

FW: MET Fall 2020 Newsletter

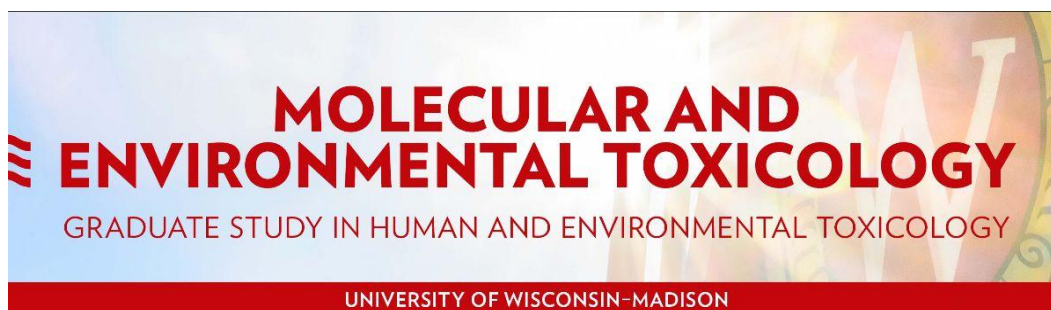
ANNE ELISE TURCO <aturco@wisc.edu>

Fri 4/2/2021 11:27 AM

To: GLORIMAR GUZMAN-PEREZ <guzmanperez@dermatology.wisc.edu>; MARK D MAROHL <mdmarohl@wisc.edu>

From: uwmadison.metc.slc@gmail.com <uwmadison.metc.slc@gmail.com>**Date:** Friday, April 2, 2021 at 11:23 AM**To:** ANNE ELISE TURCO <aturco@wisc.edu>**Subject:** MET Fall 2020 Newsletter

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Note from the MET director, Chad Vezina:

Alumni, students, faculty and friends,

It's been quite the year! We successfully navigated a conversion to online learning, to online seminars and to modified research schedules. We are all excited for the return to a new normal as we transition into summer and fall. We're making several exciting changes to our program and curriculum. We have challenged our primary stakeholders (the students) with greater decision making responsibilities to build upon our program's foundation. They have responded enthusiastically and program is thriving! We could use your help: we are specifically seeking greater involvement from our alumni to mentor our students as they plan for future careers and to provide informational interviews about toxicology-related career paths. Please contact me if you are interested in serving as a Alumni contact for current students, as a seminar speaker, or to relay your ideas for strengthening our program. chad.vezina@wisc.edu

What's new with MET?

Meet our new first year students! We have four incoming MET graduate students. Read their bios below:



(Right to left)

Chamia Chatman:

Hi, I'm Chamia. I'm a Chicago native who enjoys dancing, traveling, and spending time with my family & friends. I love to taste test food; not to be confused with a love for cooking. I earned a B.S. in Animal Sciences from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. After five years in an industry setting, I am excited to return to academia as a PhD candidate in MET and a SciMed GRS Fellow.

Kate Burgener:

My name is Kate Burgener. I grew up in Michigan and Wisconsin where I swam competitively and painted a lot. In 2020 I graduated from Georgia Tech with a bachelor's in chemical & biomolecular engineering and a minor in Spanish. My undergrad research involved micro and nano aerosolized pollutants and their interactions with contact lenses; this project brought the field toxicology to my attention. Some of my favorite things to do are hike, photograph mushrooms and lichen that I find on the trail, and sleep. It's a goal of mine to hike in all 62 national parks (I'm currently at 28). I like listening to alternative folk music and history podcasts although the last concert I attended was an EDM festival in ATL. My favorite Babcock ice cream flavor is orange custard chocolate chip and my favorite sports are Formula 1 and ice hockey.

