Dear Colleagues and Friends,

Almost through the 2014-2015 academic year and the progress of our students is strong! We have a great group of first year students and our second year students are getting ready to graduate and jump feet first into the world of genetics. Both classes are excelling in their course work and rotations.

We are in the middle of our admissions process for the Class of 2017, and once again there are many highly qualified applicants making our decision challenging.

Highlights of the past year include:

• Our training program has expanded! This academic year we accepted our first class of 6 students! With the national need for genetic counselors increasing, highly competitive applicants applying for admission, institutional support as well as support from our donors to the scholarship fund, this expansion finally became a reality.

• The students now inhabit a new, larger and updated office with individual and community work spaces. This has been a much better fit for their work flow.

• All members of the Class of 2014 were employed within 4 weeks of graduation. At the time of print, three of our graduates of 2015 are employed, too! No surprise, of course.

• Our students performed excellently on the national certification exam in 2014 with UW average scores continuing to be well above the national average.

Congrats to the Class of 2014 who all passed their exam: Erin Borchardt, Rosy Ebel, Katie (Gallagher) Douglas, Meghan Kraus, and Tara Maga.

• Our 2nd annual Genetic Counselor Open House was a success. This Open House provides an opportunity for prospective applicants to learn more about a career as a genetic counselor. We had a panel of genetic counselors, genetic counseling students and a family panel that provided valuable insight into the profession. Thank you to all who participated in this conference. We will have another conference this summer, so be sure to send interested students our way.

• UW-Madison hosted the 3rd annual Midwest Clinical Genetics Conference in the fall of 2014. Many of the speakers were former students and/or fellows in our clinical programs or associates of our Program including, Dr. Elizabeth Petty, Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at UW SMPH, Dr. Marc Williams, current Director of the Genomic Medicine Institute at Geisinger Health System as well as a graduate of the UW-Madison Clinical Genetics Fellowship, genetic counselor Ashley Khul (2013), as well as Drs. Greg Rice, Jessica Scott-Schwoerer, Phil Giampietro and David Wargowski. Topics ranged from Fragile X Syndrome, Smith-Lemli-Optiz Syndrome, VLCADD, sexuality and sexual function in the (continued on page 2)
Welcome to the Class of 2016

Hallee Adamsheck – Recipient of the Joan Burns Founder's Scholarship

I am coming to Madison from my hometown of Minnetonka, Minnesota, after graduating this past spring of 2014 from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, MN with a BA in Biology and a minor in Spanish. Growing up, I knew about genetic counseling due to experiences with hereditary cancer within my family, but it wasn’t until I shadowed several GCs after my first year of college that I began to seriously consider pursuing genetic counseling as a career. I gained advocacy experience during college by working in adult foster care homes for individuals with mental illness and at a domestic violence shelter as a volunteer women’s advocate. I also worked as a genetics tutor and an academic assistant for the biology department at my school. I participated in a bioinformatics research project that utilized next generation sequencing technology to analyze the role of abnormal B cell specific receptors in the development of Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia and the associated mutations contributing to cancer progression. I enjoyed serving as president of both Colleges Against Cancer and my sorority, two organizations of which I was very passionate to be a part. In my free time I love to read, run, and spend time at my cabin in northern MN. I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to continue my education at such a wonderful genetic counseling program, and I appreciate the program’s focus on interdisciplinary care, emphasizing both the scientific context of disease and the emotional needs of the patient. I am honored to be receiving the Joan Burns Founder’s Scholarship this fall. I share Ms. Burns’ belief that genetic counseling is integral to the family experience of processing the complex information that accompanies a genetic diagnosis, and like Ms. Burns, my personal experiences have driven my passion towards helping families navigate through these experiences. I am beyond excited to begin this next chapter and make my dream of becoming a genetic counselor a reality!

