

MCB GSA

FALL 2017 NEWSLETTER

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A Letter from the President

Jessica Kelliher

Dear MCBees,

The Fall 2017 semester was a buzzing one for the MCB GSA! Our first annual Research Symposium was held mid-August, coinciding with the arrival on campus of the first-year MCB graduate students. With 5 talks and over 50 posters presented, the Symposium provided an opportunity for current students to hear about their colleagues' work and gave first-year students a more in-depth look into potential thesis labs. In addition to our regular (and regularly successful) monthly happy hours, we held a fall potluck and a holiday party, bringing together scores of students from all corners of MCB. On the community outreach front, we have continued our DIY Days each month at the Orpheum Children's Museum and hosted two stimulating BioCafé events at the Champaign Public Library.

Excitingly, we also initiated a variety of new programs to benefit graduate students and community members alike. Science on Tap, a monthly community outreach event held at Riggs Beer Company in Urbana, provides a platform for graduate students to present their research to the public. The event has drawn in dozens of community members and fellow graduate students keen to learn, local brew in hand, about the fascinating science going on in MCB. In November, we held the first meeting of a new journal club in which invited faculty members pick literature and facilitate discussion by MCBees. Additionally, the GSA has begun working with the School of MCB to host a career development seminar series. Through this partnership, we hope to provide valuable career development opportunities for trainees at any stage in their career. We are also in the process of establishing new, regular science outreach

We are excited to present our first MCB GSA newsletter! Have ideas for what you would like to see in our next issue, or interested in contributing? Fill out this form to let us know (<https://goo.gl/forms/Fp3atOyTYCA9ftAm1>), or send suggestions to abdulla3@illinois.edu. In order to make sure you stay updated throughout the semester, make sure to subscribe to the [MCB GSA E-mail list](#).

events in local schools, so keep an eye out for more outreach opportunities coming soon!

We sincerely thank those of you who participated and donated last semester. We hope it is evident that the GSA Board is working hard to bring more programming to the MCBees and to better publicize our activities on campus and in the community. The GSA is here to benefit MCB graduate students, but our value extends beyond the bounds of the University, into libraries, classrooms, and more. Our continued success depends on your involvement, so join the hive: volunteer, participate, donate (we still have MCBee mugs for sale!), or gives us ideas to improve your GSA.

All the best,
Jess and the GSA Board



MCBee Outreach: Spreading the Buzz of Science to the Champaign-Urbana Community

Mara Livezey

Just over two years ago, the MCB Graduate Student Association (MCB GSA, MCBees) was founded by its inaugural board. As a part of its founding, the position of Outreach Chair was created, and with it, a focused effort to increase public science literacy in the Champaign-Urbana community through outreach. The inspiration for the Outreach Committee came from the recognition that as scientists, we can do much more to communicate the importance of our science (in an understandable way) to the communities that support us. Since December 2015, the MCBees have participated in 24 outreach events, most of which were organized in-part or in-full by the MCBees, and many have been collaborations with other groups in the area.

The outreach efforts that are currently being spearheaded by Mara Livezey, the chair of the Outreach Committee, have two main aims. The first aim is to increase the understanding and appreciation of science in adults in the community. The second is to focus our efforts on underrepresented minorities in science, to help them identify as scientists and increase their retention in STEM fields.

Our adult-focused outreach has come in the form of two different seminar series. The first, *BioCafe*, was inspired by TED talks and is done in collaboration with Champaign Public Library. *BioCafe* is a seminar series given by faculty in the school of MCB, either about the research they do, or about a scientific subject that is topical and of importance to them. Thus far in the seminar series, we have learned about: genetically modified organisms, the human microbiome's impact on health and disease, the physiological effect of compounds related to those found in cannabis, and science-denial and climate change. There has been an overwhelmingly positive reaction to these seminars, with great participation from the Champaign-Urbana community. We have two more seminars planned this spring: April 9th and May 15th so keep a look-out for those! The second seminar series, *Science on Tap*, is organized by Jessica Kelliher, GSA President and Academic Chair, and hosted at Riggs Beer Company. This series is given by graduate students at UIUC about their research and occurs the third Sunday of every month. With the first two seminars completed, "we are thrilled with the success of *Science on Tap* and with the number of community members we have drawn to these events. The presentations have been informative, accessible, and engaging, and the audience has asked insightful questions that led to very lively discussions" said President Jessica Kelliher. We are very pleased by the turnout for both events and are working to increase the participation of community members through increased visibility and cooperation with local news sources.

