

UAMS Graduate School

VOLUME 4, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2011

UPCOMING DATES

- May 31, 2011
Summer classes begin
- July 1, 2011
Last day to drop a class
- July 4, 2011
Independence Day Holiday
- July 11-27, 2011
Registration for Fall 2011
- July 22, 2011 Last day of Summer Session
- For additional important dates see page 8

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Letter from Dean McGehee

It's hard to believe another academic year has come and gone. With Spring 2011 Commencement one week behind us and we get a few moments to come up for air, it's nice to look back on what has been another incredibly successful academic year. The last month of our academic year, while certainly busy, is one of my favorite. I call it Commencement Season, and it kicks off with our spring reception where we make the majority of our annual student and faculty awards, followed by a number of dissertation/thesis defenses, and then culminating on a Saturday with the Graduate School Brunch and Commencement. It's a very exciting time. This year we celebrate 24 new Ph.D. graduates and 41 M.S. graduates. We had a number of firsts this year. Dr. Brooke E. Montgomery is now the inaugural graduate of the Health Promotion and Prevention Research graduate program. Her major graduate advisor, Katharine Stewart, Ph.D. is the first faculty member of the UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health to mentor a Ph.D. student. Dr. Shimul Chowdhury and Dr. Kevin Kim (major advisors: Charlotte Hobbs, M.D., Ph.D. and Mayumi Nakagawa, M.D., respectively) are the inaugural doctoral graduates of our Clinical and Translational Sciences track in the IBS graduate program. We also saw Dr. David Terrano (major advisor: Tim Chambers, Ph.D.) get double hooded at Commencement for both the M.D. and Ph.D. degrees. Many of these students will be staying in Arkansas, and many are going all over the country, including Washington, California, and Massachusetts, New York and all sorts of places in between. Regardless of destination, these are our new UAMS Graduate School ambassadors and will play a substantive role toward increasing our national visibility and respect. We wish them well as they start a new chapter of their life. And always keep in mind, none of this happens without graduate faculty. We have a remarkable cadre of faculty who deserve the credit for providing the opportunity and an environment where students can pursue their passion and thrive. When you take a moment to think about the commitment of these individuals, it is quite humbling.

We are taking the opportunity with this newsletter to remember some of the highlights of this past year. Events like the Research Induction Ceremony and Career Day. We are also bringing attention to many of the major awards students received over this past year, including three new NIH NRSA's (we now have a record number of these awards on campus), recognitions at national society meetings, and invitations to attend national workshops. Remarkably, planning for 2011-2012 is now underway. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us in the Graduate School with new ideas, events, or mechanisms to improve the ones we are already planning. I want to always be open to new ways of recognizing and rewarding our students and faculty and your input is more than welcome. In the meantime though, I hope you all take some time this summer for family and fun. If you happen to be in the Lake Ouachita area, let me know, we'll give you a pull or take you on a striper hunt (Figure 1). Have a great summer.

Robert E. McGehee, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate School

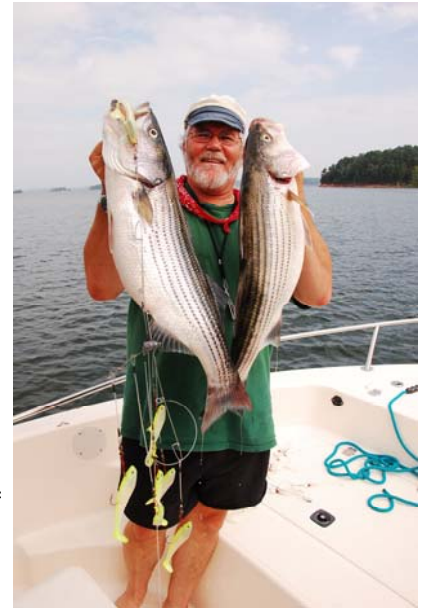


Figure 1: *Morone saxatilis* (striped bass); 4.1 Kg and 5.9 Kg, (n=2; P<0.001). Collected: June 12, 2010, Lake Ouachita, Hot Springs, Arkansas., F/V: Fish Dr.

Read the [Graduate School blog](#)
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Research Induction Symbolizes Doctoral Students' Rite of Passage

Twenty-nine doctoral candidates at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) received white lab coats in a ceremony symbolizing their next step toward achieving their degrees.

The Graduate School Research Induction Ceremony, held Sept. 27, marked a formal transition for the students upon passing their candidacy exam. The exam follows the first two years of graduate school, which is mostly in the classroom, said Graduate School Dean Robert E. McGehee, Ph.D. Now the students begin work toward their more research-focused doctoral dissertation.

