



BGSA NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2022



UPCOMING EVENTS

Field day hosted by BMP/CMP -----June 4th

T-Shirt & Tie-dying hosted by MGDB -----June 8th

How to get your first job alumni panel-----June/July

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Editor

Letter from the
D&I Committee

March 2022 Raffle

Student Spotlight

Alumni Spotlight

A Beautiful Day in the
Neighborhood -- Hiking
Trials Edition

Pictures from the BGSA's
Spring Fling



Pitt BGSA



@PittBGSA



@bgsa_at_pitt



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ANU BALOGUN

OLB25@PITT.EDU

Dear School of Medicine,

Another era of leadership within the BGSA has come to an end, and I must hand the mantle to the next Editor and Chair of the Newsletter Committee. Since I began my journey at Pitt, I have watched the BGSA grow into a first-rate multi-faceted organization. As our voices have grown, so has our resilience. The Newsletter is one of the many facets of the BGSA that has grown immensely since its establishment.

Our "Happy Accidents" and "Beautiful day in the neighborhood" sections have added some necessary pizzaz to our bi-monthly editions. We have also shifted towards spotlighting students who are equally as active outside of the lab. I encourage you to continue to send in your submissions.

This final edition under my stead features Ashvinee Elangovan, an exceptionally outstanding student both in and out of the lab. Ashu handled essential roles as part of 4RS and maintained a biorepository while advancing her graduate career. Our Alumni Spotlight is Anastasia Gorelova, a science writing manager at UPMC. Read about Ana's remarkable feats accomplished during her graduate studies and why she chose the writing industry.

This summer, Sam Herron writes a final message from the D&I committee and introduces us to the new co-chairs. Our "Beautiful Day in the Neighbourhood" section highlights some of the incredible hiking trails to visit in and around our yinzer city.

I wish you a not-so-sunny and beautiful summer.

Yours sincerely,
Anu Balogun

TRAVEL AWARDS

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALECIA ROKES & NANAMI KUBOTA
WINNERS OF THE BGSA TRAVEL AWARD FOR MAY.

PAST WINNERS

MARCH: JONATHAN KING & ANDREW MCNUTT

APRIL: ANU BALOGUN & KATHRYN FRIASON

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE



SAM HERRON

As the Spring semester ends, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee is excited to share some upcoming initiatives and reflect on the past year of programming. Over the past year, the Committee has expanded our programming initiatives and hosted a variety of events catering to the students in our community. Highlights include the Queer History Month Drag Show and Bingo, Affinity Group Rock Climbing, the International Student-focused Discussion Panel, and the Penns4Purpose Hockey Night. Our focus within the BGSA has been on building community, and none of these events would be possible without the efforts of the Committee members, the support of the SoM Graduate Office, and partnerships with other student groups and local community groups. Special thanks to Pan-African Graduate & Professional Student Union and Latin American Graduate Organization of Students, ASCEND Climbing Gym, Penns4Purpose, and the faculty, staff, and students who donated their time and energy to make these events happen!

Looking forward, it is our pleasure to introduce the upcoming Diversity and Inclusion Committee Co-Chairs for 2022-2023, Joud Mulla and Olayemi Akinyele! Joud and Olayemi have served as D&I Committee members over the past year and have made major contributions to Committee programming and initiatives. The perspectives and experience they bring will help further build the D&I Committee, and we are excited to see the direction they take the Committee moving forward! As the outgoing co-chairs, we want to thank Olayemi, Joud, and the other Committee members, Aaron Johnson, Sanjana Thosar, Bellina Mushala, and Mische Holland for their efforts, insights, and time over the past year. None of the work the Committee undertook could have been accomplished without them. It has been a privilege to work with them all and we wish them the best in their future endeavors!

As always, the committee is committed to serving as a platform that any student can build a Diversity and Inclusivity initiative from. The Committee functions as a place to bring ideas to fruition without placing the burden of planning, funding, or logistics on the student. If you want to get involved in any capacity, from passing along an idea to joining the committee itself, reach out to the co-chairs!

MARCH 2021 RAFFLE

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE NEWSLETTER, THE BGSA IS RAFFLING OFF A \$15 GIFT CARD TO A LOCAL PITTSBURGH BUSINESS OF YOUR CHOICE!

RAFFLE: [HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/GSHN5GNBMQDUGKCDA](https://forms.gle/GSHN5GNBMQDUGKCDA)

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT



ELANGO VAN ASHUVINEE

I am originally from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, having moved to the US in 2013 for my undergraduate studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. Through teaching and lab experiences during my college days, I developed an interest in biomedical research. A summer internship at the University of Iowa and two years of undergraduate research later, I joined the Pitt IGBP program in 2017. The endless opportunities at Pitt was a strong reason for my move here. At Pitt, I joined the lab of Dr Adrian Lee and Dr Steffi Oesterreich where I performed my thesis work and recently graduated from the Molecular Genetics and Developmental Biology (MGDB) program. My thesis work focused on the characterization and establishment of a functional biomarker, E-cadherin, as a repressor of IGF1 signaling. This identification can be used to stratify a specific subset of breast cancer patients who may respond better to IGF1 signaling inhibition, thus making it a targeted and successful therapeutic intervention.

