

**2000-2001  
GRADUATE PROGRAM IN BASIC MEDICAL SCIENCES**

**Administration -- Basic Medical Sciences**

The administrative structure of the graduate program functioned for the 2000-2001 academic year under the leadership of Dr. Joseph N. Benoit, Professor in the Department of Physiology, the Graduate Executive Committee, and the Senior Associate Dean, Dr. Samuel Strada. Dr. Benoit assumed his rotation as Director on July 1, 2000.

The Graduate Program expresses appreciation to Dr. Benoit for his service to the program over the last year and wishes him success as he assumes his new position as Dean of the Graduate School at the University of North Dakota September 1, 2001. Dr. Mary I. Townsley, Professor in the Department of Physiology, was elected by BMS Graduate Faculty to serve as Director of the Program for a three-year term. She assumed the position August 1.

**Recruitment Activities**

Several Basic Medical Science Graduate Faculty members from the Department of Physiology participated in the fifth annual statewide Graduate and Professional School Alabama Circuit in October. Numerous Alabama colleges and universities joined together to host this event, allowing representatives the opportunity to discuss graduate and professional school programs with undergraduate students from across the state. Though student participation is not outstanding, the event provides a chance for our faculty to establish faculty contacts at the various Alabama institutions for future graduate program recruitment opportunities.

The Basic Medical Sciences Ph.D. Graduate Program hosted its seventh Graduate Student Open House on Thursday, January 25, 2001, from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00p.m. Letters requesting names and addresses for potential students were sent to 114 regional institutions. Twenty-three schools responded, sending lists. Approximately 1,950 invitations were mailed and/or distributed to students, faculty, and advisors at various 4-year colleges and universities across the southeastern region (Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas). Additionally, ads were placed in USA's "Vanguard," and the student newspapers at the University of Alabama, Spring Hill College, and University of Southern Mississippi.

On-line registration was offered for the first time this year. A total of sixteen reservations were received for this event, which was held in the College of Medicine Conference Room. Twelve of the sixteen students (from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi) attended. Dr. Benoit welcomed visiting students and made a few general introductory remarks about the university and graduate program and core facilities prior

to faculty from the Basic Medical Science departments making individual presentations, highlighting their respective department. Graduate faculty and students joined guests for lunch and departmental poster sessions and discussions. Following lunch, visiting students toured departmental labs, in which various lab experiments, highlighting current research projects were conducted by graduate faculty and students. The afternoon's activities concluded with a Distinguished Scientist Seminar presented by Dr. Stephen Projan and drawings for door prizes.

Surveys received from participants were positive, and four of the twenty-three completed U.S. applications received for the 2001-2002 class were from students who registered for and/or attended the Open House. Offers were made to three of the four students. Of the seven U.S. students accepted and matriculating into the Graduate Program for Fall, 2001, one attended the forum. Plans are being considered to modify the Open House for 2002.

Other recruitment methods considered and/or utilized include the establishment of a website highlighting the Graduate Program, participation in Summer Research and Honors Programs, and contacts with faculty at smaller institutions. In addition to the Graduate Office's placing an ad in Science, the Department of Microbiology and Immunology also placed an ad in the April issue of the Vanguard. Attempts were also made to increase awareness of the program through the campus Office of Public Relations.

Several graduate program faculty, students, and staff participated in the USARC 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Forum April 16-19, highlighting research being conducted within the Basic Medical Science areas.

### **Admission Statistics for the 2001-2002 Academic Year**

<u>Applications:</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>International</u>	<u>Total</u>
Inquiries (including 78 Cancer Biology/17 MD/PHD)	204	295	498
Completed applications received	22	113	135
Applicants interviewed/accepted	11	3	14
Applicants matriculating	9	0	9

Average UG GPA of Students Matriculating 2001-2002: 3.45 (N = 9)

Average GRE of Students Matriculating 2001-2002: 1668 (N = 8)

### **New Programs/Policies/Requirements**

Sylvia Friedl, Manager of the Office of Research Compliance and Assurance, presented information on NIH's policy OD-00-039 requiring all funded principal investigators and their support staff to complete education relating to animal, human, and basic research in addition to research training conducted with grant, contract, or cooperative agreement support from any agency or office of the Public Health Service. An Executive Committee motion was passed, requiring all graduate students to comply with the policy by completing training, via seminars, workshops, and on-line instruction. Graduate students completed the NIH on-line training program. Many students also participated in a one day workshop held in April, receiving training in approximately five of the nine core areas that research personnel holding grants must receive training in.

