graduate students and postdocs in non-traditional career paths, including industry, intellectual property, and science communication.

The newest cohort, consisting of 31 trainees, are currently undergoing leadership, networking, and communications training, all while exploring the diversity of careers available to scientists outside of academia. The first cohort began their training last spring, and they are now completing internships in their chosen fields, including medical writing, technology transfer, and science policy.
Emory Science Advocacy Network

Advocating for the Future of U.S. Biomedical Research

Emory Science Advocacy Network (EScAN) is a graduate student group at Emory University that seeks to promote federal biomedical research funding through advocacy and education. Over the past 10 years, federal investment in scientific research has been dwindling; and as a result, scientists are no longer able to conduct the innovative research that drives discoveries. As a response to this, a group of five GDBBS graduate students founded EScAN and over the past year, EScAN has grown to include over 80 members, mostly represented from The Laney Graduate School Graduate Division of Biological and Biomedical Sciences (GDBBS).

EScAN seeks to provide a forum for graduate students interested in science policy and advocacy to stay informed, discuss current issues facing the biomedical field, and determine what we, as the next generation of scientists, can do to support a better funding environment. EScAN members are encouraged to take an active stance by writing and visiting legislators, educating our community about the importance and impact of biomedical funding, and engaging in other proactive aspects associated with scientific advocacy.

Current efforts involve advocacy seminars and workshops, community service events, visits to congressional offices in Georgia and Washington D.C., and hosting representatives and senators on campus. Last April, EScAN held a ‘Write for the Fight: Letter Writing Campaign’, in which GDBBS students, post-docs, and faculty wrote more than 350 letters that were sent to Georgia Senators and Representatives in order to advocate for additional congressional support for scientific funding. EScAN will hold its 2nd annual Letter Writing Campaign in April of 2015.

We welcome all members of the scientific community and EScAN invites all GDBBS alumni to participate in our events. Additional, up-to-date information about upcoming events can be found on our twitter (@EmoryScan) and Facebook page (Emory Science Advocacy Network). Any questions and/or comments can be directed to emoryscan@gmail.com.

Julia Omotade
President, Emory Science Advocacy Network
PhD Candidate, BCDB Program

Additionally, current trainees have released two issues of the Atlanta BEST Program Magazine, which are available at http://issuu.com/atlantabest. All articles are written and edited by current BEST program trainees or affiliates. GDBBS alumni are invited to contribute articles describing their own career journeys or providing career advice for current trainees. For additional information on the Atlanta BEST Program Magazine or to pitch an article for an upcoming issue, please email atlantabestmag@gmail.com.

Kristen Thomas
Neuroscience
BEST Program Trainee, Cohort 1
Atlanta BEST Program Magazine, Editor-in-Chief

GDBBS alumni who are now pursuing non-traditional careers are invited to get involved with the program. The program often hosts networking panels of local professionals. Current trainees are also eager to find local, part-time internships. Any alumni who would like additional information about the BEST Program, or who would like to contribute their time and expertise to the program are invited to complete an initial interest form at https://adobeformcentral.com/?f=yI9ZLNnL1TmQ6Vh2FMkBnA and to visit the program website at http://gs.emory.edu/sites/best/index.html. The Atlanta BEST Program is also inviting alumni to participate in a brief survey on career interests, skills, and values at https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=OWR2ik0%2ABUXIdRyiKU4T Kw.
Emory University will be holding its 3rd annual STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Mathematics) Research and Career Symposium starting on March 25th, 2015 at the Emory Conference Center. The 3-day symposium is organized by the Laney Graduate School to allow undergraduates interested in PhD or MD/PhD degrees and graduate students pursuing post-doctoral opportunities the chance to present their research and network with Emory faculty and students. While all participants are expected to present a poster showcasing their research, 10 students will be selected for oral presentations.

According to data from the Laney Graduate School, in the past five years the average enrollment class in graduate natural sciences programs was comprised of 7% African American and 6% Hispanic students. African Americans and Hispanics make up 12% and 16% of the general U.S. population respectively and are historically underrepresented in STEM-related fields. Therefore many academic institutions, including Emory, have taken measures to promote the diversity of their STEM trainees. For Emory, one of those measures is an annual STEM Research and Career Symposium, which also offers diversity travel awards to a select number of participants.

