



# The GSCChronicles

## December 2008

### Table of Contents

Upcoming Events  
Announcements  
Graduate Student Spotlight: *Phil Wang*  
Tip of the Month: *Downtown Holiday Market*  
GSC Meeting Overview  
Grad Student Entertainment

### Upcoming Events

December 2008

- 25 Christmas Day
- 26 Federal Government closed

January 2009

- 1 New Year's Day
- 5 GSC Meeting, 5PM
- 7 GPP Campus-Wide Lunch, 12PM
- 15 Pathways, 12PM
- 19 Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
- 20 Inauguration Day
- 23 GSC Retreat, 12-5PM

February 2009

- 14 Valentine's Day
- 16 Presidents Day

### Announcements

#### ▪ GSC Meeting:

The next GSC meeting will be held on Monday, **January 5<sup>th</sup> at 5PM** in the Grad Student Lounge, Building 10 Rm 6S235.

#### ▪ GSC 2009 Officers:

Kim Baxter and Kate Callahan will serve as the 2009 GSC Co-chairs. Tom Johnson and Matt Berberich will join them on the GSC Executive Committee as Secretary and Treasurer, respectively. Partnership Representatives for formal partnership programs are filled; some positions are still open for International Individual and US Individual Partnership Representatives. Social Committee Co-chairs are still needed. Vania Cao and Becca Chodoff will serve as *GSCChronicles* Assistant Editors. Email a Co-chair ([GSCcochair@od.nih.gov](mailto:GSCcochair@od.nih.gov)) if you are interested in a position.

#### ▪ GSC Retreat:

Mark your calendar for the 2009 GSC Retreat! It will be held on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 12-5PM, in the Natcher Conference Center (Building 45), Room A. At this event, GSC members and GPP/OITE staff will assess the accomplishments and challenges of

the past year and make plans for the new year. If you want to have an impact on grad student life at NIH, don't miss this!

#### ▪ Community Service:

The GSC Community Service Committee's next event will involve planning and cooking a meal for the Children's Inn Sunday Supper. Email [GSCservice@od.nih.gov](mailto:GSCservice@od.nih.gov) if you can help with meal planning, fundraising, shopping, cooking or serving. Also, this spring, a team of NIH graduate students will participate in Relay for Life to raise money and awareness to support the American Cancer Society's life-saving mission; see Matt Berberich or the Community Service website for details.

#### ▪ Pathways:

Pathways is a monthly meeting where career options and development are discussed, usually from the perspective of someone outside of basic research. The December meeting focused on faculty positions at predominantly undergraduate institutions. The next Pathways discussion will be held in the Grad Student Lounge on January 15<sup>th</sup>, 12PM, and will highlight jobs in the federal government.

#### ▪ GS<sup>3</sup>:

The **Graduate Student Seminar Series (GS<sup>3</sup>)** is a monthly meeting where students present their work to fellow graduate students. These meetings are great practice for talks, conferences, retreats, a dissertation defense, etc. Students meet on the third Thursday of the month at lunchtime with two speakers, who each give 20-minute talks. If you would like to present your research to your fellow grad students, please email Matt Berberich ([berberichm@mail.nih.gov](mailto:berberichm@mail.nih.gov)) to schedule a date.

#### ▪ New Interest Groups:

There was a fair amount of interest from the GPP retreat survey for interest groups in immunology as well as genetics. If you would like to help organize one of these interest groups, please contact a co-chair at [GSCcochair@od.nih.gov](mailto:GSCcochair@od.nih.gov).

#### ▪ Biophysics and Structural Biology Group: **The Biophysics and Structural Biology**

**Graduate Student Interest Group** has been meeting bimonthly. The first meeting of the month focuses on learning a new laboratory technique, whereas the second meeting of the month is used

to discuss a paper that uses the technique. If you are interested in attending or have any questions, contact Matt Berberich ([berberichm@mail.nih.gov](mailto:berberichm@mail.nih.gov)).

▪ **SNIG:**

The **Systems Neuroscience Interest Group for Graduate Students** is a group of students interested in systems/ cognitive/ clinical neuroscience. The group meets once a month to discuss the latest topics of systems neuroscience and to listen to a talk from a member of the group. Please contact Kara Lindstrom ([lindstrk@mail.nih.gov](mailto:lindstrk@mail.nih.gov)) if you would like to join.

▪ **Campus Area Listservs:**

Please join your appropriate list at <http://gpp.nih.gov/Current/GraduateStudentCouncil/GSCListSrvs/>. The purpose of these lists is to foster communication among grad students and have a monthly lunch with grad students in your region of campus. There are also listservs for the other campuses.

Typically the monthly lunch, also known as the lunch triad, is held every second Thursday of the month at various locations across the campus. In January we're combining the lunch groups. Please join us in the Graduate Student Lounge (Bldg 10, Room 6S 235A) on January 7th at noon for a brown bag lunch. Bring your own lunch; there is a microwave in the lounge. This is a great opportunity to meet new graduate students and say hi to friends.

