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UTGCP Alumni and Friends,

Another academic year is underway here in Houston, with a few changes, as always. We have likely graduated our last class of 8 students. For the first time we have twenty (!) students on campus with ten students in each class. We love the enthusiasm that each one brings to the genetic counseling program and are thrilled they all chose the UTGCP. This admissions cycle was the first GC Admissions Match and it was a resounding success. The agony and frustration of the 3 day rolling waitlist window was no more! We were able to open a single email at the end of sign out conference on that Friday in April and announce our new class. The Association of Genetic Counseling Program Directors will be utilizing the match system again in 2019 and presumably for the foreseeable future.

With the increased number of students comes the need for additional members of our leadership team. While Jen and I will remain at the forefront, we hope to add a coordinator of external rotations and a coordinator of thesis research over the next two years. Each individual will have one day of protected time per week for program activities. We feel that these additions, along with the many contributions that are already made by faculty and supervisors, will allow us to continue to provide the supportive and individualized attention that we pride ourselves on at the UTGCP. We particularly want to thank the counselors who have stepped forward this year to help us in these areas in the short term: Sarah Bannon, Sam Hyde, Malorie Jones, Krista Qualmann, and Chelsea Wagner.

After twenty-five years of service as our Medical Director, Dr. Hope Northrup stepped away from that role this spring and we welcomed Dr. Laura Farach into that role. We are forever grateful for the time and energy that Dr. Northrup poured into the genetic counseling program over the years advocating for and educating our students. The good news is that Dr. Northrup remains the Director of the Division of Medical Genetics and thus remains a staunch supporter of and integral contributor to the program. The change allows her to focus on her numerous other administrative duties while maintaining her significant clinical, didactic, and research connections to the program. At the same time, the move allows another geneticist to expand her administrative role. Please see other sections of the Helix for more on honoring Dr. Northrup and welcoming Dr. Farach.
Another administrative change this year came in the form of a change to our scholarships. We have been fortunate in recent years to be able to support all students on scholarship. However, this year we will no longer be able to do so. This caused us to re-evaluate the state of our endowed scholarships and to reach out to you for help. It was heartwarming to see the number of people who were willing to donate to endow the final piece of the Hecht scholarship. The great news is that we will now be able to offer 2 paired Hecht scholarships to incoming students in addition to the Willerson paired scholarship. These scholarships are based on academic achievement and dedication to preparation for the field of genetic counseling (advocacy, shadowing, research). In addition, this year we will have a Diversity scholarship. While academics and preparation for the field will be a component of the Diversity scholarship matrix, students must also self identify as Hispanic, African American, Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American and/or male on their application in order to be considered. We were thrilled at the diversity represented in our first year class and hope this scholarship will only attract additional diverse candidates to apply to the UTGCP. Our asking the alumni for help with the Hecht scholarship revealed the lasting passion for the UTGCP that our alumni have, and several have reached out to propose new ways to provide lasting support to the UTGCP. Look for information at the AC about some exiting developments in fundraising!

Changes to the curriculum this year are focused on the psychosocial course sequence. The old psychosocial practicum was on a two year rotation each spring, with some students receiving content “A” as first years and “B” as second years, while other students received content “B” as first years and “A” content as second years. We recognized that it would be ideal to have all of this information prior to advanced rotations but we did not want to lose the comradery of the first and second years together. Our alumni survey revealed this same push/pull of the pros and cons of change. However, with advanced rotations now finishing at winter break to make rooms for electives in spring term of the second year, the time had come to take the plunge. This year the first years are taking Psychosocial Issues I in the fall and will take a new course, creatively titled Psychosocial Issues II, in the spring. Redundancy has been eliminated and some advanced topics have been moved to the Contemporary Issues sequence. For this year only, the second years will attend approximately half of Psychosocial Issues II so that they receive the content that they missed from that section of psychosocial practicum.
Since we do not want to lose the comradery of the classes learning from one another, we have created a once per month psychosocial case conference to discuss difficult cases and to have in depth role plays. We will be looking for feedback from the current students regarding the new system.

The elective rotations were a success last year, with the students reporting that they really enjoyed having different experiences at the end of their training. Based on feedback from the last cycle, we are tweaking the set-up a bit. Look for more details on social media when the students are on rotations in the spring.

