

Soaring to New Heights: Graduate Education at Southern Miss

Graduate Dean's Report (April 2017)

Student Spotlight

Biological Sciences Graduate Student is Graduate Assistant of the Year

Dhiraj Acharya, a doctoral student in the Department of Biological Sciences, was selected as the 2017 Graduate Assistant of the Year. Working with his major professor, Dr. Fengwei Bai, Dhiraj studies the immunopathogenesis of mosquito-borne viruses that cause debilitating and often life-threatening infections of humans, including West Nile, Zika, and Chikungunya viruses. Dhiraj began his graduate degree program at Southern Miss in 2012. Since then he published three peer-reviewed, first-author articles and is co-author of eight additional articles which appeared in top journals in his discipline. He is co-author of a book chapter, author of a chapter in a general microbiology laboratory manual, and holds a patent with Dr. Bai for discovery of a novel immunological function that promotes West Nile viral clearance in the host. Serving as a teaching assistant for three years, Dhiraj has taught microbiology lab to numerous undergraduate students, and he trained many students performing undergraduate research in Dr. Bai's lab. Dhiraj earned a master of science in microbiology in his home country of Nepal in 2008, where he was awarded a "Gold Medal" by the president of Nepal. As the 2017 GA of the Year, Dhiraj was presented with a plaque and a \$500 cash award. His portrait will be added to the 2017 Graduate Student Hall of Fame in McCain Library. After graduating this May, Dhiraj will immediately begin a postdoctoral position at the University of Chicago.



Dhiraj Acharya (right), with major professor Dr. Fengwei Bai, is the 2017 GA of the Year

Graduate Student Hall of Fame Portrait Unveiling Kicks Off Graduate Student Appreciation Week

On Monday, April 3, portraits of top graduate students were unveiled at the 3rd annual Graduate Student Hall of Fame Portrait Unveiling held on the second floor of McCain Library at the office of the Graduate School. President Rodney Bennett assisted Dean Coats in honoring 13 students selected by their academic deans or the Graduate School for their outstanding academic and scholarly

accomplishments. President Bennett removed drapes from canvas, poster-sized portraits of each student taken in their research setting as Dean Coats introduced each student and read a description of their research or academic project. During his remarks to a packed house filled with the honorees, their major professors and department chairs, friends, and family, Dr. Bennett noted that each student who was recognized reached their level of success due, in part, to the excellent mentorship provided by major professors. He acknowledged that the honor belongs to mentors as well as students. The portraits will hang for one year in McCain Library until they are succeeded by the 2018 Hall of Fame inductees. The 2017 Graduate Student Hall of Fame includes:

- Carley Reynolds Young, Ph.D. student, Communication Studies, College of Arts & Letters
- Willie Tubbs, Ph.D. student, Mass Communication, College of Arts & Letters
- Ecaterina (Kate) Stepaniuc, Ph.D. student, Mass Communication, College of Arts & Letters, 2016 Three Minute Thesis Grand Champion (nominated by Graduate School)
- Jeffrey R. George, Master's student, Economic Development, College of Business
- Andrew Dodgson, Master's student, Sport Management, College of Business
- Dane Conrad, Ph.D. student, Instructional Technology and Design, College of Education & Psychology
- Claire Houtsma, Ph.D. student, Clinical Psychology, College of Education & Psychology
- Ashley Lauren Parker, MPH, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, College of Health (degree awarded)
- Olivia Hogan Ismail, Master's student, Social Work, College of Health
- Ruoyu (Mason) Zhao, DNP, Nurse Anesthesia, College of Nursing (degree awarded)
- Tiffany Leanne Zyniewicz, Ph.D. student, Nursing Leadership, College of Nursing
- Frederick M. McFarland, Ph.D. student, Physical Chemistry, College of Science & Technology
- Dahlia Amato, Ph.D. student, Polymer Science and Engineering, College of Science & Technology



Hall of Fame inductee Carley Reynolds Young poses before her portrait with her major professor, Dr. John Meyer

Graduate Students Win Awards for Research Presentations

The Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium, held Tuesday, April 4, was a success with nearly 120 students presenting their research in oral or poster format. The top presentations received cash awards, supported by the office of the Vice President for Research. The Graduate School and the Graduate Student Senate coordinated the annual event and appreciate the willingness of faculty and staff to judge the competition. Many of the presentations were outstanding and showcased the exceptional, diverse research being conducted by graduate student researchers and their mentors. The winners of the oral and poster presentations in four categories were as follows:

