

VT PRIME Quarterly Newsletter

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In this edition, we profile the incoming IMSD scholars in our 11th cohort, report about the 6th annual Mid-Atlantic PREP and IMSD Research Symposium hosted by Duke BioCore, and as always, we report lots of news from our alumni, friends, and current trainees.

Message from the directors

We hope you continue to find our Newsletter informative and as a resource. The big news from our programs is the PREP renewal through 2023! Thank you everyone for your support. In recent weeks, 4 trainees (2 PREP alums and 2 IMSD) successfully defended their PhDs. Between PREP and IMSD, we now have 58 total PhDs. In other news, VT hosted the second [Black College Institute](#); Dr. Roseanne Foti, current research mentor to IMSD scholar Derek Burns was named [Chair of Psychology](#): congrats to her and we thank Dr. Bob Stephens for being an excellent partner to IMSD/PREP: during his leadership, Psychology recruited and trained 8 trainees: the most of any department. Happy 4th of July and enjoy your summer. **Zac Mackey, Luke Achenie, and Ed Smith.**



MAPRS @Duke attendees pose for a group picture. Front row are the organizers Drs. Paige Cooper and Daniella Jones. There is more about MAPRS below. Given the short time they had to organize the symposium, it was wonderful. We are looking forward to getting back there for BIOCORE in July.

The guest speaker for our **Summer I IMSD/PREP/Carver Forum** was VT grad and IMSD alum [Dr. Jordan Booker](#), Emory (soon to be Asst Prof at the University of Missouri, Columbia in the fall of 2018). In addition to talking about his current (socialization and meaning making) and previous (effects of emotion= and

(socialization and meaning making) and previous (effects of emotion- and gratitude-focused expressive writings on incoming college students' adjustment) research, Jordan counseled current trainees (and PREP candidates) to "listen to your advisors/mentors because they always have your best interest and be ready to say no."



Dr. Booker at Squires to meet his former colleagues.



Dr. Booker presenting at the Summer I forum at The Inn at Virginia Tech



Current IMSD Psych majors, including Dr. Shara Grant (front left), our newest PhD at Avellinos (Tatiana's, foreground, favorite hangout)



Current IMSD Psych trainees, Jeff and Derek, react to Jordan's jokes.

Postcard from  @Duke

This year's Mid- Atlantic PREP and IMSD Research Symposium at Duke started with an admonition to stay "woke" by [Dr. Jacqueline Looney](#), Senior Assoc Dean and Assoc Vice Provost at Duke. In her wonderful opening remarks, she also counseled trainees and participants to not "leave your emotional problems to go too long," and to "shape your career" and try to live by the advice from Mr. Benjamin I. Hayes "the tragedy of life is not meeting our goals but not having goals." The keynoter for our first night, [Dr. Raphael H. Valdivia](#), Vice Dean for Basic Science, followed with an equally insightful talk and his story to the position of academic leadership at such a prestigious institution is even more inspiring. His career has involved "one wreck after another" including as an "outdoor educator." So, "always get up" and if "your dream of becoming a writer does not pan out, become something else" just like he did!

Six VT PREP/IMSD alumni were at MAPRS: Deon (PREP, now at VCU), Crystal (PREP, now at Duke), Byron (IMSD, now at Duke), Ramine (PREP, now at UNC as postdoc but soon Asst professor at NC A&T), Brittany (Distinguished PREP alum award winner, Postdoc, Penn) and Jasmine (Distinguished IMSD alum award winner, PhD from Pitt, Research Scientist, Children's Place).



VT participants, alums and friends



Gabrielle, Tasmine, Dominique and Hagar at MAPRS





2018 Distinguished MAPRS awardees: Drs. [Jasmine Williams](#) (right), [Brittany Taylor](#), (middle) and [Melinda Capes](#). Plaque and cash are provided by the Virginia Tech Provost's Office.



Dr. [Paige Cooper](#) introducing keynote Dr. Valdivia. In the foreground are Dr. [Josh Hall](#) (UNC PREP and Cocreator of MAPRS) and our own Dr. Luke Achenie, PREP CoPD.

Introducing our incoming IMSD (11th Cohort): Four new trainees will be joining the "family." As we have done before, we asked each to help us introduce her/him to our community:



Marcos Aguayo (he will be affiliated with Human Development during his lab rotations).