For the first time this year, there are genetic counseling students at both UT and Baylor in the greater Houston area. Luckily, the number of counselors in Houston is evenly divided between the two entities and thus we have plenty of resources to support everyone. The challenge may come in placing students from other programs for summer rotation. We have been fortunate to be able to host several GC students from outside of Houston each year for summer rotations, but with 18 students between our two programs to place, Houston may become one of those cities where it is notoriously hard to place students. As the number of programs expands across the country (43 and counting), we hope you will heed the call to be a supervisor and host summer students. Expanding the supervision network is a part of the workforce taskforce initiative. This year AGCPD and NSGC are sponsoring the Outstanding Clinical Supervisor Award. Each program’s graduating class helps choose a winner per program. Look for announcements at the AC. We are thrilled to announce Sarah Bannon as the first recipient of the Outstanding Clinical Supervisor Award at the UTGCP. If you see her in Atlanta, please give her a big congratulations.

I hope to see many of you in Atlanta. Our reunion dinner is Thursday evening at Max Lager’s. Email Meagan Kaulfus (mekaulfus@mdanderson.org) or me if you did not get the evite. Please also email Telisha (Telisha.D.Green@uth.tmc.edu) with your permanent email (gmail/yahoo/icloud/etc) in addition to your current work email. We want to make sure we know what you are up to. Speaking of that, there are many UT alumni presenting at the conference – make sure to support them! If you aren’t able to attend the AC, consider coming to TSGC in February, as this year it is in Houston.

Hope to see you soon,
Claire
Dr. Northrup has played an invaluable role in the education of over 150 genetic counseling students thus far at the UTGCP. She served as medical director of the program for an amazing 25 years. The students have always appreciated her experience, knowledge, and kindness. We are all grateful that she will remain an integral part of and staunch supporter of the UTGPC.

For 25 years of service as Medical Director of the UTGCP
Welcome Dr. Farach

We are excited to welcome Dr. Laura Farach as the new Medical Director of the UTGCP. Dr. Farach is an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics at McGovern Medical School at UTHealth. She is a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and American College of Medical Genetics. Dr. Farach loves teaching and is invested in the training of future pediatricians, geneticists, and genetic counselors.

“I am excited and honored to serve as the UTGCP Medical Director. I have always loved the program for its excellent leadership and outstanding students. It is a close-knit community in which everyone cares for one another, and especially for the students. With the first few months of being Medical Director under my belt, and seeing the interworking of the program, I am loving it even more. We had a very successful interview season and I am thrilled with our new class. I look forward to being part of the UTCGP community for many years to come.”

-Dr. Laura Farach

Congrats to Sarah Bannon—Outstanding Clinical Supervisor

Nominated by the Class of 2018, Sarah Bannon is the recipient of the University of Texas Genetic Counseling Program Outstanding Clinical Supervisor for 2018.

The class writes: “Sarah is an outstanding supervisor because she is able to adapt her supervision style for students at different points in their training. She demonstrates and explains counseling skills for beginning students and encourages advanced psychosocial counseling skills for advanced students. At all levels, she provides in-depth debriefing to help students understand what she interpreted from the genetic counseling session. She provides feedback that is actionable and shows an ability to quickly diagnose students' challenges and develop a plan for improvement. She is an excellent resource for the most up-to-date information and is very active in providing guidance when students express uncertainty. Sarah helps students grow in case preparation, information-provision, self-reflection, psychosocial counseling, and professional development, all while adding humor and encouragement. All of these skills make Sarah an outstanding clinical supervisor.”
“Our program will be the first program in which the curriculum is all online. There were several reasons we elected to go the online route, but one of those was to expand access to genetic counseling training and encourage underrepresented populations to consider a career in genetic counseling. Our workforce needs diversification, and online programs could be one of the ways that we can address this issue. Studies show that online programs tend to be more diverse because they allow for more flexibility while delivering high quality education. We also knew that our program would serve a large geographic region (ID, AK, MT, WA, OR) that has not seen the benefit of having local genetic counseling graduates. At the same time, because there are no other program in the Pacific Northwest, currently, we can utilize a genetic counseling community that is regional rather than local which can spread out the training burden for clinical rotation sites.”

