

MONTHLY UPDATE

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

May 2018

Hard to believe that semester one is already well advanced, with fourth year student introductions submitted, and all students busy with assignments/reports as well as lots of research activity. This weekend will be a time to celebrate student achievements with many of our students graduating on Saturday May 12th. As always we will have a celebratory function in the Department on the morning of graduation day. Thanks to Robyn, Sigurd, and their helpers, who help make this a success.

I'm delighted to be able to announce the winners of the new Joan Mary Anderson Award in Plant Biochemistry. This new award is granted at the beginning of the 400-level year to the student(s) who show(s) the greatest promise in contributing to plant science, and this year they are Miriam Hunt, Caitlin Elborough and Caitlin Harris. You can read more about Joan Mary (Jan) Anderson on our website, where Miriam Sharpe has constructed a page on the scholarships and awards available to students in the Department and the people whom they commemorate.



Thank you to Bronwyn and Peter Small for putting together last month's newsletter - in addition to giving me a month off editorial duties, I hope it has fostered a new understanding of the significance of the "steam" and "water" emails that are distributed periodically. Minor inconveniences for us mean hours of sometimes very unpleasant labour for maintenance staff.

Thanks to the Publicity/Outreach Committee we have big signs outside the building and now a much smartened-up stairwell. There are more bits still to come over the next few weeks. We very much hope these improvements will make it easier for everyone to find us, and we should end up with fewer dazed and confused stairwell-wanderers. Edwin and the Genomics Aotearoa staff in particular are hoping for fewer door-knockers looking for reception!

As has become the "new normal", the University remains in a state of flux, with shared services being phased in bit by bit. Fingers crossed our department will be strongly supported under the new model. However, there is considerable uncertainty at this point and extra patience is required from everyone as it is a stressful time for all involved.

Science continues though, and I know it has been a busy time for all staff with many new staff members and lots of new research projects getting underway. Publications is always a good indicator of research success, and this month I want to highlight two recent publications^{1,2} in *Nucleic Acids Research* (Impact factor of 10.2 if thinking PBRF!) that report the work of PhD students. Lim from Chris Brown's laboratory gets first prize as he has not yet had his oral, so having this paper out is an impressive achievement, while Andrew Cridge gets a perseverance prize as I think he undertook the research published in NAR when he was a PhD student in Warren's laboratory at least 10 years ago!

I hope everyone is enjoying the nice autumn weather.

Catherine

PhD/MSc completions:

Congratulations to Chris Hakkaart, Henry Beetham, and Andrew Single, all from Parry Guilford's group, who have finished all the requirements of their PhDs since the last newsletter. Henry is currently post-doc-ing in Edinburgh working on breast cancer, while Chris and Andrew have post-docs with Parry.

¹Cridge *et al. Nucleic Acids Research* 46, no. 4 (2018): 1927–44. doi:10.1093/nar/gkx1315.

²Lim *et al. Nucleic Acids Research* (April 19, 2018): 93. doi:10.1093/nar/gky282.

STOP PRESS

Another research highlight to celebrate!

See Paul Gardner in "Latest News and Research" on the University website front page.

New arrivals

Riku Takei has taken up a position as ARF in the Merriman lab, while Padmini Parthawarathy and Chun Shen Lim are now ARFs with Paul Gardner.



Debina Sarkar is Sarah Diermeier's new post-doc



Nikita Deo is a new post-doc with Sally McCormick



Sophie Mathiesen, a new PhD student with Steph Hughes



Maddie McIntyre-Wilson a new MSc student with Steph Hughes

Purchasing

In the absence of negative feedback about the latex gloves we've been testing, we are in the process of changing the brand held in the store.

As of 1st May Officemax will no longer supply our stationary, the new supplier is Winc. You may notice some brand changes over the coming weeks, but most items will not change except perhaps in the pricing (cheaper).

Lynn

Health, Safety & Compliance

Thank you for your patience and support in welcoming me into this role. I know I have big shoes to fill following Chris leaving, but hope to do this in my own way.

- The MPI audit in March went well with no major issues.
 - Just a reminder to keep sending me your culture collection paperwork as your items arrive.
 - Please be careful these wet days at building entrances, the floors are slippery and there have already been falls.
 - It is important to log any accidents/incidents on Vault, no matter how small. If you have trouble logging these please contact me and I can help you out with it.
- Jackie

IT

Microsoft Office Work-at-Home licence is now available again for University staff members. If you wish to have Office for use on your home computer please get in touch with DJ or Darren in the departmental IT office.

Building & Equipment

In the April departmental equipment round we agreed to purchase a variety of essential lab equipment (details to come). We also decided to upgrade and improve some shared facilities such as cell culture and plant growth rooms.

The emergency callout last week was due to water getting in to a sensor. The good news is that we don't need to do any trial evacuations for another six months – and so it should be considering how well organised and responsive everyone was.

We have a couple of electrical switch-boards on site to replace either end of the first floor and a plan to eventually get them all done.

We are in the process of updating the alarm procedures for freezers to make the response more reliable and enable the records to be kept more up-to-date.

The rebuild on the third floor is nearing completion with Martin venturing a guess of a few weeks to completion.

Presently work will start on the east end of the big old CELs lab on the ground floor. It is going to be cut roughly in half. The current work is being done by Dentistry whose main site is being rebuilt.