Sara Clowes – Recipient of the Dr. Raymond Kessel Scholarship in Outreach

I grew up in Seattle, Washington and earned a Bachelor of Science in Cell, Molecular and Developmental Biology in 2012 from the University of Washington. I discovered my passion for genetics through both coursework and undergraduate research projects while attaining my degree. While volunteering with a community organization that provided medical care and prevention education to local homeless youth, I forged my interest in working directly with patients in a clinical setting. That experience dovetailed with my passion for educating and counseling domestic violence survivors with a local non-profit and the culmination of these experiences led to an active interest in pursuing a career in Genetic Counseling. I am honored to have been awarded the Dr. Raymond Kessel Scholarship in Outreach.
Kessel Scholarship in Outreach as I feel it acknowledges my ongoing commitment to take an active role in educating and supporting those in my community. I am grateful for the recognition this award provides and am inspired by Dr. Kessel’s contributions to his field and community—I hope to promote his accomplishments by having a greater impact in local communities after gaining the knowledge and tools that the UW Madison Genetic Counselor Training Program can provide. I couldn’t be happier to be among the Class of 2016 and am looking forward to every aspect of the next two years!

Laura Dattilo – Recipient of the Genetic Counselor Training Program Alumni Scholarship for Leadership

As a UW-Madison alumna, graduating in 2012 with bachelor degrees in Genetics and Spanish, I am thrilled to be returning to this incredible University to join the Genetic Counselor Training Program. I first learned of the genetic counseling profession when I was in high school and am grateful to have attended a college where I had the resources to pursue it. The UW community is blessed with an abundance of resources and professionals who are willing to share them, something of which I definitely took advantage. The spirit to step up within the medical and educational community is part of what makes the University of Wisconsin and their alumni excellent leaders in the community. I am honored to be a recipient for the Genetic Counselor Training Program Alumni Scholarship for Leadership as I believe that leadership has already played an important role in my life. With experiences like being a director of UW-Madison Colleges Against Cancer, a vice president of the Wisconsin Alpha Chapter of Pi Beta Phi, a lead counselor of a local teen crisis counseling organization, and most recently, a committee head of a local walk for the Neurofibromatosis Network, I look forward to continuing to use my resources to become a leader as a genetic counselor. In addition to being a proud Badger fan, I spent the past two years working at a domestic abuse shelter, a local non-profit working with teenagers in the Madison court system, and at a local boutique hotel. In my free time I enjoy watching football (go Bears!), trying new foods and recipes, and practicing yoga. I am also a marathon runner, attempting to run a marathon in every state with my third state in sight fall 2014. While finishing that 26.2 is sweet, nothing is quite as exciting as the journey I am about to take with these five other lovely ladies. Here is to a great two years and U-RAH-RAH Wisconsin!

Jordan Elliott – Recipient of the Dr. Richard Pauli Scholarship in Clinical Research

I was born and raised in Prairie Grove, Illinois, a northwest suburb of Chicago. In 2012 I received my bachelors in Biology with a minor in Chemistry from Elmhurst College. I am honored to be receiving the Dr. Richard M. Pauli Scholarship in Clinical Research from UW-Madison this fall. I, like Dr. Pauli, believe that in the field of genetic counseling it is crucial to continue research and to broaden our scope of knowledge in order to positively impact patient care. During my undergraduate career, I did research concerning turtles living in anoxic conditions in the Midwest and the effects of these conditions on their shell mineral content. Since graduating I have been working at Prevention Genetics, a genetic testing company based out of Marshfield, Wisconsin as a laboratory technician. I believe the skills I learned in these laboratory roles will be help me effectively perform research in the realm of genetic counseling and carry out Dr. Pauli’s mission. I first became interested in the field of genetic counseling when I shadowed a clinical geneticist and genetic counselor at a pediatric genetics clinic in a western suburb of Chicago during my sophomore year of college. Since then, I have volunteered as a sexual assault and shelter advocate at The Family Center, a domestic violence shelter based out of Wisconsin Rapids. I also worked coaching elementary school girls in an after school program called Girls on the Run. Some of my hobbies include running, biking, hiking, camping, and traveling as much as possible. I love exploring new places, have been known to play a mean game of ping pong, and love a good old fashioned bingo night. I am absolutely thrilled to be heading to Madison this fall, and am very excited to take this next step towards my dream career. On, Wisconsin!