“The biggest challenge in building the program was skepticism and misunderstanding about online education. Most people think of a correspondence course, one directional learning without any interaction with other students or the instructor. This is a common misconception, but one that we often have to address. In addition to other accreditation and university standards, online programs also have to follow Quality Matters Standards which requires a regular and substantive interactive learning environment. These 43 standards cover learning objectives, assessment & measurement, instructional materials, learner activities and interactions, technology, support, and accessibility. A certified QM instructional designer reviews all of our courses to ensure they meet these standards. So our students will work together. A lot! There is group work, team work, and individual work embedded in every single one of our 23 courses, but as opposed to just going to a classroom together their interactions are very intentional.”

Jennifer also has some encouraging advice for other GCs looking to build a new program or grow and existing one: “Call on your colleagues! There is no way we could have done this without tremendous support from our genetic counseling community. Several programs, program directors, and other relevant folks were key to our success. They shared advice, documents, processes, and a sympathetic ear. Having so many individuals to rely on gave us the courage to do this (because it is scary!) and the encouragement to try out a new model.”

Boise State’s Genetic Counseling graduate program will open its virtual doors to 12 students in the Fall of 2019. After all the planning, hard work, and anticipation, Jen’s parting thoughts are simple: “I can’t wait to have students!”
2017-2018 Highlights

Genetic Counseling Awareness Day—featuring UTGCP Mentor/Mentee Event

UT Alumni at ACMG in Charlotte, NC

Houston Genetic Counselor Happy Hour
Welcome Party

2017 Annual Conference

Jordan Berg, Research Award 2017
Julia Wynn, Alumni Award 2017

2017 UTGCP Welcome Party
2017-2018 Highlights

TSGC Annual Conference, 2018
Dallas, TX

Graduation — Class of 2018
Thesis Defenses

First Years Visit the Rise School

MD Anderson Counselors at Houston Restaurant week

Retirement Parties
2017-2018 Highlights

Spreading the word about Genetic Counseling
Find the UTGCP Online!

Search/Follow the public Facebook page: “University of Texas Genetic Counseling Program”

Join the closed Facebook group (for UTGCP alumni only): “UT GCP Community”

Follow up on Instagram: @UTGCP

As you post on Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, hashtag #UTGCP so we can see what you are up to for all things program/alumni/genetic counseling related!
Meet the UTGCP students!

Class of 2019
Alexa, Danielle, Emily, Allison, Cayleen, Samantha, Peyton, Georgiann, Carol, and Angelica

Class of 2020
Brad, Caroline, Kaitlyn, Wendi, Luke, Autumn, Sarah, Aranza, Addison, and Emily
Addison Johnson

My name is Addison Johnson and I am from Boise, Idaho. I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Idaho, where I enjoyed volunteering as a domestic violence and sexual assault advocate, conducting research on mindfulness and its beneficial role in posture and movement, and socializing through active involvement in my sorority, Kappa Delta. For the last year, I worked as a Direct Care Aide for individuals on the severe end of the autism spectrum, providing physical care, behavior intervention, and emotional support in their daily lives. As a new genetic counseling student and previous Psychology major, I am most looking forward to learning advanced counseling and communication skills so I can better support families psychosocially as they adapt to complex medical genetic information. As far as hobbies go, I love everything outdoors, including skiing, running, and anything involving water in the summertime! Finally, I am a bit of a thrill-seeker. I've been sky diving, never say no to a rollercoaster, and like to attend music festivals in places I've never been. I am loving Houston so far and look forward to spending (at least) my next two years here as a part of the UTGCP.

Autumn Vera

I'm Autumn and I am a native Houstonian! I was born and raised here, and graduated from the University of Houston in 2015. I'm excited to continue my education here in Houston and witness the Astros take another World Series Championship in 2018. My favorite things to do in Houston include running in the parks, Houston sports, and hitting up all the amazing Mexican restaurants the city has to offer.
Sarah Burke

Hi! I’m Sarah Burke, and I’m from the metro Detroit area. I graduated from the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in 2017. I’m really excited to move to Houston and become a part of the distinguished UT Genetic Counseling Program. I was very involved with anthropological genomics research as an undergraduate, and I helped to study the genetic mechanism of high-altitude adaptation among the Andean population. During my gap year, I spent time as an intern in a cancer genetics clinic, providing ABA therapy to kids with autism spectrum disorder, and volunteering in a shelter for women who have experienced sexual and domestic violence. I’m looking forward to learning how to apply my experience in the world of genetic counseling. Outside of school, I love being outdoors, eating delicious food, and watching the Food Network. Although I will miss the cool fall weather and the Great Lakes, I can’t wait to explore Houston, experience all of the diversity and culture, and get to know my amazing classmates.