Noah Carrillo:

I grew up in Oak Creek Wisconsin, a small city outside of Milwaukee. I (virtually) graduated from UW Madison in 2020 with a degree in Genetics and Genomics and a certificate in business management. I was first introduced to the MET program during the summer after my sophomore

year when I was lucky enough to do a summer research opportunity program through the METC working in the Ronnekleiv-Kelly lab. I had an amazing summer being mentored by Morgan Walcheck, and later Patrick Shwartz, who inspired me to pursue a graduate degree in toxicology. In terms of research, I am most interested in the medical research aspects of toxicology, more specifically cancer mechanisms and treatments. In my free time I like to play rugby whenever I can find enough people who know the rules, which is not very often. I also like to cook as often as possible. Admittedly, I am not very good so I stick to the basics, but I hear I make great orange chicken. My favorite animal is undoubtedly the humble narwhal. First because they are essentially the unicorns of the sea. Secondly because of the narwhal cameo in the movie Elf, with Will Ferrell.

Menna Teffera:

I'm Menna Teffera, a first year graduate student in the MET program. I am from Massachusetts and grew up about 30 minutes away from Boston MA. I studied public health at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, with a focus in Toxicology. I became interested in toxicology as a career when I took a Food Toxicology course as an elective and enjoyed it so much I joined my teacher's lab. I liked how toxicology took the environmental and human health issues that I learned about as a public health major and explained them on a molecular level. In that lab, I mainly studied phthalates and their effect on behavior and metabolism multigenerationally. My lab also worked on other projects such as as BDE-47 and its impact on lipid metabolism. I am interested in environmental health and the epigenetic effects of environmental toxins on the human body. However I am also interested in widening my research interests during my time in grad school. My rotations currently cover a variety of research topics, from determining protein function to the effect of toxins on urinary/metabolic health and the effect of diet on aging. In my free time I like to draw (been doing that since I was a kid), bike everywhere, and bake. I've gotten pretty good at baking over quarantine and can make a mean sandwich bread. Some fun facts about myself: I'm not actually East Coast born-I was born in California and promptly moved across the country before I turned one. I can play a variety of instruments but I am out of practice with all of them. And I can identify bird species pretty well (but not in Wisconsin-I'm working on it).

MET Response to Racial Disparity

Earlier this year, in response to the black lives matter movement, MET introduced a new officer position entitled **Equity ambassador**.

This position will be held by a current student which will be dedicated to the equity and diversity in all the MET activities. The equity officer will attend all MET policy, curricular, and admissions meetings, a reminder that the goal of equity is enduring and persistent. The equity officer will be the first to offer suggestions and opinions at these meetings. They will also review and recommend changes to the MET graduate program handbook. **Noah Carrillo** and **Hannah Richerson** have been appointed as the inaugural MET equity officers for 2020-2021. Noah is a first year graduate

student currently pursuing a master's degree and Hannah is a fourth-year dual degree student pursuing a PhD in Environmental Resources, with a minor in MET and a JD. During their first semester as Equity officers, they focused on identifying strategies to recognize and eliminate barriers for individuals within MET programs and worked to outline responsibilities--- including reviewing the MET handbook and accumulating resources. As the two founding Equity Officers, Noah and Hannah hope to provide a robust framework for MET that prioritizes each individual. Additionally, they will ensure an MET that protects and respects each member's identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion which will enrich the program as well as the University of Wisconsin-Madison community.

Celebrating diversity in science

Each seminar we are having short presentations given by current students and faculty highlighting the contributions of different scientists from minority groups. Our Equity Officers are also leading fascinating discussions within the MET program to further talk about any topics of interest that arise from the presentations.

NEW! The Molecular and Environmental Travel Award for Equity and Inclusion

Students in MET have organized a new **Travel Award: The Molecular and Environmental Toxicology Travel Award for Equity and Inclusion** to fund graduate student travel to the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS) or the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanic or Native American in Science (SACNAS). Graduate students will apply and a sub-committee will review the application and decide each year's recipient.

