Mission Statement: The Alaska Biomedical Learning and Student Training (BLaST) program has an overarching aim to enhance capacity for undergraduate biomedical research training and efficacy for both engaging students from diverse, especially rural Alaskan, backgrounds and preparing students for biomedical research careers. With this respect, we would like to congratulate our graduating scholars and UREs!

Events/Announcements

Olivia Rhines
B.S., Chemistry: Biochemistry: Olivia, a BLaST Scholar, is moving to Las Vegas this summer to attend UNLV’s School of Dental Medicine (class of 2021). After graduation, she hopes to return to Alaska to practice.

Alexander Michael Shercliffe
magna cum laude, B.S., Biological Sciences: Physiology: Alexander was a Summer 2017 URE.

Brandon Putuuqti Kowalski
B.S., Biological Sciences: Physiology: Brandon, a BLaST Scholar, graduated Fall 2016.

Elizabeth Himschoot
cum laude, B.S., Biological Sciences: Physiology: Elizabeth, a BLaST Scholar, plans to expand her research experience within the One Health field to develop a more focused plan for attending graduate school. She is spending this fall in Washington D.C. conducting nutrition research at the National Zoo, an exciting opportunity to meet others interested in her area of education.

Jesse Klejka
B.S., Biological Sciences: Cell and Molecular Biology: University Honors Scholar: Jesse, a BLaST Scholar, plans to attend Victoria University in New Zealand, pursuing a Master’s study in Clinical Immunology to further explore research and clinical opportunities in the medical field, and as a stepping stone towards attending medical school.

Farimang Touray Jr.
B.S., Biological Sciences: Physiology: University Honors Thesis Scholar: Fairmang, a BLaST Undergraduate Research Experience Student for the academic year 2016-2017, is planning to attend either physical therapy school or entering into a Masters of Public Health program this upcoming academic year to continue his education.

Hannah Taylor Short
magna cum laude, B.S., Biological Sciences: Cell and Molecular Biology: University Honors Scholar: Fairmang, a BLaST URE, graduated December 2016 and will be attending medical school in August 2017 at the Georgetown University School of Medicine.

Gabriel Cartagena
summa cum laude, B.A., Psychology: University Honors Scholar: Gabriel, a BLaST Scholar, received the Joel Wiegert Award for Outstanding Senior Man, as well as the Outstanding Research in Psychological Science at SACNAS 2016, and Outstanding Psychology Student of 2017 at UAF in the Department of Psychology. He has been accepted to the University of Florida’s Clinical and Health Psychology Ph.D. program, as well as their joint Masters in Public Health program.

Vanessa Santana-Miranda
magna cum laude, B.S., Biological Sciences: Physiology: Honors Thesis Scholar: Graduating second-year BLaST Scholar Vanessa presented her research at the International Behavioral Neuroscience Society conference in Hiroshima, Japan, in June, 2017 (photo right). Vanessa will be going to veterinary school next year. She has been accepted to the UAF/Colorado State University collaborative program, Washington State University and University of Wisconsin-Madison.
Team Updates

We welcome our new additions to the BLaST Program for the upcoming academic year! We look forward to learning, sharing, and getting to know all of you in your new adventures in biomedical science!

**Fall 2017 – Spring 2018 Scholars**

- Jewel Blanchard
- Courtney Bunker
- Ana Carrasco
- Miyah Chinglik
- Melissa Clark
- Christina Edwin
- Diloola Erickson
- Mollie Fisher
- Daedre Gibbons
- Kendrick Hautala

**Fall 2017 – Spring 2018 Graduate Mentor Research Assistantships (GMRAs)**

- Tynan Becker
- Sheri Coker
- Aline Collin
- Casey Clark
- Andrew Cyr
- Carla Frare
- Scott Jerome
- Madison Kosma
- Don Larson
- Malabika Maulik
- Lauren Wild
- Kimi Yatsushiro

**Fall 2017 Undergraduate Research Experience (URE) Students**

- Rachel Alexander
- Louise Bishop
- Richard Chen
- Aaron Cook

- Jennie Humphrey
- Noah Khalsa
- Jimin “Josh” Kim
- KaCee Llewelyn
- Brianna Lu
- Tandi Marth
- Sarah Maupin
- Monica Mikes
- Ava Parrish

- Viktorija Podlutskaya
- Jonilee Polanco
- Savanna Ratky
- Kristian Rivera
- Raven Shaw
- Thorne Varier
- Mark A. Velasco
- Katrina Watson
- Hannah Wing

**Faculty Pilot Projects**

- Angela Bowers
- Abel Bult-Ito
- Robert Coker
- Kriya Dunlap
- Devin Brown
- Ginny Eckert
- Carie Green
- Jennifer Guerard
- Cristina Hansen
- Lisa Hoferkamp
- Thomas Kuhn
- Andres Lopez
- Joshua Lupinek
- Todd O’Hara
- Laura Oxtoby
- Jacques Philip
- Andrej Podlutsky
- Sherry Tamone

**Equipment Awards July 1, 2017**

- Srijan Aggarwal – UAS Sitka/Juneau
- Cristina Hansen – UAF Vet Med
- Claudia Ihl – UAF Northwest Campus
- Amanda Kelley – UAF
- Mary Beth Leigh – UAF
- Josh Lupinek – UAF
- Sonia Nagorski – UAF Juneau
- Linda Nicholas-Figueroa – Ilisagvik College
- Heidi Pearson – UAS Juneau
- Andrej Podlutsky - UAF
- Sherry Tamone – UAS Juneau
- Chris Whitehead - Sitka
- Cory Williams - UAF

**Friendly Reminder:** Please pay attention to your inbox! Surveys about your participation in BLaST come from Evalulogic, our outside evaluator, and the CEC with the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) at least three times a year!

