**NEW FACULTY**

We are pleased to welcome the following new faculty to our program:

- **John Belmont, M.D., Ph.D.**, Professor
- **Rui Chen, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor
- **Christophe Herman, Ph.D.**, Associate Professor
- **Brett Graham, M.D., Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor

They come to us from the Department of Molecular and Human Genetics at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) and mentor some of our 2012-14 Fellows.

**ACCOLADES**

Diana Milewicz M.D., Ph.D., has been named chair-elect of the M.D.-Ph.D. Section for the Graduate Research, Education and Training Group (GREAT) of the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC).

Dr. Milewicz directs The University of Texas M.D./ Ph.D. Program at Houston, a joint program between The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth) Medical School and The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. This combined degree program provides training for students pursuing a career as a physician-scientist. See Accolades, pg. 2

**MEET THE 2012-14 FELLOWS!**

The following outstanding applicants were selected to participate in the GXE fellowship for the 2012-14 term.

**Mentored by Dr. Suzanne Leal at the Human and Molecular Genetics Program at BCM, third year student, Zongxiao He’s goal is to be a well-rounded Principal Investigator and to continue research in genome-wide association studies. He was a semifinalist for the Charles J. Epstein Trainee Award for Excellence in Human Genetics Research at the ASHG Annual Conference in San Francisco last November.**

**Trainee Ruchi Masand joined Dr. Brett Graham’s lab in 2008 where she focuses on mitochondrial disease and genetics. Her goal is to identify suppressors of porin mutant phenotypes in fruit flies to identify new interacting pathways to gain mechanistic insight into the function of voltage-dependent anion channels.**

**Linda Polfus is in her second term as a GXE fellow, where she continues to work in Dr. James Hixson’s lab on her dissertation. Her topic of research focuses on analysis of gene by smoking interactions associated with subclinical markers of cardiovascular disease in large cohorts, including coronary artery calcification and fibrinogen levels.**

**Priya Sivamakrishnan’s research is centered on cellular response to DNA damaging agents through the modulation of the fundamental processes of transcription and DNA repair. She is a third year student in Dr. Christophe Herman’s lab and a student representative on the Graduate Education Committee, Dept. of Molecular & Human Genetics at BCM. She received the John R. Kelsey Student Speaker Award in October, and she presented a poster, “Is transcription fidelity a road block for the repair of DNA double-stranded breaks?” at the**

**Yijie Zhai’s research is focused on understanding the principles of disease pathogenesis and desires to contribute to the research and final treatment of human disease. He has co-authored two publications: “A Worldwide Collaborative Genetic and Clinical Study to Provide a Comprehensive Survey of RD3 Mutations and Delineate the Associated Phenotype, *PloS One* 2013; and “Dawn of ocular gene therapy: Implications for molecular diagnosis in retinal disease.” *Science China Life Sciences* 2013.**

**Yan Zheng’s main area of interest is genetic epidemiology in chronic diseases and she hopes to become a professional epidemiologist specializing in cardiovascular disease. She received a Master’s in Public Health in Epidemiology at Emory University in Atlanta, GA. Dr. Eric Boerwinkle is her mentor.**

*****SAVE THE DATE***

**SYMPOSIUM FOR BWF-FUNDED PROGRAMS**

May 14-16, 2013

Emory University is hosting a symposium for the three BWF-funded PUP programs. The goal is for students, administrators, and directors of the three PUP programs to meet, discuss experiences with their programs, and to enable sharing of ideas. There will be a poster competition, as well as a case competition. Burroughs Wellcome Fund highly recommends ALL Fellows attend the symposium. All expenses will be paid by BWF.
ACCOLADES (continued from pg.1)

GxE faculty members, Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., and Jacqueline Hecht, B.S., M.S., Ph.D., are among seven UT professors who have been elected to The University of Texas Academy of Health Science Education, an organization of distinguished scholars recognized for their teaching excellence.