The outreach efforts focused on young people and children come in a variety of recurring events. For children ages 4+, MCBees participate in the Orpheum Children's

Science Museum's *DIY Weekend Wizards* program. On the second Saturday of each month, MCBees plan and prepare hands-on science activities for the visitors of the museum. Our most popular events have included looking at slides under a microscope, invisible ink, and measuring combustion with candles. We also participate twice yearly in *Girls Do Science*, where female graduate students talk with elementary-school-aged girls about what they do in lab while working through a scientific activity. Additionally, the MCBees have partnered with I-STEM, UIUC's STEM education initiative, for a series of events including DNA days, and most recently, a multi-disciplinary summer camp. These events have focused on exposing underrepresented minority students from Urbana High School to various aspects of biology and how to pursue higher education and careers in STEM fields. Jeremiah Heredia, a 4th year student in the department of biochemistry and frequent volunteer, said "I volunteer because it's fun hanging out with other MCBees outside of school. But more importantly, I was inspired to enter science through similar programs. I know how powerful these programs could be to students and it just feels right to give back." Lastly, the Outreach Committee is always looking to expand our efforts in the community. Our current motivation is to expand our reach into the public schools of Champaign-Urbana. We are in the process of starting a new partnership with Jefferson Middle School, so we can get into classrooms to encourage young students to stay curious about, and consider careers in science.

Over the past two years, the MCBees have built a robust program of outreach with the aim of increasing public science literacy in our community. We are thankful for the hard work of all our volunteers, and welcome any suggestions for additional outreach activities.

For more information, to suggest an additional outreach idea, or to volunteer for our next outreach event, please email mara.livezey@gmail.com.



Upcoming Events

January

1/16 **First Day of Spring Semester**
 1/21 **Science on Tap!**
 1/24 **Journal Club**
 1/26 **January Happy Hour**

February

2/10 **DIY Weekend Wizards**
 2/23 **February Happy Hour**

March

3/2-3/3 **Recruitment: Weekend 1**
 3/10 **DIY Weekend Wizards**
 3/16-3/17 **Recruitment: Weekend 2**
 3/30 **March Happy Hour**

April

4/14 **DIY Weekend Wizards**
 4/9 **BioCafé**
 4/27 **April Happy Hour**

May

5/12 **DIY Weekend Wizards**
 5/25 **BioCafé**
 5/26 **May Happy Hour**

For more updates, subscribe to our [mailing list](#) and follow us on social media!



Website: (<https://publish.illinois.edu/mcbgrad-gsa/>)



Facebook (MCB.GSA)



Twitter (@MCBGSA)

GSA SWAG FUNDRAISER

SUPPORT MCB GSA

**MUGS:
\$10**

Contact Joe Seimetz at
seimetz1@illinois.edu to make a
 purchase



WE ARE EXCITED TO WELCOME THE
 NEWEST MEMBER OF THE GSA BOARD:

**OUTREACH ASSISTANT: MAX
 BAYMILLER**

CONGRATS, AND WELCOME TO THE
 TEAM!

SAVE THE DATE:

The recruitment weekends this year are
March 2nd/3rd and **March 16th/17th.**

Recruitment for the next class of MCB
 graduate students is right around the corner.
 As always, Shawna appreciates all the help
 she can get so mark your calendars!

The MCB Graduate Student Association presents

Rapid Fire!

Saturday, March 17, 2018

3-5 PM

B102 CLSL

as part of the MCB second recruitment weekend

Deadline for registration:

5 PM Thursday, March 1

[Register Here!](#)

The MCB GSA is hosting our third annual *Rapid Fire!* flash-talk competition on **Saturday, March 17, 2018 from 3:00-5:00 PM** as part of the MCB second recruitment weekend. We invite all MCB-affiliated graduate students to present their research to prospective MCB graduate students, your fellow MCB graduate students, and faculty from all MCB departments! The top presenters will also be awarded a

TRAVEL GRANT AWARD!

1st place: \$500

2nd place: \$300

3rd place: \$200

Instructions for *Rapid Fire!*:

1. Present your research and its impact in an engaging way for a **general audience**: you should be able to explain your research to a **non-scientist!**

2. Your talk can be up to **3 minutes** long.

3. You will have two slides:

Slide #1: We will make each competitor a standard **formatted slide** with your name, your department, your lab, and the title of your talk.

Slide #2: You may **prepare one (ONLY ONE!) additional PowerPoint slide**. The slide may only include still images. We will not accept slides with animation, sound, or video files. The slide must be prepared by the submitter. You may bring additional props if this will assist in your presentation.

4. Come up with a catchy title!

5. Depending on the number of entries, we may need to limit the number of graduate students to one per lab group.

Remember, please

[Register for the competition by 5 PM Thursday, March 1.](#)

Instructions to presenters will be sent out after the registration deadline.

If you have any questions, please contact the GSA's Academic Chair, Jess ([jkellih2@illinois.edu](mailto:jkelih2@illinois.edu))!

About the MCB GSA Board

Are you curious about how the GSA board functions, or what each position actually entails? The current GSA board was elected this past August and will be in term until the next election, which will take place during the summer of 2018. If you are curious about any (or all!) of the positions, here is a quick rundown from each of the current position holders. If you have any questions, feel free to contact any of us at the provided e-mail addresses.