▪ **GSX Listserv:**

The Graduate Student Exchange (GSX) is a social listserv for grad students at NIH. Postings for roommates, items for sale, and social outings are common. It's a great way to connect to the group of grad students. To join the group, visit the GSC webpage and follow the link.

**Happy Birthday to:** Kate Szarama (Dec 1<sup>st</sup>), Brooke Baker (Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>), Dan Crooks (Dec 3<sup>rd</sup>), Lisa Higginbotham (Dec 8<sup>th</sup>), Candace Pfefferkorn (Dec 11<sup>th</sup>), Shantelle Lucas (Dec 12<sup>th</sup>), Kitman Tsang (Dec 14<sup>th</sup>), Ashley Owen (Dec 20<sup>th</sup>), Vanessa McMains (Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>), Khalisa Herman (Dec 25<sup>th</sup>), Matt McElmer (Dec 26<sup>th</sup>).

**Upcoming Birthdays:** Stephanie Guzik (Jan 11<sup>th</sup>), Nancy Van Prooyen (Jan 12<sup>th</sup>), Megan Cleland (Jan 15<sup>th</sup>), Jennifer Reed (Jan 16<sup>th</sup>), Beth Hayes (Jan 20<sup>th</sup>), Angelo Kolokithas (Jan 27<sup>th</sup>), Heather Pressler (Jan 29<sup>th</sup>), Kevin Shenderov (Jan 29<sup>th</sup>), Lydia Durant (Jan 30<sup>th</sup>).

Please **send your publications, awards, graduation, and birthday announcements** to [GSChronicles@od.nih.gov](mailto:GSChronicles@od.nih.gov) for recognition.

## Graduate Student Spotlight



**Phil Wang**

Our Graduate Student Spotlight this month is Phil Wang from the University of Maryland, College Park, Neuroscience and Cognitive Science program. He is originally from Vienna, Virginia – a quiet town in Northern VA that is just outside the beltway. It's changed a lot over the years, but it still has the appeal of having quiet suburban areas with very easy access to the busier side of Northern VA and the beltway. Phil went to the University of Virginia as an undergraduate with a major in biology. He did not do research while in college but decided after graduating from UVA to do a 2 year postbaccalaureate fellowship in Dr. Robert Wenthold's lab at the NIDCD/NIH. Phil says that this experience was really great in his perspective, and inspired him to pursue a career in science.

Phil is currently in his 6<sup>th</sup> year at the UMD program and is scheduled to defend in May 2009. He continues to work in the NIDCD Laboratory of Neurochemistry, in Dr. Robert Wenthold's section on Neurotransmitter Receptor Biology. His graduate work involves studying the molecular

mechanisms of neuronal development, with a particular focus on two projects: 1) the roles of Synaptic Adhesion-Like Molecules (SALMs) in neurite outgrowth and 2) studying NMDA receptor function in hippocampal neurons early in development.

His research resulted in an incredibly funny moment for Phil this year during the NIDCD retreat at Rocky Gap. A few minutes before the awards ceremony at the end of the retreat, Phil realized he had misplaced his jacket and went to search for it so he wouldn't miss the bus, which was leaving immediately afterwards to take everyone home. He went back to his room, got his jacket (luckily), and a few minutes later made it back to the conference room. When he got to the door, everybody was silent and just looking around everywhere. For a few moments, he stood there looking around the room like everyone else. His friend Ron, the staff scientist in his lab, was standing a few feet in front of him so Phil walked up next to him and asked what was going on. Ron's head turned towards Phil, as if in slow motion, gave him a surprised double-take, and exclaimed, "Phil!". Everybody in the room turned and looked at him, with his entire lab laughing because of the startled look on his face, and Ron pushed him forward towards the stage. It turns out that Phil had won a prize for best poster, and that they announced his name only moments before he returned to the room. He walked to the stage to receive the award and say thanks, and was pretty embarrassed at the time because he was afraid people thought he skipped the ceremony. But it was apparently clear to the audience what had happened and they thought it was really funny, so it was a nice memory.

Phil has been incredibly active in the GSC over the past few years. In 2006, Phil took on the task of GSC Social Committee Co-chair, though he considers this period a great group effort between Stephanie Guzik, Ashley Hardin, Abby Vogel, Tracy Jill Doty, Athena Klutz, and many others. "Those weekly happy hours were great, I'm really proud of what we did that year as a group," he recalls. In 2007, Phil became the GPP liaison to FelCom and in 2008 became the FelCom Social Committee Co-chair. He has also planned a number of events on the NIH campus for trainees: in 2004, 2007, and 2008, Phil was an integral member of the Graduate Student Research Symposium planning committees; and in 2008, he was a member of the planning committee for the First Annual OITE Career Symposium.