There will be two prominent keynote speakers at this year’s symposium: Dr. Kristine Garza and Dr. Hannah Valantine. Dr. Garza received a PhD in microbiology from the University of Virginia, did her post-doctoral work in the Department of Immunology at the Ontario Cancer Institute, and is currently an Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Texas at El Paso where her research looks at the effect of obesity on T cell-mediated immunity. She has displayed a long-standing commitment to promoting diversity in STEM, most notably for her involvement with SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Hispanics/Chicanos & Native Americans in Science) in various roles, including Executive Director.

Dr. Valantine holds an MD from St. George’s Hospital Medical School (London, UK) and did her post-doctoral work in the field of cardiology before coming to the U.S. to hold posts at Stanford University as a Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine and Senior Associate Dean for Diversity and Leadership. Dr. Valantine’s track record of promoting diversity in academic medicine won her the NIH Director’s Pathfinder Award for Diversity in the Scientific Workforce. In 2014 she became the NIH’s first Chief Officer for Scientific Workforce Diversity where she leads the NIH’s effort to diversify the biomedical research workforce.

For more information about the symposium please visit: http://www.gs.emory.edu/STEM

For general inquiries or if you are interested in becoming involved with the symposium please contact: stem.symposia@emory.edu

Ayush Kishore
Molecular and Systems Pharmacology
The annual GDBBS banquet has been an increasingly successful and festive event. In its fifth year, the banquet was held on Friday, September 17, 2014 at the Druid Hills Golf Club and was well attended by GDBBS students, faculty, mentors, family and friends.

Beginning with drinks on a patio overlooking the golf course, the banquet was a memorable event from the start. Moving into the banquet hall, dinner and entertainment provided by the acappella group, No Strings Attached, created a relaxed environment for the awards portion of the event. The banquet was kicked off by a talk commending and encouraging students and faculty to continue their dedication to science. The address was engaging and a perfect segue into the announcement of faculty and mentor awards. Finally, student awards were presented to an enthusiastic crowd, with strong support by individual programs for their peers.

Karen Siegel, a 5th year student in the Nutrition and Health Sciences program and winner of the NHS Student of the Year Award, said she “appreciated the efforts of the GDBBS program, faculty and students to create such a warm environment to celebrate receiving this award. It’s great to see the support of my peers tonight.”

The banquet has become one of the biggest and best events organized by GDBBS, whether attendees received an award or simply supported other GDBBS family. At the conclusion, attendees departed with enthusiasm and look forward to the 6th annual banquet in fall 2015.

Katie Coakley
Nutrition and Health Sciences
With the 2014 holiday season wrapping up, many people around the world are reflecting on past years, enjoying the present, and making resolutions for the future. Here at Inscripto we are getting inspiration from Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* and taking a look the GDBBS’ past, present, and future.

**GDBBS Past (and present!):**

_Eddie Morgan, PhD, Department of Pharmacology_

Dr. Morgan earned his PhD from the University of Glasgow in 1979. He joined the Department of Pharmacology in 1986 and was a founding member of the Molecular and Systems Pharmacology program.

_How was graduate education organized at Emory when you joined the pharmacology department?_

When I joined GDBBS didn’t exist. It started around 1990. At that time there were already two interdepartmental programs: neuroscience and a genetics program. Everybody else belonged to departmental programs. GDBBS was established with fewer programs than it has now obviously. BMB (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology) and pharmacology was PPS (Physiological and Pharmacological Sciences).

_What role have you played in the development of the GDBBS?_

I was involved fairly early on in the division. I was a member of both BMB and PPS. I started as Director of Graduate Studies for BMB. Then I got more involved in PPS and was one of 2-3 faculty that developed the MSP program out of PPS. My involvement in the Division has been mostly with recruiting underrepresented minorities. I got into that through being training grant director of MSP and found that I enjoyed it. I liked it so much that I started recruiting for the Division as well and not just MSP.

_What are some of the biggest changes you’ve seen over the years as a GDBBS faculty member?_

One of the biggest things I’ve seen Division wide was when it was made easier for students to change programs, especially in the first year. I think that was a very positive move. The ability for students to switch programs makes the Division truly interdisciplinary and made our model much more viable. There’s also been much more emphasis in recent years on training for alternate careers, which is very positive. There is a gradual altering of attitude of faculty toward alternate careers. Not all faculty are in tune yet, but many more are than previously, and that’s good for helping students find what they’re interested in doing and is better for student morale.
What are some programs you would like to see implemented or better supported?

