



NEWSLETTER

Happy April!

Spring has sprung! Also severe weather, stay safe out there everyone and make sure you get severe weather alerts at least two different way. As always, if you have any comments or concerns, please fill out our [anonymous Google form](#). Have a great month!

- BSA Social Media Committee

DEPARTMENT NEWS

➤ Congratulations to all our departmental award recipients!

•Kevin McCarty (Guengerich Lab) and Menghan Mei (Ren Lab), who both received the Frank Chytil Travel Award.

•Tata Kavlashvili (Dewar Lab), who received the Laura Busenlehner Award for Outstanding Leadership & Research.

•Tyler Hansen (Hodges Lab), who received the Leon W. Cunningham Award for Excellence in Biochemistry

•Alexandra Blee (Chazin Lab), who received the Michael Waterman Award for Outstanding Achievement in Postdoctoral Studies

•And our fearless leader Dr. Dave Cortez, who received the Richard Armstrong Mentoring Award

➤ Have some cool results but not sure how to make a figure? Need a scheme for a poster but not sure where to start? VU Basic Sciences is hosting a BioRender webinar for our department about making figures. The webinar will be held on Zoom on Friday, April 14th at 9:30 am. You can register [here](#).

TRAINEE OF THE MONTH

Verda Agan

What year are you? I'm a 4th year PhD Candidate.

Whose lab are you in? Emily Hodges

What do you like best about the biochemistry department? I love the collaborative and supportive nature of the department. People are super approachable and willing to help.

What advice do you have for other students? I like to adhere to three mantras: (1) Don't strive for perfect because perfect isn't realistic, especially in science. What you should aim for is doing your best and your best IS enough. Repeat that to yourself - often. (2) Give yourself credit. So often we don't stop to appreciate our wins, like getting an experiment to work, or finally troubleshooted some code. I encourage you to stop, look at what you did, and pat yourself on the back (or come to me and I'll high-five you). (3) When you're stuck or having a hard time understanding something, it doesn't mean you're dumb; rather it's an area of improvement you can work on. I once had a PI who told me that I shouldn't call experiments that didn't work failures, but setbacks. I have since modified how I frame setbacks and now call them areas of improvement. Areas of improvement are expected of us as trainees and it's important we view them as learning opportunities.

What's your favorite experiment to run? My favorite experiment to run is whole genome bisulfite sequencing. There's nothing quite so satisfactory as getting a library with the fragment size distribution and high yield you were shooting for.

What's your favorite place to go or favorite thing to do in Nashville? My favorite thing to do is take my dog, Vader, to Centennial Park with my husband and watch him play and try desperately (but to no avail) catch a squirrel.



[Click here to nominate a fellow grad student or post doc for Trainee of the Month!](#)

DEPARTMENT EVENTS IN APRIL

- **3rd - 7th** - Graduate Student Appreciation Week
- **7th** at noon in **LH 214** - Frontiers Seminar: Dr. Johannes Walter, Harvard Medical School, HHMI
- **14th** at 9:30 on Zoom - Live biochemistry figure makeover with BioRender (see "In Other News" section below)
- **7th** at noon in **LH 214** - BSA Colloquium: Sara Conwell
- **21st** at noon in **LH 214** - Frontiers Seminar: Dr. Tanya Paull, University of Texas at Austin
- **21st** from 5-7pm at **Kung Fu Saloon**: Social Event

Congrats to...

- **Dr. Jeffery Jian** and **Dr. Tyler Hansen** for defending their dissertations this month!
- **Dr. Juan Carvajal Garcia** for receiving the Helen Hay Whitney Foundation Fellowship!
- **Drs. Hrishita Das, Erin Jennings, and Kavi Mehta** for being part of the first class of [Destination Biochemistry Postdoctoral Scholars](#).

As we continue down our PI trivia path this month, we are wondering...

What is Breann Brown's favorite local Nashville donut flavor?



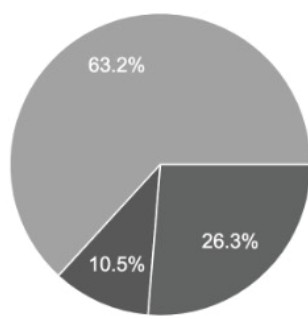
A) Salted Brown Butter from East Park Donuts



B) Maple Bacon from Five Daughters Bakery



C) Classic with Chocolate Icing from Fox's Donut Den



The results are in!

A good amount of you must have attended the Coffee and Conversations because you knew this fact! 63.2% got the correct answer of Taylor Swift, 26.3% went with another Nashville icon, Thomas Rhett, and finally 10.5% went with Miranda Lambert. If you're still trying to get tickets to the Eras Tour, maybe ask Andrew Folkman?

IN OTHER NEWS

- **Graduate Student Appreciation Week** is April 3rd - 7th. The Graduate School is hosting events throughout the week just for grad students. Don't miss Breakfast and Conversations with the Dean on Monday or the baseball game on Tuesday. More info and events can be found [here](#).
- Elections for the Graduate Student Council (GSC) are coming up quickly! Nominations are open now until the election is held at the **April General Body Meeting (GBM)** on April 6th. Nominate yourself or someone else and find out more [here](#). The GBM will be at 6:30 pm in Featheringill Hall 134.
- **The Vanderbilt International Researchers Alliance (VIRAL)** is hosting their inaugural symposium this month on Friday the 28th from 9am - 6pm in the Student Life Center Ballroom.



Tennessee State Parks



Check it out!

- **Places to go:** Sure, Nashville is just a couple hours from the [most popular national park](#) in the country, but Tennessee is also home to numerous, smaller, less-crowded [state parks](#). These beautiful parks provide opportunities for sightseeing, hiking, picnicking, camping and many more activities. Get outdoors before the mosquitoes beat you to it!
- **Things to do:** Spring is also a great time to catch your favorite Nashville sports teams before it turns into a sauna outside! Both the [Nashville Soccer Club](#) and the [Sounds](#) have multiple home games this month. Not ready to give up winter? You're in luck because the [Predators](#) still have plenty of icy indoor games for you.
- **People to see:** Looking for a way to shake off the last of your seasonal depression? The Nashville Comedy Festival is April 17th - 23rd. Catch comedians like David Spade, Ali Wong, Leanne Morgan, and countless others performing around town at various venues throughout the week. Looks like there are plenty of tickets still available. Buy tickets and view the lineup [here](#).



Please reach out to lindsey.n.guerin@vanderbilt.edu or kaitlyn.r.browning@vanderbilt.edu if you have any feedback, questions, or student of the month nominations.