

# MONTHLY UPDATE

## DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

March 2018

Another academic year is upon us and the campus is once again very busy with the students back in town. We welcome all students, but here I want to particularly welcome the 27 new 400-level students as well as the 13 research Masters students who will call Biochemistry their research home for 2018. As always these students will be doing a range of projects and completing GENE, NEUR, PLBI, MOBI, MBHD and not least BIOC majors! As the year progresses we look forward to getting to know everyone and hearing about your research successes as well as some of the tribulations along the way!

Grant writing success in 2017 has resulted in the arrival of many new postdocs too and there are more to come. They are a very welcome addition to the Department as they bring new skills and expertise from around the globe, helping to ensure further research success. At last count the Department is home to 20 Research Fellows and Postdoctoral fellows, which is more than for many years and I know the research committee will be identifying ways to help build connections between research staff.



While we welcome many, March is also a month for saying goodbye to several staff who have made significant contributions to the Department. Firstly, we say goodbye to Wayne and Monica who are moving to Victoria University. Monica is already settling in to the new house and job in Wellington, while Wayne is leaving at the end of the month. We appreciate the significant contribution Wayne and Monica have made to the department over the last five and a half years; their enthusiasm for research and teaching will be missed, and we wish them the very best for their future at the School of Biological Sciences at Victoria University. Several of their students will remain at Otago and we expect that they will visit from time-to-time. The first visit for Monica will be at the end of the month and while she is here we have a farewell afternoon tea scheduled in the Department at 3.15pm on Wednesday March 28th.

Alas, that is not our only farewell for March, as Chris Hart has resigned after over 20 years in the Department. We will all miss her and hope that she will visit us when she returns from her travels. There will be a morning tea for Chris at 10.15am on Thursday March 29th.

On top of all these comings and goings we continue to have the builders in the Department – I suspect they have begun to think that they will never be finished! Stage two of the first-floor building renovations has been completed, and was celebrated last week by a morning tea “shout” for the builders. Now they are busy on the third floor building new offices for the Merriman and Gardner groups. This has caused some disruption, particularly to the OGBF staff, but I hope a much better suite of offices will reward us very soon.

To close I want to highlight the achievements of two very successful Edson Prize winning graduates of the Department. Firstly, congratulations to Bridget Thomas who completed a PLBI/BIOC double major in 2017 and was awarded the Prince of Wales Prize which is given by the University to the top undergraduate student. While Bridget is currently travelling we hope that she will return to continue her studies sometime soon. Secondly, in February Max Wilkinson (300- and 400-level Edson Prizes, and Prince of Wales Prize 2014) gave an outstanding seminar about his PhD work on the spliceosome. If you missed the seminar, Miriam has written a news article for our website that has links to the papers.

Enrolments are up in the biochemistry 200-level papers and we look forward to welcoming the Biochemistry major and minor students to the Department on Wednesday (note the tea room will be unavailable from 12.30-2pm).

Please look at the “logo” ideas displayed in the staff room. We need feedback on those, and any other ideas you may come up with.

Catherine

## New arrivals

Megan Leask has returned as a Postdoctoral Fellow with Tony Merriman.

Jade Yip is working as an ARF for Sally McCormick

Jack Curry is working as an ARF for Catherine Day

Haoyu Xiong is working with Sarah Diermeier as a part-time ARF.



Sasha Gavryushkina is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Gardner Lab



Claudia Rossig is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Brownfield Lab



Elisa Saager, visiting student from Germany, working with Julian until August



Laure de Villèle, visiting student from France, working with Steph & Lucia until June

## Health & Safety

There is a MPI audit in March. The IBSC meeting is on the 27th March, the deadline for submissions is noon on the 19th March. The last IBSC audit was in February and everyone did a fantastic job again – thank you all. A new Compliance Manager has been appointed and is shadowing me over the coming weeks. Please make Jackie feel welcome in her new role.

Goodbye from Chris.

## Purchasing

Liquid Nitrogen – can all users please now sign out their liquid nitrogen usage through the store during work hours & only use the book after hours. This change is to reduce errors. Please note that the “unit” is litre, so 100ml=0.1 under quantity.

Life Technology Supply Centre – you are now required to log on to their site in order to “purchase” before picking up goods from there. See Lynn if you require more information.

The pHScientific Supply centre has been removed due to the lack of use.

## Building & Equipment

Torsten is the new equipment coordinator. The Licor imager in lab 203 has been moved to the bench by the windows at the back (west end) of the lab.

## 3D Printing

As some of you know (and have been getting excited about) the Department has recently bought a 3D printer. We have been testing a number of uses for it, and are pleased to be able to start offering a gel comb and spacer set printing service. At present the comb and spacer sets will be free of charge, this may change for larger items in the future. See Miriam and Bronwyn to discuss your requirements.

Images below are of a 16 well comb and spacer set we 3D printed, and a gel run by Martina using them.

