



VANDERBILT
Office of Postdoctoral
Affairs

ANNUAL REPORT

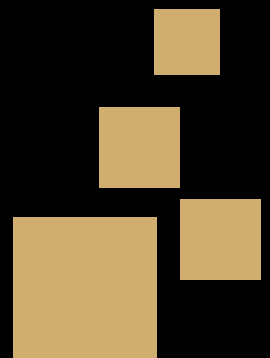
2024-25

www.vu.edu/postdoc

Vanderbilt University is an internationally recognized private research university in Nashville, Tennessee. It offers undergraduate programs in the liberal arts and sciences, engineering, music, education and human development, as well as a full range of graduate and professional degrees. Faculty, students, postdocs, and staff work closely together to examine challenging questions across a wide range of disciplines. As a result, postdocs at Vanderbilt have the opportunity to further enhance their skills and prepare for future careers while working with leading scholars in the biological and physical sciences, engineering, the humanities, law and business, and the social sciences.

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YEAR AT A GLANCE



Postdocs and the mentors that support them are celebrated at the annual awards ceremony.

In the 2024-2025 academic year, the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) focused on fostering community among our postdoctoral population through various events, new initiatives, and storytelling. During the academic year, OPA onboarded 277 new postdocs to Vanderbilt and held 25 new postdoc orientations. Additionally, OPA held more than 55 meetings with administrative staff, faculty, and current or prospective postdocs to support research and scholarship on Vanderbilt's campus.

To support potential and incoming postdocs, we launched the Vanderbilt Postdoc Handbook in January 2025, providing essential onboarding information, postdoc policies, and resources for their careers at Vanderbilt. Additionally, the Vanderbilt Postdoc Association (VPA) Buddy Program, initiated in July 2024, successfully matched 53 incoming postdocs with current postdocs, easing their transitions into their new role, new cities, or new countries, with more than 60 current postdocs participating as buddies.



Postdocs enjoy breakfast with Vice Provost C. André Christie-Mizell during Postdoc Appreciation Week.

The VPA monthly Speak Easy series and Happy Hour saw increased engagement, and both the Annual Postdoc Symposium and Awards Ceremony experienced higher attendance, reflecting the growing sense of community among our postdocs. The VPA organized hikes and an outing to a Vanderbilt women's soccer game, further promoting community. During National Postdoc Appreciation Week, the OPA formed partnerships with various internal and external partners to celebrate our postdocs.

A new initiative, "Celebrating Success," expanded on our monthly postdoc features by highlighting individual accomplishments, showcasing their journeys through awarded funding, publications, and future career steps.

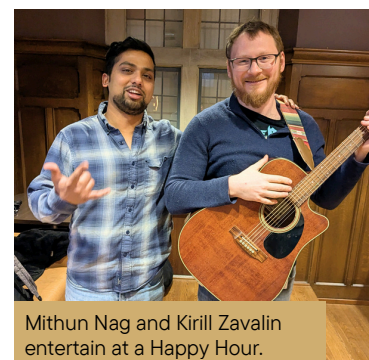
What's on the horizon?

Looking ahead, the OPA aims to enhance engagement within the Vanderbilt postdoc community before their arrival, while they are on campus, and after they depart. We seek to leverage the expertise of alumni postdocs as a valuable resource for our current members, creating additional mentoring opportunities that benefit the entire community.

We are your OPA. We are working on your behalf!



A tenure-track faculty career panel was held in April for postdocs on the job search.



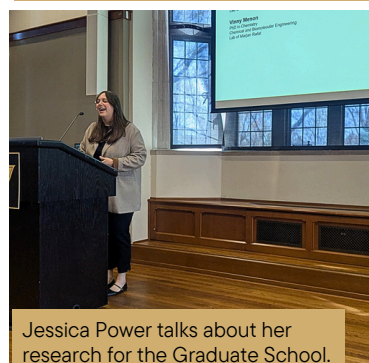
Mithun Nag and Kirill Zavalin entertain at a Happy Hour.



Members of the VPA and OPA attend the National Postdoc Association Conference.



