

# SCIENCE & MEDICINE GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOLARS

A Newsletter for students, alumni, and friends of SciMed GRS



## GREETINGS FROM THE PROGRAM

The SciMed GRS Program at the University of Wisconsin-Madison was established in 2008 and serves to enhance the experience of underrepresented students receiving graduate degrees in biological disciplines. SciMed GRS is a unique program offering professional development, community resources, and funding opportunities for underrepresented minority students. The program currently supports over 140 students in 38 graduate programs spanning four schools and colleges on campus. The program is delighted by the recent surge in graduations, now with a vast network of over 140 alumni working in academia, industry, and related disciplinary fields. In this newsletter, we feature both current students and alumnus to showcase the breadth of experience and success of scholars in the program. We hope you enjoy reading about the continued growth and success of the SciMed GRS Program.

- ABBEY THOMPSON, SCIMED GRS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR  
 - DR. SARA PATTERSON, SCIMED GRS DIRECTOR

## A LOOK AT THIS ISSUE:

- SCIMED GRS BY THE NUMBERS - 2
- NEW STUDENT WELCOME - 3
- STUDENT AND ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT - 4
- EVENT HIGHLIGHTS AND COMMUNITY - 6



# SCIMED GRS BY THE NUMBERS

**143** Alumni (97 PhD, 46 MS)

**140** Current Fellows

**38** UW graduate programs affiliated

**10** NSF GRFP Recipients

**2** Ford Foundation Recipients

## SCIMED GRS GRADUATE PROGRAMS

- Ag & Applied Economics
- Agroecology
- Agronomy
- Animal Science
- Bacteriology
- Biological Systems Engineering
- Biomedical Data Science
- Biophysics
- Cancer Biology
- Cellular & Molecular Biology
- Cellular & Molecular Pathology
- Clinical Investigation
- Comparative Biomedical Sciences
- Dairy Science
- Endocrinology & Reprod. Physiology
- Entomology
- Epidemiology
- Food Science
- Forest Ecology
- Genetics
- Horticulture
- Integrated Program in Biochemistry
- Life Sciences Communications
- Medical Genetics
- Medical Physics
- Microbiology Doctoral Training Program
- Molecular & Cellular Pharmacology
- Molecular & Env. Toxicology
- Neuroscience Training Program
- Nutritional Sciences
- Pharmaceutical Sciences
- Physiology
- Plant Breeding & Plant Genetics
- Plant Pathology
- Population Health
- Social & Admin. Science in Pharmacy
- Soil Science
- Wildlife Ecology

## SCIMED GRS FACULTY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Elaine Alarid      | Oncology                                  |
| Lyric Batholomay   | Pathobiological Sciences                  |
| Ian Bird           | Obstetrics and Gynecology                 |
| Thomas Browne      | Assistant Dean CALS Undergraduate Program |
| Lara Collier       | Pharmacy                                  |
| Richard Eisenstein | Nutritional Sciences                      |
| Zsuzsanna Fabry    | Pathology and Laboratory Medicine         |
| Jeremy Foltz       | Agriculture and Applied Economics         |
| Katrina Forest     | Bacteriology                              |
| Brian Fox          | Biochemistry                              |
| Douglass Henderson | Engineering Physics and Medical Physics   |
| James Keck         | Biomolecular Chemistry                    |
| Charles Lauhon     | Pharmaceutical Sciences                   |
| Sara Patterson     | SciMed GRS Director and Horticulture      |
| Troy Runge         | Biological Systems Engineering            |
| Ahna Skop          | Genetics                                  |
| Jade Wang          | Bacteriology                              |



# WELCOME 2018 COHORT!



## OUR CURRENT STUDENTS SHARE HOW SCIMED GRS IMPACTS THEM...



**JOSHUA  
CRUZ**  
NEUROSCIENCE &  
PUBLIC POLICY  
2014 COHORT

"Graduate school can often times be very isolating. Especially for people who have moved far away from their homes and cultures. SciMed's professional development and financial support has given me the opportunity to help create a diverse and welcoming community that has expanded both my academic and social networks at UW-Madison."