See the MET website here for more details. Are you excited about this award or want to give back to the MET program? Consider donating to this award here!



DONATE

Recent accomplishments from MET students

Awards/Fellowships/Grants:

- Morgan Walcheck was awarded with the Ruth Dickey Award!

- Anne Turco earned a F31 fellowship for her proposal: "Developmental origins of prostate-related urinary dysfunction in adult males: TCDD exposure increases prostatic noradrenergic innervation and smooth muscle contraction"!
- Congrats to Joni Baker-Sedillo (Cryns Lab), Glorimar Guzman-Perez (Ahmad Lab), Jessica Parrott (Bradfield Lab), Brandon Scharpf (Vezina Lab), Conner Kennedy (Keil-Steitz Lab), Brenna Walton (Arendt Lab), Tyler Beames (Lipinski Lab), Andrew Knutson (Watters Lab), and Robbie Manuel (Liang Lab) were appointed to the T32 Training Grant!

PhD candidates as of September 2020:

- Congratulations to Charles Olmsted, Andrew Knutson, Brenda Rojas, Patrick Carney, Kenneth Rivera-Gonzalez, Jess Parrot, and Dominic Sanchez who recently passed their prelim and are now PhD candidates!

Publications:

- Charles Olmsted recently coauthored on a scientific paper which was accepted on 03/16/2020 in the Multidisciplinary Journal of Microbial Ecology Journal. Read the article [here!](#)
- Kenneth Rivera-Gonzalez and Tyler Beames collaborated in a review paper regarding the pesticide synergist piperonyl butoxide. Read it [here!](#)
- Tyler Beames also published a review paper on gene-environment interactions in birth defect etiology. Read the article [here!](#)
- Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez collaborated with one of our alumni from MET: Dr. Liz Garcia-Peterson on two publications on the role of sirtuin 6 (SIRT6) in melanoma skin cancer. Read the review article [here](#) and the data paper [here!](#)
- Anne Turco and Dr. Sam Thomas published a manuscript on the impact of TCDD exposure on C57Bl/6J mouse urination. Read the article [here!](#)

Professional Development Activities:

- Charles Olmsted recently attended the online SMET conference (international society of microbial electrochemistry and technology).
- Anne Turco, Morgan Walcheck, Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez, Jessica Parrot, Chamia Chatman, and Andrew Knutson attended the virtual Midwest SOT conference.

Summer Research Program:

The MET-Summer Research Opportunities Program "hosted" six students virtually for an experience that included learning the fundamentals of toxicology, professional development, and the analysis of large-scale databases to examine human health toxicants.

- **Summer interns:** DaJhnae Gambrell-Sanders (Clark Atlanta University), Nneamaka Iwobi (University of Maryland, Baltimore County), Aundrea Lee (University of Louisiana-Lafayette), Collin Nguyen (University of Wisconsin-Madison), Amanda Rosendo-Ocasio (University of Puerto Rico-Arecibo), and Breanna Sullivan (Hofstra University).
- **MET lecturers:**
 - Alumni: Tracie Baker, Paul Hanlon, Cherry Tsai-Brown, Emmanuel Vazquez-Rivera, Rachel Wilson, and Javier Velasco.

- Current students: Patrick Carney, Lily Gonzalez-Vazquez, Brenda Rojas, and Morgan Walcheck.
- **MET mentors:** Mele Avilla, Patrick Carney, Lily Gonzalez-Vazquez, Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez, Conner Kennedy, Andrew Knutson, N. Thomas Peterson, Kenneth Rivera-Gonzalez, Alex Veith, Morgan Walcheck, Brenna Walton, and Rachel Wilson.