Jennifer Rietzler – Recipient of the Dr. Renata Laxova Scholarship in Patient Advocacy

I come to Madison, Wisconsin from the not so distant land of, well, Madison, Wisconsin. (Technically, I grew up in Oregon, Wisconsin, but I currently reside in Madison so I digress...) I earned a B.A. in Cytogenetics along with a minor in Spanish from Saint Mary’s University in Winona, Minnesota in the year of 2012. I originally learned about the career of a genetic counselor in my biotechnology class in high school, but it was not until shadowing counselors here at the Waisman Center and later attending case conferences that my interest was genuinely piqued. Right after completing my undergraduate degree, I hopped on a plane to Seville, Spain where I interned with a medical geneticist and a neurologist at a pediatric hospital, observing and participating in a wide array of cases with patients and their families. Ultimately, it was through
this experience that I came to fully appreciate the “not so standard issues” which comprise much of what a genetic counselor attempts to understand and relay to patients within their day-to-day experiences. Since returning home from Spain, I have continued to make connections working with patients as a Bilingual Reproductive Health Assistant at Planned Parenthood. Listening to the stories of patients who come to the clinic is always humbling. More notably, it has offered me tremendous insight into understanding how crucial the language we use with patients can be especially when handling difficult counseling situations on subjects such as STIs, risks of sexual activity for early teens, or options for continuing or terminating a pregnancy. I have come to recognize that being an advocate for the patient allows for the creation of a partnership that might not have been otherwise, and with this in mind, I am honored to be receiving the Dr. Renata Laxova Scholarship in Patient Advocacy to begin my studies in the Genetic Counseling Program here at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. So much of what has brought me to choosing this atypical career stems from my passion for patient advocacy, and it was Dr. Renata Laxova who emphasized the importance of hearing out the “stories” and lived experiences of patients and their families as part of successful counseling. Other gateways that have influenced my pursuance of studies for genetic counseling include my role as a Student Health Advocate on campus during my time at Saint Mary’s, my volunteer experiences at Special Olympics of Wisconsin, the Free to Breathe Lung Cancer Partnership in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as completion of an undergraduate research thesis on the Induced Nitric Oxide Synthase Gene. On a more personal note, I have slim to zero knowledge about my paternal family history due to the fact that I had a donor versus a dad, I am the middle child of three sisters and have a horse named Kip. If someone were to hand me a s’more, I wouldn’t say no. And of course, I am simply ecstatic to be a part of the Class of 2016 here at UW-Madison. On Wisconsin!

Sara Zoran – Recipient of the Genetic Counselor Training Program Alumni Scholarship for Leadership

I grew up in a suburb of Green Bay, WI and graduated from UW-Madison with a BS in Genetics and a MS in Endocrinology & Reproductive Physiology. While a career in Genetic Counseling was an interest as an undergraduate, I chose a different path. I began my career track by performing basic research on the process of fertilization. One project I was involved in flew on the Space Shuttle, another led to a patent for assessing sperm function. Pursuing an interest to combine science and education, I transitioned to Course Coordinator with the Biology 151 & 152 program. This was followed by significant shift to “stay at home mom” for my two (now teenage) boys. My first step back into the workforce was at a public high school, working with youth who were At Risk, struggling readers, or who had learning disabilities. Much has changed since I first became aware of Genetic Counseling; the human genome has been sequenced, fields of study which were nonexistent when I was an undergraduate student are now on the frontier of medicine. Much has stayed the same; my love of learning, my curiosity with, and awe of, all things science, my passion for educating people about intimidating subjects in a non-intimidating way, my compassion for people who are facing challenging life situations. And so, after looking at my life both backward and forward, I decided I wasn’t done learning, dreaming, or challenging myself. I am thrilled to be joining the UW Genetic Counselor Training Program Class of 2016 and am honored and grateful for the recognition and financial support of the Alumni Scholarship for Leadership. The contributions of UW Madison Genetic Counselor Alumni to the field and community are vast and influential on many levels. I am motivated and committed to use my life experiences in the pursuit of similar endeavors.

Welcome

We would like to welcome three great genetic counselors to the UW genetics team: April Hall, Kristen Gunderson, and Christie Turcott. We look forward to their involvement with student training and clinical supervision.

Farewell and Thank You!

Truly a farewell and a thank you to our colleagues, Jody Haun (1985) and Heidi Luebke (1988), upon their retirement. Both have been a valued and important mentor to countless students in our program. Enjoy your retirements!

The Class of 2015 has just completed the comp exam and passed with flying colors, is putting the finishing touches on their research projects and is soon to write up their last counseling outline as a student. Each brings a unique perspective to the program and truly embodies the typical attributes of the UW genetic counseling student, namely strong critical thinking skills, drive, and passion. They have been a pleasure to work with these past two years. Best wishes to the Class of 2015!
ALUMNI UPDATES

We love to hear updates from UW-Madison alumni. Please consider sharing professional and personal updates as well as any great alumni photos by emailing Laura Birkeland at lebirkeland@pediatrics.wisc.edu.