Who are you?

I am a southern Arizona boy who has learned to appreciate all opportunities that life presents to me. [Read more...](#)

Fun Fact about you:

For many years I competed in professional



Matthew Flores (associated with Biological Sciences during lab rotations).

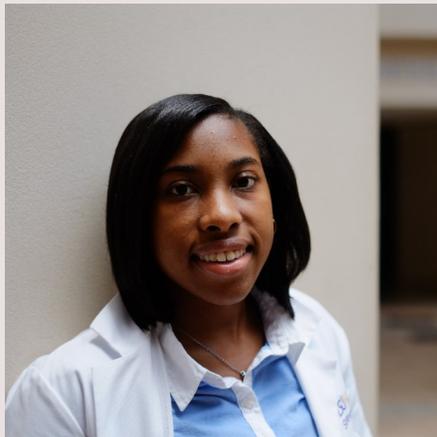
Who are you?

I am a nerd... [Read more...](#)

Fun fact about you:

In my undergraduate years, I participated in the ballroom dance team, helped teach an introductory Microbiology course...[Read more..](#)

rodeo events around the country, so it is almost second-nature to indulge in "ranch" life.



Demisha Porter

Who are you?

I am a graduate (2017) of King University in Bristol, Tennessee...[Read more...](#)

Fun fact about you:

I used to play collegiate basketball for King University and I like to draw.



Crystal Ruiz Irizarry (*will be associated with the Department of Animal Sciences and [NIMML](#) during her lab rotations*)

Who are you?

The truth is that for me, this is a difficult question... [Read more...](#)

Fun fact about you:

I am trilingual in Spanish, English, and Italian.

We asked [IMSD 10](#) to give some advice/helpful tips to incoming IMSD

11:

My advice would be to learn about the resources that are offered at the graduate school. Also, it is easy to get carried away with social activity or vice versa with school work. Implement a reward system. That way, you can have the best of both worlds

- Katrina

Find something that you enjoy doing to destress. But also, understand that now is the time to actually learn your trade, a bachelor's degree is really just a foundation. Graduate school should be the time you live your research, the time you put in now will set up your career. And as far as places to eat: save money, buy a plane ticket, and fly to the west coast where the food is good! But if you're going to have to stay here, The Cellar has some good food and great beer.

- Chris

Mine is to really make sure to communicate with with your advisor and keep them updated with what's going on in your life. Your first year will probably be very busy and largely dominated by classes. Your advisor understands this, just let them know. Additionally, Charlotte may be 3 hours away, but you /can/ make it there in time for a concert after a full day of work.

- Kandace

Figure out the schedule that works best for you, and do your best to stick to it. Juggling things in grad school can get very overwhelming if you don't plan ahead and organize your time in a way that best suits your goals and abilities. This includes social activities and relaxation time (whenever you can find it).

Imposter syndrome is real, and we all experience it to some degree: talk to a senior IMSD trainee (myself included) or any other grad student, and you'll find that most will agree. Therefore, take it easy on yourself, and resist the urge to compare your accomplishments to those of others. Focus on yourself, and be patient.

Find a hobby, craft, sport, or anything else that can help you take the load off. Your physical and mental health are crucial to your success as a researcher, so take care of yourself, and schedule some recreation time in your week. Intramural sports are great, and the games are few and spread out so they shouldn't take too much time away from your research. I played soccer, indoor soccer, and volleyball.

Fun things to do:

- Hiking: There are trails everywhere, and the scenery is beautiful.
- Trivia Tuesday at Mellow Mushroom
- Wednesday Salsa nights at Sycamore Deli
- Thursday Karaoke nights at Bull and Bones
- XTREME Springs trampoline park in Christiansburg.

Food:

- Latino's Taste: LATINO FOOD! It's in Radford (~30 minutes away) and has amazing and authentic Latino food, by Blacksburg standards at least. Fairly cheap too.

- The Cellar (Greek, kind of): Pretty good food and really good beer options.

- Next Door Bake Shop: Decent sandwiches and coffee/tea options.
- Benny Marzano's: Huge pizza slices that taste okay for \$5.
- Taphouse: I've had one burger here, and I loved it.
- Whitebarrel: Winery that has half off wines on Wednesdays and really good paninis.
- Bollo's: Dr. Smith favorite coffee shop. Their coffee is great.
- Idego: Another really good coffee shop.

