Molecular & Translational Biology Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2026

FROM THE DIRECTORS' DESK

Dear MTB Family,

We hope you had a wonderful summer and are excited to begin what promises to be another outstanding academic year for the Molecular and Translational Biology (MTB) Program! As our community continues to grow, we are thrilled to welcome our newest affiliated students and several outstanding faculty members who have joined the program over the past few months. Their expertise and enthusiasm will further strengthen the collaborative and innovative environment that makes MTB such a special place.

This newsletter highlights many of the remarkable accomplishments of our students and faculty, including exciting research achievements, awards, and the graduation of several outstanding doctoral and master's students this spring and summer. We are incredibly proud of all they have accomplished and look forward to seeing the impact they will continue to make.

Building on the tremendous success of the past year, we are excited for the opportunities that lie ahead and are confident that the 2026–2027 academic year will be filled with new discoveries, collaborations, and achievements.

We wish everyone a successful and inspiring semester!

Warm regards,
Kristin and Kendra

Celebrating our Recent Graduates

Dr. Stephen Farmer



"THE ROLE OF HUNTINGTIN IN ENDOLYSOSOMAL TRAFFICKING AND HUNTINGTON'S DISEASE PATHOGENESIS"
Advisor: Sheng Zhang, PhD

Dr. Peyton High



"EGFR AND LGR5 DUAL-TARGETING ANTIBODY-DRUG CONJUGATE-BASED THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES FOR THE IMPROVED TREATMENT OF COLORECTAL CANCER"
Advisor: Kendra Carmon, PhD

Dr. Chase Hutchins



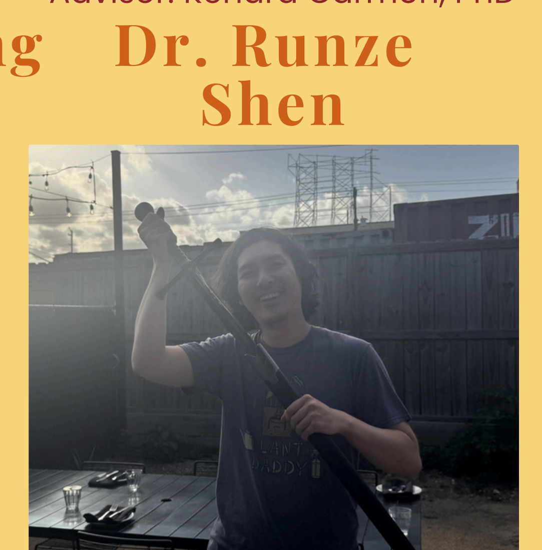
"COMPUTATIONAL AND EXPERIMENTAL EXPLORATION OF THE ROLES OF MEMBRANE DYNAMICS OF RHEB IN RHOA IN SIGNALING AND DRUGGABILITY"
Advisor: Alemayehu Gorfe, PhD

Dr. Thi Thu Trang (Tracy) Luu



"LIPID REGULATION OF PROTEIN FUNCTIONS"
Advisor: Guangwei Du, PhD

Dr. Runze Shen



"EEPD1 EVOLVED A UNIQUE DNA CLAMPING DIMER PROTECTING REVERSED REPLICATION FORKS"
Advisor: John Tainer, PhD

Zarmeen Khan



"PAM2ODN INDUCED EPITHELIAL RESISTANCE AGAINST INFLUENZA A REQUIRES STAT3 ACTIVATION"
Advisor: Scott Evans, PhD

Congratulations to all of our recent graduates! We are so proud of you all and very grateful for the scientific and personal guidance and mentorship you have shared with us. You're all destined for amazing things! "You're off to Great Places! Today is your day! Your mountain is waiting, So... get on your way!" - Dr. Seuss

University Matters & Other Announcements

- Aug 31: Fall Semester Began
- Sept 28: Fall Rotation Begins
- Nov 9: Last Day to Petition for Defense for Fall 2026 Graduation
- Nov 18-Dec 18: Spring Registration
- November 26-27: Thanksgiving Holiday
- Dec 11: Last Day of Classes & Fall Rotation
- Dec 18: End of Fall Semester
- Dec 22-Jan 1: Winter Break
- Jan 11: Spring Semester Begins

MTB Courses

This Fall
- GS03 1221: Advanced OMICS
- GS03 1231: Structural and Functional Analysis of Proteins
- GS03 1241: Cell, Tissue, and Animal Model Systems
- GS12 1011: MTB Seminar Series

Next Spring
- GS13 1024: Molecular Basis of Cell Signaling
- GS12 1011: MTB Seminar Series

Sping Symposium Highlighta

Thank you to all who joined us at the 2026 MTB Spring Symposium!

A day full of novel proposals, hypotheses, and data was capped off by our keynote speaker, Layla Abushamat, and a celebration at The Dogwood.



Congratulations to Dr. Harry Karmouty-Quintana, recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Award. Special thank you to Amanda Williamson for all her hard work behind the scenes.