President: Jessica Kelliher

Being President of the MCB GSA is a uniquely rewarding experience. As President, I have been working to fulfill the GSA's mission by ensuring (1) that each GSA Board member has the resources and support they need to execute their roles, and (2) that GSA programming augments the graduate school experience for all MCB students. Other miscellaneous duties include, but are not limited to, planning Board meetings and assembling meeting agendas, contacting individuals and departments for donations, providing oversight about communications sent by the GSA, and speaking on behalf of the GSA at events such as recruitment. As President, I am also in frequent contact with Shawna Smith, who provides invaluable advice and resources for the GSA. Serving as GSA President has benefited me because of the leadership skills I have developed. (jkelliher2@illinois.edu)

Academic Chair: Jessica Kelliher

I am very passionate about my position as Academic Chair because I get to promote the awesome science we do as MCB graduate students, as well as help fellow MCBees develop professionally. As the Academic Chair, I coordinate events that showcase graduate students' research both intra- and extramurally. These events currently include Science on Tap, Rapid Fire!, and the GSA Research Symposium. I also organize the GSA Journal Club and, in conjunction with the School of MCB, a career development seminar series. This position has benefited me greatly; planning a variety of events while coordinating with contacts within and outside of the University has allowed me to build my own academic and professional skills in the process. (jkelliher2@illinois.edu)

First-Year Liaison: Katie Frye

As the first-year liaison, I am involved with all things related to the first-year students. First, I help plan the MCB GSA related recruitment events in early spring. Then, once the new class of students is accepted, I am on their Facebook page answering questions and getting them acquainted to UIUC and CU before their arrival. In August, I help plan and run the MCB GSA Research Symposium while assisting with organizing orientation events for the

incoming students. Throughout the fall, I help make sure the first-year students have the support they need to choose their rotations, choose a lab, and enter fully into the program. The work that is done in this position not only is valuable to the GSA and the MCB program as a whole, but also allows for the development of important skills such as leadership, learning to work as a team and as a team leader, delegation, how to engage others, problem solving, and communication. (kafrye2@illinois.edu)

Outreach Chair: Mara Livezey

As Outreach Chair, I am responsible for initiating, organizing, and participating in multiple science-education-related activities in the Champaign-Urbana community. I maintain our current outreach programs including: monthly DIY Saturdays at the Orpheum Children's Science Museum, BioCafe seminars at Champaign Public Library, and collaborations with I-STEM. Additionally, I am working to increase our impact on the community through new initiatives such as volunteering at local public schools, with a focus on underrepresented minorities in STEM fields. Personally, being outreach chair has inspired my career plans of working long-term in public science education at a university, museum, or non-profit. This position is great experience for any future career in science, from academia to science policy, as you will learn to juggle multiple projects, manage groups of people, and network to make new contacts. I currently spend most of my time as Outreach Chair communicating with my contacts in the community, planning the details of outreach events and activities, and working one-on-one with the adults and children that come to our events.

(livezey2@illinois.edu)

Communications Chair: Sabrina Abdulla

As communications chair, my job is to spread the word about upcoming GSA events to both the members of the GSA, as well as to members of the Champaign-Urbana community. This involves keeping our website and social media accounts up to date, as well as finding other opportunities to advertise within the CU community. In addition, I put together the semester newsletter. In figuring out how to best reach out to different groups of people, delegate tasks, and organize our digital presence, this position has allowed me to build on my communication, leadership and organizational skills. (abdulla3@illinois.edu)

Secretary: Stefanie Eben

As the Secretary of the GSA, I am responsible for keeping records at our monthly board meetings, and I help other board members whenever they need help. This position is a great experience to learn how to work together as a team, improve communication skills, and help organize academic

as well as non-academic events for graduate students and the community. Being Secretary has been awesome thus far. Working together with grad students from different departments, and trying to organize various GSA events has been very rewarding. (seben2@illinois.edu)

Treasurer: Sisi He

As treasurer of GSA, I manage our general and outreach funds as well as oversee organizational expenses. In addition, I write SORF funding applications and work with the fundraising chair to generate revenue for our academic, social and outreach activities. As a board member, I also serve the GSA in broad advisory capacity to further our goal to serve MCB graduate students. (sisihe2@illinois.edu)

Social Chair: Anshika Gupta

As the MCB GSA social chair I am in charge of organizing all social events for the MCBees. This includes our monthly happy hour as well as events such as holiday parties, potlucks, picnics, and more! These social events are a great way to get to know your fellow MCBees from all four departments. (anshika2@illinois.edu)

Fundraising Chair: Joe Seimetz

My responsibility as Fundraising Chair is to bring in outside money to the organization which goes to supporting all of the activities and events held by the GSA. The person in this position should be comfortable soliciting donations and sponsorships from companies, professors, and other individuals and organizing fundraising events. In addition, the Fundraising Chair is in charge of procuring MCB GSA "swag" to both promote and raise additional funds for the GSA. This position is an opportunity to learn new professional and organizational skills, that are not normally experienced by graduate students, which will be useful in a wide variety of future endeavors. (seimetz1@illinois.edu)

Photographer: Ananya Sen

As the GSA photographer, my job is to attend social, outreach, and academic events to take photos of the MCBees in action. This position has been a fun, easy opportunity for me to volunteer my time to the GSA while participating in events! (asen4@illinois.edu)