Kaitlyn Amos

My name is Kaitlyn Amos, and I’m originally from Waco, TX but have spent the last 7 years on the east coast in Charlottesville, VA. I got my BA from Baylor University, studying Communication and PR.

March is when I typically begin counting down to Christmas Eve. I love salsa, the harmonica, Mary Oliver-esque poems and my bicycle. I’ve mastered Spanglish, currently working on a proficiency in Spanish.

I’m grateful, excited (and in some ways even surprised) to be back in school - but consider it a huge privilege to be learning from my smart classmates and the incredible faculty in this program. As of right now, I’d like to someday work as a Cardio-Genetic Counselor.
Luke Kruidenier

My name is Luke Kruidenier and I am one of the new genetic counseling students for the UTGCP. I am from Denver, Colorado and lived in Colorado my whole life. I am really looking forward to learning more about prenatal genetic counseling and getting as many experiences I can in that area. I am really into music, concerts, gaming, and when possible, hiking.

Aranza Gonzales Cendejas

I am originally from Mexico but have lived in many different cities while growing up. When my family and I first moved to the United States we lived in Houston for a year. After Houston we moved to Miami, and after two years in Miami we moved to Bethesda. My dad returned to Texas my last year of high school so I decided to look for potential colleges there. I was accepted into the University of Texas at San Antonio but transferred my sophomore year to UT Austin. I graduated from UT Austin with a degree in Biology and moved back to Houston to attend the School of Health Professions at MD Anderson. Once I graduated from the MD Anderson program, I went to work for a start-up company in the Texas Hill Country. My hobbies include: exercising, trying new restaurants, attempting to knit, going to the movies, and photography. While in Houston, I’m looking forward to re-exploring this city!
Emily Stiglich

Hi my name is Emily Stiglich. I'm from Indiana and went to school at Indiana University, where I received a BS in Neuroscience. I am so happy to be a part of the UTGCP and am excited to live in a place where it isn't cold for half of the year. I'm looking forward to developing and refining the skills that it takes to be a great genetic counselor while I'm here! In my free time I love to hike, paint, and eat food.

Wendi Betting

Hi everyone, I’m Wendi! I grew up in Florida but most recently lived in Boston where I worked as a clinical research assistant. In my free time, I enjoy going to the pool and trying new restaurants. I am excited to be a part of the Genetic Counseling Program at UTHealth and am looking forward to exploring Houston!
Brad Power

Hi all! My name is Brad Power. I am from Maryland where, prior to this move, I had spent my whole life. I grew up outside of Baltimore, but most recently I was living on the Maryland side of D.C. While it has been a big change, I am very happy to be here in Houston and to be a part of such a supportive GC community.

I graduated in 2016 with a degree in biology from St. Mary's College of Maryland, a tiny public liberal arts school in the southern tip of Maryland. After that I went to work for 2 years at NIH in a lab studying the genetics of oculocutaneous albinism. It was there that I finally learned about genetic counseling. I had always been involved in various STEM education and counseling/mentoring programs and so when I finally discovered genetic counseling I knew it was the perfect fit. After scrambling to change course with my life plans, I was fortunate enough to find my way here!

In my spare time I am a huge board game nerd and will happily spend an entire day playing board games. I also enjoy running and rock climbing. I am really looking forward to exploring all of the amazing food Houston has to offer, being a part of the medical center and experiencing a year without a winter. I'm excited to be a part of the UTGCP family and I look forward to continuing to meet everyone at TSGC or NSGC in the coming years!