Donna Mihm (1980) is living in Vancouver, BC, as is evident by the “eh” on her birthday cake seen here. She has been retired from the Provincial Medical Genetics Programme for 10 years, with her last position in the clinic as Program Director for the Medical Genetics Clinic at Women’s and Children’s Hospital in Vancouver. Since retiring, she stays busy traveling, gardening and keeping in touch with family and friends. As she told us earlier, Program grads are always welcome to look her up when they are in Vancouver. Thanks Donna!

Stefanie Dugan (1999) took a new job at the BloodCenter of Wisconsin after almost 15 years in a clinical role at the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. She is excited for this change as she will be developing a new position that involves not only direct patient care to those with inherited bleeding disorders, but also supporting the genetic testing services offered by the BloodCenter’s Diagnostic Labs as a national esoteric reference lab, offering test utilization management and clinical consultation to ordering providers, and serving on the diagnostic labs’ medical and scientific leadership team. Congrats Stefanie on this great opportunity!

Quinn Stein (2000) has been named associated professor and director of the Genetic Counseling program being developed at Augustana College. The program is in collaboration with Sanford Imagenetics, “an initiative designed to integrate genomic medicine into primary care for adults.” Quinn has worked in South Dakota with Sanford Health for the last 15 years as a genetic counselor in addition to being a clinical professor and a member of the faculty for the Sanford School of Medicine at the University of South Dakota. Congratulations to Quinn on this great accomplishment. He joins the ranks of five other UW-Madison grads who serve as Program Directors. In addition to all of this, Quinn presented a poster at AEC this fall, “High Frequency of Genetic Services for Patients with Inborn Errors proud of Metabolism.”

Beth Wood Denne (2000) has had a busy year being promoted to a Manager of genetic counseling services at Counsyl, continuing her work on the ABGC Board of Directors and starting her term as President-Elect for the Board of Directors for ABGC in January 2015. She also is “beyond proud of my classmate, Quinn Stein, and all of his MANY accomplishments!!” We are proud of you, Beth!

CeeCee Fairley (2001) is now working at the Cord Blood Registry. When asked for a quick summary of her new job, she explained that her new role is still being defined. This is such an exciting time to be a genetic counselor where we have the power to help create our own jobs. Best wishes to CeeCee and this new transition!

Amy White (2002) recently started a lab-based remote position with the Biochemical Genetics Laboratory at Mayo Clinic after more than 12 years as a clinical genetic counselor with the Biochemical Genetics team at the Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. She will be a wealth of knowledge to her new team, but we are sure she will be missed by CHW!

Lindsay Zetzsche (2004) recently presented at Mayo Clinic’s Utilization Management Conference, a series of talks dedicated to value-based medicine and test utilization. Lindsey co-presented on the evolving role of the genetic counselor in the laboratory and the successful test utilization management system to provide cost savings to hospitals and increased value to overall patient care. It is great to have her and other UW alumni in lab-based positions helping to pave the future of genomic medicine.

Meg Bradbury (2005) presented a poster at AEC in New Orleans this fall: “Multigene Panel Testing vs. Whole Exome Sequencing: What is the Best Testing Approach for Patients with Epilepsy and Neurodevelopmental Disorders?”

Taryn (McDowell) Rosenthal (2006) states that she and her GC husband have no major updates, but she has done pretty well traveling in Northern Italy, camping in the Sequoias and is now settling into the home-owners life with less travel and more home renovations. She continues to work at Kaiser Permanente in California providing clinical care in areas of prenatal, cardiogenetics and Huntington disease. As this is going to press there was a happy Facebook announcement about an upcoming addition to their family. Can you guess?

Alex (Meyers) Yonker (2006) started her training for a master’s degree in Bioethics &Society at King’s College in London. If her Facebook posts are any judge, she is also making sure to see the sights while living abroad!

Laura Birkeland (2007) welcomed a bouncing baby boy, Anders, into the world on December 2nd, 2014. This is the 8 lbs. 9 oz. reason for the typical Winter SNPits newsletter being a tardy Spring version.