As part of the lab, we currently run a Rapid Autopsy program in which I have been very fortunate to be a part of. This is a program that allows patients to donate their tissues for research upon passing. Participating in this program has been a very humbling experience, where it also drove us to do more impactful work in our field of breast cancer. This program is being well received and will yield very crucial information in the coming years.

In an attempt to reconnect with my fellow Malaysians in the biomedical field, I joined a student organization called Malaysian Biosciences Scholars (MBIOS), where I successfully organized monthly 'Research Insider' events to highlight Malaysian scientists from around the world by inviting them for virtual talks. We were able to hear from a variety of speakers ranging from food scientists to chemists, where these talks were catered towards a general student audience to instill an interest in research and to improve science communication. This role was a great opportunity for me to network with scientists around the world during the pandemic and to motivate myself to excel in my field.

In the last few years of my time at Pitt, I was a part of Fourth River Solutions (4RS), a student run consulting organization in Pittsburgh. 4RS provides a platform for graduate students and postdoctoral trainees to translate their scientific knowledge into real-life business solutions by consulting for start-up level companies in the region. I participated in several engagements, took part in the Pittsburgh Innovation Case Competition (PICC) and later on became the Chief Human Resources Officer of 4RS. Through 4RS, I was able to learn about consulting as an alternate career, meet other trainees interested in consulting and hone my leadership skills. This experience has vastly enriched my graduate career and I would highly encourage everyone to look out for the next recruiting cycle announcement from 4RS! Being a part of several organizations/projects while performing my thesis work allowed me to learn to manage my time better and to multitask. The need to focus on different things throughout the day gave me an opportunity to have a fresh perspective on things every time I returned to a task. With my days at Pitt coming to an end, I would like to thank BGSA newsletter committee for this opportunity and extend my best wishes to all fellow graduate students!



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Anastasia (Ana) Gorelova, Ph.D.

Manger, Science Writing

Media relations

UPMC and Pitt Health Sciences

My name is Anastasia (Ana) Gorelova, I graduated from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine with a Ph.D. in Molecular Pharmacology in April 2020. I am an international student and I came to Pitt from Russia on an F-1 visa. While in grad school, my research focused on molecular mechanisms of cardiovascular disease called pulmonary hypertension. I spent many hours in the lab doing PCRs and Western Blots to pin down the role of a protein called EBP50 in endothelial cell pathology that happens in the lung vessels of patients with PH.

About mid-way through my graduate training I switched research advisors.

Around the same time I realized that even though lab work came easy to me (or at least that I was pretty good at performing and designing experiments and interpreting data) I didn't see my future in academic research or even at the lab bench at all. So I started exploring alternative careers outside of science. On weekdays after coming home from the lab and on weekends I researched career paths that are available to PhD graduates - my key criteria were good earning potential and job satisfaction. A few options stood out to me right away - data science and medical writing.

After dabbling in teaching myself basic coding skills (I taught myself basics of Python and web development with HTML, CSS and Javascript) I realized that a career in tech wasn't as exciting to me as I thought it would be. Around the same time I also attended a conference for medical writing professionals. Medical writing is a pretty broad field that encompasses writing white papers, helping with grant writing, writing clinical trial reports, FDA applications, continuing medical education courses and more. While these projects were closer to my previous experiences as a research scientist, I still felt like they weren't offering an outlet for expressing any creativity and honestly just sounded boring. So I decided that medical writing wasn't the kind of field that I wanted to get into.

But around the time when I was exploring medical writing, I came across an online community (now defunct, unfortunately) called Massive Science whose business goal was to create a new kind of media company that publishes science stories written by scientists.

They were also providing free training in science writing for PhD students and postdocs and paid for published stories. So I sent them an email and introduced myself and started working with them soon after. Approaching science writing in a way that was led by my personal curiosity and interests was such a refreshing experience and it helped me realize that a) I was actually pretty good at writing and b) I could make it into a career. Writing for Massive Science was the first time I tried to write about science for a wide circle of readers in English. Until that experience I sort of forgot that I enjoyed writing when I was little and even throughout high school and haven't considered that writing in English is a viable career path.