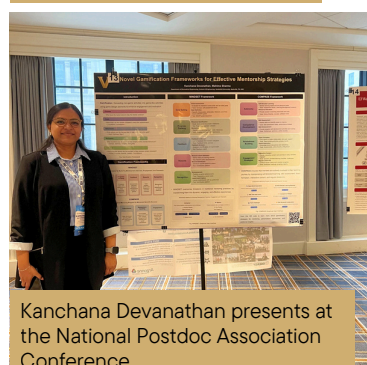
Postdocs enjoy the picnic during NPAW.



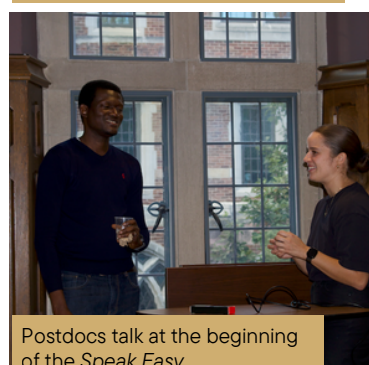
Jessica Power talks about her research for the Graduate School.



Postdocs enjoy the monthly coffee break.



Kanchana Devanathan presents at the National Postdoc Association Conference.



Postdocs talk at the beginning of the Speak Easy.



Research posters are presented at the Postdoc Symposium.

LEADERSHIP



C. André Christie-Mizell

Vice Provost for Graduate Education
Dean of the Graduate School
Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
Centennial Professor of Sociology



Faith Bishop

Associate Director, Office of
Postdoctoral Affairs
Special Project Director for Graduate
Education and Postdoctoral Training



Annie Evans

Program and
Communications Manager



OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS

MISSION

The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA) is responsible for planning and managing programs and services for Vanderbilt's postdoctoral community. OPA supports Vanderbilt-affiliated postdocs as well as faculty and staff administrators who work with the postdoctoral population. OPA is the central resource for postdoctoral services and serves as a liaison among postdocs and central University administrative offices. OPA also works closely with the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association (VPA) to address the interests and concerns of postdocs.

POSTDOCS BY THE NUMBERS

POSTDOC POPULATION

AY 2024-2025

SCHOOL NUMBERS

Arts and Science	149
Engineering	85
Graduate School	4
Law	4
Medicine	431
Nursing	3
Owen	4
Peabody	48
Other (Centers/Institutes)	1
TOTAL	729



69

Departments
Represented



108

Funded by Training Grants
or Individual Fellowships



56

Countries Represented

WHAT IS A POSTDOC?

Vanderbilt postdoctoral fellows, commonly known as postdocs, are professionals who have earned doctoral degrees and are temporarily pursuing additional scholarly training, experience and research progress necessary for a wide range of career paths. Postdocs play an important role in Vanderbilt's research enterprise and are integral to the discovery and learning mission of Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

VANDERBILT POSTDOC ASSOCIATION

Formed in 1998, the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association (VPA) serves as a platform to bring together and support the Vanderbilt postdoctoral community.



VPA COMMITTEES



The **Scholarly Learning** committee is responsible for organizing the annual VPA symposium. In addition to the annual symposium, this committee may also organize other invited talks, workshops, and seminars for the postdoc community.



This **Career Development** committee is responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing professional development-focused initiatives and events for the postdoc community.



The **Community Building** committee is responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing social- and networking-focused initiatives and events for the postdoc community.



The **Postdoc Advocacy** committee is responsible for planning, organizing, and implementing advocacy-focused initiatives and events for the postdoc community. Additionally, members of this committee will sit on the Postdoctoral Fellow Advisory Committee.

