

*Alumni Newsletter*  
*Department of Physiology and Biophysics*  
*University of Illinois at Chicago*  
*September, 2008*

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**New students**

I know Spring is supposed to be the time of renewal but I actually think September is that time of year. Why you may ask – well it is when our new students start. On September 5 we held a reception to introduce the new students to our Department.

PhD student



Jill Bennett

MS Students



Raymond Krawzak



JoAnn Lagman



Amin Rmeileh



Heather Wilson

## Thesis defenses

Another joy is seeing students finish. I am never sure who is happier – the faculty or the student. Although the student is often not aware of the transformation they have undergone it is quite obvious to an outside observer. I am sure you join me in wishing these students (now alumni) well.

### PhD students

Olga Chernaya (thesis advisor Primal de Lanerolle) The role of the actomyosin based cytoskeleton in the regulation of physiological cell responses.

Rahul Dave (thesis advisor Mark Rasenick) Molecular mechanisms of functions Gs alpha-tubulin interactions.

Rosalba Satta (thesis advisor Alessandro Guidotti) Nicotine targets epigenetic mechanisms in selected populations of telencephalic GABAergic neurons.

Aurora Shehu (thesis advisor Geula Gibori) Regulation and function of HSD17B7 enzyme in tumorigenesis and fetal survival.

Lauren Taglia (thesis advisor Richard Benya) Gastrin releasing peptide receptor mediates its morphogenic properties via ICAM-1 and Hsp72.

### MS student

Liliana Grajales (thesis advisor David Geenen) Passage number and c-kit expression determine bone marrow-derived cell differentiation.

Liliana also was awarded a Student Scholarship in Cardiovascular Disease and Stroke from the American Heart Association.

## Transitions

A couple of our faculty members have left our Department for new positions. On the one hand both are heading for wonderful new opportunities but on the other I will miss them as they are friends. Our Department will also miss them because of their value to our Department.

Pieter de Tombe has become head of the Department of Physiology at Loyola University Medical School.

Randall Hudson has moved to the Department of Physiology at the University of Buffalo. On a side note now maybe I can now convince all in our Department to spell Randal with only 1 L as I do.

## **Alumni Update**

I received a very nice note from Helen Rarick updating us on her doings. She received her PhD in 1992 and writes:

"I have been teaching at Wright College in Chicago-Department of Biology for 4 years now. Received tenure last year."

"For the past 2 years, I've been involved in an NSF-funded grant to help undergraduate community college students participate in independent research. I've been collaborating with a colleague (an ecology PhD who is an alumna of the Department of Biology at UIC) in our Biology Department. He planted a prairie on a plot of land behind Wright College. I have been helping him run soil nutrient analysis using an inductively-coupled plasma atomic emission spectrometer (see, training in the Department of Physiology allows one to be versatile and learn to use all kinds of equipment). We are presented our research at the Ecological Society of America national meeting in August."

"Yes, research can be done at community colleges, and it is amazing that if students (especially those typically underrepresented/minorities) are given a chance early on to participate in research, they succeed if mentored and may choose to enter the field. One of our students never thought he would go to graduate school, but wanted to go into an allied health field. After one year in our independent research program, he is accepted at Loyola for the fall, plans to do independent undergraduate research there, and go on to grad school – he wants to become a research."

Thanks Helen for the update – it always good to hear how our alumni are doing. Please send me your update so I can include it in a future issue.

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