Category

Arts & Humanities

Life, Health, & Environmental Sciences

Physical Sciences & Math

Social & Educational Sciences and Business

Oral Winners

1st Elizabeth Radley
2nd Torie Fowler and
Christina Heras-Ramirez (tie)
1st Grover Brown
2nd Erin Frick
3rd Katrina Aleska
1st Phillip Pickett
2nd Matthew Patterson
3rd Andrew Janisse
1st Brian Bauer
2nd Mohamed Ismail and
Amber de Vere (tie)

Poster Winners

1st Sarah Wright
2nd Tracy Barnett
3rd Mary Wolverton
1st Edward Kelley
2nd Samuel Hendry
3rd Matthew Ladato
1st Austin Maples
2nd Brad Davis
3rd Vivek Vasagar
1st Sarah Butterworth
2nd Mallorie Carroll
3rd Elizabeth Schlosser

Faculty Kudos

2017 Graduate Mentor of the Year is Psychology Professor

Dr. Brad Dufrene, professor and director of the School Psychology Service Center in the Department of Psychology, was named 2017 Graduate Mentor of the Year at the Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium awards luncheon on April 4. Selected from an exceptional group of faculty who were nominated by their graduate students, Dr. Dufrene was recognized for fostering the intellectual, scholarly, personal, and professional development of his students and for holding them to high standards of excellence. Among the documents the review committee used to evaluate the nominees' credentials were letters from current and former students. Dr. Dufrene's students clearly recognized the quality mentorship and concern that Dr. Dufrene provides his students. A current student commented that he demonstrates

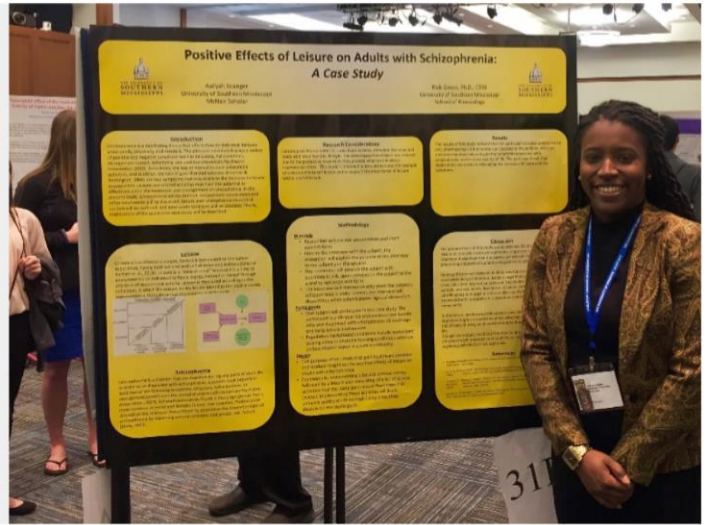
"multicultural competence" which helped her appreciate her value as a bilingual school psychologist. Another noted Dr. Dufrene's abundant fairness in crediting students for their research contributions. A former student stated that on a daily basis he uses what he learned from Dr. Dufrene in the practice he established following completion of his degree. Dr. Dufrene has mentored more than twenty-five graduate students since beginning his career at USM twelve years ago. He joined the USM faculty after receiving a Ph.D. in educational psychology with an emphasis in school psychology from Mississippi State University in 2005. An active researcher with more than forty peer-reviewed articles and three book chapters published, Dr. Dufrene's research focuses on prevention of emotional and/or behavioral disturbance in young children experiencing health disparities; treatment integrity in applied settings; and functional behavior assessment.



