Featured Interview: John Scales

Bo Liang and Ethan Van Arnam

What is your current role in the department?

My job title is Facilities Manager, what is now called a Research Operations Manager. My role is to assist the department to run smoothly, in regards to department facilities, safety and related issues. I act as a liaison between our department and other departments at the University as well as outside vendors and contractors.

Tell us about your road to working in the department and how your job has evolved over time.

I grew up in Union Square in Somerville. I started out working at an ink company, preparing mixes of different colors (I had to pass a test recognizing more than 100 colors to get the job). After that I found a job here at HMS working as a technician in Irving Goldberg’s lab in what was then the Pharmacology department. I then took on the role of working with facilities and safety issues to assist the lab. Later other labs asked me to assist them in these regards, which I did. The department needed a photographer and I was offered a new opportunity, which I gratefully accepted while I continued with the facilities and safety duties and did less work in the lab. I had a friend who was the amphitheater projectionist, manning the slide decks during talks in the back of the old C building auditorium, I used to have my lunch with him while he was working. The auditorium is no longer there, of course, and under the remodeled floor plan my current office actually sits where the slide projector used to be. The more things change, the more they stay the same sometimes!

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What is your typical day at work like?

I find that my typical day is always interesting, in that there are quite often different twists and new challenges to some degree. Most recently, there has been a project by the Engineering and Construction Department, on behalf of the Medical School, to replace the Fan Coil Units, (FCU’s), that provide heating and cooling, with units that are more energy efficient. Lately I’ve been working with a lot of FCU adjustments, defective valves, and leaks. Some days, safety may take a large part of the day, while a lab or fire inspection might be ongoing, or if a lab requires assistance in meeting the safety criteria.

Do you have any advice for trainees in the department?

Trainees could peruse our department web page and learn about what is available to assist them. They should also talk to their lab mates and members of their neighboring laboratories and when they go to happy hour or the retreat they should try to meet new people and not stay in their familiar circle. Those relationships can always help in unexpected ways. There can be times when they may need something such as a piece of dry ice that they need for a one time shipment, a specified time that they will need to use the autoclave, to borrow freezer space, or find procedures and policies that are already set up to help them.

We’ve heard that you’re pretty accomplished outside of your job here - keeping busy with hobbies such as brewing, music, and photography. What are you doing for fun these days?

With the cooler temperatures of late I’ve been enjoying riding my motorcycle and bicycle. On Saturdays sometimes I might take a ride and find new roads on my motorcycle, and I try to get a nice bicycle ride in on early Sunday mornings before the roads get congested with traffic and pollution. I find that the cooler temperatures allow me to pedal a little faster and longer. I do some beer brewing from time to time – have done up to ten gallons at a time but I’ve found five gallons more manageable. I’ve got a Scotch Ale brewing right now. I also enjoy playing music by myself and with my friends every week, who I have played with for a while. I play the drums and piano. Music is really another language, like a code. I can see that improvement comes with time and determination. It is important to learn how to do something for yourself, by yourself, to get better at it.

BCMP Trainee Spotlight

Liz Ransey, Graduate Student, Sliz Laboratory

Julien Duxin, Post-Doc, Walter Laboratory
Where are you from?

I’m from Toledo, OH – I was born and raised a Buckeye (even though I got my B.S. in Rochester, NY).

What are your research interests?

My primary interests are in RNA biology – specifically in those proteins that modify, process or otherwise affect RNA maturation. In the Sliz lab, I focus on understanding how Lin28 recognizes and interacts with what we now understand to be the majority of the transcriptome (in addition to its cognate let-7 miRNA targets). My experience coming into the lab was working with an enzyme that hydrolizes the unique 2’-5’ phosphodiester bond of intronic lariats, RNA-Lariat debranching enzyme. My next project goes back to mechanistic enzymology in characterizing the DEAD-Box Helicase p72 and its regulation of miRNA processing. So diverse aspects of RNA biology – my tool of choice is X-ray crystallography.

Who is your scientific role model?

One of my main role models is an MD/PhD Neuroscientist currently at Duke, Dr. Kafui Dzirasa. We were connected through the UNCF-Merck fellowship. He’s one of those incredibly accomplished, energetic, larger-than-life scientists that is still so humble and kind, all whilst taking his field by storm. Every time we talk he is in a different part of the country, with a new NIH grant, asked to be on a new congressional advisory committee or offered another administrative position. Most recently he was asked to be on a TV show (‘The Doctors’). Sometimes I imagine his life is like a video game that he’s just constantly winning. That being said he’s very grounded and supportive; I get a lot of fantastic advice. Not to gush!

