MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, DR. JOAN M. GOVERMAN

Dear Members and Friends of the Department of Immunology,

2020 has been an extraordinary year for all of us. The corona virus pandemic presented enormous challenges as we dealt with personal losses, social isolation and working remotely. I am very proud of how our department members have met these challenges. Initially, our lab work was limited to Covid 19 research, completion of ongoing experiments and maintenance of critical reagents. Over time, our Covid 19 Committee (Jakob von Moltke and Andrew Oberst) could develop protocols that allowed us to resume much of our research activity. Our researchers adapted to working under social distancing conditions, remote lab meetings, work shifts etc. These are especially anxious times for our trainees, and I appreciate their efforts to continue their work under difficult circumstances. Many of our faculty quickly pivoted to studies on the immune response to SARS CoV-2 infection, and papers in top-tier journals are now coming out from their efforts. We are a resilient, talented group, and we will continue to adapt and carry out our mission. This year we also felt the impact of the social unrest that has swept the country. We recognize that the type of events that triggered this unrest are not new, they are just more visible now. As individuals and as a department, we have begun the process of looking within ourselves and our institutions to understand how we contribute to racism and what we can do to overcome it. We are working to make our department a more diverse, inclusive and supportive place to work; please see our section on the activities of our Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee in this newsletter.

While 2020 has been a difficult year, it has also been another year of extraordinary accomplishments for our department. Our faculty continue to be incredibly successful in securing research funding and publishing seminal papers. In the global rating of immunology by US News and World Reports, we jumped up four spots to become #6 in the world! This achievement reflects the extraordinary talent of our trainees and staff as well as faculty. We welcomed eight new predoctoral students this fall (please see photo) and added two new Affiliate Faculty Members: Dr. Mark Headley, Assistant Member at the FHCRC and Dr. Oliver Harrison, Assistant member at BRI. Our continued growth strengthens the bonds within the immunology community in Seattle and provides new training opportunities for our students. This year, we also embarked on efforts to educate the public about immunology. This effort was spearheaded by Marion Pepper and led to a series of lectures by each of our primary faculty that explained the fundamentals of the immune response and how research in our department is addressing the current pandemic. We also gave lectures for UW Osher Lifelong Learning Institute with a similar goal. Our hope is that the lay community will better understand immunology and basic research and support our efforts through philanthropy.

Finally, I want to note that this is my last letter to you as Chair as I intend to retire from the UW this coming year. It has been an absolute privilege to lead this amazing department for the past 11 years, and I have been fortunate to stand on the shoulders of my faculty giants. I know that the department will continue to thrive and excel. I will miss this job, and I will miss my lab as I have always “found my voice” in basic research. Nevertheless, I am excited to turn a new page. I encourage all of you to stay engaged and support the department. Here are the best ways to do that: Our Fund for Excellence supports activities for students and postdocs. Our endowed Dr. Richard Titus Fund for Graduate Student Support supports a student every other year; we are hoping to increase this fund to support a student each year. Please consider contributing to make a difference in the future of science, immunology and lives of students. A big thank you to those who have donated in 2020 (so far!): Sean Tucker and Frances Chang; Sarah Bland; Jim and Diane Moon; Joe Pew and Marion Pepper; Pat and Jane Malone; Anita Kavanaugh; Connie and Byron Barnes; Jane and Mike Bove; Barbara and Mark Lovseth; Chris and Sherryl Wilson; Joan and Irwin Goverman. This support is deeply appreciated, and there is still time left to donate in 2020!
GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATE

- This year we welcomed eight new graduate students (pictured on the left).
- Three grad students defended their PhD degrees in the past year including: Gerald Kellar, (Ziegler Lab) December 2020; and two MCB students Kristen Mittelsteadt (Campbell Lab) June 2020; and Julia Berksen, (Prlic Lab) December 2019.
- Retreat awards: Best long talk for postdoc (Caleb Stokes, Gale Lab), for grad student (Geral Olson, Aderem Lab). Best lightning talks: postdoc (Nandan Gokhale, Ram Lab), sr. grad student (Miranda Lyons-Cohen, Gerner Lab) and jr. grad student (Laila Shehata, Pepper Lab).
- Graduate student awards: Sigal Kofman (Oberst Lab) received a NRSA F31 'Investigating IRG1-driven regulation of flavivirus-induced neuroinflammation'. Jessica Huang (Gerner Lab) with a 1-percentile score, received a NRSA F31: Regulation of monocyte trafficking into lymph nodes during inflammation.
- Graduate student Nick Hubbard (Oberst Lab) received the 2020 Dr. Richard Titus Endowment Award for Grad Student Support in Immunology. Only awarded every other year, this fund directly supports students. To donate and expand the award, make your gift to the Titus Endowed Fund.
- Our new Immunology Community Directory launched in fall 2020. This new interactive resource helps prospective students meet our current students and get to know us better.
- Thank you to our students helping us pivot to virtual recruiting this year! Check out our student-made video to hear why our students chose our program, what they are working on and what their life in Seattle is like.