On October 21, 2001, a basic medical sciences graduate faculty retreat was held at Brookley. Agenda items pertaining to curriculum, student performance, governance, and recruitment matters of the graduate program were discussed and prioritized for implementation. Recommendations were made and forwarded to the Senior Associate Dean for review, and then brought to the Executive Committee for final review and subsequent execution into policy and procedure.

**GOVERNANCE** - proposed that the BMS Graduate Program be administered by a rotating Director, elected by a majority vote of the Graduate Faculty, to serve a three-year term. The Director may serve an additional term, if reelected, but the same individual cannot serve more than two consecutive terms. Selection of the new Director will take place 2.5 years into the term of the current Director.

The election for the Director will be conducted by an Elections Committee composed of a member from each Basic Science Department. Members will be appointed by the current Director, with the concurrence of the Chair in the Committee member's Department. The committee will elect a chair to preside over its meetings. It will be the Committee's task to solicit candidates, disseminate policy statements from candidates to the Graduate Faculty, and conduct a secret ballot election to determine the Director. If none of the candidates receives greater than 50% of the votes from the Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Faculty, a runoff election will be held between the two candidates receiving the most votes, and the one receiving the majority of votes in a runoff election will become the Director.

**CURRICULUM** - proposed and have begun work on developing a core curriculum for incoming students' first year of course work. The curriculum committee advocates students' entering the program without selecting specific departments and allowing them to complete three lab rotations with any member of the Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Faculty, regardless of their advanced program affiliation. Entering students would also complete a two-semester core course designed to prepare them for study in any of the advanced programs and provide sufficient broad training to prepare them for the wide range of careers available in biomedical sciences.

It is anticipated that the core curriculum course(s) will be interdisciplinary and interdepartmental. The target date for implementing a core curriculum is Fall, 2002.

SPEC - proposed revisions of policies concerning the dissertation defense and decisions regarding graduate student dismissal and probation.

The committee recommended that students be required to complete a rigorous, closed defense of dissertation, administered by the candidate's dissertation committee and deemed satisfactory by a majority vote of said committee before the scheduling of the candidate's public dissertation seminar. Submission of the written dissertation should be completed at least two weeks prior to the closed defense of dissertation.

In regard to dismissals and probationary status for BMS graduate students, a recommendation was made that students be dismissed for (1) receiving six semester hours of D or F, (2) accumulating any combination of 9 semester hours of C or less, or (3) failing to raise a GPA above a 3.0 within two consecutive semesters of being placed on probation. Additionally, students may be dismissed or placed on probation for two unsuccessful attempts to pass qualifying exams, unsatisfactory progress at two consecutive dissertation committee meetings, unethical scientific conduct or failing to comply with guidelines in the timely completion of requirements for earning the Ph.D. degree. When deemed appropriate, SPEC will meet with the student before making a recommendation to the Director of the Graduate Program on the action and period of time and conditions required for removal of the probation status.

An appeals process was also recommended, allowing students an opportunity to appeal an automatic academic dismissal or SPEC recommendation for dismissal or probation. The process allows for the student and an advocate of the student, e.g. a Department Chair or other designated member of the COM faculty, to attend and have voice at the meeting of SPEC. Following the hearing, SPEC will render a decision on the appeal in a closed session with a majority vote of the SPEC members in attendance at the appeal. Recommendation to accept an appeal would then be forwarded to the Director of the Graduate Program and Senior Associate Dean of the COM for review. The Senior Associate Dean would be responsible for appealing further action to the Dean of the Graduate School. Additionally, it was noted that a student dissatisfied with an appeals decision rendered by SPEC can initiate an administrative appeals procedure as stipulated in the Graduate Bulletin, with the Senior Associate Dean serving as the final arbitrator for the COM. The Dean of the Graduate School has the authority to override previous decisions regarding the student's dismissal.

RECRUITMENT/FUNDING - proposed that a full-time recruiter be hired for the program. Due to proration and a hiring freeze, this cannot be accomplished in the near future. However, in addition to holding Open House, it was recommended that departments become more involved with making contacts with faculty at other possible 'feeder' institutions and that other 'feeder' programs such as ones promoting summer research be explored.

