

MONTHLY UPDATE

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY

September 2016

This has been a very busy semester so far and I know everyone was relieved to have semester break this week!

A highlight of the last month was our Spring/Anniversary party after the fourth year talks on Friday. It was great to see so many join in the celebrations; having the whole department involved is a big part of a successful function. Thanks to Bronwyn and Teena for organizing.

Some staff and students have escaped the Department over semester break to think and talk research at the Nelson QMB week. I'm sure they will be having a good time and come back with plenty of new ideas for their research.

Thanks to Debbie, Peter and the team, who have put in a lot of effort to improve the staff/common room – it is now midway through refurbishment and already looking vastly better. New chairs are on their way as well as some more pieces of furniture to complete the upgrade. We have had a lot of positive feedback, with this layout suiting people working in the common room as well as those having a cup of coffee or eating lunch.

Speaking of rooms, some of you will have noticed activity in the Micro/Biochem link this week as the storage room behind Kaye's office is being refitted as an office for Shar. It was a very full storage room, many treasures were hiding there, and they have all had to find new homes. Some have become a display behind glass doors in the common room, others have found temporary homes around the Department until plans for permanent storage/display are finalised. We may need to run a competition to determine the functions of many of these items!

The first floor refit plans are progressing and we hope that phase one, which involves refurbishment of the central part of the floor, will occur over the summer. As happened last summer, there will be considerable disruption and people will have to vacate their labs while work is done. While the teaching labs will serve as the main alternative lab space over summer, a few people may need accommodation until the end of 2017 so some sharing may be necessary.

The second half of the semester promises to be very busy with large classes and lots of labs. It is also an important time for students who are deciding what to do next so I know we will be busy with information sessions. Hopefully also some time to enjoy the nice weather now that spring is now officially here, and the Metservice says it's going to be quite summery.



Catherine

All Biochemistry staff and students who were present at last Friday's function, and have also given a talk at the Research Society Meeting, gathered for a photograph. Chris Brown was the senior present (1987).

PhD completions

Congratulations to Monika Sharma (McCormick Lab) who has completed the requirements of her PhD.

Conferences

Recent attendance

Iain Lamont “BioMetals 2016, 10th BioMetals International Symposium” Germany 10-15 July

Sigurd Wilbanks, “Protein Folding in the Cell” Vermont, USA (24 - 29 July)

Craig Marshall “SCAR Open Science Conference” Kuala Lumpur 20-30 August

Upcoming

Warren Tate, biennial international IACFS/ME research and Clinical Conference, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 25 Oct - 2 Nov

Wayne Patrick, 17th International Biotechnology Symposium (IBS 2016) Melbourne, Australia 23 - 27 October

IT

There is a new screen outside the IT office door, with information on IT staff whereabouts. When staff are in the department but out of the office, an emergency number will be shown. This is for emergencies, such as when teaching equipment is not working.

Staff members can now purchase the most recent version of Microsoft office for PC and Mac for **personal** use on home computers for the vastly discounted rate of \$15. You can sign up here <http://www.microsoftup.com/hupnz/home.aspx?culture=en-NZ> using your otago email address to access the offer. If asked, the programme code to purchase is 0A876669FF.

Health & Safety

The radiation room is being decommissioned for the first floor renovation. If anyone needs to use a radiation facility they should discuss their needs with Chris Hart, who can make arrangements.

There will be an MPI audit in September, so ensure all paperwork is up to date!

New arrivals



Tiffany Oulavallickal is an ARF working with Wayne Patrick.

Equipment Experts

As you all know, we now have a list of “equipment experts” who are available for maintenance, troubleshooting, and user training. This is the “short version”:

Ultracentrifuges: Carolyn Porteous- Beckman Optima Max-XL and Optima XE-90 ultracentrifuges.

Autoclaves: Lois Martin

Cell Imaging: Tanis Godwin - Cytell and the Cytation 5. She is also the contact for any other assistance CGL may be able to offer.

Method Development on MiSeq: Rob Day is happy to advise on the design and suitability of different sequencing approaches for the Illumina MiSeq platform.

RT-PCR: Robyn Lee - Roche Real Time PCR machines and the robots that can be used to set up PCR reactions in 96- and 384-well plates.

Fluorescent Microcopy: Isaiah will train users on the inverted and upright fluorescent microscopes.

ITC and CD: Monica Gerth. Please contact her for training and/or any equipment issues.

Protein Crystallisation and Imaging: Sam Jamieson will provide oversight of the Mosquito and RockImager.

qPCR and HRM assays: Andrew Cridge will provide help in designing, running and interpreting qPCR and HRM assays on the machines in lab101.

Mass spectrometry: See Diana, Abhishek and Torsten for all mass spectrometry and related needs.