

# UNIVERSITY OF MAINE CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER



## Greetings from Emily A. P. Haigh, Director of Clinical Training

Dear Clinical Program Alumni and friends,

The past couple years have brought some incredible challenges and new developments for the clinical program. Like everyone, we've done our best to navigate the pandemic and continue our high quality program. Despite these challenges our program has remained resilient and risen to the challenge of meeting the mental health needs across the state. In the fall of 2020, the clinical program received a 10-year re-accreditation, the longest professional accreditation period granted to only the strongest American Psychological Association programs.

At the faculty level, Dr. Schwartz-Mette was awarded tenure and promotion and won a competitive R15 grant from NIMH. We are also happy to welcome back Dr. Hecker to the department. Dr. Hecker has been quick to establish a number of important partnerships and funding with Acadia Hospital, UMaine Machias, and Maine Medical Center. Additionally, through a generous donation from the Albert B. Glickman family foundation and support from the university, our clinical program launched the Glickman Fellowship in Clinical Psychology. This fellowship funds a clinical psychology student who has significant ties to Maine with the aim of increasing the number of licensed clinical psychologists who live and practice here.

Building on the initial relationship, the Glickman-Lauder family pledged further support to help increase capacity of the clinical psychology program. As part of a major gift, the clinical program will better meet the needs of the state by filling gaps in our expertise and hire two tenure track positions. The gift also provides funding for a professional position to help coordinate practicums and experiential training opportunities at both the graduate and undergraduate level as well as support curriculum developments or "Pathways to Success in Psychology" that will help students interested in careers in mental health.

I am also happy to report that this past July the clinical program, in collaboration with the social work program, was awarded a 1.48 MIL Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) training grant to help address the behavioral health care workforce needs in rural Maine. The Rural Integrated Behavioral Health (RIBHPC) training program will allow us to fund 7 additional clinical psychology students.

Finally, we are pleased to be partnering more closely with the Office of Behavioral Health for the State of Maine. In this capacity the clinical program is partnering to establish a forensic postdoctoral position with the State Forensic Service and develop a funded practicum opportunity for clinical students to gain exposure to policy work. Encouragingly, all of these new developments, combined with a recently added assistantship in the UMaine Counseling Center, has allowed our program to recruit significantly bigger cohorts of students. We're excited by this momentum and look forward to having a bigger impact on clinical training, research, and service moving forward.

All my best,  
Emily

## Greetings from April O'Grady

### Director of the Psychological Services Center

Well, what a year and a half it has been for all of us! I imagine many of you had to make the transition to telehealth services like the PSC did back in March 2020. There were so many questions to answer. How do we create a telehealth program from scratch? How do we serve all of our clients until we do get telehealth off the ground? Will we try to do any in-person services? What about assessments that need hands-on materials? There must be a way to do online MMPI's but how exactly do we do that? What do I do when my client comes to their teletherapy session while they are in bed and in their pajamas? Or from their car in a busy parking lot? Like everyone, we had to determine confidential email service, video platforms, Google phone numbers, and online forms. Despite the flurry and sense of urgency, this period was a unique training experience in how to respond to a crisis ethically and in an empirically-based manner. We consulted with colleagues and national professional organizations, such as Association of Psychology Training Clinics, and reviewed the literature on telehealth. Sometimes it was exhausting and sometimes exhilarating.

By the time May 2020 arrived, we had our telehealth program up and running, and PSC clinicians were back to providing high quality, empirically supported services but through the screens of their computers. But now there was a new challenge. Our first years had never seen a client yet and they were moving straight into telehealth. Full credit to their fortitude, they managed wonderfully and carried full clinical caseloads all summer and into their practicums the following year. And as if that was not enough, in the true spirit of a scientist-practitioner training clinic and with the help of Melissa Jankowski, Taylor McMillan, and Jessica Shankman, we wrote an IRB and offered a Covid-19 Stress Clinic. Through the CSC, we offered a 4-session course of therapy targeting stress reactions or emotional difficulties related to the impact of the pandemic and its isolation.

There have been some nice surprises along the way. People really like coming to teletherapy sessions, and cancellations and no shows are virtually non-existent. Teletherapy means that you can do exposure trials every week right in someone's home. Our clinicians are right there when a client with OCD reaches into their garbage and smears their germ hand all over their counter. ERP will never be the same again!