I think it’s going to be critical to set up internship opportunities for students. The BEST (Broadening Experiences in Scientific Training) program is doing that but I think it’s going to be important to make those opportunities available to a larger number of students. We’ve now recognized the necessity for alternative career choices but now we have to provide the tools for students to be competitive in those kinds of careers.

GDBBS Present:

Shonna McBride, PhD, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

Dr. McBride earned her PhD from the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio in 2005. She joined the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at Emory in 2012. Dr. McBride is a member of the Microbiology and Molecular Genetics program.

What has been your involvement with the GDBBS since joining Emory in 2012?

When I first got to Emory I entered the MMG program because I felt that it was best suited for what my lab studies. I wanted to be part of a program where I could commit time and resources for recruiting and mentoring. Since joining the program I have lectured for IBS 504 (Prokaryotic Molecular Genetics) and IBS 742 (Regulation of Cell Growth) as well as participated on the MMG executive committee. I also conduct graduate student interviews at recruitment and co-organize the MMG seminar series.

How does the GDBBS compare with your graduate school experience?

My experience was department based. Here in GDBBS students don’t really belong to the department to which their professors belong. Their ties are closer to the program which, in the case of MMG, contains students and faculty in almost every research building on campus. This allows them to have a broader network early on in their scientific career.

What is your approach to graduate education?

Everybody pulls from their own experiences. I’ve been in several labs throughout my training which allowed me to experience a lot of different mentoring styles. I try to be more sensitive to the needs of graduate students. I prefer to give people different options for figuring out what they want to do and initially outline the projects. Over time the students have to take over the development process.

Are there any aspects of the GDBBS curriculum that you feel help students with their career development?

No matter what field you go into you have to know how to think, write, and present. Upper level courses require students to write grant proposals and review papers. Throughout your graduate education you will give presentations and seminars. All of those things help you get those little pieces of experience that you need to be able to communicate your work.

GDBBS Future

The future of GDBBS looks bright! As of August 2014 there are 54 GDBBS students who are funded externally, putting them on track to pursuing careers inside and outside of academia. A couple of recent alumni have begun to prosper soon after graduation by earning NIH Early Independence Awards. These coveted grants are awarded to outstanding early-career scientists who have the “intellect, scientific creativity, drive and maturity to flourish independently without the need for traditional postdoctoral training” according to NIH Director Francis Collins. The Early Independence Award provides the awardee with $1.25 million spread over 5 years. The Emory alumni granted these awards are William Kaiser, PhD (2012) and Sean Stowell, MD, PhD (2014). Dr. Stowell’s research focuses on key factors that determine the success of blood transfusions while Dr. Kaiser is investigating programmed necrosis. Both gentlemen are off to a great start in their careers with a hefty boost from the NIH right out of graduate school!

Alessandra Salgueiro
Cancer Biology
EBOLA 2014: Emory’s Time to Shine

Last year was the year of the largest Ebola outbreak ever documented, with widespread transmission starting in Guinea, followed by Liberia and Sierra Leone, all in March. By August, the virus had spread to Nigeria and Senegal, leading to the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring the epidemic an international public health emergency. That same month, the virus made its way to the U.S. Specifically, here on Emory’s campus. The nation watched the first Ebola-infected person in the U.S., Dr. Kent Brantly, a physician with Samaritan’s Purse who was transferred from Liberia to Atlanta, walk off his ambulance at Emory University Hospital. Dr. Brantly and Nancy Writebol, a medical aid who arrived at Emory three days after Dr. Brantly, were discharged, free of the virus, later that same month. The nurses, doctors, scientists, and caregivers who treated and cared for those patients with Ebola, some of whom contracted the virus as a result, were named Time Magazine’s Person of the Year for 2014.

One of “The Ebola Fighters,” the term given by Time Magazine, is a doctor here at Emory, Dr. Bruce Ribner. Both Dr. Brantly and Dr. Bruce Ribner, medical director of Emory University Hospital’s Serious Communicable Disease Unit, are two of the five doctors whose personal essays about their experiences with Ebola were included in the Time publication. In his essay, Dr. Ribner details his fears that the unit, which has been in place for 12 years, would never prove useful and may have been a waste of time and resources. However, once Dr. Brantly and Writebol were successfully cleared of the virus, Emory, along with the expertise of our neighboring Centers for Disease Control (CDC), quickly became the nation’s expert on treating Ebola. In fact, when Thomas Eric Duncan was diagnosed at Texas Health Presbyterian, and Dr. Craig Allen Spencer was diagnosed at Bellevue Hospital in Manhattan, Dr. Ribner was on the phone with these other hospitals, helping them follow the proper protocols. In that four months last fall, ten people were treated in the U.S. for Ebola; four of those successfully at Emory.