VPA BOARD MEMBERS 2024-2025

VPA LEADERSHIP



Kanchana Devanathan

President &
Career Development



**Naome
Mwesigwa**

Vice President

COMMITTEE CHAIRS



Alicia Cronin

Community Building



Ashima Chopra

Scholarly Advancement



Ilkin Safa

Community Building



**Mithun Nag
Karadi Giridhar**

Scholarly Advancement



Ismary Blanco

Postdoc Advocacy



Taseer Ahmad

Career Development

EVENTS

2024

* JULY

Effective Mentoring Strategies for Postdocs

Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success

* AUGUST

Happy Hour

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

* SEPTEMBER

Vanderbilt Women's Soccer Game

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



National Postdoc Appreciation Week Events

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs & Campus Partners

* OCTOBER

Federal STEM Policy and Advocacy: An Inside the Beltway Look

Vanderbilt Office of Federal Relations, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs & Campus Partners

18th Annual Postdoc Symposium

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

Halloween Social

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



* NOVEMBER

Immigration Workshops

International Student & Scholar Services & Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

International Game Night & Tacos

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs & Biomedical Research Education and Training Office

Individual Development Plan Workshop

Dr. Mariann Piano & Daien Sanchez

* DECEMBER

Postdoc Holiday Luncheon

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs



EVENTS

2025

* SPRING SEMESTER

International Postdoc Workshop Series

English Language Center

* JANUARY

Speak Easy

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

* FEBRUARY

Happy Hour

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



* MARCH

Speak Easy

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

* APRIL

Happy Hour

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

VPA Executive Board Meet & Greet

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

Career Development Faculty Panel

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

* MAY

Speak Easy

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association

Annual Postdoc Awards Ceremony & Reception

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs



Postdoc Hike at Percy Warner

Vanderbilt Postdoc Association



* JUNE

Effective Mentoring Strategies for Postdocs

Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success

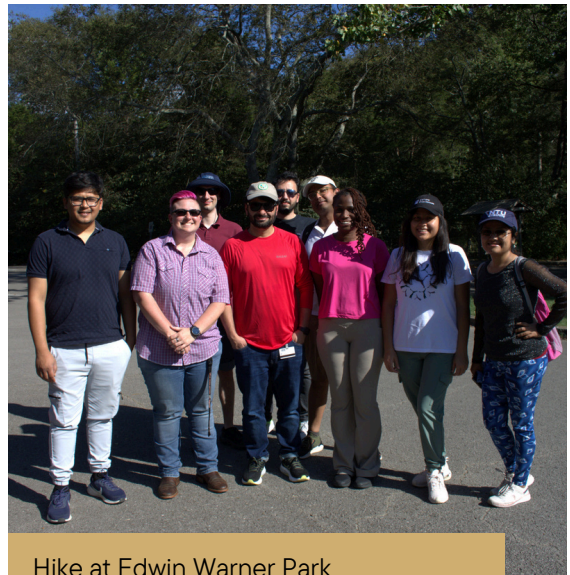
NATIONAL POSTDOC APPRECIATION WEEK

September 16 - 20, 2024

National Postdoc Appreciation Week (NPAW) recognizes the significant contributions that postdoctoral fellows make to research and discovery. The 15th Annual National Postdoc Appreciation Week was held September 16 - 20, 2024. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs partnered with other campus departments to host daily events for the postdoc community.



Postdoc Coffee & Catered Breakfast



Hike at Edwin Warner Park



Women in the Academy Panel hosted by the Women's Center



Postdoc Family Picnic



Speak Easy Talk Series



OPA at the Farmer's Market

EVENTS OF THE WEEK:

MONDAY

- * Postdoc Headshots
- * Annual Postdoc Family Picnic at Fannie Mae Dees Park

TUESDAY

- * Postdoc Headshots
- * Cookies with the BRET Office
- * Women in the Academy: Expanding Your Network 2.0
Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center

WEDNESDAY

- * Postdoc Coffee & Catered Breakfast
Breakfast sponsored by Proteintech

THURSDAY

- * OPA at the Farmer's Market
- * VPA *Speak Easy* Talk Series

FRIDAY

- * Postdoc Hike at Edwin Warner Park

18TH ANNUAL POSTDOC SYMPOSIUM

October 14, 2024



Dr. Patricia Clark presents the keynote at the 2024 symposium.

