

graduate alum notes

Dear Graduate Alumni

Recruiting top undergraduate science talent to graduate programs in the basic medical sciences has been a challenge for most universities around the country in the last several years. WSU is no exception. To improve our recruiting and admissions process at the School of Medicine, we have recently implemented a suite of web-based programs that are designed not only to enhance our ability to respond rapidly to prospective students' questions about programs, but to entice them to begin the formal application process online.



We've been aided in our effort by a new policy, implemented by the Graduate School and University Admissions, which permits departments to receive all original application documents directly from students. Programs extensively review the applications and make decisions on admission and rapidly inform applicants. Only then are documents forwarded to University Admissions for action. This arrangement has worked well over the past year or so, allowing students' submitted applications to be acted upon in a timely fashion.

Extending this policy, the School of Medicine Graduate Programs Office has engaged an established company, ApplyYourself, located in Fairfax, Va., whose mission is to provide cost-effective, Web-based solutions for the recruiting and admissions process to colleges and universities throughout the nation. Their services streamline and improve the efficiency of the graduate admissions process.

The School of Medicine currently utilizes two ApplyYourself programs that are tightly integrated. One is an online inquiry form on which students can quickly provide important biographical and academic information. At the same time, they may request additional information on one or more specific graduate programs. The Web-based program provides an immediate automated e-mail response customized for each student. The prospect's data is simultaneously forwarded to the appropriate School of Medicine graduate program officer. A number of additional features, including regular automated follow-up e-mail to each prospect, distribution of Open House announcements, WSU events, etc., are available. We presently respond to more than 100 inquiries per month on this system!

In the companion program, Apply Yourself has designed an exceptional Web application process, which we are about to publish to our Web site. The entire application process from start to finish, including the ability of the students' referees to submit letters of recommendation in a secure manner online and to pay the application fee by credit card, are all available. This system will allow us to notify the student of his or her admission status electronically, as well as provide electronic personnel forms and appointment letters to facilitate student enrollment.

With these changes, we look forward to significant improvement in our overall graduate recruitment and admissions efforts as we move into the new millennium.

Kenneth C. Palmer
Kenneth C. Palmer, PhD
 Assistant Dean for Graduate Programs

Graduate Alumni Profile: Michael Emmert-Buck, MD, PhD

In the mid 1990s, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) began work on the development of a new technique for laser capture microdissection or LCM. This complex project required several years of work by professionals from many different disciplines. Dr. Michael Emmert-Buck, a graduate of the MD/PhD program at the School of Medicine, was a key contributor to the LCM project and also learned that his educational experience had left him well-suited to working with several different fields at once.

After graduating in 1991, Dr. Emmert-Buck went on to complete his residency at the National Cancer Institute at the NIH and then began work on the LCM. "The method allows one to rapidly and precisely procure specific cells from a tissue section for a subsequent molecular analysis, using a laser to perform dissections," he explained.



Dr. Emmert-Buck worked at the NIH and helped develop and commercialize a new technique for laser capture microdissection.

Dr. Emmert-Buck began his multi-disciplinary studies at Wayne State University where his interests bridged the gap between research and medicine. "I knew from an early age that I was interested in integrating medicine and science," he explained. As an undergraduate student, he became involved in research in pharmacology, where he was exposed to a number of opportunities for future graduate work and to instructors that greatly influenced his career. He explained, "In so many ways, the clinical and scientific training that I received was excellent, and has served me well at the NIH.

The LCM started as a "good idea," but required the services of a team of professionals that included clinicians, molecular biologists, physicists, engineers, entrepreneurs and bio-informatics specialists.

"I've observed over the years that scientists and clinicians don't work as well together as, perhaps, they could." Yet at the NIH and throughout the development of the LCM, things were different. "One of the cool things about the NIH campus is the opportunity for multi-disciplinary work," Dr. Emmert-Buck said. "I enjoy this type of effort. Bringing together investigators and clinicians from different disciplines can be synergistic and exciting."

The technique is considered a routine research tool by many labs today, yet Dr. Emmert-Buck's group is currently working on new approaches that are much simpler and faster than standard LCM. "We

developed and commercialized LCM only a few years ago. It was a good step forward at the time. However, now it seems like ancient history."