Dean Karen Coats presents 2017 Graduate Mentor of the Year Award to Dr. Brad Dufrene

McNair Scholars Program News

McNair Scholars Present Research at National Research Conference



McNair Scholars Mary Travis (left) and Aaliyah Cole (right) presented results of mentored research at NCUR

Immersing students in undergraduate research and preparing them to communicate their findings are important goals of USM's McNair Scholars program, and the Scholars are taking advantage of opportunities to do both. Last week (April 6 – 8) Mary Travis and Aaliyah Granger shared their research with a broad audience at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) at the University of Memphis. Mary, a senior geography major from Hattiesburg, gave a talk entitled "Delta Hands for Hope: a Force for Reconciliation and Sustainable Development in the Delta?" Her research mentor is Dr. Mark Miller. Aaliyah presented a poster, "Positive Effects of Leisure on Adults with Schizophrenia: A Case Study." Aaliyah, a senior from Meridian, is majoring in therapeutic recreation. Her research mentor is Dr. Rick Green. Aaliyah and Mary were accompanied to NCUR by Carolyn Cawthon and Kim Brown, Director and Assistant Director of the McNair Program, respectively.

McNair Scholars Receive University Recognition

McNair Scholars were recognized at the USM Student Awards Ceremony on April 11. Aliscia Burkett, Political Science; Arcia Caston, Kinesiology; Kelsey Hubbard, Kinesiology, Aaliyah Cole, Biological Sciences, and Jeremy Moore, Music Education, were recognized by Who's Who. Aaliyah Cole was included in the undergraduate Hall of Fame, and Jeremy Moore was named Best Citizen.

McNair Program Renewal Application Submitted

Carolyn Cawthon is principal investigator on an application submitted to the U.S. Department of Education seeking renewal of USM's Ronald McNair Scholars Program. Submitted in early April, the grant application requests \$1.13 million to support a five-year project of mentored research, professional development, STEM experiences, travel to professional conferences, and long-term outcome assessment for up to twenty-five McNair Scholars per year. Funding for successful applications will be announced in the fall.

Graduate Student Recruiting

Carolyn Cawthon, Director of Operations and Recruitment and Director of the McNair Scholars Program, and Kim Brown, Assistant Director of the McNair Scholars Program, attended the graduate recruitment fair at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) at the University of Memphis April 6 – 8. They collected contact cards and discussed USM's graduate programs with dozens of prospective graduate applicants who were attending NCUR to present results of undergraduate research projects. Contact information on prospects is being loaded into Radius for departmental review.

Professional Development Opportunities for Graduate Students



The Graduate School is accepting applications for the 2017-2018 Professionals in Preparation program. Professionals in Preparation is a Graduate School-sponsored professional development program designed to help graduate students develop “transferable skills” that will set them apart in a

competitive job market. The program focuses on communication, leadership, mentorship, ethics, and other important skills that cross disciplinary boundaries. In addition, participants may compete for travel awards to assist them in traveling to professional conferences. Seminars and workshops will be held twice monthly during the fall and spring semesters (usually from noon to 1:00 p.m. on Fridays), and students will compete in the annual Three Minute Thesis competition and present their research at the Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium. The program description may be viewed on the Graduate School website. A complete application will include a form (see link below), a current CV (limit 3 pages), and a letter of support from the student's committee chair. Feedback from previous participants has been universally positive with students noting the value of the training they receive in the program. Applications must be submitted by noon, Friday, May 5. Please encourage students to apply. <https://forms.usm.edu/graduate-school/view.php?id=36300>

News from the Graduate School

Julie Beckham Joins the Graduate School Staff

Graduate Admissions has a full roster with the addition of Julie M. Beckham to the staff. Julie joined the Graduate School on April 10 after a one and a half year role as an application specialist in Undergraduate Admissions. Julie's experience with Radius and PeopleSoft will allow her to make rapid progress as she learns graduate admissions processes and provides customer service to prospects, applicants, and faculty. Julie earned a B.S. in Liberal Arts at USM in 1992 majoring in advertising with a marketing minor. Outside of USM, Julie owns her own business, “Creative Embroidery & Design.” She is an active volunteer, fundraiser, and donation acknowledgement coordinator for Hub City Humane Society.

Julie Beckham



Application Deadlines

Tracy Barnhill, Manager of Graduate Admissions, notified departments of the need for each department to set appropriate deadlines for prospective students to submit applications to their programs and pay the application fee. Required application documents may still be received after the application is submitted (transcripts, letters of reference, etc.), so deadlines should be early enough for those additional documents to be received and applications to be completed before departmental review. Departments who have not yet provided those deadlines should submit them right to Tracy immediately. Graduate Admissions will not re-open application portals after published deadlines have passed. Re-opening and closing portals is a manual process that is very time consuming. Any applicant who applies after the deadline must apply as a non-degree seeking student.