The Farmer’s Almanac predicts another cold and snowy winter. How are you preparing?

I will be doing the following: Stocking up on hot chocolate mix – only L.A. Burdicks. Investing in a few of those thick, pajama onesies. Breaking out all of the standard movies for some serious marathons – Love Actually, A Christmas Story, Nightmare before Christmas, etc. Finding all of my cookie recipes and get to practicing. Getting an industrial bottle of Vitamin D.

Is there anything else we should know about you?

I have an identical twin sister. She works for the Detroit Tigers, so we don’t talk much about science.
*James Kath*

**Where are you from?**

I was born in St. Raphael, a small city on the Mediterranean coast of France. Lived there until 14 and then moved with my family to Montevideo Uruguay, the country of dulce de leche, mate and soccer! Lived in Montevideo until 19 and then moved to Springfield, “Misouruh.”

**What are your research interests?**

Basic mechanisms of DNA replication and DNA repair.

**Who is your scientific role model?**

Louis Pasteur (“vive la France!”)

**The Farmer’s Almanac predicts another cold and snowy winter. How are you preparing?**

Really? That’s really bad news. Maybe I will leave for a 3 months vacation.

**There is a rumor that you used to play golf competitively. Can you elaborate?**

I was actually born with a tennis racket in my hand but fortunately realized soon enough that I was too bad to honor my parents’ legacy! That’s when I found golf which I picked up when I was 9 years old. In 2000, I obtained a golf scholarship to play for the Missouri State Bears. During 4 years I traveled throughout America, playing in some of the best golf courses. That was a lot of fun! Unfortunately, once more, I realized that I was not good enough to make a living out of it, and thus became a scientist.

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### Word on the Street

**What model organism would you be and why?**

*Thomas Graham, Emily Low, and Liz Ransey*
Julien Park, from Seoul National University, joined as a Postdoc.

Postdoc Hyun Jin Bae received a fellowship from the National Research Foundation of Korea.

Coen Lab

Rosio Fernandez joined as a Post-Baccalaureate Student, who will research human cytomegalovirus (HCMV) nuclear egress. Rosio attended CUNY Brooklyn College, where she received a B.S. in Biology with a concentration in Microbiology.

Jenna Morris-Love joined as a Post-Baccalaureate Student, who will research herpes simplex virus 1 (HSV-1) microRNAs. Jenna recently graduated from UConn with a B.S. degree in Molecular & Cell Biology and a minor in Physiology & Neurobiology.

Han Chen, a former post doc, joined Microbiotix Inc. in Worcester, MA as Senior Scientist.

Purba Mukherjee, a former postdoc, started a postdoc at Scripps Research Institute.

Lei Feng, a former postdoc, joined an app development company in China.

Dongli Pan, a former postdoc, is joining the Department of Basic Medicine at Zhejiang University in China as an Assistant Professor.

Gregory Lab


Gregory Lab (continued)


Loparo Lab

Prof. Joe Loparo’s daughter, Clare Elizabeth Loparo, was born on September 18.

Struhl Lab

Carol Baisden, a longtime lab manager, retired.

Wagner Lab

Ronghui (Gloria) Du from the Medical School of Nanjing University will be a Visiting Professor in Wagner Lab for the coming year.

Patrick Fischer from University of Saarland has been a Visiting graduate student since May.

Shimi Meleppattu from Ben Gurion University of the Negev joined as a Postdoc.

Simini Grigoriu is now a Researcher at Astra Zeneca in Waltham.

Naotaka Sekiyama, a former Postdoc, is now an Assistant Professor in Biophysics at the University of Kyoto

Rafael Luna is the Program Director for Faculty Appointments at HMS Faculty Services.

Paul Coote was promoted to Research Associate.

Alison Leed, a former postdoc, and her husband Dave welcomed a son, Xavier Louis Dybes on August 20th.

Graduate Student Diego Baptista was awarded a three year, Howard Hughes Medical Institute Gillaim Fellowship for Advanced Study Program.


T. Raschle, C. Lin, R. Jungmann, W.M. Shih, G. Wagner: Controlled co-reconstitution of multiple membrane proteins in lipid bilayer nanodiscs using DNA as a scaffold. ACS Chemicl Biology, doi http://dx.doi.org/10.1021/acschembio.5b00627.