After getting a few published clips through Massive Science I applied for a Mass Media Fellowship run by AAAS and was extended an offer to work as a business reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. A couple of months after my graduation and a few months into the COVID-19 pandemic, I moved to St. Louis, Missouri to start my reporting fellowship. Working at a daily newspaper was an incredible opportunity to hone my writing skills and to step into the shoes of a journalist who is constantly chasing stories and working on tight deadlines.

As my fellowship was nearing its end, I received an email from my now-boss, encouraging me to apply for a position of a public information officer (PIO), or a media relations manager, at UPMC. I got through several rounds of interviews and started working at UPMC in October 2020.

In my current role I serve as a link between researchers at Pitt Schools of the Health Sciences and journalists. On one hand, my science background allows me to quickly understand even the most complicated research and convey it to reporters accurately and engagingly. On the other hand, I understand how the media world works and I help reporters find sources for interviews, pitch them story ideas and help facilitate interviews and video- and photo- shoots on- and off-campus. My job allows me to wear multiple hats and I still get to enjoy learning about cool new science without the pain of mourning a null result at my lab bench.

I advise all students and especially international students to pursue their passions and curiosity and not settle for the most obvious career option that is presented to you. Try to use your time in graduate school as an opportunity to explore your interests and try out different career options. There are lots of free or heavily discounted online classes in hundreds of subjects that are available to you. Many professional societies have conferences (online and in-person) that offer cheap rates for students - you could even try and make the case for your department to sponsor you. Also, networking will take you far. If someone you've met is doing something that you think sounds interesting and fun - invite them for a cup of coffee! Some of these meetings won't go anywhere, but others might spark a new idea or ignite a new professional connection that might be instrumental to launching your future career.

Don't be afraid to try something new and ask questions. We choose to go into science because asking questions is our calling - try to extend the same attitude towards your personal life as well.

I would love to hear from you if you have questions or just want to chat.

Email me at gorelovaa@upmc.edu



A BEAUTIFUL DAY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Awesome Summer Hikes Near Pittsburgh

Welcome! Glad to have you here. Are you looking for some new hobbies to do in Pittsburgh? Have a date but not sure where to take them? Or just looking for a good hangout spot with your friends this holiday? You're in the right place! This is a new column to the newsletter that focuses on this great city and why we love it- or at least some things we love about it- if you aren't quite sold on this Yinzer nation! Maybe checking out a few of these spots will help change your mind. At the very least, you'll have a fun time! Let's get exploring:

Source--<https://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/take-a-hike-10-of-the-best-trails-in-the-pittsburgh-area/>

PANTHER HOLLOW TRAIL

You may already be familiar with the panther hollow trail, located right by us in Schenley Park. At only 3.2 miles, the panther trail is a great way to explore Pittsburgh's Schenley Park; this trail is an exciting mix of urban views, historic bridges, and woodsy vibes. The good news is it's not as crowded as other hikes and can be an excellent way to leave the city without actually leaving the city.



SCHENLEY PARK

HOLLOW OAK LOOP

One of the more enchanting trails in the city, this hiking trail boasts a delightful treat. Avid hikers give this a modest rating—this picturesque trail features wooded areas, a waterfall, and even a cave.



E1875 HASSAM ROAD,
CORAOPOLIS, PA

MINERAL SPRINGS LOOP

About 40 minutes outside the city, this is a popular hiking area with an easy trail, and it is also famous for birding and running. The most remarkable thing about this trail is during the winter, the waterfall freezes over with hundreds of icicles hanging off the caves. Some have described this as similar to Chronicles of Narnia, something you must see for yourself.



3000 PA-18,
HOOKSTOWN, PA

EMERALD VIEW PARK TRAIL

Our hilly yinzer nation is home to many incredible scenic views that can be enjoyed while on this hiking trail. The park also hosts playgrounds, overlooks, and picnic areas. Only 2.3 miles and considered a moderate climb, you end up at a hilltop that offers the most incredible views of the city.



BAILEY AVE,
PITTSBURGH, PA 15211



KILDOO TRAIL

The Kildoo Trail is nestled in McConnell's Mill State Park. It is a 1.3-mile trail with incredible and beautiful scenery, including numerous small waterfalls. Located 45-minutes outside the city, this hike is considered moderately complex, but the beautiful streams, waterfalls, rock formations, and other historic structures make it worth it.



MCCONNELLS MILL,
SLIPPERY ROCK TOWNSHIP, PA



SAMARA



SPECIAL FEATURE!



Espresso a Mano is a great spot to grab coffee or pastries. Grab and go, or stay for a while and enjoy the atmosphere. It has become my go-to spot for coffee and I go at least one morning a week (if not more). The employees are super friendly and kind. I've never had a negative experience there, and everything I've ordered has been delicious

PICTURES FROM THE BGSA'S SPRING FLING





NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE



Anu Balogun
CMP



Adeola Fagunloye
MPGP



Leigh Miller
PMI