Also, the application and evaluation form for the graduate program were placed on-line on the College of Medicine Basic Medical Sciences Graduate Program web site, which is linked to the University web-site.

Annual stipends for all BMS Graduate Students remain at \$14,688.

Graduate faculty and students were encouraged to utilize the new Confocal Microscope in Dr. Hester's core laboratory.

Two new courses for the Cancer Biology Interdepartmental Program were offered Fall, 2000. Several students enrolled in the seminar and biostatistics courses.

BMS students were given new BBL email accounts through the Biomedical Library, enabling the Graduate Office to simplify communication between the students and graduate office administration personnel.

### **BMSSO-Basic Medical Sciences Student Organization**

The Basic Medical Sciences Student Organization sponsored another BMSSO T-shirt design and sale and hosted several social events including a fall cookout for BMS faculty and students at Lavetta Park on Old Shell Road and a Christmas luncheon. Members also participated in several community activities, including the American Heart Association Walk in September, American Cancer Society Relay-for-Life in April, and collecting donations for the Mobile Aids Support Services in December.

### **Graduates**

Three students officially graduated upon completing all requirements for the Ph.D. degree during September 2000-August, 2001. They are:

#### **Allison Williams Dobson**

DISSERTATION TITLE: "Functional Characterization of T-type Calcium Channels in Pancreatic Beta-Cells"  
 MAJOR PROFESSOR: Glenn Wilson, Ph.D.  
 DEPARTMENT: Cell Biology and Neuroscience  
 CURRENT POSITION: Post Doctoral Fellow; Wake Forest University

**Sean Wayne Dobson**

DISSERTATION TITLE: "Characterization of the Protein Phosphatases of Plasmodium falciparum"  
MAJOR PROFESSOR: Sailen Barik, Ph.D.  
DEPARTMENT: Biochemistry and Molecular Biology  
CURRENT POSITION: Medical Student; Wake Forest University

**Rebecca A. Repel Fillmore**

DISSERTATION TITLE: "Factors Involved in the Regulation Production of Smooth Muscle Gamma Actin mRNA"  
MAJOR PROFESSOR: Warren E. Zimmer, Ph.D.  
DEPARTMENT: Cell Biology and Neuroscience  
CURRENT POSITION: Post Doctoral Fellow; Department of Microbiology, University of South Alabama

To date, 125 students have received their Ph.D. degree in Basic Medical Sciences. The breakdown of graduates by department is as follows:

Biochemistry and Molecular Biology	25
Microbiology and Immunology	32
Pharmacology	27
Physiology	19
Structural/Cellular Biology-Cell Biology and Neuroscience	22

## OFFICE OF GRADUATE MEDICAL EDUCATION

The Office of Graduate Medical Education is responsible for oversight of GME activities, policies, and procedures throughout the USA Hospitals and Clinics. During the 2000-2001 academic year, USA sponsored ten (10) residency programs, one (1) combined residency program, and five (5) medical subspecialty programs, for a total of over 200 residents and fellows.

All USA programs are currently fully accredited. Four programs underwent routine site visits by their Residency Review Committee (RRC) of the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME). One of these has received continuing accreditation, while the other three are awaiting their results.

The Graduate Medical Education Committee conducted an internal review (required by the ACGME half-way through the accreditation period) on seven (7) programs. Internal review committees are composed of a chair, a faculty member from another specialty, a hospital administrator, a resident, and the coordinator for GME. This process allows for a program to address, prior to the time of the RRC Site Visit, any deficiencies noted by the internal review. It also forces self-review by the program.

The ad hoc subcommittee for the development of a Core Curriculum is actively pursuing a viable method of assessing the residents' education in general competencies rather than having this accomplished by each program.

The Housestaff Policy and Procedure Manual and the Resident's Contract of Appointment were updated to comply with the new ACGME Institutional Requirements. The Housestaff Manual has been placed in .pdf format on the Residency Programs website for easy retrieval and update.

Sections of the Institutional Review Document were presented, when time allowed, for approval by the GME Committee in preparation for the Institutional Review by ACGME. This review is slated to occur in late 2001.