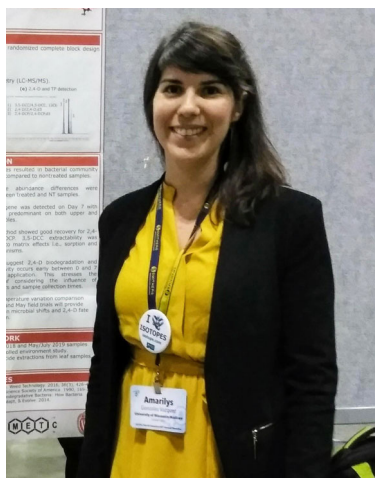
Did you recently publish a paper or win an award? If so, email Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez (guzmnperez@wisc.edu) by October 1st to be featured in the next MET newsletter!

Spotlight on Graduation



Anne Turco will be defending her thesis in April 13th 2021 at 1:00pm. Anne worked in the laboratory of Dr. Chad Vezina during her graduate career.

- **Research Focus:** Novel toxicological endpoints in urology
- **Post-Graduate Career:** Toxicology study director at Covance



Amarilys (Lily) Gonzalez Vazquez works in the laboratory of Dr. Paul Koch in the Plant Pathology Department. Her research focuses on studying pesticide-bacterial interactions and pesticide degradation at varying seasonal conditions. Lily will be defending her thesis in Fall 2021 with plans of later pursuing a postdoc.



Morgan Walcheck will be defending her thesis in September 2021. Morgan worked in the laboratory of Dr. Sean Ronnekleiv-kelly during her graduate career. Research Focus: The effect of the Aryl Hydrocarbon Receptor on the immune system and pancreatic cancer development. Post-graduate goals: post-doc

Students that recently obtained their degrees:

PhD:



1. **Joni Sedillo** defended her thesis in December 2020. Joni worked in the laboratory of Dr. Vince Cryns during her graduate career.

- **Research Focus:** Role of dietary methionine in both the development and treatment of cancer.
- **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** Post doctoral. She will be starting in January as a post-doc in the lab of Dr. Steven Schrodi (UW-Madison) in bioinformatics and medical genetics/epigenetics.

2. **Folagbayi (Fola) Arowolo:** defended his PhD work "" under the mentorship of Dhanansayan Shanmuganayagam. Starting

- **Research Focus:** Role of dietary methionine in both the development and treatment of cancer.
- **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** Post doctoral. In July he started a clinical postdoctoral position with the SFGH Clinical lab at UCSF.

3. **Rachel Wilson:** defended her PhD work under the mentorship of Christopher Bradfield.

- **Research Focus:** The Aryl hydrocarbon receptor allelic series in mice.
- **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** Postdoctoral position in the lab of Dr. Euan Ashley at Stanford University

4. **Morten Seirup:** defended his PhD work under the mentorship of James Thomson.

- **Research Focus:** Loss of maturity in Primary hepatocyte culture: Understanding the mechanisms and improving the culture conditions.
- **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** He has a position lined-up at Dianomi.

5. **Debra Garvey:** defended her PhD work under the mentorship of Nihal Ahmad.

- **Research Focus:** Polo-like kinase 4 as a therapeutic target in non-melanoma skin cancer.
- **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** Post doctoral. She is now a postdoc in Dr. William Ricke lab here at UW-Madison.

Masters:

1. **Shelby Petersen:** defended her MS work under the mentorship of Chad Vezina.

- **Research Focus:** The veterinary perspectives on Snake Fungal Disease.
- **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** Industry. She now has a position as a bioanalyst at Covance.

2. **Brandon Bocanegra:** defended his MS work under the mentorship of Vincent Cryns.

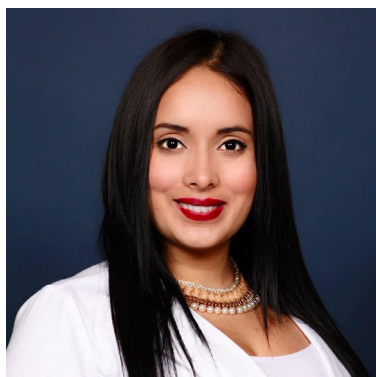
- **Research Focus:** Exploring Metabolic Vulnerabilities of Cancer Associated with Branched Chain Amino Acid and Methionine Deprivation.
 - **Post-Graduate Career Interest:** Industry. He is working at Pace Analytical / 3M in the Twin Cities.
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What's up Postdoc?