Planning for the 18th Annual Postdoc Symposium commenced in February, led by the Vanderbilt Postdoc Association (VPA) Scholarly Advancement Co-Chairs, Madeline Searcy and Madushika Wimalaratne, who initiated a call for committee members. The symposium committee, comprised of postdocs from various disciplines, collaborated throughout the planning process. In July 2024, newly-elected co-chairs Ashima Chopra and Mithun Nag assumed organizing duties.

The event attracted over 175 attendees, including postdocs, presenters, faculty judges, panelists, and campus partners.

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Patricia Clark, O'Hara Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the University of Notre Dame, delivered the keynote address titled "Protein folding in the cell: Challenges and opportunities," sharing insights from her career and personal life challenges.

Featured Talks

- Opening Research Talk: Dr. Eric Gurevitch, 2024 Postdoc of the Year,
- Career Development Talk: Dr. Charleson Bell focused on research innovation and entrepreneurship.

Breakout Sessions

1. Leadership and Management Skills: Presented by Stacey Satchell, Director of Graduate and Postdoc Academic Success.
2. Communication and Public Engagement: Faculty panel discussion on effective science communication with general audiences.

Postdocs from Vanderbilt and peer institutions showcased their research through poster presentations and lightning talks. This year's symposium successfully fostered collaboration and knowledge sharing among the postdoc community.



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Poster
Presentations



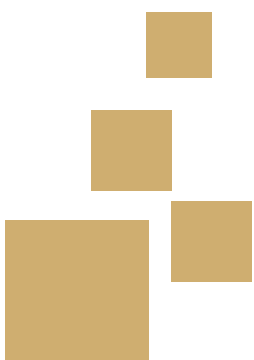
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Lightning Talks



23

Resource Fair
Tables



Postdocs network during the reception and awards ceremony.



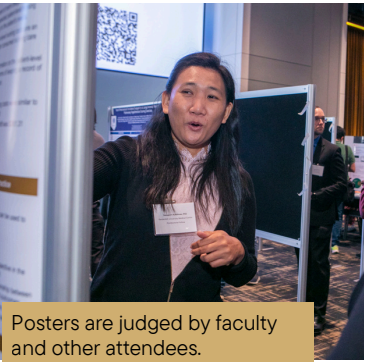
Postdocs present their research at poster sessions.



Alicia Cronin and Taseer Ahmed sit at the registration table.



Dr. Charleson Bell discusses entrepreneurship.



Posters are judged by faculty and other attendees.



Dr. Eric Gurevitch presents the postdoc research talk.



Dr. Patricia Clark presents the keynote over lunch.



Dr. Peter Chesney presents a lightning talk.



Postdocs attend one of two concurrent sessions.

POSTDOC SYMPOSIUM AWARD WINNERS

LIGHTNING ROUND TALK AWARD WINNERS

1ST PLACE:
JACOB BOUSSARD
Pharmacology

Discovery of Tool Compounds for the
Exploration of PAR-4 Indicated Disease
States

2ND PLACE:
KEAVASH ASSANI
Urology

Clinical Validation of Myprostatescore 2.0
(MPS2) Testing Using First-Catch, Non-DRE
Urine

POSTER PRESENTATION AWARDS

ERIC BEADLE
Medicine

Reactivation of Gli2 in Liposarcoma Tumors
Induces Microenvironment Remodeling
and Alters Tumor Differentiation

AHMAD TOUBASI
Neurology

Chronic Active Lesions Preferentially
Localize in Watershed Territories in Multiple
Sclerosis

POSTER SESSION PEOPLE'S CHOICE AWARDS

**JÉSSICA DA CONCEIÇÃO
MENDONÇA**
University of Tennessee

Understanding the Interactions Between
Lactobacillus spp. and Group B
Streptococcus in the Vaginal Tract

SUPAPORN KULTHINEE
Medicine

Acute GPER1 Activation Reduces Blood
Pressure during the Inactive Period in Aged
Female Mice