Caroline Berch

I am from Virginia near Washington DC and went to undergrad at Vanderbilt University. Honestly, every part of starting grad school is exciting. I am especially looking forward to geeking out over everything we are learning with my new classmates.
Catching up with the Class of 2019

**PEYTON BUSBY**

Hello GCs of Texas— I hope everyone enjoyed their summers! I started off my summer with a week of volunteering at the Muscular Dystrophy Association's annual summer camp. After a fun week filled with camp activities and Taylor Swift karaoke, I returned to the real world and began my summer rotation. I spent four weeks at Baylor Scott and White in Temple, where I was able to see a large volume of medical genetics cases, as well as a couple of prenatal and cancer cases. I spent the last week of my summer rotation at UT Southwestern in Dallas and Fort Worth, where I was able to focus specifically on cancer counseling. My summer experiences really helped to build confidence in my counseling skills, so thank you to all of my supervisors for a wonderful summer! I wrapped up the summer by spending time with my family in central Texas, the highlights of which were hanging out in Krause Springs and spending the night in the cutest little tree house ever after zip-lining at Cypress Canopy Tours. Now that I am back in Houston, everything is moving so quickly. We are already over one third of the way through the semester and I am about halfway done with data collection for my thesis project! I am looking forward to what the rest of this semester and next semester have in store.

**DANIELLE WILLIAMS**

I spent my summer rotation at the Rocky Mountain Cancer Center in Boulder, Colorado. It was great to experience a smaller, community clinic setting and how that differs from larger cancer centers. I was able to see a variety of cases and handle most of the follow-up for my patients. I also had the opportunity to contribute to a research project regarding genetic testing for patients with metastatic breast cancer as well as other literature review projects. For my thesis project, I am conducting an NSGC survey that will examine the current genetic counseling ordering practices and interpretations of somatic mismatch repair testing in evaluation of Lynch syndrome. Our results will help determine whether the current NCCN guidelines for tumor testing could be expanded to benefit cancer genetic counselor practices. I'm looking forward to second year and attending our first NSGC!
EMILY KROSSCHELL

This summer I spent two weeks at Mayo Clinic in their biochemical genetics lab. I learned about the roles of a laboratory genetic counselor and got to help create testing algorithms for future tests. I also spent three weeks at Texas Children's Hospital working in the Hematology and Pediatric Genetics clinics. I got to counsel families on some really rare genetic conditions, which was very rewarding. Now that I am a second year student, I am looking forward to being the lead counselor in all of my sessions. I am also looking forward to finding out what I will doing for my elective rotation this spring.

ALLISON MOATS

This summer, I had the opportunity to go home to Ohio and rotate through the Bing Cancer Center at Riverside Methodist Hospital. I really enjoyed the chance to spend more time with my extended family, especially my grandparents. It was also enlightening to have a cancer rotation at a clinic that is much smaller from MD Anderson. My thesis looking into the prevalence of hypoglycemia in patients with mitochondrial disease is beginning the data collection phase, and I look forward to providing this novel piece of information to the field.

ANGELICA STARNES

I spent my summer doing cancer genetic counseling (with a little bit of medical genetics as well) in Colorado Springs and Denver. I really enjoyed being able to experience a smaller community hospital in comparison with a large cancer institution like MD Anderson along with enjoying the wonderful weather and sites of Colorado. On the thesis front, my project has been approved by the IRB (yay!) and the survey will be sent out shortly to begin data collection. I am excited to be entering the next stage of the thesis process.
SAMANTHA MONTGOMERY

This summer I had the opportunity to do a specialized prenatal/psychiatric genetic counseling rotation here in Houston! During this rotation, I gave a presentation on the genetics of mental illness and psychiatric genetic counseling to individuals with personal and/or family histories of these conditions. This tied right in with my thesis project, so it was nice to have a chance to share this valuable information with the community. I’m currently surveying individuals from local support groups and UT psych/MFM clinics with personal and/or family histories of mental health conditions to identify interest in and barriers to psychiatric genetic counseling services. I’m looking forward to NSGC and surviving the rest of the semester!

GEORGIANN GARZA

I spent my summer at LBJ and St. Joseph’s doing the Spanish Immersion rotation. It helped me get closer to my goal of being a bilingual genetic counselor. It gave me a great opportunity to expand my Spanish vocabulary and create connections with my patients. For my thesis I am working with Sarah J. Noblin and we are interested in learning more about the previous experiences of immigrant Latinas and their expectations for prenatal care and genetic counseling/testing. I am currently collecting interviews to see what information we can gain from this population so we are better equipped to counsel them and address any concerns they may have. I am most looking forward to wrapping up the school year and seeing what life post-graduation