Laura (Simons) Pape (2007) welcomed her third baby, Hannah, on June 7th, 2014. Congratulations!
Kate Murphy-Orland (2008) hosted a genetics and dietician luncheon to promote inter-professional relationships...or perhaps just an excuse for clinical supervisors to get together and have fun.

From left to right: Emi Higuchi, MS, CGC, Heidi Leubke (1988), Lisa Obernolte, MS, RD, Sonja Henry, MS, CGC (2002), Ashley (Klein) Kuhl, MS, CGC (2013), Kara Reynolds, MS, CGC (2000), Kate Murphy Orland, MS, CGC (2008), Nikki Drillias RD, CD.

Angela (Bewell) Thompson (2010) and her husband welcomed baby boy Sam into the world this past fall. When we last saw her here at UW as part of her work with GenDx, she appeared to be balancing her life as a new mom and a working lady quite well.

Jennifer (Hesemann) Kemppainen (2011) recently transitioned from a lab-based position in the Biochemical Lab at Mayo Medical Labs, to a clinical role within their Medical Genetics department providing direct care to patients as well as supervising all genetic counselors with a clinical role at Mayo Clinic. Adding to this career change, Jennifer also was recently married and now has a last name that is a bit more challenging to spell, but worth it we’re sure! Congrats Jennifer on these two big events!

Ashley (Klein) Kuhl (2013) presented at the Upper Midwest Genetics Conference in September, “Clinical Testing for Maple Syrup Urine Disease and Propionic Acidemia in the Plain Clothes Community.” This conference, which was hosted here in Madison, is a forum for geneticists and genetic counselors to discuss current research and clinical practice issues. Other presentations were given by UW faculty including Dr. Philip Giampietro, Dr. Jessica Scott Schwoerer, and Dr. Elizabeth Petty. On a personal note, Ashley and her husband Nate just had an accepted offer on a house!

Recent Alumni Publications

Many UW graduates are involved with research on some level and we are proud to list a few recent publications. As always, be certain to send publications updates our way so they can be included in our next newsletter.


Alumni Gatherings at the 2014 NSGC 33rd Annual Education Conference

NOLA was hot and ready for the UW-Madison Genetic Counselors! We gathered at a local pub for a night of conversations and catch-up; it was great to see such a large turnout. See you next fall in Pittsburgh, PA.

FLASHBACK

With the first official class graduating in 1978, UW-Madison is one of the most experienced genetic counselor training programs in the United States. Enjoy these flashback photos going back 35 years ago!


Class 1990: Anna Leininger, Florence (Tina) Marini, Cecelia Bellcross, Cheryl Cytrynbaum, Melissa Muroff.

Class 1995: Peggy Modaff, Andrea Paras, Francesca Holland-Morris, Jennifer (Schmidt) Monroe.


Class 2000: Kara Reynolds, Allison Spitale, Nancy Palmer, Beth Wood-Denne, Quinn Stein.

Class 2005: Meg Bradbury, Jason Flanagan, Sara Zondag, Amy Rettler, Regan Veith.

Class 2010: Angela (Thompson) Bewell, Ellen Dwyer, Megan Nelson, Craig Adamski, Liga Bivina.
Stay in touch!

We would love to hear from you. Please stay in touch via:

**Facebook:** UW Genetic Counselor Training Program Alumni

**Website:** www.med.wisc.edu/gc

**Email:** reiser@pediatrics.wisc.edu or lebirkeland@pediatrics.wisc.edu

**Mail:** Waisman Center, 1500 Highland Ave, Madison, WI 53705

**Phone:** 608-262-9722

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Make a Gift

Your gift to the Genetic Counseling Masters Program Award Fund will help us fulfill our mission of training competent and compassionate genetic counselors who will be lifelong learners and leaders in the field.

This fund was created to support the genetic counseling master's program. It will provide tuition assistance that will allow students to choose the University of Wisconsin-Madison for their graduate training in genetic counseling.

Genetic counselors help individuals and families sort through critical health issues. In a rapidly expanding field, they play an increasing role in research and public health. The University of Wisconsin-Madison Genetic Counseling Master’s Program is committed to preparing genetic counselors who will help families and help shape the future of genomic medicine.

Gifts to the Genetic Counseling Masters Program Award Fund are administered through the University of Wisconsin Foundation, the official fundraising and gift-receiving organization for the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

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