"During graduate school, time is limited. Every decision you make is going to have an impact on your trajectory towards success. Choosing to be a student in SciMed was one of the best decisions I have made so far. The coordinators are genuine and want to see you succeed. My fellow students are experiencing similar adversities, so they always have a listening ear when you need to vent. To me, SciMed is both a community and a family that reminds you that you are not alone during your limited stay at UW Madison and they will be there when you need to make the toughest decisions."



**TROY M.  
KING JR.**  
MICROBIOLOGY  
2017 COHORT



**CRISTINA  
ZAMBRANA-  
ECHEVARRIA**  
PLANT PATHOLOGY  
2016 COHORT

"SciMed has been an essential part of my graduate career. It provides opportunities for professional development, leadership, scientific exchange, and outreach. More importantly, it is a community that I've been able to rely on for support and guidance from the program's coordinators to its students. I am incredibly fortunate to be part of this community."

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

## LORRAINE RODRIGUEZ-BONILLA



with as well as converse about my personal experiences.

### Tell us about your research.

I work on understanding the genetic diversity of wild populations of cranberries across their native range for breeding and conservation efforts. Since cranberries are one of the few native crops to North America, there is an interest to study and conserve wild populations. My research took me to many unique and hidden locations across Minnesota and Wisconsin where I collected plants for my research. Once we extract the DNA and run markers to screen these plants, we are able to recommend certain areas as locations to be protected by the US Forest Service due to their unique genetic profile. Also, we screen and collect plants with traits of interest to be incorporated into our breeding program.

### How did you get into science?

I've always had a strong relationship with the natural world, especially growing up in a family of farmers, but I was never interested in science as a career. I wanted to be a lawyer. In high school things changed for me, I had a bunch of friends taking this class that was all about doing research experiments and that piqued my interest in science. Joining them in their activities was always a fun and interesting time and when the time came to apply for college I decided to follow a career in science. Eventually I focused on agricultural genetics for food production.

Still to this date, I love all aspects of policy and decision making, but now with a science focus.

### What has been the value of serving as a peer mentor?

It allowed me to give back to the community that has contributed a lot to my graduate school experience. At different stages we connect with people that help us define our goals or just find the best coffee shop to study at. I had those people in my life and I wanted to be able to help others as well.

"IT'S SO VALUABLE TO HAVE PEOPLE WHO SHARE THE SAME INTERESTS AS I DO. IT'S NOT COMMON TO HAVE PEOPLE WHO I CAN HAVE ENGAGING SCIENTIFIC DISCOURSE WITH AS WELL AS CONVERSE ABOUT MY PERSONAL EXPERIENCES"

**Graduate Program:** Plant Breeding & Plant Genetics  
**SciMed GRS:** 2014 Cohort  
**Advisor:** Dr. Juan Zalapa

### What is your favorite part about being part of the SciMed Community?

Through SciMed GRS, I developed strong connections with fellow graduate students as well as with Abbey and Sara. Together, they have continuously provided support, which was exactly what I needed to surmount challenges during my PhD experience. I am thankful for SciMed GRS and all that I experienced being part of this community.

### Do you feel you get both an academic and personal value from SciMed GRS?

I received both from SciMed GRS, but the personal value has been the most important piece. It is so valuable to have people who share the same interests as I do. Its not common to have people who I can have engaging, scientific discourse

### What are your plans for after graduation?

I am looking for opportunities for post-doctoral research positions in the USDA where I can pursue my interests in research and science policy.



Lorraine doing fieldwork in the forest collecting wild cranberries as part of her research.