According to Dr. Emmert-Buck, it is likely that LCM will be translated into a clinical tool in the future, and will be useful for patient diagnosis and prognosis. "To see this occur would be particularly satisfying to all of us involved in its development," he added.

"I pattern my group at the NIH after the lab of Dr. Bonnie Sloane, my PhD advisor at the School of Medicine. The experience in her lab as a graduate student was wonderful. It involved challenging science, excellent mentoring and a highly interactive team."

He also pointed out, "Dr. John Crissman's pathology lectures during the second year of medical school sparked my interest in pathology. This led me to Dr. Sloane's lab for PhD work and then to the NIH."



Michael and his wife Leslie with their two children.



Notes

GRADUATE ALUMNI NOTES

1988

Theresa Bacon-Baguley, PhD, is an associate professor at Grand Rapids Medical Education and Research Center at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids, Mich.

1991

William Karpus, PhD, is an associate professor of pathology and microbiology-immunology at North-western University in Chicago.

Stephen Wachtel, PhD, is the director of research development for Evanston Northwestern Healthcare Research Institute in Illinois.

Ruijin Yao, MD, PhD, is a clinician in physical medicine and rehabilitation in Rockville, Md.

1992

Paul Standley, PhD, is director of a physiology department in Phoenix, Ariz. He has a research interest in biophysical strain regulation of vascular smooth muscle proliferation and migration.

1993

John Xiaojiang Hu, PhD, is practicing forensic pathology in Phoenix, Ariz. He specialized in forensic pathology and is board certified in anatomic pathology and forensic pathology.

1995

Steven Silletti, PhD, recently joined the Moores Comprehensive Cancer Center of UCSD to continue research on cell migration, invasion and metastasis. He is an avid hiker and recently spent 25 weeks in the Sierra Nevada mountain range hiking the John Muir Trail.

1996

Stacey Shehin, PhD, has been working at Proctor and Gamble as a human safety scientist for the past three years.

Xiaohui Tan, PhD, is a resident in the internal medicine program at Weiss Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

1998

Louis Caragine, Jr., MD, PhD, completed his fellowship at UCSF in endovascular neurology in July 2002. He has been named director of vascular and endovascular neurosurgery at Geisinger Medical Center in Danville, Pa., and relocated with his wife, Robyn, and daughters Crystal and Cassandra.

WE NEED YOUR PHOTOS...

WE WOULD BE HAPPY TO INCLUDE PHOTOS TO RUN WITH YOUR CLASS NOTE

(SORRY, WE CAN NOT RETURN THEM)

Graduate Alum Investigates Cancer Inhibitor, Wins Training Award

Cancer researchers everywhere are searching for essential cancer blockers, and a Wayne State University graduate student, and alum Hector Biliran, has found one that seems promising. Already, Biliran has three publications about the mechanisms of maspin, a novel protease inhibitor that has tumor suppressive potential in breast and prostate cancers. Although its molecular mechanisms are not well understood, maspin seems to block cell motility, thereby inhibiting tumor invasion. Biliran suspects this ability has something to do with the interactions

among maspin, the surface structure of cancer cells and urokinase-type plasminogen activator (uPA). He has shown that maspin expression leads to a significantly reduced level of cell surface-bound uPA and that the inhibitory effects of maspin involve many complex interactions. This important work earned him a predoctoral trainee position, or Scholar in Training Award, from the American Association for Cancer Research. He presented his findings at the AACR's annual meeting in 2002. "It is intriguing to hypothesize that novel maspin-based therapeutic strategies may prove useful to specifically target human malignan-

cies that are associated with markedly elevated uPA," Biliran said. Biliran left the University of the Philippines in 1997 and began course work at Wayne State University in experimental and molecular pathology, serving as a graduate teaching and research assistant. He recently finished his doctoral degree under the supervision of Dr. Shijie Sheng, and moved on to work as a postdoctoral fellow with Dr. Erkki Ruoslahti at the Burnham Research Institute in La Jolla, Calif.

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My news for class notes: _____

Or email news to alumni@med.wayne.edu and type Graduate Alumni Class Notes in subject line.

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