- Jeff

My advice is to never be afraid to admit you don't know something. At the beginning, you might feel it's expected for you to know what you're supposed to be doing and understand every topic thrown at you, but really, this is a learning environment. We all make mistakes, and when you don't know something, better to admit it and ask. That way, you can do things right from the get-go and better comprehend what's being taught to you.

- Alex

News from/about current IMSD/PREP scholars: Dr. Marietou Paye, PREP alum, was here in May to help us current the accomplishments of our trainees including degree completions (Alexis, Adwoa, and Shara), grants/fellowships (the prestigious SMART for Katrina, IMSD10, and Pascal (ACS 2018 Scholar)

A leader from our 6th IMSD Cohort, **Dr. Shara Grant** (research mentor: Dr. Bruce Friedman), successfully defended her dissertation. She has been one of our most impactful trainees and among other accolades was a NIH GSOAR scholar in the summer of 2017;

- **Katrina, IMSD 10th**, was awarded the prestigious SMART Fellowship: <https://smart.ase.org/>
- **Pascal. IMSD undergrad**

Our trainees attended and presented at several conferences:
Brittany Boribong (IMSD, Caroline Jones & Liwu Li, mentors) presented at: XII Congress of Latin American Assn of Immunology (<http://immunomexico2018.mx/>) and the XXIII Congress of SMI in Cancun, Mexico;
Kisha Greer (IMSD, Michelle Theus, Research mentor) attended and presented at the 2018 ISSR Meeting. Melbourne.

(Dr. VandeVord, research mentor) was selected a 2018 American Chemical Society's Scholar.

Australia:
<http://www.isscr.org/meetings-events/annual-meetings/isscr-annual-meeting-2018/attend>;
Trevin Glasgow (IMSD, Scott Gelloer, mentor) attended and presented at the ISEE conference in Australia: <http://www.isee2017.com/>;
Diana Novo (IMSD, Kevin Edgar, research mentor) attended and presented at the Annual ACS meeting in New Orleans.

Alumni News: our alumni continue to do great things all around. Several (Drs. Jennifer King and Karey Sutton) had or are expecting (Dr. Kacie Blackman) a baby: congratulations; Others alumni news include a tenure track assistant professor position (Dr. Ramine Alexander, PREP alum, Jamie Zoellner, Research mentor; and Dr. Elaine Nsoesie, IMSD alum, Asst professor, Boston University) and awards or attended prestigious meetings and conferences: we profile those below.

PhDs completed: **Dr. Tiffany Gray**, George Washington University
Dr. Alexis Trent, VT Engineering Science and Mechanics
Dr. MyThanh (Vo) Beedle (PREP alum) Washington State University
Dr. Erica Arroyo (PREP) UCLA





Sheldon Lawrence (PREP 10) at the 2017 Florida Genetics Symposium

Congratulations to Sheldon Lawrence who was recently awarded the prestigious SPIRE scholarship for his postdoctoral research at University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill!



Dr. Tiffany Gray (third from left) at the Impact summit with fellow participants

PREP alum Dr. Tiffany Gray (Julie Dunsmore, Research Mentor) was part of the Blockchain commission at the Impact Summit- a forum that engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.



PREP alum, Dr. Brandy Huderson (Mike Akers, research mentor, now assistant professor of Biology at the University of the District of Columbia, was a panelist in the American Association of Colleges and Universities' 2018 Wye Faculty Seminar on Citizenship in the American and Global Polity.



Cassie Eng (PREP alum, research mentor Martha Ann Bell), presented a paper at The Biennial International Conference on Infant Studies, Philadelphia, PA.

Upcoming events

- [Duke BioCoRE](#)(summer, 2018)
 - [STEM research and Career Symposium](#) (Sept, 2018)
 - [SPECTRUM fair](#) (Oct, 2018)
 - [FOCUS fair](#) (Oct, 2018)
 - [ABRCMS](#) (Nov, 2018)
-

Books/podcasts we recommend for our community

Podcast we recommend:

"[TED Radio Hour](#)" The recent episode on "Comfort Zone." Luvvie Ajayi recommends that "you get comfortable with being uncomfortable" and "remove your filters so you can expand your comfort zone."



This edition of the Newsletter was edited by Victoria Mukuni and Ed Smith

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