Symposium Research Award Winners

POSTDOC SYMPOSIUM PLANNING COMMITTEE

2024-2025 SCHOLARLY ADVANCEMENT CO-CHAIRS

ASHIMA CHOPRA

MITHUN NAG KARADI GIRIDHAR

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

KARAN ARORA

KANCHANA DEVANATHAN

EMAN DESOKY

VINAY MENON

NAOME MWESIGWA

TOR NASCI

MAHIMA SHARMA

SPECIAL THANKS TO: THE 2023-2024 SCHOLARLY ADVANCEMENT CO-CHAIRS

MADELINE SEARCY

MADUSHIKA WIMALARATHNE



2024 Symposium Planning Committee



SPEAK EASY **TALK SERIES**

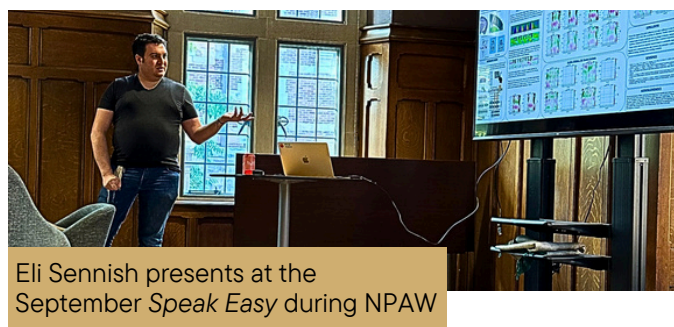
A POSTDOC TALK SERIES TO TELL YOUR SCIENTIFIC STORY

Hosted by the Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association (VPA), the *Speak Easy* Talk Series seeks to offer a casual venue for scientific presentations that are accessible and digestible to the public through an evening happy hour event at Alumni Hall. *Speak Easy* presenters discuss a variety of topics including biology, neuroscience, mathematics, data science, health-related science, and more.

The goal of the *Speak Easy* Talk Series is to provide an opportunity for postdoctoral scholars to discuss their science with a broader audience, including postdoc peers, and to provide speakers the opportunity to highlight the amazing scientific discoveries happening across Vanderbilt.



Mert Demirci presents at the January *Speak Easy*



Eli Sennish presents at the September *Speak Easy* during NPAW

Interested in speaking at a future *Speak Easy*? Use the QR code to submit an abstract!





Alec Walter presents at the May Speak Easy

SEPTEMBER 19, 2024

ELI SENNESH
Psychology

Current-Source Density in Higher Visual Areas Reflects Distinct Motifs for Oddball Processing

MAHIMA SHARMA
Biomedical Engineering

Tuberculosis Detection Using *In Vivo* Raman Spectroscopy: An Exploratory Study

JANUARY 16, 2025

MERT DEMIRCI
Medicine

RNA Sequencing Analysis of Skeletal Muscle in Moderate to Advanced Chronic Kidney Disease

B. ILKIN SAFA
Medicine

The SGLT2 Inhibitor Empagliflozin Modulates Myeloid Cell Gene Expression

MARCH 27, 2025

ALICIA CRONIN
Institute of Imaging Science

Acute GPER1 Activation Reduces Blood Pressure during the Inactive Period in Aged Female Mice

MILENE FONTES
Pediatrics

How are blood vessels discussed with neighbors? Fight or friendship?

MAY 15, 2025

LAVENTA OBARE
Medicine

The Fat Truth: HIV, Hearts & Hidden Clues

ALEC WALTER
Biomedical Engineering

Differentiation and characterization of bacteria using high-wavenumber Raman spectroscopy

ANTON ZHELONKIN
Medicine

Decoding Dendritic Cells Heterogeneity

2025 SPRING POSTDOC AWARDS CERMONY & RECEPTION

May 23, 2025

Each year the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Vanderbilt Postdoc Association solicit nominations for a variety of awards to be given to postdoctoral fellows, those who mentor them, and campus partners that actively seek to better the postdoc experience.

Nominations were received through the spring, and the awards ceremony was held on May 23, 2025 to recognize the winners of each award.

The ceremony included remarks from C. André Christie-Mizell, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Director of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs, and Kanchana Devanathan, VPA President.