### Tell us a little about yourself?

I currently work as the Associate Director of Chemistry for Henry Ford Health System, which is my first "real" job! Prior to this I spent two years in Seattle, Washington as a postdoctoral Clinical Chemistry Fellow at the University of Washington Medical Center. I love graphic novels and science fiction podcasts. I am not a good cook, but I make a GREAT craft cocktail. I really like living in Detroit and if you haven't been I recommend you visit.

### Can you describe your research in a few sentences?

As a clinical laboratory director, my main focus is on service and operations: meaning that I take on the responsibility of ensuring that the laboratory aids and improves patient care in a compliant and efficient manner. In addition to that, I engage in both clinical and academic research projects that are fairly broad and span the subjects of laboratory operations, assay development, and health disparities.

### How did SciMed GRS prepare you for your current position?

SciMed GRS helped me in many ways. The two that come most strongly to mind are: 1) Exposing me to examples of nontraditional career paths for basic

science PhD's. 2) Providing support for my growth as a professional (i.e. helping me draft my CV, looking over my cover letters and application materials, connecting me with other like minded and more senior professionals).

### What are some of the biggest challenges (or achievements) you faced in your new career?

Managing difficult professional relationships has been by far the most challenging thing I have faced in the last few years. There is no step by step guide on how to do this, but when you find yourself in this situation, I suggest finding a friend or mentor that you can trust and go to for advice.

### What advice do you have for new graduates?

I have two pieces of advice: 1) Network your butt off! Nearly every position and opportunity I have had, including my fellowship and current job, came about because I knew someone who knew someone that was willing to give me an informal recommendation. 2) Take the time and the space that you need to find your path.

"TAKE THE TIME AND SPACE THAT YOU NEED TO FIND YOUR PATH"

Some of us are lucky enough to know exactly what we want to do and exactly how to get there, but others feel confused and overwhelmed (I certainly did). If you are struggling with this, I suggest thinking through the things you want to do professionally and personally by asking yourself basic questions. For example, do you like grant writing? publishing? teaching? Do you enjoy working traditional hours or do you need flexibility? Do you want to travel often or not? If you know what you want (and don't want) for your career and what kind of life you want to build for yourself, then it will be easier to recognize which opportunities are right for you and which ones are not.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:

## GABRIELLE WINSTON-MCPHERSON, PHD



**Graduate Program:**  
Pharmaceutical Sciences  
**SciMed GRS:** 2011 Cohort  
**Current Employer:** Henry Ford Health System

### What prepared you to land your current position and what would you recommend current SciMed GRS students do to pursue that route?

I trained specifically for the position that I am in now, so if you are interested in clinical chemistry then doing a fellowship in the field is the fastest route. To prepare for fellowship I reached out to people in the field and asked for informational interviews, read journals, etc.

### What is next for you?

Currently, I am still settling in to my new role here at Henry Ford Hospital, so in the immediate future I am trying to learn this new system, finishing up a few publications left over from fellowship, starting to build my internal network, and focusing on making more healthy and sustainable work-life choices.



Gabrielle at work at the Henry Ford Hospital

# COMMUNITY & EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

## SCIMED POSTER SESSION

SciMed students showcase their research during the SciMed Poster session each year.



## SCIMED GRS & SROP MIXER

The SciMed Outreach Committee and Summer Research Opportunities hosted a mixer for SciMed graduate students and SROP students. The event included food, lots of great conversation, and games.

## SCIMED SPEAKS

SciMed Speaks is a presentation platform for SciMed students to create short, engaging storytelling experiences for general audiences on scientific topics of interest.

**BRYAN LE**  
How Vanilla Conquered the World



**ALEXANDRA TORRES LAW**  
Pursuing Parenthood and a PhD



**ESTEBAN QUINONES**  
We've Come A Long Way Together | A Review of Global Poverty Trends



## 2017 WINTER GATHERING



SciMed graduate students, friends and families joined together over food, holiday treats, hot chocolate, and crafts during the annual winter gathering to celebrate the end of the fall semester and the holiday season. This year the craft was building your own snow globe. Warm hot chocolate and conversation was enjoyed throughout the evening!