Take good care,  
April

## 2021 INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT UPDATES

### **Michelle Buffie**

Oregon Health & Sciences University, Portland, OR

### **Eliot Fearey**

University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO

### **Melissa Jankowski**

University of North Carolina School of Medicine, Forensic Track, Chapel Hill, NC

### **Jess Shankman**

Children's Hospital Stanford/Children's Health, Palo Alto, CA

## Translational Research: Research Collaboration Between Dr. Fayeza Ahmed and the Jackson Laboratory

The primary aim of the Maine Health, Aging, and Lifestyle (HAL) Lab, directed by Fayeza S. Ahmed, PhD, is to investigate the multifactorial nature of physical health and risk for dementias, such as Alzheimer's disease (AD). Currently, there are 5.8 million adults with AD in the United States, and this number is projected to increase to 7.1 million by 2025 and 13.8 million by 2050<sup>1</sup>. Alzheimer's Disease (AD) is a significant public health problem. With no cure for AD and a rapidly growing number of new diagnoses of this debilitating disease, researchers such as Dr. Ahmed are focusing on risk reduction. Although observable symptoms of AD do not begin until older adulthood, the disease process actually begins decades earlier<sup>2</sup>. As such, the HAL lab is dedicated to furthering our understanding of the role of modifiable risk factors, or lifestyle behaviors such as exercise, among middle-age adults. Dr. Ahmed is particularly interested in the relationship between the brain's blood supply system, exercise, and their impact on cognitive function.

A fortuitous meeting among UMaine Psychology AD researchers and AD researchers at the Jackson Laboratories led to a research collaboration between Dr. Ahmed and Dr. Gareth Howell. The Howell lab studies AD from many angles, including exercise, diet, and the trajectory of these behaviors during middle age in a mouse model. Additionally, the Howell lab is part of a large National Institute of Aging grant, MODEL-AD, which is a multi-institute collaboration to develop and study new mouse models of AD.

The collaboration involves two parallel projects – human and mice – that will investigate the impact of exercise on cognitive, neuroinflammation, gene expression, and cerebrovascular function in a middle-age sample. While the benefits of exercise on the brain are well known, a major aim of this study is to advance scientific knowledge about those who will benefit most from adopting a physically-active lifestyle. The ability to conduct a translational study of this nature allows for investigation of these complex relationships in a highly-controlled environment in mice with validation among human participants.

The Howell study and serum analysis for both mice and humans are funded from the Tucker Taft Foundation while the remaining human participant study components are funded through the University of Maine. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, face-to-face research cannot be conducted. By creating several modifications, however, Dr. Ahmed and researchers from the HAL lab have been collecting data remotely. They are now in the process of analyzing pilot data for an external grant submission.

### References

1. Alzheimer's Association. (2020). Alzheimer's disease facts and figures. *Alzheimer's and Dementia*, 16(3), 391-460.
2. Sperling, R.A., Aisen, P. S., Beckett, L. A., Bennett, D. A., Craft, S., Fagan, A. M., Iwatsubo, T., Jack, C. R., Kaye, J., Montine, T. J., Park, D. C., Reiman, E. M., Rowe, C. C., Siemers, E., Stern, Y., Yaffe, K., Carrillo, M. C., Thies, B., Morrison-Bogorad, M.,...Phelps CH. (2011). Toward defining the preclinical stages of Alzheimer's disease: Recommendations from the National Institute on Aging-Alzheimer's Association workgroups on diagnostic guidelines for Alzheimer's disease. *Alzheimer's and Dementia*, 7(3), 280-292.