Patrick Schwartz (Ronnekleiv-Kelly Lab), Breanne Steffan (Keller Lab), and Emmanuel Vazquez-Rivera (Bradfield Lab) were recently appointed the T32 Training Grant!

Postdocs! Do you want to be featured in the next newsletter? If so, please email Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez (guzmnperez@wisc.edu) by October 1st!

Alumni Spotlight



Alumni **Dr. Liz Garcia-Peterson** (2019) is currently a Postdoctoral Intramural Research Fellow at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, (NIH-NIEHS). She is part of the

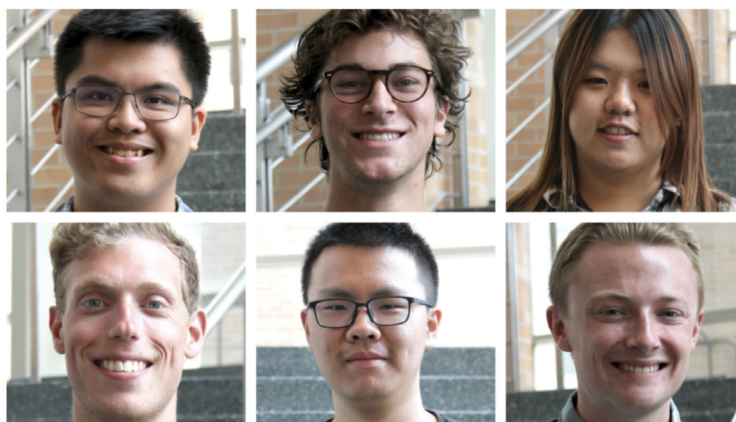
Metabolism, Genes, and Environment Group where she focuses on how epigenetic changes involving gut microbiota can impact cancer cell metabolism and growth. Read more about her career path and advice for current MET students [here](#)! You can also read on a recent interview directly from the [NIH](#).

To learn more about what other alumni have done since graduating the program visit the MET website [here](#)!

To be featured in the next MET alumni spotlight email Mark Marohl at mdmarohl@wisc.edu by October 1st! We will interview you and add your career story to the website and the next newsletter!

If you are [hiring](#) and are interested in recruiting MET students please email Mark Marohl at mdmarohl@wisc.edu to obtain contact information or to distribute an advertisement!

Spotlight on Pharmacology and Toxicology Undergraduate Students!



Left to right (top): Steven Do, Nate Verhagen, and Jennifer Li,
Left to right (bottom): Stephen Halada, Fang Hao, and Nik Zelle

Congrats to Steven Do, Nate Verhagen, Jennifer Li, Stephen Halada, Fang Hao, and Nik Zeller on being awarded with the Hilldale Undergraduate/Faculty Research Fellowship! This year marks a record number in PharmTox students who received this fellowship which is one of the most prestigious awards offered at UW-Madison. Read more about these students, their projects, and how the PharmTox undergraduate program has contributed towards their future careers [here](#).

Are you in the Pharmacology and Toxicology program? Do you want to be featured in the next MET newsletter? If you've published a paper, won an award, or made a new discovery in your research send an email to Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez (guzmnpres@wisc.edu) or Anne Turco (aturco@wisc.edu) to be featured.

If you are interested in helping gather stories and accomplishments from your classmates email Glorimar Guzmán-Pérez (guzmnpres@wisc.edu) to see how you can get involved in this newsletter!

Events for the Semester

- SOT annual meeting March 12-March 26, 2021 (Virtual)

Email uwmadison.metc.slc@gmail.com with any questions about this posting.



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