The 2025 postdoc award winners and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW OF THE YEAR

The Postdoctoral Fellow of the Year award recognizes a postdoctoral scholar who demonstrates excellence in research and scholarship. The nominee must demonstrate excellence in several criteria, including publications, presentations, awards/honors, service and mentoring. The Office of Postdoctoral Affairs solicited nominations from faculty in each school, and the Postdoctoral Fellow Advisory Committee reviewed and voted on all nominations.

Maxime Chevéé
Pharmacology



Chevée is a postdoc in the lab of Erin Calipari. Since joining Vanderbilt in summer 2020, Chevéé has achieved numerous accolades, including the 2024 NARSAD Young Investigator Grant. In addition to his research excellence, he is noted for his dedication to mentorship and leadership, actively supporting fellow scholars and students within the Vanderbilt community. His involvement in the VPA has further strengthened collaboration among peers. Described by colleagues as compassionate and caring, Chevéé fosters an atmosphere that empowers others to excel.

Lorenzo Gavassino
Mathematics

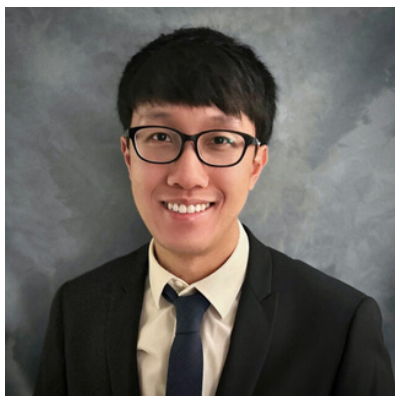


Gavassino is mentored by Marcelo Disconzi. Gavassino has quickly emerged as a rising star in relativistic fluid dynamics and kinetic theory. His academic journey includes being awarded the prestigious 2024 MERAC Prize for the Best Doctoral Thesis in Theoretical Astrophysics, alongside extensive media coverage in outlets like Discover magazine and the American Physical Society's Viewpoint section. Gavassino combines physical intuition with mathematical rigor to tackle complex challenges and produce groundbreaking research contributions. Beyond his scientific achievements, he is recognized for his strong commitment to mentorship and collaboration, actively supporting fellow researchers and fostering interdisciplinary exchanges within the Vanderbilt community.

POSTDOC SERVICE AWARD

The Postdoc Service Award goes to a postdoctoral scholar who has demonstrated sustained service to Vanderbilt through service to the community at large—through professional societies, scholarly work outside regular lab responsibilities, or by leading within and promoting the postdoc experience at Vanderbilt. The Vanderbilt Postdoc Association solicits nominations from all postdocs, and the VPA Executive Board reviews and votes.

Lianrui Zuo
*Electrical and Computer
Engineering*



Zuo is a postdoc in the lab of Bennett Landman. Zuo's proactive approach to mentoring has included invaluable guidance to undergraduates, Ph.D. candidates, and M.D./Ph.D. researchers, leading to significant developments such as the first senior-author publication in fall 2024. Zuo initiated the "MASI Deep Dive" meeting, which fosters collaboration and idea exchange among researchers, enhancing the community's engagement and growth. His international leadership extends to chairing the ninth International Workshop on Simulation and Synthesis in Medical Imaging at MICCAI 2024 and co-organizing an open challenge for IEEE ISBI 2025. Zuo's commitment to scientific integrity is further demonstrated through his peer review efforts, including launching a special issue of *NeuroImage* as guest editor.

POSTDOC MENTOR AWARD

Recipients of the Postdoc Mentor of the Year Award must demonstrate a willingness to share expertise and advice; service to the community at large, including other mentoring activities; and scholarship within the mentor's own career, including publications, awards, presentations and honors. The Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association solicits nominations from all Vanderbilt postdocs, and the VPA Executive Board reviews and votes.