"At this point, these candidates know more about a broad range of topics than they ever will in their entire life," said McGehee. "This step moves the doctoral candidate out of the classroom and embarks them on something they've never done before."

UAMS Chancellor Dan Rahn, M.D., said the symbolism of the ceremony was important.

"Symbolism matters because of the way it represents the responsibility you are now taking on and the responsibility society places on your shoulders," Rahn said. "Society expects you to do work that

improves health and promotes a better understanding of the human condition.

"Without research nothing changes, nothing gets better."

Keynote speaker Philip Langlais, Ph.D., a professor at Old Dominion University, impressed upon the candidates the importance of research integrity and professional standards. Society needs new researchers studying the complex medical, health care and social issues, he said.

"Everyone, irrespective of discipline or position is expected to uphold the same standards of integrity and ethical behavior when conducting research or any other scholarly activity," Langlais said. "Welcome to this honorable profession. You are needed."

The candidates then received their coats one by one. They were helped into their coats by their advisor and their program director.

Afterward, the candidates recited an Affirmation of Scientists, pledging to "ensure that the results of my research and other scientific activities ultimately benefit humanity" and to "become a worthy role model deserving of respect by those who follow me."

The doctoral candidates represented 12 programs: biochemistry and molecular biology, bioinformatics, cellular physiology and molecular biophysics, communication sciences and disorders, health promotion and prevention research, health systems research, interdisciplinary biomedical sciences, interdisciplinary toxicology, microbiology and immunology, neurobiology and developmental sciences, nursing science, and pharmacology.

Upon passing the candidacy exam, doctoral candidates have seven years to complete their dissertation, a document submitted in support of a candidate receiving their degree that presents their research findings.



UAMS doctoral candidates recite the Affirmation of Scientists

M.D./Ph.D. Program Offers the Best of Both Worlds

Kevin Kim said his interest in becoming a physician scientist grew out of his first post-college job as a laboratory technician. It ultimately led him to seek a medical degree and doctorate in the UAMS [Graduate School](#).

While working in a lab at the University of California, San Francisco that was studying the [human papillomavirus](#) (HPV), Kim said he was able to see how laboratory findings could translate into new medical treatments for patients. In this case, it was the study of immune responses against HPV-induced cervical disease that helped move toward development of a vaccine. The physician scientists leading the research left an impression on him.

"They possessed the drive and passion for pushing the edge of knowledge in their respective fields and at the same time, had a unique perspective as physicians caring for patients," Kim said. "I witnessed firsthand how researching the natural history of HPV in infected patients led to the establishment of guidelines for clinical practice.

"Additionally, the findings from our research had implications for the development of a therapeutic vaccine against late-stage cervical disease."

He said he felt compelled to follow the path of his mentors in that HPV work, including [Mayumi Nakagawa](#), M.D., Ph.D., an associate professor of pathology in the UAMS College of Medicine.

Kim is now in his third year of graduate school, which followed completion of his first two years of medical school. He anticipates earning his doctorate at the end of

the academic year, then returning to complete his medical degree.

He is continuing to study HPV, evaluating the HPV-antigen-specific, cell-mediated immune response in patients with HPV-related diseases, such as common warts and cervical disease, with the long-term goal of developing therapeutic vaccines against these diseases.

The 19 students in the UAMS M.D./Ph.D. student group are led by [William Wessinger](#), Ph.D., associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology of the College of Medicine and director of the [Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences](#) program in the Graduate School.

"This is an elite group of trainees — their enthusiasm, self-initiation and mutual support is phenomenal. These future physician-scientists will be among the leaders in translational biomedical research in this country," Wessinger said.

Kim said the students are a tight group, supporting one another on the long path to completing an M.D./Ph.D.

Another support mechanism for Kim is the [Graduate Student Association](#), of which he is serving as president. The group organizes activities that promote fellowship among its members as well as sharing of ideas in research and teaching. The GSA also represents graduate students in campus organizations, and act as a means of communication between the Graduate School office, UAMS administration and students.

"We're all in it together for the long haul, the good times along with the rough patches, and the GSA is there to make the ride a little bit smoother," Kim said. "GSA has been especially successful in promoting activities that

bring the student body together and make graduate school more enjoyable, with the intention to create an environment and atmosphere where students can hopefully initiate and build lasting relationships.

"We always try to coordinate events that will impact the most number of students and accommodate the diverse array of interests of our students."