CAYLEEN SMITH

My name is Cayleen Smith. I am a second-year genetic counseling student at the University of Texas program. This summer I went back to D.C., where I am from, to do prenatal and cardiovascular. I chose D.C. for my summer rotation because I hope to go back there after graduate school. Now that I am back for my second year, I have been spending a lot of my time in clinic and working on my thesis. My thesis project is focused on how genetic counseling impacts a woman’s ability to cope with termination for fetal anomaly and the expectations that women have for genetic counselors during this time. I am currently recruiting participants through an online survey. I’m looking forward to the rest of this year and training to become a genetic counselor!
CAROL NOWLEN

This summer, I spent the first half back at home in New Jersey visiting family and friends. I was able to spend some time at the beach, and took some day trips to the zoo, the Yuengling brewery, and Broadway to see Wicked. The second half I was lucky enough to spend in Houston doing the Spanish Immersion rotation at LBJ and St. Joseph's with Sarah and Priscila. I had a great time learning how to do sessions in Spanish and becoming familiar with the patient population. After graduation, I'm looking to head back to the East Coast to be closer to my family.

ALEX BREAM

I spent my summer rotation here in Houston rotating with the Baylor and TCH prenatal group! I really enjoyed learning more about what being a genetic counselor full time will be like. I also really enjoyed the opportunity to enjoy and explore the city and Texas some more! Coming into this semester, I am excited to continue to train to be a genetic counselor. For my thesis, I am looking at the relationship between metabolic control, quality of life, and body image in patients with GSD type Ia. I have started data collection and can't wait to hear what people have to say!
Class of 2018, where are they now?

SARAH AZAM

After graduation in May, I moved back to Iowa! It was bittersweet leaving Houston (and I miss it dearly! ): but it was wonderful to spend the summer catching up with old friends and family. I started working as a cancer counselor at Mary Greeley Medical Center and I’m working on getting the cancer genetics clinic set up here since I’m the first (and only) GC. Everyone has been so welcoming and excited for our department to grow. Other than that, I’m enjoying work-life balance post boards and getting ready to bake up a storm of fall goodies. I’m looking forward to seeing everyone at NSGC this year!

LAUREN FLEDDERMAN

Currently I am living and working in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area of Minnesota as a prenatal and cardio genetic counselor. I am enjoying the start of fall in the Midwest and am bracing myself for this winter after living in Texas the last few years. I will be at NSGC in Atlanta this November to present a poster on my thesis research!

SARA WOFFORD

After graduation, I decided to stick around Houston (albeit a bit more north!) and have been working at the MD Anderson Woodlands Clinic for the past few months. I recently started seeing patients at the LBJ clinic as well. I am really enjoying my new job and feel so fortunate to be here! Outside of work, I spent some time touring around Canada and moving to my new home in the Woodlands in the midst of my boards studying. Now that the test is behind me, I look forward to going on walks in the nature preserve right next to my house and spending more time engaging in creative hobbies. You can expect to see me and my poster at the NSGC AC this year.
TAYLOR BEECROFT

Post-grad life has been a whirlwind, but things have been wonderful now that boards are finally behind me. I accepted a job as the first genetic counselor dedicated for the cardiovascular genetics team at Texas Children’s Hospital. Outside of clinic, I’m ecstatic to be on the conference planning committee for the Marfan Foundation’s Annual Conference, which our team is hosting in Houston this coming July. I’m still actively playing roller derby in my free time, and won the Houston Roller Derby championship with my team just a few days before I took boards! I will be presenting a poster at NSGC this November, but I’m also really looking forward to catching up with my UTGCP family at the reunion dinner.

KATE MOWREY

After graduation, I had a wonderful month off before I started work. In that time, I moved to Midtown, spent time with family and friends, and took lots of naps. In June, I started my position as a pediatric genetic counselor at UTHealth, so it has been a fun transition from student to faculty member. I work in the TSC clinic, general genetics clinic, and will be starting my own neurology template soon! In addition to my clinical responsibilities, I am faculty member for LEND (Lonestar Education in Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disabilities) and TexasTIPs. Otherwise, I am learning about how much free time comes into your life once you pass boards (#blessed). I will be going to NSGC this year to present a poster for my thesis. I hope to see you all there!
JESS OMARK

Since graduating from the UTGCP, I have been working as a pediatric genetic counselor at the University of Michigan Health System (Michigan Medicine). I am greatly enjoying my first few months in this position! I am part of a team comprised of six geneticists and four other genetic counselors, and I am enjoying the many opportunities to continue to develop my clinical skills. I also look forward to exploring other opportunities including supervision and research. I will be attending NSGC in November, where I will have a poster for my thesis project, Attitudes Toward Updated Genetic Testing Among Patients with Unexplained Mismatch Repair Deficiency. I am living in Okemos, Michigan (right outside of Lansing). With my newfound free time since passing boards, my fiancé and I are enjoying exploring the Lansing area, making occasional weekend trips back to Chicago, and wedding planning!