## 2021 POST-DOCTORAL FELLOWSHIP UPDATE

### Laura Andrews

Post-Doctoral Resident at Health Psych Maine, Waterville, ME

### Colin Bosma

Post-Doctoral Behavioral Health Resident at Providence Medical Group, Portland, OR

## Research Spotlight

### Dr. Rebecca Schwartz-Mette awarded NIMH R15 Grant, funding the BIRCH Project

Dr. Rebecca Schwartz-Mette is an Associate Professor and the director of the Peer Relations Lab, which is dedicated to understanding the link between emotional adjustment and friendship functioning in childhood and adolescence. She was awarded a prestigious National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) R15 grant in 2018. Since then, the Building Interpersonal Resilience and Community Health (BIRCH) Project has been underway, with fall 2020 marking the start of the second year of data collection. Dr. Schwartz-Mette generously agreed to share more about the BIRCH Project, conducting school-based research, especially considering the unexpected challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The BIRCH Project is a large, school-based study that broadly aims to understand risk and protective factors for the socialization (i.e., contagion) of depression, self-injury, and suicide within adolescents' dyadic friendships and across their social networks. Given the high rates of depression, self-injury, and suicidality among adolescents, particularly in Maine, data from the BIRCH Project is ultimately aimed to inform and enhance prevention and intervention efforts that leverage the important developmental context of friendships. The project is longitudinal and multi-method, with five assessments spaced throughout the school year that utilizes self-report, friend-report, observational, and ecological momentary assessment (EMA) methodologies. The BIRCH team works closely with school administrators and counselors to quickly identify adolescents at acute risk for suicide, connecting families to resources and referrals. At the end of data collection, the BIRCH team prepares school climate reports for each school, highlighting strengths and growth areas for each community that can inform policy and curricular decisions for the coming academic year.

The first cohort of adolescents from four schools across the state of Maine participated in BIRCH during the 2019-2020 school year. Following our winter survey, the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated school closures and, thus, quick and flexible thinking from the BIRCH team! We incorporated daily assessments of COVID-related anxiety, isolation, and loneliness, as well as social interaction and physical distancing practices during the first two weeks of Maine's school shutdowns, serendipitously offering us a window into the immediate effects of COVID-19 on adolescents' peer relationships and emotional adjustment.

This year's data collection has been similarly marked with questions that continue to stretch us. Chief among them: What does it mean to conduct school-based research in the middle of a pandemic? Lots of persistence, creativity, and social distance! We have five school partners this year, and each is faced with their own set of rolling and unpredictable challenges on a near-daily basis. We are proud of our strong community connections and our ability to adjust to these uncertain times. The BIRCH Project has shifted to be completely remote this year, in order to meet the diverse needs of our students and schools and to continue to take advantage of this unique opportunity to better understand the impact of COVID-19 on adolescents' socioemotional adjustment. A special thanks to the BIRCH Team (fifth-year doctoral students Eliot Fearey and Jessica Shankman, and first-year students Raegan Harrington, Trevor Long, and Cassandra Rowan) who keep the positivity and energy rolling!

## 2021 FELLOWSHIP AWARD UPDATES

### **Susan J. Hunter Teaching Fellowship Award** – Awarded to Taylor McMillan

The Hunter Teaching Fellowship is awarded in recognition of a student's excellent work and abilities as a potential university teacher. Taylor is currently a fifth-year student in Dr. Fayeza Ahmed's lab. Her research interests include examining the role of nutrition as a modifiable risk factor for cognitive decline.



## Doing Justice to Graduate Forensic Specialty Training

### *Background*

April O'Grady, Ph.D.

For over two decades, our program has offered specialized experiences in forensic psychology. It is a corner of our field that has kept me fascinated every day of my career but it can be an area that is little-known to the field at large. Despite not ever having a specific track or emphasis, we've given our students varied and valuable forensic experiences that have shaped their training in many ways. As you'll hear from current and recent students below, some have used their training to enhance their general assessment and consultation skills and others have chosen to pursue careers in forensic and correctional psychology. In this section of the newsletter, we wanted to provide a window into these specialized experiences.



For some history, back in the mid 1990's, faculty members Geoff Thorpe and Jeff Hecker had dedicated some of their private practice time to court-related assessment, and developed research programs with a forensic focus. Sue Righthand, who has been an important part of our program in multiple ways since that time, provided graduate student research-based funding through grants with DHHS and DOC. Jeff and Geoff began taking doctoral students with research interests in forensic areas, and Doug Nangle also became involved with forensic practice and research. In the early 2000's came a Department of Corrections contract with the PSC to provide evaluations for juveniles in the legal system, and I became the Director of the PSC, bringing along my forensic training from internship and postdoc. Over the years, our forensic training options have weathered all sorts of changes, including faculty moving on to other areas of their careers and multiple, scathing rounds of government budget cuts.

