

Molecular Matters

Department of Biochemistry

February 2018

DEPARTMENT NEWS

Awards and Recognition

Dr. Barbara Golden, Professor of Biochemistry, Interim Assistant Dean for Graduate Education and Faculty Development, received an award in the amount of \$200,000 from the Pew Charitable Trusts for a proposal entitled “A ribozyme with tRNA-synthetase activity for protein engineering *in vitro* and *in vivo*”. The broad goals of this proposal are to develop a ribozyme with tRNA synthetase activity and implement this ribozyme in cells to aminoacylate a specific tRNA with an artificial amino acid. This technology will enable site-specific insertion of artificial amino acids into proteins *in vitro* and *in vivo*. The project period is 11/1/2017 – 10/31/2020.

Dr. Beth Tran received the Lifetime Achievement Award in Service 2018 from the RNA Society. From Juan Valcárcel, President of the RNA Society, on behalf of the Awards Committee: *“The Award aims to recognize your outstanding contributions to the Society, from being the first Junior scientist representative to the Board and your roles on behalf of the Junior scientists representatives, to the establishment and continuation of the career workshops and mentoring lunches at RNA meetings, to your service in the Board of Directors. You are the youngest person to receive this award, as a recognition of the key roles that young members can play in the bettering of our society”*. Congratulations, Dr. Tran.

Dr. Xiaoqi Liu received an award in the amount of \$2500. from the Purdue Cancer Research Center Director Special Projects. The grant aims to study the role of polo-like kinase 1 in epigenetic modulations due to exposure to environmental toxins such as arsenic. Led by Dr. Chongli Yuan at Chemical Engineering, the internal grant by PCCR will be used to generate enough preliminary data for a major NSF grant application. The project period is from 01/01/2018 – 01/31/2019.

Graduate Program Spotlight

Bird Stair Graduate Fellowship Awardees

The Department of Biochemistry is pleased to announce the Bird Stair Graduate Fellowship Awardees for 2018. A total of \$72,000 was distributed to 14 graduate students to support their research. Congratulations to the following students for their outstanding work. To read more about the students and their research read more at <http://bit.ly/2EKcBER>

Undergraduate Program Spotlight

Biochemistry junior Stephanie Price has not only excelled at Purdue as a member of the Honors College and a College of Agriculture Ambassador, but has also taken the opportunity to participate in three study abroad programs: a short tour of Belgium and the Netherlands, a semester abroad in Padua, Italy, and is currently spending a semester abroad in Monterrey, Mexico. Read more at <http://bit.ly/2sMQlV>



Recent Publications

Adebesin, F., J.R. Widhalm, J.H. Lynch, R.M. McCoy and **N. Dudareva**. 2018. A peroxisomal thioesterase plays auxiliary roles in plant β -oxidative benzoic acid metabolism. *Plant J.* **93**: 905 - 916.

Alumni News

Dr. Jenna Rickus, associate vice provost for teaching and learning and professor of agricultural and biological engineering and biomedical engineering as well as a biochemistry alumna, was featured in PurdueToday "Purdue Profiles" on January 23. Click on the link to read the full article:

<http://bit.ly/2DNXFUO>

We love to hear from our alumni. If you have information that you would like to share, please contact Rachel Weaver at rrweaver@purdue.edu.

Going the Extra Mile

Dr. Humaira Gowher traveled to Vancouver, British Columbia, on January 21–27 as an invited speaker at the Keystone Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology, DNA and RNA Methylation to give a talk entitled "Biological outcome of catalytic specializations of DNA methyltransferases". Also attending were two members of her lab, graduate student Allison Norvil and associate researcher Ming He.

Dr. Ann Kirchmaier traveled to Atlanta, Georgia, on January 23–24 to serve on the DNA Mechanisms in Cancer grant review panel for the American Cancer Society.

Dr. Natalia Dudareva, along with graduate student Ryan Benke and postdoc Benoit Boachon, traveled to Lucca (Barga), Italy on February 3-9 to participate at the GRC on Plant Volatiles: "The Role of Plant Volatiles in Communication". Ryan presented a poster "Elucidating the role of synaptic vesicle protein 2 in volatile organic compound emission", Benoit presented a poster "ScentSational and puzzling terpene metabolism in petunia flowers", and Dr. Dudareva was chair of a session on "Biosynthesis and transport of volatiles." She also was one of the organizers of the GRC Power Hour, which is designed to help to address the challenges women face in science.

Upcoming Events

Biochemistry Speaker Seminars

(Every Tuesday in Whistler Hall, Rm. 116 unless stated)

February 27 – Dr. Shin-Ichiro Imai, Washington University in St. Louis, Department of Developmental Biology, School of Medicine

Biochemistry Graduate/Postdoc Seminars

(Fridays at 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. in Whistler Hall, Rm. 116)

March 2 - Gilbert Kayanja (Puthiyaveetil lab) & Ryan Benke (Dudareva lab)

March 9 - Courtney Traugh (Chapple lab) & Fabiola Mura-Villanueva (Chapple lab)

March 30 - Aaron Benjamin (Lohman lab) & Colin Carlock (Xiaoqi Liu lab)

Spring Break: March 12 – 16, offices open, but classes not in session



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