ANNELISE PACE

Summer 2018 was definitely one for the books. I started with a bang by traveling around Italy and Greece with my family (a trip comprised of a LOT of eating and a LOT of walking). I spent some time in my home state of New Mexico eating lots of chile before eventually returning to Texas. This time I made the very bittersweet move to Dallas— bitter because I was not returning to my amazing friends and GC community in Houston, but sweet because I was starting an incredible job at UT Southwestern as their 14th (!) cancer genetic counselor. I am now seeing patients at multiple UTSW clinics in Dallas and Fort Worth. I love having so many GCs around and even some familiar UT alumni :)

![Image of a group of people standing together.]
As I had hoped last year, I was able stay here in Houston so I have officially traded in my snow boots and coats for sandals and sunglasses and taken a prenatal position at Baylor College of Medicine/Texas Children’s Hospital. I primarily see patients at the Methodist Smith Tower and the TCH Pavilion for Women. My new coworkers have been warm and welcoming while I get my bearings here and I am very excited about the new opportunities in this position! In addition to graduating and starting a new career I have also moved across the medical center to Rice Village and just in case that wasn’t enough change, I have a new puppy, Enzo! Now that grad school and boards are over, I am looking forward to exploring more of the fun things to do here in Houston. I’m excited to see my classmates and fellow UTGCP alumni at NSGC.
We look forward to seeing everyone at the Annual Conference in Atlanta, next month!
Every year UT GCP recognizes an alumnus who presents themselves as an outstanding genetic counselor and an exemplary representative of our program. Nominations are collected each year so keep an ear and eye out for another amazing colleague to add to the list.

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<th>Year</th>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>Catherine Wicklund</td>
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<td>Kaylene Ready</td>
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UT GCP recognizes the first new graduate from each class to publish their thesis research.

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<td>Class of 2013</td>
<td>Katherine Dempsey</td>
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<td>Class of 2015</td>
<td>Sarah (Mayes) Huguenard</td>
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<td>Class of 2016</td>
<td>Theresa Wittman</td>
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<td>Class of 2017</td>
<td>Jordan Berg</td>
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Recipients of the 2018 awards will be announced at the reunion dinner at the NSGC AC!
UTGCP Alumni

Class of 1991
Deb Durand

Class of 1992
Patricia Sculley
Pamela (Nackajski) Welgenhausen

Class of 1993
Becky Finkboner
Marnie Rocklin
Cathy Wicklund

Class of 1994
Fara Etzel
Jennifer McKeand
Cassidy Rodnick

Class of 1995
Melanie Andrews Casal
Robin (McKenney) McGoey
Jill Sawyer

Class of 1996
Heather (Ferguson) Coldebella
Carolynn (Lockmiller) Crossman
Sadie Ellen (Maynard) Blake
Tricia Zartman Page

Class of 1997
Noelle (Agan) Danylchuk
Ellen (Friday) Steinwachs
Andi Ybarra

Class of 1998
Erika (Martin) Miller
Joylnn Swantkowski
Melissa Trant-Kline

Class of 1999
Sara Cooper
Ashley (Nelson) Solomon
Michelle Strecker
Sarah Jane (Tew) Noblin

Class of 2000
Saleen Chenevert
Angie (Gibson) Jacobson
Amie (Ortman) Blanco
Leslie (Rogers) Evans

Class of 2001
Betsy Clark-Gaye
Kendra Waller
Lauren (Wright) Nelsen

Class of 2002
Valerie Banks
Jennifer Bayliss Saucier
Stephanie (Manzo) Hill
Laura Pine Ellis
Jennifer (Seifert) Eichmeyer

Class of 2003
Sandra Darilek
Emily (Gutter) Burke
Jennifer (Malone) Hoskovec
Carolyn Wilson-Brackett

Class of 2004
Andrea Atherton
Colleen (Buechner) Wu
Jamie Chance
Carol (Linsner) Brooks
Alice Schindler