He said this year's goals and projects for the group include community service projects; creation of a Teaching Opportunities and Communication committee to offer opportunities for students wanting to hone their teaching skills; and promoting faculty involvement. Kim said the group also is establishing the Graduate Student Council, which has representation from each Graduate School program and seeks to build camaraderie among the programs.



**UAMS graduate student
Kevin Kim**

UAMS' Gaddy Says Scientists Have 'Best Job There Is'

UAMS' Dana Gaddy, Ph.D., warned an audience of prospective researchers that the life of the scientist carries its share of rejection and pain. But for her, there have been far more ups than downs.

Gaddy, the featured UAMS speaker at the 10th Annual Career Day for Biomedical Sciences, titled her presentation: "The Roller Coaster of Running Your Own Lab – Why Would Anyone Want to Do That?"

"It's a roller coaster, like most careers," she said. "Some of the lows are pretty low." But Gaddy used a graph projected on a large screen to document the highs and lows of her own career, noting that despite the lows – primarily from grant rejections – the trajectory was consistently up.

Gaddy is a professor in the Department of Physiology and Biophysics in the College of Medicine. Her research interests are receptor kinase signaling in reproductive tumor cells, metastatic bone disease, matrix metalloproteinases and metastasis, and ovarian cancer. She spoke to 108 attendees from 13 colleges in two states that included undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Her success in the field, she said, meshed with her own goals and attributes. Those include curiosity, wanting a

career filled with learning and discovery, a strong desire to control her career path, and a joy of working with students and colleagues.

Gaddy spoke fondly of her research "family," students, former students and colleagues who remain close. Her work schedule is flexible, but she puts in well over 40 hours a week. She also gets to travel to exotic locales around the world for scientific meetings.

"Although this is a roller coaster, I'm having a blast. This is a great life; it's incredibly rich," Gaddy said. "You'd have to pay me a lot of money to do anything else."

By the end of her lecture, she answered her own question: "Why would any intelligent, curious, scientifically minded person not want to run their own lab? Because I really think it's the best job there is."

Other Biomedical Career Day speakers and topics were:

- Traci Hall, Ph.D., National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences; "Love Research but Not Writing Grants? How About NIH Intramural Research?"; Research Triangle Park, N.C.
- Mike Stern, Ph.D., vice president of research, Allergan; "The Role of Research and the Researcher in a Pharmaceutical Company"; Irvine, Calif.
- Lincoln Wilkins Jr., Ph.D.,



Dana Gaddy, Ph.D., a featured speaker at the 10th Annual Career Day for Biomedical Sciences

senior medical science liaison, Cephalon; "Medical Science Liaisons: Linking Science With Application"; Frazer, Pa.

- Denise Croix, Ph.D., technical sales consultant, Miltenyi Biotech; "May the Force Be With You – A Jump to the Dark Side"; Coppell, Texas
- Barbara Clancy, Ph.D., associate professor of biology and neuroscience, University of Central Arkansas; "The Joy of Egg Juggling: Teaching and Research at an Undergrad Institution"; Conway, Ark.

Ben Davis Talks to Grad Students about Making Life Changes

A Little Rock man who gained Internet fame by chronicling a 120-pound weight loss journey told UAMS students, faculty and staff they could make the same kinds of dramatic changes.

Ben Davis, 24, video documenting his 120-pound weight loss garnered him national attention and speaking engagements, said the changes don't have to be health or weight loss but could be almost anything.

"Set some goals. Set reasonable, measurable and small goals," he said. "Then make it fun. Make it a game."

Davis was invited to speak to students at a March 3 event hosted by the UAMS Graduate

School and Graduate Student Association. He was introduced by childhood friend and UAMS graduate student Lee Ann King.

Davis's weight loss video has been viewed more than 1 million times on YouTube. His story has been featured in magazines and on the Today Show. The video grew out of a blog where he wrote about his weight loss for his grandmother, he said

He said keeping a journal of his weight loss was another important element in his success.

On his blog Davis says, "On Christmas Day, 2008, I made a promise to my grandmother to get a grip on my obesity, my depression and my life."

In addition to his speaking engagements, he is now a contributor to active.com, a fitness website. Read more about him – and watch the video that started it all – on <http://bendoeslife.com>.



Ben Davis

Graduate Student Association Officers 2011-12

Congratulations to the new 2011-12 GSA officers

President: Faith McDaniel

Vice President: Chad Cragle

Secretary: Adam Brown

Treasurer: Neil Detweiler

Recycling Coordinator: Steven E. Smith

ASG Representatives: Tristan Fowler & Nandini Sakurikar

Teaching Opportunities and Communications Chair: Laura Broederdorf

Thank you to the 2010-11 officers for all of their hard work.