And lastly, congratulations to our pre- and post-candidacy flash talk and poster winners and to all our poster presenters and oral speakers for their excellent presentations!!

Research and Funding Opportunities

Nature Conference: Next Generation Cancer Therapeutics
Houston, TX, October 6-8, 2026

BIG-TCR Fellowship
Deadline October 16, 2026

NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program (GRFP)
October 19-23, 2026 (Proposal deadlines vary by field of study)

Archer Fellowship Program
Deadline November 1, 2026

36th Keck Annual Research Conference: Spatial Biology: Emerging Technologies, Computational Approaches, and Translational Applications
Houston, TX, November 6, 2026

Texas Life Sciences Forum
Houston, TX, November 10, 2026; Apply for GSBS funding by October 14, 2026

NIH Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Transition Award (F99/K00)
NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (F31)
Cycle Deadlines: August 8, 2026. December 8, 2026. April 8, 2027

Upcoming Events

MTB Peer Mentor
Call for next cohort opens October

Student InterCouncil Salutation
September 23, 2026

Lab Coat Ceremony
October 9, 2026

GSBS Internship Overview
October 13, 2026

MTB Retreat
October 16, 2026

Resources

Poster Printing
$100, Contact Amanda

MTB Travel Awards
$500, Primary MTB Students

GSBS Travel Awards
$500, Pre-Candidacy
$750, Post-Candidacy

GSEC Travel Award
$750, MSB and IMM Students

UTHealth Parking
Apply for free after hours parking

MTB LEADERSHIP

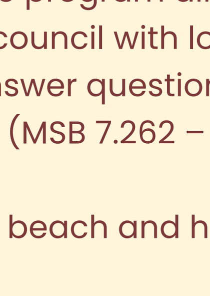
DR. KRISTIN ECKEL-MAHAN



Program Director

When not at work, Kristin enjoys travelling, cooking, running and swimming with her husband and three children.
(Oh yea, she also loves to work on grants and papers in very, very, very loud natatoriums!)

DR. KENDRA CARMON



Program Co-Director

When outside the lab Dr. Carmon enjoys still thinking about science, spending time with her dog Chucky, watching TV (particularly reality and true crimes shows), and hanging out at coffee shops (you will rarely find her not drinking coffee).

AMANDA WILLIAMSON



Program Manager

Amanda's current role is to assist the program directors with administrative duties. She also assists the student council with logics of event planning and she is almost always available to answer questions.
Please feel free to drop by her office (MSB 7.262 – M/W/Thu).

Outside of work, Amanda enjoys the beach and hanging out with her 17lb ginger cat, Kabuki!

2026-2027 MTB STUDENT COUNCIL!

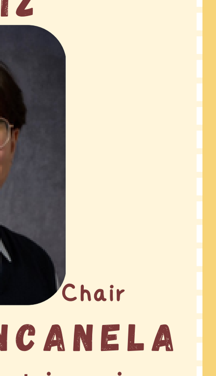
SOPHIA HUANG



President

When Sophia is not in the lab, she can be found in a pottery studio, either throwing bowls and mugs on the wheel or sculpting. She also loves cooking, baking, and playing video games with friends.

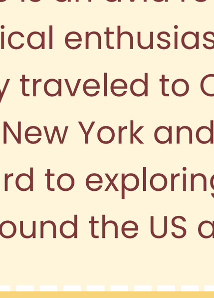
CARA BIDDLE



Vice-President

Cara spends her time outside of the lab cooking, taking care of her plants and fish, and hiking in the great outdoors! In particular, she enjoys visiting state and national parks, with her favorite being Bryce Canyon.

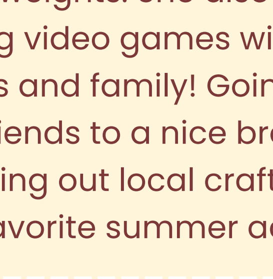
CANDISE TAT



Chair

Along with enjoying public health communication, Candise is an avid reader and musical enthusiast! She recently traveled to California and New York and looks forward to exploring more cities around the US and world.

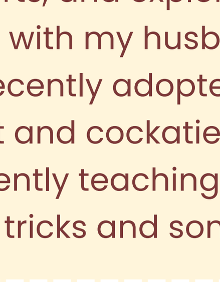
BEATRIZ SCHUENG ZANCANELA



Chair

Outside of lab, Beatriz enjoys reading, playing guitar and lifting weights. She also loves playing video games with her friends and family! Going out with friends to a nice brewery and trying out local craft beers is her favorite summer activity!

ALEXANDRIA GATTON



Chair

When not in lab I enjoy biking, running, baking, going to concerts, and exploring Houston with my husband! I also recently adopted a parakeet and cockatiel and I am currently teaching them some tricks and songs!

Want to be featured in the next newsletter? Scan the QR code or click the link

We would particularly love to hear about any internal or external trainings, volunteer events, fellowship opportunities, lab accomplishments, publications, awards, grants, student successes, faculty promotions, open positions, or even personal milestones!

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