Rosenfeld wins Career Educator Award

Gary Rosenfeld, Ph.D.

Gary Rosenfeld, Ph.D., Professor of Integrative Biology and Pharmacology and Associate Dean for Educational Programs, has received the 2017 Southern Group on Educational Affairs (SGEA) Career Educator Award. The Career Educator Award is the highest honor given by the SGEA and recognizes an active SGEA participant of ongoing educational leadership with a sustained and compelling record of educational scholarship with strong professionalism values. The SGEA represents the largest region the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Group on Educational Affairs (GEA).

Chair, IBP
Dr. John Hancock

Vice Chair, IBP
Dr. Agnes Schonbrunn

Director of Management Operations
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Dean’s Teaching Excellence Awards

Congratulations to this year’s winners of the Dean’s Teaching Excellence Awards!

Alex Gorfe Abebe, PhD
Shane Cunha, PhD
Carmen Dessauer, PhD
Guangwei Du, PhD

Jeffrey Frost, PhD
David Loose, PhD
Oleh Pochynyuk, PhD
Gary Rosenfeld, PhD
Levental Lab Receives Award
Ilya Levental, Ph.D.

The Levental lab has recently successfully competed for a major international award from the Volkswagen Foundation for an initiative titled “Life?”, which aims to elucidate the basic principles of life on Earth. The international and multidisciplinary team of scientists from the Max Planck Institute and Saarland University (Germany), the Weizmann Institute (Israel), and UT-Houston was awarded 1.5 million EUR to investigate the fundamental mechanisms underlying membrane adaptation, in a project entitled “The Design Principles of Living Membranes”. The ultimate goal of the project is a unifying theory of membrane homeostasis from the simplest living organisms to mammals.

For nearly all life forms, the crucial function of segregating and concentrating the reactants of biochemistry is served by lipid bilayers. Such bilayers are marvels of physical chemistry and evolution, with biological, prebiotic, and synthetic lipids self-assembling into utterly unique materials. Biological membranes are robust and rigid, yet also fluid, dynamic, and adaptable. They encapsulate cellular components, yet allow exchange of nutrients and information. And they present a surface to reduce the dimensionality of life’s reactions, but also participate in those reactions and confine them via lateral compartmentalization. Tightly balancing these competing demands is absolutely essential for properly organizing information flow within a cell.

Most importantly, living membranes are homeostatic. For example, decreased temperature leads to a decrease in membrane fluidity and consequent loss of cellular viability. In response, cold-blooded organisms from bacteria to large animals (like reptiles and fish) have converged on a homeostatic response wherein tightly packing lipids are replaced by non-packing ones to maintain the physical and functional state of their membranes. In warm-blooded animals, the Levental lab recently discovered that a strikingly similar response is induced by membrane perturbations induced by dietary lipids.

Remarkably, despite being discovered over 40 years ago and being observed across all branches of life, the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying this fundamental response remain almost completely uncharacterized. Deciphering the principles of life’s responsive interface will be the goal of the Levental lab and their colleagues, whose expertise encompasses systems biology, geochemistry, evolution, and synthetic biology. The ultimate vision of the group is to build a self-sustaining and growing membrane, as a key pre-requisite and model for synthetic life.
Dr. Pochynyuk Receives Award

Oleh Pochynyuk received the American Physiological Society Renal Section Young Investigator Award at the recent Experimental Biology meeting at Chicago (April 2017). This award recognizes an outstanding young investigator pursuing research in renal physiology, pathophysiology or hypertension. Dr. Pochynyuk presented the Young Investigator Award Lecture and chaired a featured topic session at the meeting.

Brittany Jewell Receives Scholarship

Brittany Jewell was awarded the 2017 Tzu Chi Foundation Scholarship for Excellence. The scholarship recognizes students with a commitment to community service and an outstanding academic record with a commitment to science and medicine.

New Members of the Team

Diana Medrano
Sr. Executive Assistant
Dr. Hancock

Hongyin Wang
Postdoctoral Fellow
Dr. Levental

Lidan Zhao
Postdoctoral Fellow
Dr. Li

Dandan Zhu
Postdoctoral Fellow
Dr. Lee
Student & Postdoc Awards & Activities

CRB Retreat-Camp Allen 2017

The following students received awards for their Oral Presentations at the 2017 CRB Retreat at Camp Allen. Congratulations!

1st Place
Samantha Berkey

2nd Place
Max Odem

3rd Place
Kelsey Maxwell
Courtney Olsen

Dr. Xiaodong Cheng awarded Faculty of the Year!
Proposals & Awards

Twenty two proposals were submitted by the Department of Integrative Biology & Pharmacology in the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2017 by Drs. Bavencoffe, Berdeaux, Chang, Cheng, Dessauer, Gorfe, Hancock, Levental, Li, Lichtenberger, Pochynyuk, Schonbrunn, Walters, Wong, Yang, Zhou, and Zhu.

Nine proposals were awarded this quarter. Faculty receiving new awards include Drs. Cheng, Dessauer, Lee, Li, Lichtenberger, Pochynyuk, Schonbrunn, and Walters.

~Data provided by Deborah Brougher, Sr. Grants and Contracts Specialist

| Proposals Submitted FY2017 3rd QTR |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                               | # Submitted | Amount            |
| Federal                       | 17          | $13,539,807.00    |
| Private                       | 4           | $487,000.00       |
| State                         | 1           | $62,964.00        |
| Total                         | 22          | $14,089,771.00    |

| Awards Received FY2017 3rd QTR |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
|                               | # Received | Amount            |
| Federal                       | 7           | $2,877,687.00     |
| Private                       | 1           | $50,000.00        |
| State                         | 1           | $500,000.00       |
| Total                         | 9           | $3,427,687.00     |

New Awards

New Awards received during the third quarter of Fiscal Year 2017 include:

Dr. Lichtenberger. PLx Opco Inc. Aspirin-PC for Chemoprevention of Colorectal Cancer.

Dr. Pochynyuk. American Society of Nephrology. TRPC3-Dependent CA2+ Signaling in Collecting Duct Water Reabsorption and Osmosensitivity.


IBP Calendar of Events

Administrative Staff Meetings, 2:30-3:30 PM, MSB 4.136
July 6, August 3, September 7, October 5, November 2, December 7

CRB Meetings, 12-1 PM, Room 4.100
July 6, August 3

Faculty Coffee/Tea, 10-11 AM, MSB 4.100
July 5, 12, 19, 26, August 2, 9, 16, 23, 30 September 6, 13, 20, 27 October 4, 11, 18, 25 November 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 December 6, 13, 20

Dates to Remember:

July 4: Independence Day—The University will be closed for Official Business

September 4: Labor Day—The University will be closed for Official Business

September 11: Patriot Day

September 10: Grandparents Day

September 22: First Day of Autumn

October 9: Columbus Day

October 31: Halloween

November 11: Veterans Day

November 23: Thanksgiving

December 21: First Day of Winter

December 25: Christmas Day

December 31: New Year’s Eve