**Equipment Awards July 1, 2017**

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- Mary Beth Leigh – UAF
- Josh Lupinek – UAF
- Sonia Nagorski – UAF Juneau
- Linda Nicholas-Figueroa – Ilisagvik College
- Heidi Pearson – UAS Juneau
- Andrej Podlutsky - UAF
- Sherry Tamone – UAS Juneau
- Chris Whitehead - Sitka
- Cory Williams - UAF

**In The News**

URE Student, and now Scholar, Raven Shaw designed this year’s 2017 UA-BRC program booklet, as well as other research materials.

**BLaST supported the 10th annual University of Alaska Biomedical Research Conference (UA-BRC)**

May 18-19, 2017

The BLaST-sponsored Biomedical Exploration Experience (BEE) boot camp was held May 8-19, 2017 at UAF as a two-week, two-credit course. This was designed for undergraduate students considering careers in medicine or science, and offered many firsthand opportunities to learn different techniques and experience environments found in the medical field. Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center (CAIHC), a local tribal clinic run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, was one of the main contributors of service. The class was taught by BLaST LRTT Natalia Podlutskaya. LRTTs are Laboratory Research Teaching Technicians.
By Larry Duffy – Professor of Chemistry and Biochemistry, RAHI faculty
Eight RAHI students in the Allied Health biochemistry course, “A Survey of Organic and Biochemistry” participated in developing a One Health approach curriculum model at UAF this past summer May 30 – July 13, 2017. One Health is a trans-disciplinary approach that is especially appropriate for rural Alaska where sustainability during this era of a rapidly changing climate is a major community health challenge. An integrated approach that focuses on the interactions between the environment, plants, animals and humans is key to maintaining healthy ecosystems and healthy communities. The goal of sustainability is to maintain a healthy planet, with healthy people, and the development of appropriate cultural and economic systems.

Students from Galena, Kipnuk, Fairbanks, Utqiagvik, Sitka and Anchorage connected the human, historical, and ecosystem dimensions in Holly McKinney’s anthropology research course with basic metabolism and biomedical science in their chemistry course. As the summer progressed, a variety of health topics were discussed in a holistic manner, guided by Vet Med student and RAHI alumni Chris Clement.

A draft course curriculum was developed and organized into three general categories: 1) environment and ecosystem health, 2) animal and human interactions, and 3) human health. Discussions around these different categories were designed to cross disciplinary boundaries in order to explicitly highlight the connections and emphasize the trans-disciplinary nature of the One Health approach.

In Alaska, where people live close to the land and depend upon natural resources for food, medicine, materials and energy, Alaskans are aware of the connections between the environment, animals and a healthy community. One Health supports the cultural values of Alaska and respects the wisdom of generations contained in their traditional ecological knowledge. The student engagement generated by a place-based One Health of RAHI Research course encourages us to try to deliver the course next spring in the general Allied Health chemistry courses.

Opportunities

Conferences

ANHR – Alaska Native Health Research 5th Annual Conference Oct. 16-18 at Captain Cook Hotel, Anchorage, AK
Youth and Elders Conference hosted by First Alaskans Institute– Oct. 16 – 18 at Dena’ina Center, Anchorage, AK
Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN) Annual Conference – Oct. 19 – 21 at Dena’ina Center, Anchorage, AK
SACNAS 2017 – Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics & Native Americans in Science Conference - Oct 19-21 in Salt Lake City, UT
ABRCMS 2017 – Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students - Nov 1-4 in Phoenix, AZ

BLaST Events

NEW FPP Call-Out Announcement opens August 14th!
Research Mixer co-hosted with URSA– Sept. 22 from 4:30 – 6:30 p.m. – Rm 501 IARC – UAF
NEW URE Applications for Spring 2019 opens October 23rd!

More highlights and information on our webpage: http://alaska.edu/blast/
BLaST is funded by the National Institute of Health (NIH)–Diversity Program Consortium (DPC) and part of the BUILD programs. There are ten BUILD sites, which enables us to connect with other nationally recognized biomedical researchers, undergraduates, graduates, and mentors. BLaST is unique as one of the BUILD programs in that we implement a tiered mentoring approach as well as a big focus on One Health! Picture above shows our rural connections. For more information: http://alaska.edu/blast/resources/

June Scientist of the Month 2017:
Dr. Elena “Lena” Vayndorf, a Postdoctoral Fellow at UAF focuses on nutrition and biogerontology with her research in neurodegenerative diseases and the relationship between diet and Alaskan blueberries. Congratulations Lena!

July, 2017: Faculty Mentor
Dr. Thomas Kuhn was recognized with all his contributions towards biomedical research and inspiring others – Congratulations Tom!

August, 2017: Undergraduate Researcher Raven Shaw (left, on far right), 2017-2018 Scholar and previous URE, develops & works with harmful algal bloom (HAB) research in Southeast Alaska. Congrats Raven!

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