K. Takeuchi, H. Arthanari, I. Shimada, G. Wagner: TROSY selected nitrogen detection experiments enable higher resolution at high field magnets. J. Biomol NMR, in press.
Walter Lab (continued)

Lin Deng, from Dartmouth Medical School, joined as a postdoc in the Walter and Pellman Labs.

Daniel Semlow, from University of Chicago, joined as a postdoc.

Magdalena Budzowska went to University of Copenhagen to start a postdoc.

Gheorghe Chistol, a postdoc, got married in May.

Lin Deng, a postdoc, had his second baby (Linda) in September.

James Dewar, a postdoc, was awarded Charles A. King Trust Postdoctoral Fellowship. James also received a “2015 Outstanding Postdoctoral Fellow Award” in Harvard Medical School in recognition of excellence in research.

Justin Sparks, a postdoc, was awarded Damon Runyon Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in July.


Send us your news!

Are the publications from your lab not listed? Do you have lab news to share? Have your lab’s newsletter representative contact us for the next issue at bcmpnews@gmail.com.

Wanted!

The BCMP Quarterly needs writers and layout managers. We are looking for regular or one-time articles to feature in the newsletter. Topics include (but not limited to): trainee profiles, interviews with departmental or visiting scientists, literature summaries and reviews, departmental news, local events, conferences reports, work and life interest, and more. If you are looking to learn or sharpen Adobe Photoshop, Illustrator, or InDesign skills, we are looking for help with putting the newsletter together. If you have an idea for an article, want to get involved with production of the newsletter, or have suggestions, please contact us at bcmpnews@gmail.com.
Career Resources

Career Guidance for Academic and Non-Academic Jobs
Office of Career Services (available for graduate students only)
http://www.ocs.fas.harvard.edu/students.htm
Events: Consultation for resume writing and interviews, Connection to Harvard alumni networks

Office of Postdoctoral Fellows
http://postdoc.hms.harvard.edu/
Events: Workshops, career panels, office hours for consultation

Harvard Biotech Club
http://thebiotechclub.org
Events: Annual Career Fair (September), Weekly Journal Club

Harvard Graduate Business Club
http://harvardgraduatebusinessclub.com/
Events: Mini-MBA program (every summer), monthly business journal club, finance workshops, entrepreneurship and career development events

Harvard Consulting Club
http://www.harvardgraduateconsultingclub.com/
Events: Consulting Career Fair (06/24/2015), MIT vs. Harvard Case Competition (8/17/15), weekly case/interview practice sessions, consulting workshops, panel discussion with consultants, networking events, information sessions with representatives from different firms

GSAS Science Policy Path
http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/sciencepolicy/home
Events: Faculty chats, yearly DC trip in the spring (preference toward graduate students)

Division of Medical Sciences (DMS) Paths
https://www.hms.harvard.edu/dms/resources/paths.html
Individual clubs available to students, focusing on non-tenure track careers: Biotechnology, Consulting Education, Law, Policy and Non-Profit, Science Writing

Our Mission Statement: The Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology Trainee Committee is responsible for addressing the needs of the graduate students and postdoctoral fellows in the department. This committee is charged with identifying ways to create a sense of community for students and fellows and to increase interactions between trainees and the faculty. The Committee meets regularly with faculty and departmental administration to suggest and implement improvements for students and fellows. If you have any concerns or suggestions please contact a committee member. New members are welcome! https://bcmp.med.harvard.edu/trainee-committee

Current Members: Ravi Amunugama (Walter), Luke Chao (Harrison), Jyoti Dev (Chou), Daniela Fera (Harrison), Thomas Graham (Co-Chair, Loparo/Walter), Dane Hazelbaker (Buratowski), Alfredo Hernandez (Richardson), Elissa Hobert (Clardy), James Kath (Loparo), Krish Karunatilaka (Hogle), Phong Lee (Harrison), Bo Liang (Harrison), Emily Low (Walter, Co-Chair), Rafael Luna (Wagner), David Migl (Harrison), Mukesh Sharma (Chou), Ethan Van Amam (Clardy), Kyle Vrtis (Walter), Jason Heustis (curriculum fellow), Mabel Duyao, Laurance Hem & Kristen Parker (Administration)
Quarterly

is a publication of the BCMP Trainee Committee. Join us at our meetings on the last Monday of each month. Send us photos from the retreat for our next issue.

Masthead

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