Thanks to the Ebola Fighters, the outbreaks of Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) in Senegal, Nigeria, and Spain were declared over on October 17, October 19, and December 2, 2014, respectively. According to the CDC, a national EVD outbreak is considered to be over when 42 days (double the 21-day incubation period of the virus) has elapsed since the last patient in isolation became laboratory negative for EVD. As of January 16, 2015, the estimated death count is 8,483. The WHO reports that today, one out of three Ebola patients survives the infection.

Containing the spread in West Africa was no simple task, however. Lt. Rebecca Levine, an Emory PBEE alum, described to CNN the difficulty of contact tracing in West Africa. When she arrived in Sierra Leone in August, she brought software designed by the CDC to more effectively manage the lists of possible infections. The physical resources are not the only hurdle to preventing spread, though. Lt. Levine explained how it is difficult to get community members to cooperate, as most people give fake addresses or no address, resulting in only 20-30% viable contacts in the database. People even intentionally leave a possible contact off the list, for fear of putting someone they know in isolation. Her stories show that education about the virus is necessary for spread prevention. As Lt. Levine states, there is a
dire need for more resources, more beds, and more informed staff.

Although Ebola’s time at Emory went by without complication, the same cannot be said about the rest of the country. As Nancy Gibbs of Time Magazine pointed out, news of Thomas Eric Duncan’s death created frenzy. Two Ohio schools closed because one of the middle school’s employees may have flown “on a different flight, but perhaps the same aircraft” as Amber Vinson, one of Duncan’s nurses, NBC reported. Navarro College, located 60 miles outside Dallas, rejected students from Nigeria, stating in the rejection letter “Navarro College is not accepting international students from countries with confirmed Ebola cases.” Spanish authorities killed the dog of a woman who contracted Ebola in Spain. Yet a quick search on the WHO website shows that there have not been any reports of symptomatic illness in dogs during any outbreak of EVD in Africa, nor is there evidence that dogs can transmit EVD to humans (and a possibly infected pet should be monitored in quarantine by a veterinarian). Despite the CDC’s constant reminders to the public that a person is not contagious until he or she shows symptoms and that Ebola can only be spread through bodily fluids, people allowed fear to cloud their rational judgment.

Emory University, on the other hand, shined during those four months. The Emory community saw four infected patients successfully discharged, and President Obama came to campus to meet with the healthcare workers treating Ebola-infected patients and lauded Emory’s world-class facilities. Finally, two Emory freshmen designed a prototype for a rapid Ebola test strip. Rapid Ebola Detection strips, or REDS, the brainchild of Rostam Zafari and Brian Goldstone, differ from others EVD detection tests in that they are designed to detect the virus before symptoms start, during the incubation period, in order to better prevent the spread of Ebola. Currently, the only way to test for the virus is to perform a PCR for the viral RNA from a blood sample. The science behind the strips is still confidential, and as of October, the two students raised their goal of $14,500 through crowdfunding, and were looking for a laboratory to let them make and test their strips.

Emory’s work with Ebola didn’t end after the last patient left. The new year brings the commencement of The Ebola Faculty and Community Forum, a semester-long forum that will explore the effects of EVD on public health, policy, law, ethics, government, development, religion and more. Emory’s School of Nursing, College of Arts and Sciences, Oxford College, Candler School of Theology, Laney Graduate School, Goizueta Business School, School of Law, School of Medicine, and Rollins School of Public Health have all lent their support for the forum, whose speakers include Emory faculty, experts currently working on Ebola in West Africa, and former President Jimmy Carter. The session with former President Carter will be open to everyone, and the first hour of all other sessions will be open to members of the Emory community. A schedule of the forum’s events can be found here http://news.emory.edu/stories/2014/12/er_ebola_discussion_group/campus.html. Be on the lookout for Ebola related Emory news in the future and check out the links below for Emory related news mentioned above.

Obama’s visit to Emory: http://news.emory.edu/stories/2014/09/er_obama_visit_coverage/campus.html

Emory freshmen create REDS: http://news.emory.edu/stories/2014/09/er_freshmen_build_ebola_test/campus.html

Brindar Sandhu
Genetics and Molecular Biology