Commencement Information

Hattiesburg

Hooding Practice: Thursday, May 11, 10:00 a.m., Reed Green Coliseum

- Hooding faculty and their doctoral student are encouraged to attend
- The hooding platform (box) will be used at all ceremonies

Commencement: Friday, May 12, Reed Green Coliseum, 2 ceremonies

- 9:00 a.m.: Colleges of Arts & Letters, Education & Psychology, Nursing
 - Candidates and professors should arrive at Payne Center by 7:45 a.m.
- 3:00 p.m.: Colleges of Business, Health, Science & Technology
 - Candidates A-M and professors should arrive at Payne Center by 1:30 p.m.
 - Candidates N-Z and professors should arrive at Payne Center by 1:40 p.m.

Gulf Coast (Gulf Park, GCRL)

Hooding Practice: There is no separate hooding practice for the Gulf Coast campuses.

- Faculty and students are welcome to attend practice in Hattiesburg on Thursday, May 11.

Commencement: Saturday, May 13, 10:00 a.m., Mississippi Gulf Coast Coliseum, Biloxi

- All doctoral candidates and hooding professors should arrive no later than 8:45 a.m.

Operations Updates

Summer Enrollment for Students Holding Summer Graduate Assistantships

After consultation with appropriate administrative offices and the academic deans, the following modification to required summer enrollment for students holding summer GA's will be in effect this summer. Eligible summer GA's may hold the assistantship while enrolling in a minimum of 1 credit hour during summer 2017, rather than the 3 hours normally required for full-time summer enrollment. This change does not limit GA's to 1 hour; up to 3 hours will be awarded if needed. The change will allow us to utilize tuition waivers more effectively. To be eligible for the 1 hour minimum summer enrollment the following conditions must be met (in consultation with HR):

1. If a continuing student, the student must have been enrolled full time and held an assistantship during spring 2017 and must be already enrolled full time for fall 2017.
2. If graduating during summer 2017, the student must have been enrolled full time and held an assistantship during spring 2017 and has applied for graduation for summer 2017

For those offices that have already submitted tuition waiver requests for students meeting the requirements for the 1 hour option, please submit an amended request to Shelby Flores only for those students who are affected.

Note: The 1 hour enrollment option does not apply to federal work study assistantships. Work study GA's must register for a minimum of 3 hours during the summer.

Graduation Deferment Form Update

Graduate degree auditors discovered that departments often are not aware that their students defer graduation because the deferment form required only the student's signature. To remedy this situation, the deferment form was modified to include a signature line for the student's committee chair or department chair. This change will also provide an opportunity for the student to be advised about their degree progress and plans for completion of the program. The new form is available on the Graduate School website.

A Note of Appreciation

Dean Coats would like to recognize and thank the many individuals who helped make Graduate Student Appreciation Week 2017 a big success. Of particular note were the contributions of Vanessa Molden, Coordinator of Special Projects in the Graduate School, who coordinated all events. Robyn Curtis, Director, Nationally Competitive Awards; Elena Azadbakht, Assistant Professor, Health and Nursing Librarian; Adrienne McPhaul, Assistant Professor, Science, Health, and Nursing Librarian, Gulf Park; Michele Frasier-Robinson, Assistant Professor, Education and Psychology Librarian; Nadine Phillips, Instructor, Interlibrary Loan Librarian; Josh Cromwell, Institutional Repository Coordinator; and Jeanne Stewart, Reviewer of Theses, Dissertations, and Capstone Projects, Graduate School, all provided professional development workshops for graduate students. Many USM faculty and staff served as judges for the Susan A. Siltanen Graduate Research Symposium. Their time was much appreciated. The Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry and the Department of Biological Sciences co-sponsored guest speaker Dr. Justin Brown, who spent the day with graduate students to inform them about expectations and job opportunities for Ph.D.'s in industry. A special thanks is extended to President Rodney Bennett for his participation in the Graduate Student Hall of Fame Portrait Unveiling Ceremony. Honorees and their faculty mentors, friends, and family were inspired by his words and honored that he made the time to be a part of this event.

Taking You TO THE TOP!

Elevating you to a higher level of academic and professional achievement