Graduate Student Awards 2010-11

Suja Aaraththodiyil (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)

Received an American Society for Microbiology travel award to attend the Viral Genome Replication Conference

William Atchley (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received a Ruth L. Kirchstein National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health

Nathan Avaritt (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)

Received an ASBMB graduate student travel award to attend the ASBMB 2011 Annual Meeting

Matina Balou (Communication Sciences and Disorders)

Received the Gerondelis Foundation Research Grant

Klressa Barnes (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received an American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery Conference Travel Award

Shweta Chavan (Bioinformatics)

Received a travel award to attend the 8th Annual MidSouth Computational Biology and Bioinformatics Society Conference

Shimul Chowdhury (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received the Wilson Presentation Award for Predoctoral Students at the 50th Teratology Society Annual Meeting

Lisa Cortez (Interdisciplinary Toxicology)

Received an ASPET travel award to attend the 2011 Experimental Biology Meeting

Linda Crompton (Nursing Science)

Received the Jonas Center and the John A. Hartford Foundation Predoctoral Scholarship

Tristan Fowler (Cellular Physiology and Molecular Biophysics)

Received The Endocrine Society Outstanding Abstract Award for the Endocrine Society 2011 Meeting

Received the Women in Endocrinology Young Investigator Award for the Endocrine Society 2010 Meeting

Hamdan Hamdan (Cellular Physiology and Molecular Biophysics)

Received an American Society for Neurochemistry Young Investigator's Education Enhancement Travel Award

Hunter Holthoff (Pharmacology)

Received a Ruth L. Kirchstein National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health

Received an APS Microcirculatory Society Travel Award to attend the 2011 Experimental Biology Meeting

Drew Jones (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)

Invited to the St. Jude Graduate Student Research Symposium

Received First Place in the Graduate Student Life Sciences Oral Presentations at the 95th Annual Arkansas Academy of Sciences

Kevin Kim (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received a 2011 Midwest Trainee Travel Award to attend the CSCR/MWAFMR Combined Annual Meeting

Aleksandra Markovets (Bioinformatics)

Received a Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp. Bioinformatics Internship

Tanecia Mitchell (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received a Society for Free Radical Biology and Medicine Young Investigator Award for the 17th Annual Meeting

Lara Mrak (Microbiology and Immunology)

Received an International Conference on Gram-Positive Pathogens travel award

Nisha Nanaware (Pharmacology)

Received an Amgen travel award to attend the 2011 AAPS National Biotechnology Conference

Selected to be a student co-moderator at the AAPS National Biotechnology Conference Subcutaneous Absorption of Macromolecules session

Andrew Norwood (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received a Behavior, Biology and Chemistry Conference travel award

Melda Onal (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received the 2010 ASBMR President's Award

Elina Pathak (Pharmacology)

Received an ASPET travel award to attend the 2011 Experimental Biology Meeting

Christina Pettey (Nursing Science)

Selected for the National Institute of Nursing Research Summer Genetics Institute

Shanthi Vadali (Interdisciplinary Toxicology)

Received an ASPET travel award to attend the 2011 Experimental Biology Meeting

Zhen Wang (Pharmacology)

Received an American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowship

Received an APS Caroline tum Suden/Francis A. Hellenbrandt Professional Opportunity Award to attend the 2011 Experimental Biology Meeting

Received a Society for Experimental Biology and Medicine Young Investigator Award to attend the 2011 Experimental Biology Meeting

Charity Washam (Bioinformatics)

Received the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute Predoctoral Fellowship in Breast Cancer

Received a travel award to attend the MidSouth Computational Biology and Bioinformatics Society Annual Meeting

Received the Best Conference Abstract Award at the International Conference on Cancer Induced Bone Disease

Received an International Bone and Mineral Society New Investigator Travel Award to attend the International Conference on Cancer Induced Bone Disease

Jennifer Watts (Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences)

Selected to present at the NIH 6th Annual Pain Consortium Symposium

Received a Diversity Travel Award to attend the 25th Annual National MD/PhD Student Conference

Martin Watts (Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences)

Received a Ruth L. Kirchstein National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health

Received a Diversity Travel Award to attend the 25th Annual National MD/PhD Student Conference

Agnieszka Zielinska (Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences)

Received an American Health Association Predoctoral Fellowship

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Important Dates

August 17, 2011 Orientation for new graduate students

August 22, 2011 Classes for Fall 2011 begin

October 13, 2011 Career Day for Biomedical Sciences

*Additional important dates for Fall 2011 can be found on the Graduate School website