Amazingly, however, we have flourished. The PSC won a competitive bid for a State of Maine contract to provide assessment services to youth in the juvenile justice system, and UMaine doctoral students have collectively conducted nearly 300 forensic assessments and consultations since our partnership with DOC. We have a strong reputation in the community for providing valuable, evidence-based forensic evaluations, and multiple referral sources outside of the court system turn to us for violence, threat, firesetting, and sexual-based risk assessment. Students interested in forensic-related careers have also conducted attorney-referred evaluations and consultation, which can provide the opportunity for testimony experience. Depending on students' training needs, I've offered directed readings in forensic psychology with an emphasis on competence and criminal responsibility matters. Through my private practice, students have been able to observe and receive focused training on State Forensic Service evaluations in jails, prison, and forensic inpatient settings. There is also the opportunity to observe testimony on my cases and to receive specialized training on the nuances of preparing for and delivering testimony.

Below you'll hear from some of these students about the experiences they've had. It's a two-way street though, and I'm lucky to be able to work with them in this fascinating area of our field.

***Department of Correction Practicum: Cross-Cutting Skills***

Taylor McMillan, M.A. and Liv Valo, M.A.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) Practicum is an invaluable experience because it grounds assessment coursework in the complex and consequential world of juvenile justice and rehabilitation. We would recommend this practicum to all graduate trainees, notably including those who do not anticipate careers in forensic psychology, as a valuable opportunity to hone their skills in structured clinical interviewing, identifying and interpreting key psychological risk assessment tools, formulating a comprehensive report that includes targeted recommendations, and collaborating with other treatment providers to provide comprehensive psychological services and intervention. This practicum is intellectually and emotionally stimulating both in its intensive focus on skills-building in evaluation and reporting as well as in its dynamic engagement with at-risk youth and their psychosocial contexts. That said, this work is as rewarding as it is challenging thanks to the expert guidance of Dr. April O'Grady and to ongoing collaborations with the broader community of government and civilian stakeholders, including clinical and forensic psychologists, who are committed to restorative justice.

***From Juveniles to Adults – Severe Mental Illness in Forensic Populations***

Melissa Jankowski, M.A.

After spending a year on the DOC practicum, I knew that forensic psychology was the career path I wanted to pursue. Following consultation with Drs. April O'Grady and Sue Righthand, it was clear that gaining experience working with severe mental illness, and seeing what unmet mental health needs during adolescence can later look like for adults who find themselves in the legal system, was the next best step as I worked my way toward internship. In order to meet this need, our program collaborated with Riverview Psychiatric Center State Hospital in Augusta to provide me with a full-time practicum experience. I spent 10 hours a week on the acute forensic unit and had the opportunity to work exclusively with forensically involved patients. Within this intensive setting, I prepped and led 2-3 groups per week including DBT, ACT, competency restoration, and CBT-based psychosis groups, carried a load of individual therapy clients and conducted diagnostic, cognitive, intake, and malingering assessments, and even had voting privileges on the medical executive committee. The combination of DOC, Riverview, and the countless opportunities Dr. O'Grady created for me over the years allowed me to successfully match to a forensic internship site.

***Specialized Forensic Training – Internship and Beyond***

Rachael Huff, Ph.D.

The specialized training I received through working with Drs. April O'Grady and Sue Righthand has allowed me to pursue internship and postdoctoral training in the field of corrections. I completed my internship at Marcy Correctional Facility in Marcy, NY. Through this placement I gained experience assessing and treating adult males who had committed sexual offenses and were designated as likely to be reviewed for civil confinement upon their release. I completed risk assessments as well as comprehensive evaluations comprised of personality, diagnostic, and intellectual testing. Group therapy was the primary modality, although individuals who presented with barriers to participation were also given individual treatment. I also had the role of primary clinician for some inmates, meeting monthly and tracking their progress in treatment as well as discussing any barriers.