Michael Blackburn, Ph.D., serves with Michelle Barton, Ph.D., as dean of The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston, a joint venture of UTHealth and the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center that offers Ph.D. and MS degrees in biomedical research. Dr. Blackburn is also on the faculty of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UTHealth Medical School and has been a member of the graduate school faculty since 1997.

Dr. Jacqueline Hecht is professor and director of the Pediatric Research Center at UTHealth Medical School, and professor and associate dean of research at the UTHealth School of Dentistry at Houston.

OTHER NEWS

TRAVEL AWARD INCREASE

The Burroughs Wellcome Fund Travel Award has been increased to $2,000 per year, per student. This will ensure that our fellows are able to attend and present at conferences or meetings that are relevant to the goals of the GxE Training Program. Please contact the Office of Training Programs if you have any questions.

FELLOWS’ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Ian Gibson (2010-12), is halfway through his doctoral program, and hopes to graduate in mid-2014. He is lead author on two articles to be published in the next few months— one is technical and the other will be a journal editorial. Ian’s main interest is in the field of population genomics, and specifically analysis of large whole-genome datasets such as 1000 Genomes and CHARGE-S.

Melanie Heney Lacaria (2010-12) received a post-doctoral fellowship from the "Training Program in Regenerative Medicine" at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute in Canada. She has co-authored “A functional role for structural variation in metabolism.” Adipocyte 2013.

Bo Xiong, (2010-12) is co-author of two articles; “Crag is a GEF for Rab11 required for rhodopsin trafficking and maintenance of adult photoreceptor cells.” PLoS Biology 2012; and “A mutation in EGF repeat 8 of Notch discriminates between Serrate/Jagged and Delta family ligands.” Science 2012.

Tiantian Cai’s (2011-12) manuscript, “Conditional deletion of Atoh1 reveals distinct critical periods for survival and function of hair cells in the organ of Corti” is being reviewed by the Journal of Neuroscience.

Thuy Le’s abstract was accepted for a poster session at ATS 2013. She also presented at her departmental workshop seminar series and at the UTHealth Medical School Research Retreat where she placed third. Thuy is the recipient of the Gigli Family Foundation Scholarship.

Bing Yu was a finalist for the 2012 Jeremiah & Rose Stamler Research Award for New Investigators; she presented at the ARIC meeting in Houston in October. She is co-author of two articles: “Association of Genome-Wide Variation with Highly Sensitive Cardiac Troponin-T (hs-cTnT) levels in European- and African-Americans: A Meta-Analysis from the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities and the Cardiovascular Health Studies.” Circ Cardiovasc Genet. 2012; and “Genome-Wide Association Study of Cardiac Structure and Systolic Function in African Americans: the Candidate Gene Association Resource (CARe) Study.” Circ Cardiovasc Genet. 2012.

SUMMER INTERN UPDATE

Karina Vazquez (2010) is in her 2nd semester at University of Utah pursing a PhD in Molecular Biology.

Diana Del Bosque (2011) graduated from University of Houston and is teaching Biology at Cinco Ranch High School.

Kelsey Poisson (2011) graduates from Cornell this spring and will be attending medical school in the fall.

Anna Burcham (2012) serves on the Undergraduate Research Board at Auburn University. She received Honors credit for her genetics course after presenting her GxE summer research project.

Evan Jones (2012) graduated in December from Abilene Christian University and is interviewing for graduate school. He will be presenting at Texas Academy of Sciences in February, and is working on an invited editorial publication for Journal of Cell and Developmental Biology.

Lucas Sanor (2012) a senior at Olivette Nazarene University, has been invited to interview at several universities to pursue his dream of a PhD in Genetics.

BIOMEDICAL INFORMATICS WORKSHOP

PRESENTED BY DR. PAUL SCHEET

WILL OCCUR DURING THE WEEK OF MAY 20-24

EXACT DAY & TIME TO BE DETERMINED

TRAINING PROGRAM OFFICE

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