ABOUT THE BANNER IMAGE

The front page banner image depicts EpCAM+ epithelial cells (green) and tubulin β3+ neurons (red) in mouse skin. Produced by the Gerner Lab.

SPOTLIGHT ON POSTDOCS

- Nandan Gokhale (Ram Lab): Received a Helen Hay Whitney Foundation Fellowship fall 2020.
- Lauren Webb (Tait Wojno Lab): Selected by the Society for Mucosal Immunology (SMI) to submit an abstract and present on Mechanisms of Inflammation in Nov. 2020.
- Caleb Stokes (Gale Lab): K08 award Mentored Scientist Research Career Development Award from NIAID in spring 2020.
- Susana Orozco (Hamerman Lab): Awarded F32 NRSA fellowship from the NIH/NHLBI, Inflammation-associated anemia and the role of monocyte-derived inflammatory hemophagocytes in a model of blood-stage malaria.
- Sreetama Choudhury, (Subramanian Lab) was awarded the AAI Career Re-entry fellowship in fall 2020.
- Kristin Anderson (Greenberg Lab): Received the inaugural 2020 Bio-Techne Intern Ovation Alumni Award
- Philip Domeier (Ziegler Lab): Awarded an F32 fellowship grant NIH/NIAID “Regulation of Germinal Centers by Thymic Stromal Lymphopoietin in Mice and Humans”, Received a poster award at the Aegean Autoimmunity Conference
- Shannon Liudahl (Headley Lab): Received a two-year Fred Hutch Immunotherapy Integrated Research Center pd fellowship award in Feb. 2020

IMMUNOLOGY TWEETS

Follow us on Twitter @UW_Immunology for the latest Immunology news.
MIDWINTER CONFERENCE OF IMMUNOLOGISTS AWARDS 2020

Congratulations to all who received poster, travel and young investigator awards at the Midwinter Conference of Immunologists in January 2020. Another UW Immunology sweep!

Left: The Ray Owen Poster Award (AAI): Tayla Olsen (Rongvaux Lab), Jessica Huang (Gerner Lab), Nick Hubbard (Oberst Lab), Peter Morawski, PhD (Campbell Lab), and Meera Shenoy, PhD (Koch Lab). Short Oral Presentation and Travel Award (AAI): Frank Sovge (Ram Lab). Young Investigator Travel Award (Biolegend): Oyebola Oyesola, PhD (Tait Wojno Lab). The Ray Owen Young Investigator Award (Cellular Immunology): Lindsey Warner, and Alum Ty Crowd, PhD, (both from the Stetson Lab).

IMMUNOLOGY DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION (DEI) COMMITTEE

Top Row (left to right): Postdocs: Kristin Anderson, Caroline Stefani, Lauren Rodda; Grad Students: Andrew Konechy, Brittany Ulloa, Sigal Kofman, Rudy Nazitto. Bottom Row (left to right) Faculty: Jakob von Molk, Savan Ram, Elia Tait Wojno (DEI Chair); Staff: Michelle Trudeau, Sandy Turner, Sarah Bland

DEPARTMENT OF IMMUNOLOGY DEI ACTIVITIES 2020

The Immunology DEI Committee has played an integral role in the life and culture of the Department this past year. Our activities focused on student and postdoc recruitment, retention, and experience. Faculty and students attended both the SACNAS and ABRCMS virtual conferences this year. The Committee also initiated a Department directory, with brief biographies from trainees to highlight and celebrate diversity within our Department. We are collaborating with the MCB program and other DEI leaders in the School of Medicine to nucleate Affinity Groups for trainees in basic science programs. Affinity Groups foster a sense of community among groups of individuals with a shared identity by providing a forum to share ideas, experiences and outreach or career development activities. The DEI Committee also partnered with the Center for Innate Immunity and Immune-Mediated Diseases to reinvigorate Departmental outreach and educational activities for middle, high school and undergraduate students in underrepresented groups.

To build community across constituencies in the Department, the DEI Committee organized DEI-focused training sessions for faculty, staff and trainees at our annual retreat with Dr. Kimberly Harden (Seattle U) and with facilitators from the UW Center for Teaching and Learning. Importantly, the Committee organized a Department-wide Pizza and Perspectives discussion on anti-racism in academia and in our Department. Finally, the Committee is facilitating a Department-wide discussion to build a DEI Roadmap that outlines Department goals and actions that will support and build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community into the future. For more information on Immunology DEI Committee activities, members, and goals, see our inaugural newsletter and our website. If you wish to get involved with Committee activities, contact Sarah Bland (immcasst@uw.edu) or Elia Tait Wojno (etwojno@uw.edu).