Upon graduating with my doctorate in August 2020, I followed this interest to a work as Treatment Team Leader at the Massachusetts Treatment Center. The MTC houses inmates and civilly-confined individuals who have committed sexual offenses. I currently provide clinical supervision to 2 masters-level clinicians and we provide high-intensity group therapy to a unit of 75 inmates. As director of the unit, I also aid the inmates in managing their therapeutic community and coordinate with graduates to address problems as they arise. I have provided didactic training through this role and have gained an understanding of administrative duties within a corrections setting. My commitment to working with incarcerated populations and my belief in a rehabilitative approach to corrections has been shaped largely by my time with Drs. O'Grady and Righthand. Through their knowledge of the justice system and enthusiasm for this field, I have been able to use my generalized training approach to pursue this niche interest.

## Meet the New Cohorts

### Welcome Third Years

**Jennifer Hugg** is a third-year student from Des Moines, IA and lived and worked in the Boston area before joining the UMaine psychology department in 2019. Her research interests focus on adolescent populations, dyadic relationships, and RO DBT. In her free time, she enjoys knitting and trying new recipes.



**Aubrey Legasse** is a third-year student from Goffstown, New Hampshire. She earned a B.A. in psychology and a B.S. in health policy and management from Providence College in 2017. After graduating, Aubrey accepted a research assistant position at Butler Hospital, the psychiatric affiliate of the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University. There she managed four NIH clinical trials in two research departments -- the Behavioral Medicine and Addictions Research Unit and the Psychosocial Research Unit. Currently, Aubrey is in Dr. Emily Haigh's Maine Mood Lab (MML). Her research interests include emotion regulation, non-suicidal self-injury, and their physiological correlates. Her clinical interests include working with forensic populations and assessing various levels of risk.

**Jade Perry** is a third-year student in the Clinical Psychology doctoral program. She received her B.A. in Psychology from San Jose State University in 2017. Before joining the University of Maine, Jade worked as a research assistant in the Prevention and Intervention Lab at Stanford University where she assisted in studies primarily focused on stress and psychopathology in adolescents as well as psychosocial stress in pediatric cancer families. At the University of Maine, Jade's research interests include investigating the relationship between cyber victimization and internalized distress in youth, and how interpersonal processes may play a role in this relationship. Outside of work, she enjoys playing with her active pups, adventuring to new places, baking, and binge watching shows on Netflix!

### Welcome Second Years

**Raegan Harrington** is a second-year student from Manchester, Maine, and earned a BA in psychology here at the University of Maine in the spring of 2020. While obtaining her degree, Raegan started working in Dr. Schwartz-Mette's Peer Relations Lab her freshman year. She remained in this lab all four years of her undergraduate career, where she worked on multiple research projects and publications but notably worked as project coordinator for the Maine Adolescent Peer Project. Directly after graduating, Raegan chose to continue her work in Dr. Schwartz-Mette's lab and is now a graduate member of the team. Raegan's research interests include understanding how youths' social/social cognitive conversational behaviors help develop or maintain internalizing over time.

**Lindsey Lagerstrom** is a second-year student from Presque Isle, the northernmost part of Maine. She graduated in May of 2020 with her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from the University of Maine and considers herself very lucky to be continuing her education at the University. Lindsey is currently a member of Dr. Ahmed's Health, Aging, and Lifestyle Lab. Her research interests lie in investigating the role of depression as a risk factor for neurodegeneration, specifically, Alzheimer's disease. Lindsey is interested in the early detection of the neurodegenerative process, and the potential for modifiable risk factors in midlife, as mechanisms to slow progression of the disease.

**Trevor Long** is a second-year student from Livermore, California. He earned a BA in psychology from the University of California, Berkeley in 2017. As an undergraduate research assistant in the Golden Bear Sleep and Mood Research Clinic, Trevor assisted in the development of treatment-based studies that utilized CBT to address sleep disturbance among teens and elderly at-risk populations. After graduation, Trevor moved across the country to work as a post-baccalaureate project coordinator in the Peer Relations Lab at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. There, he helped conduct peer relations research investigating the development of suicidal behaviors, non-suicidal self-injury, and other adolescent psychopathology by examining adolescents' interpersonal experiences with peers. Currently in Dr. Rebecca Schwartz-Mette's Peer Relations Lab at UMaine, Trevor's primary research interests include peer relationships, psychophysiology, and socialization and contagion of suicidal and self-harming behaviors.