## INVITED SPEAKER HIGHLIGHT: DR. MONICA WHITE

### BLACK FARMERS, FOOD JUSTICE AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF DETROIT

Dr. Monica White is a professor of Environmental Justice at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She spoke to the SciMed GRS community in November 2017. Her research investigates communities of color and grassroots organizations engaged in the development of sustainable, community food systems as a strategy to respond to issues of hunger and food inaccessibility.



# UPCOMING 2018-19 CALENDAR

## CONGRATULATIONS 2018 GRADUATES!



SciMed GRS Graduation Recognition Event 2018 in Allen Centennial Gardens.

## UPDATES FROM OUR ALUMNI...

**JOSE RODRIGUEZ MOLINA, PHD** SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY SPECIALIST  
THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC

**CHANTELL EVANS, PHD** HHMI HANNA GRAY FELLOW  
UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

**JAIME WILLBUR, PHD** ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

**MORE  
EXCITING EVENTS  
TO COME!**

**SEPTEMBER 12**  
SciMed Kickoff Meeting  
Union South Recreation Room  
5:30pm

**OCTOBER 16**  
SciMed Speaks Event  
4:30pm

**NOVEMBER 7**  
SciMed Poster Session  
Wisconsin Institute for Discovery  
4:00pm

**DECEMBER 6**  
SciMed End of Year Gathering  
University Club  
4:30pm



**DR. SARA PATTERSON**  
SciMed GRS Director  
spatters@wisc.edu



**ABBEY THOMPSON**  
SciMed GRS Associate Director  
abbey.thompson@wisc.edu



**MICHELLE PARMENTER**  
SciMed GRS Program Assistant  
parmenter@wisc.edu



**LORRAINE RODRIGUEZ BONILLA**  
SciMed GRS Graduate Student Assistant  
rodriguezbon@wisc.edu



## CONTACT US

2525 Microbial Sciences  
1550 Linden Drive  
Madison, WI 53706  
scimedgrs.wisc.edu



**SciMed Graduate Research Scholars**  
**2525 Microbial Sciences**  
**1550 Linden Drive**  
**Madison, WI 53706**  
**Phone: 608-890-2308**

Nonprofit Org. US  
 Postage Paid  
 Madison, WI  
 Permit No. 658

### Support SciMed Graduate Research Scholars

I/We wish to join other students/alumni/industry/friends in enhancing service opportunities in the SciMed GRS Program by contributing as indicated below. Please make checks payable to: UW Foundation-Science & Medicine Graduate Research Scholars. Contributions can also be made online through the SciMed GRS website: <http://scimedgrs.wisc.edu>

- Enclosed in my/our contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ I choose to specifically designate my gift for the following:
  - The greatest need of the program
  - Student support (travel to conferences, etc.)
  - Programmatic events including invited speakers
- I wish to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each year for \_\_\_\_ years beginning \_\_\_\_\_ (year). Please remind me to pay the annual amount I have pledged in \_\_\_\_\_ month(s)
- Please charge my gift of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ to my \_\_\_\_ Master Card \_\_\_\_ Visa \_\_\_\_ American Express
  - Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Cardholder's Name: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Cardholder's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- My company will match this gift; company form is enclosed
  - Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Return Form to: UW Foundation, US Bank Lockbox 78807-0807



SciMed Graduate Research  
 Scholars  
 2525 Microbial Sciences  
 1550 Linden Drive  
 Madison, WI 53706  
 Phone: 608-890-2308

Website: [scimedgrs.wisc.edu](http://scimedgrs.wisc.edu)

We welcome any questions, comments, and updates!

Please direct correspondence to:  
 Abbey Thompson  
 SciMed GRS Associate Director

Email: [abbey.thompson@wisc.edu](mailto:abbey.thompson@wisc.edu)