Despite his many GSC activities and abundance of lab work, Phil still makes time for a few hobbies. Most of his recent outside activities involve spending time with his girlfriend, Hazuki, and her 6-year-old daughter. Although most of his time is focused on preparing to defend in May, he also likes to throw the lacrosse ball around, ride his bike, go to the gym with Julien Debbache, attend NIH happy hours, and play an occasional video game on the Xbox360 when he has time. Phil had a golden retriever named Calvin – his parents made Phil get straight A's in the fifth grade to get him – who passed away in 2004 and is missed very much. Some of Phil's favorite movies include *Batman Begins*, *The Dark Knight*, *Old School*, *Wedding Crashers*, *300*, & *Gladiator*. He also enjoys reading science fiction novels.

Phil knows that professional networking is a challenge for many people and has advice for them. He personally likes to look at networking as a really fun opportunity to make new friends. "In a happy hour or other social-professional situation, don't be afraid to randomly go up to someone and just introduce yourself. I think you'll find that the vast majority of people out there would be happy to talk to you, and the subsequent professional connections will follow naturally from that first act of kindness. Even if you don't have any specific professional connection with someone when you first meet, you can never predict what coincidences happen in the future. It's a surprisingly small world when it comes to these connections - whether you have a shared acquaintance, or have a similar research interest, etc. At the very least, you may have made a new friend, which is always a great thing." If you've ever met Phil, you'll know that he networks well, and the people he meets are his instant friends. If you happen to see Phil at one of our GSC events, be sure to say hello and find out how truly kind and involved he is.

## **Tip of the Month:**

### ***Downtown Holiday Market***

Each year, local artisans and crafters sell their wares in front of the F Street entrance to the Smithsonian American Art Museum & National Portrait Gallery (between 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Streets NW). The market hosts a variety of international items and also features many performing groups and food options. If you're looking for a unique idea for holiday gifts or if you just want to get into a holiday spirit, the market is open now until December 23<sup>rd</sup> from 12-8pm daily. While you're down on the mall,

you may also want to consider ice skating at the National Gallery of Art's fountain rink. The tickets are for two-hour sessions and skate rentals are available for those of us who haven't ventured into ice skating since we were 10. There's also a rumor that the hot chocolate available in the pavilion is especially good.

Holiday Market website:

<http://www.downtownholidaymarket.com/>

Ice Skating information:

<http://www.nga.gov/qinfo/skating.htm>

## **GSC Meeting Overview: 12/08/08**

\*Shawn Mullen, representing GPP, announced the OITE Open House Holiday Party on Dec 12<sup>th</sup>. The Grad Student Roundtable discussion, planned for December, is postponed until early January.

\*GSC election results announced: Co-Chairs Kim Baxter and Kate Callahan, Secretary Tom Johnson, Treasurer Matt Berberich.

\*Students were requested to confirm that they are on the current GSC listserv.

\*Vote on Partnership Reps taking on recruitment and orientation events: Majority ruled in favor.

\*GSC retreat announced for Jan. 23<sup>rd</sup>, 12-5PM, Natcher Room A.

\*Vote on January meeting date (5<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup>): Majority ruled January 5<sup>th</sup>, 5PM.

\*Social Committee needs a replacement Chair.

\*Social Committee announced the FelCom/GSC Holiday Party on Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> and the GSC "Out with the Old/In with the New" Happy Hour at Blackfinn on Dec 16<sup>th</sup>.

\*FAES Lab Techniques Class: Students were pleased with the class; hopefully it will continue.

\*Pathways events were announced for Dec. 11<sup>th</sup> (faculty at undergraduate universities) and Jan. 15<sup>th</sup> (federal government jobs).

\*GS<sup>3</sup>: Next meeting (3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday in January) needs speakers.

\*Community Service: Packing boxes was successful; blood drive Dec 10th was announced. Relay for Life is planned for April.

\*Trainee Advisory Committee will solicit feedback on OITE website improvements.

\*Partnership Reps: International Individual, US Individual reps still needed; formal partnership rep positions are filled.

\*OITE Trainee Advisory Committee reps are being finalized.

\*Newsletter: Vania Cao and Becca Chodroff volunteered for Assistant Editor positions.

\*Website: Photos are requested to update website.

\*FELCOM Reps: Project Management seminar announced for February. SurveyMonkey should

not be used to collect personal information. NIH group on LinkedIn networking website announced.

\*Thesis Committee will meet with interested partnership and training directors to see how they can be involved.

\*Phil Wang arranged for a discounted grad student rate at the NIH campus R&W gym.

\*Julien Debbache arranged a Science Policy workshop series, to begin in 2009.

## **Graduate Student Entertainment**

With a former synchronized swimmer on the editorial staff of the *GSCChronicles*, it was inevitable that this video combining science with the sport would be distributed as entertainment. Students from UCSF choreographed this routine for their annual retreat. The video won Honorable Mention for the Cell Dance competition at this year's ASCB meeting in San Francisco, CA and in this editor's opinion, should have won first place in the Public Outreach category but probably wouldn't have been scored well by judges due to their illegal use of the bottom of the pool.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFuCE22agyM>

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GSC Spotlight

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