**Cassandra Rowan** comes to the University of Maine clinical psychology program from University of Vermont's Vermont Center on Behavior and Health where she worked as a research project assistant on a FDA and NIDA investigation on the potential of very low nicotine content cigarettes to combat smoking addiction. Cassandra previously earned her BA in Psychology from Middlebury College, having contributed to research studying the origin of empathy in casual conversations among unacquainted individuals. Cassandra has joined Dr. Schwartz-Mette's Peer Relations lab, and her research interests include the relationship between emergent psychopathology and development, particularly in adolescence, and ethical concerns surrounding the treatments of adolescents.

**Jenn Thompson** is from Alexandria, Virginia. She completed her bachelor's in biological sciences and psychology from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in 2016. While attending Virginia Tech, Jenn was an undergraduate research assistant in the Center for Applied Behavior Systems, under the direction of Dr. E. Scott Geller, and primarily assisted with actively caring studies. After graduating, she moved to Nashville, TN where she was a research coordinator at the Vanderbilt Memory & Alzheimer's Center, administering neuropsychological tests and collecting data for studies investigating the relation between heart health and brain health. She also supported several Alzheimer's disease and other neurological clinical trials. She is currently in Dr. Fayeza Ahmed's Health, Aging and Lifestyle (HAL) lab, and her research interests include identifying and modifying risk factors for neurodegeneration.

## 2020 SECOND YEAR PROJECTS

**Emily Scarpulla**, Examination of linguistic choices during problem-talk as a predictor of depressive symptoms

**Liv Valö**, Emotion regulation in aging: Clarifying treatment targets for older adult depression



## 2021 NEW PRACTICUM PLACEMENTS

VA Maine Healthcare System, Togus, ME  
Office of Behavioral Health, Augusta, ME

### Alumni Updates

**Amber Martinson** recently accepted a promotion to be the Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator at the SLC VAMC. She is still the lead clinician for the CBT for Chronic Pain Program there. The research group had three more publications in the last year, two in the *Journal of Opioid Management*, and one in *Pain Medicine*.

**Victoria Quinones** recently accepted a position as a staff psychologist at Lifespan Psychiatry, where she will be providing psychological services at the Comprehensive Spine Center and primary care. This position includes a faculty appointment at Brown University as well, which will give her the opportunity to supervise psychology residents.

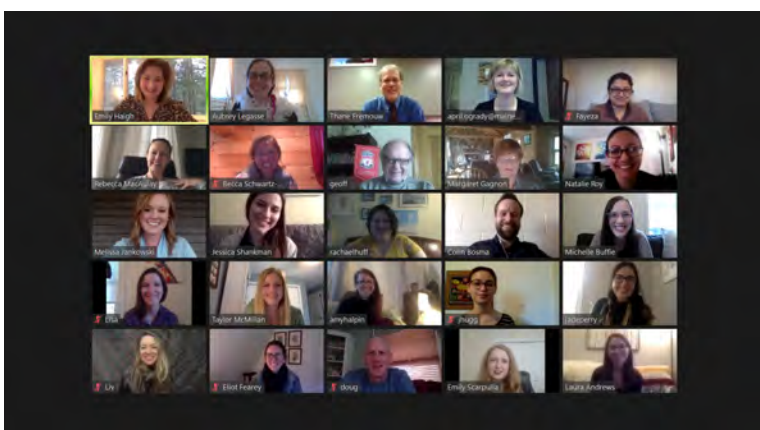
**Jennifer Sauv  (2015)** and her husband Brett have welcomed their second child, a son named Bennett Gabriel Sauv .

In April 2021, **Olivia Bogucki** accepted a position at Massachusetts General Hospital in their primary care psychiatry program. This position also comes with an academic appointment at Harvard Medical School.

**Shannon Brothers** is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

In January 2021, **Rachel Goetze** accepted a position as a Primary Care Mental Health Integration Psychologist at VA Maine and member of the Psychology Training Committee.

**Teresa Fecteau** recently earned a promotion to Associate Medical Director, US Medical (Neuromuscular Disease) at Biogen. Primary responsibilities will be focused in Congress strategy and tactics, Advisory Board oversight and other HCP engagement initiatives, and working cross-functionally to enhance scientific engagement with stakeholders.



***Congratulations to all of our  
current students and alumni for  
their good work and  
accomplishments!***

***Keep in touch!***