Corinne Carlton-Smith
*Psychology & Human
Development*

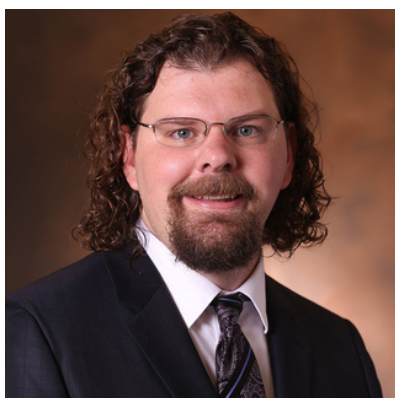


Carlton-Smith is a postdoc in the lab of Autumn Kujawa. Since joining the Mood, Emotion and Development Lab in August 2024 as a NIMH T32 postdoctoral fellow, Carlton-Smith has made significant contributions to psychology and mental health research while demonstrating a profound commitment to mentorship. Known for her supportive and approachable nature, she fosters a collaborative environment that encourages the personal and professional growth of her mentees. As her mentor Autumn Kujawa states, "Corinne is a rising star in youth mental health research," reflecting her influential role in shaping the next generation of researchers dedicated to addressing mental health disparities.

FACULTY MENTOR AWARD

Recipients of the Faculty Mentor of the Year Award must demonstrate a willingness to share expertise and advice; service to the community at large, including other mentoring activities; and scholarship within the mentor's own career, including publications, awards, presentations and honors. The Vanderbilt Postdoctoral Association solicits nominations from all Vanderbilt postdocs, and the VPA Executive Board reviews and votes.

Bennett Landman
*Electrical and Computer
Engineering*



Landman is Stevenson Chair of Engineering, University Distinguished Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering in the School of Engineering, and University Distinguished Professor of Radiology and Radiological Sciences in the School of Medicine. Landman goes above and beyond traditional mentorship, providing exceptional support while encouraging intellectual exploration and curiosity. His dedication to nurturing each trainee's individual strengths has empowered mentees to achieve significant milestones, including successful grant submissions and professional development opportunities. Landman's open-door policy fosters a collaborative lab environment, facilitating access to vital resources and opportunities for presenting research at major conferences. His thoughtful mentorship has left a lasting impact on the careers of his mentees and the broader academic community.

OUTSTANDING CAMPUS PARTNER

This award recognizes a remarkable team whose dedication and collaboration has furthered the mission of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and provided outstanding support to our postdoc community. The Outstanding Campus Partner Award is chosen by the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

**Vanderbilt University
Medical Center
Office of Research**



The VUMC Office of Research plays a crucial role in supporting postdoctoral fellows by ensuring their needs are met and facilitating connections with various campus resources. By fostering partnerships with VUMC departments and VUMC Human Resources, the office helps postdocs navigate challenges and enhance their experiences at VUMC. This collaborative spirit is essential for cultivating a thriving academic environment that fosters growth and innovation among researchers. Susan Meyn, Vice President for Research Resources, and Amy Martinez, Associate Program Director, accepted the award on behalf of the office.

POSTDOCTORAL FELLOW ADVISORY COMMITTEE

2024-2025

The Postdoctoral Fellow Advisory Committee serves as an advisory body to the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and includes faculty, staff, and postdocs from across Vanderbilt University and Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

FAITH BISHOP

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

ISMARY BLANCO

VPA representative

JAMES R. BOOTH

Peabody College

ELIZABETH BOYD

Graduate School

TANYA BROWN

*People, Culture,
and Belonging*

DAVID CALKINS

VUMC Office of Research

WALTER CHAZIN

School of Medicine, Biomedical Research

Education & Training

C. ANDRÉ CHRISTIE-MIZELL

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs;

Graduate School

ANNIE EVANS

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

ELLEN GOLDRING

Peabody College

ANNIE HORNUNG

Graduate School

JOHN MCLEAN

College of Arts & Science

MARIANN R. PIANO

School of Nursing

JENNIFER A. PIETENPOL

VUMC Office of Research

FLORENCE SANCHEZ

School of Engineering

CHRIS VANAGS

Peabody College

JULIE WILBERS

International Student & Scholar Services

RICHARD H. WILLIS

Owen School of Management





VANDERBILT
Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

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