Class of 2005
Jennifer LeMoine
Tamara Solomon
Cindy Trotter

Class of 2006
Marianna (Horz) Raia
Gabriel Lazarin
Stacey Miller
Kaylene (Whetstone) Ready
Jennifer (Sherrill) Czerwinski
Julia Wynn

Class of 2007
Jennifer (Defant) Burgess
Alyssa (Knisley) Wright
Erin Salo-Mullen
Cathy Sullivan Crapitto
Catherine (Tipps) Vendola
Amy (Stanford) Wells

Class of 2008
Lauren (McNair) Baggett
Sarah Guerra Seth
Lauren (Spurck) Youngborg
Blair Stevens
Matt Tschirgi

Class of 2009
Laura Amendola
Sarah Colosimo
Jennifer Fowler
Travis Morgan
Lauren Murphy
Rebecca (Sample) Carter
Marisa Vineyard

Class of 2010
Justine Cooper Pickarski
Carrie Crain
Deanna Darnes
Leslie (Newman) Dunnington
Gina Nuccio
Amy (Sommer) Poole
Class of 2011
Emily Gabitzsch 
Laura Godfrey Hendon 
Trisha Nichols 
Sarah (Swain) Barnett 
Laura Panos Smith 
Ashley (Henriksen) Woodson

Class of 2012
Nevena (Cvjetkovic) Krstic 
Carolyn (Garby) Haskins 
Roya Mostafavi 
Salma Nassef 
Sam Penney 
Katie Rock 
Ann Simmons

Class of 2013
Allison (Copeland) Ortega 
Jessica Davis 
Kate (Dempsey) Principe 
Michelle McDougle 
Nikki Mohrbacher 
Brad Rolf

Class of 2014
Amanda Hanson 
Andi (Lewis) Ybarra 
Jackie Mersch 
Shannon Mulligan 
Emily Parham 
Aarti Ramdaney 
Stephanie Thompson

Class of 2015
Lizzie (Baack) Bowdish 
Callie Jenevein 
Carla McGruder 
Sarah (Mayes) Huguenard 
Katie (Sagaser) Schutte 
Haley Streff 
Kayla (Vaughn) Rosnau 
Caiqian (Wu) Cropper

Class of 2016
Torry (Breen) Howell 
Katie Chan 
Christina Falugi 
Meagan (Giles) Choates 
Jessie Ross 
Ginger Tsai 
Victoria Wagner 
Theresa Wittman

Class of 2017
Jordan Berg 
Maggie Clifford 
Leslie Durham 
Amanda Gerard 
Meagan Kaulfus 
Katy Reese 
Chelsea Wagner 
Ellen Zirkelbach

Class of 2018
Sarah Azam 
Taylor Beecroft 
Lauren Fleddermann 
Ellie Gould 
Kate Mowrey 
Jess Omark 
Annelise Pace 
Sara Wofford
Welcome to our new Houston Genetic Counselors!

Ellie Gould (Baylor Prenatal) from UT Houston
Kate Mowrey (UT Pediatrics) from UT Houston
Katie Gunther (UT Pediatrics) from the University of Alabama at Birmingham
Lauren Desrosiers (Baylor Pediatric Oncology) from the University of South Carolina
Roa Sadat (TCH Neurology) from Emory University
Sara Wofford (MD Anderson Cancer Center, The Woodlands) from UT Houston
Taylor Beecroft (TCH Cardiology) from UT Houston
From the Editors

Annelise Pace, Class of 2018

I jumped at the opportunity to be involved in this newsletter as a way to stay involved with the amazing UTGCP. I’m so lucky to continue to be paired up with Jordan (first as my second year mentor in grad school, then as a coworker here at UTSW, and now as a co-editor of the Helix!). I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing from all of the alumni and faculty who contributed to this edition. Unfortunately I will be missing everybody in Atlanta this year but I am excited to make a trip back to Houston for TSGC.

Jordan Berg, Class of 2017

Life in Dallas has been going well! Can’t believe it has already been almost a year and a half since graduating, and I have been fully immersed in life as a GC. It has been fun to be working with Annelise on this year’s newsletter, and along side her in clinic at UT Southwestern. I am looking forward to catching up with all my UTGCP friends in Atlanta next month, and return to Houston in the spring for TSGC conference!