



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, DR. JEN GOMMERMAN

It is a great honour to begin serving as Immunology Department Chair, beginning with this Newsletter. In addition to this newsletter, I am experimenting with other ways of communicating with you beyond the in-box. Since August, I have been meeting one-one-one with our faculty, staff and student representatives to take the temperature of the Department. I am learning a great deal and storing up ideas like the busy squirrel outside my living room window. In this first year, I will be working with all of you to come up with a plan that articulates our priorities for the future. I look forward to your participation in this exercise.

To that end, Faculty, please join me on [November 6th at Faculty Club \(11:00 a.m.\)](#) for our fall meeting. I have modified the meeting agenda, which you will receive in advance, to be a little shorter, alternating fall/spring for some of the committees. I **highly** recommend you join in for this meeting, preferably in person if you are able. It is a chance to provide valuable input.

I would like to welcome new administrative staff member Michelle Samonte who takes on the role of Research Financial Coordinator. In addition, I would like to congratulate Kate Sedore who has been promoted to the position of Education Program Officer. Well-deserved Kate!

A lot happened during the busy month of September. We enjoyed two very successful retreats. At the IGSA-run Autumn Retreat at Fern Resort September 10-11 we were lucky to hear excellent presentations from our Keynote Speakers Drs. Sara Suliman and Rafi Ahmed as well as some of our talented post-doctoral fellows.

It was wonderful to interact with Sara who is an alumnus of our Department (Guidos lab). As she said on “X” (the app formerly known as Twitter), our retreat “was really good for her spirit”. High praise!

We were treated, as always, by a creative and memorable IGSA video, based on the “Barbie” movie - I am truly awed by the timeliness and professional look of these legendary videos. And of course, we had some fine weather. Not sure I will be able to reliably conjure up the same flawless weather we have enjoyed in the past for future retreats, but I will do my best. Next year we are looking for dates that will be post-CIHR deadline, but we will stick with the fall.

We also had an amazing Faculty retreat – a half day of inspiring science at Hart House. Thank you to Drs. Dana Philpott and Tracy McGaha for organizing. It was well-attended and the participation was considerable – all the way into the dark hours of the day. With this newsletter, we have added a survey for faculty to determine preferences for retreat location next year. [PLEASE FILL IT OUT – IT WILL TAKE YOU 30 SECONDS.](#)

Lastly, we finished September with a well-attended IMMSA lunch event at the JCR Trinity College. Thank you to our colleagues at Trinity for hosting this and IMMSA for organizing.

Looking forward to October, I wish you all a Happy Thanksgiving and safe travels if applicable. Please enjoy time with family and friends and raise a toast to the coming academic year.



UPCOMING DEPARTMENT SEMINARS

EASTON SEMINARS

Mondays, 11:05 – 12:00 at MSB 2170

Monday, October 2nd, 2023

[Dr. James Riley](#)
[Professor of Microbiology](#)
[Associate Investigator, Abramson Family Cancer Research Institute](#)
[Member, Institute for Immunology](#)
[Member, Center for Cellular Immunotherapy](#)
[Member, Diabetes Research Center](#)
[Investigator, Abramson Family Cancer Research Institute, University of Pennsylvania](#)
Talk Title: "Tuning T cells for the control of HIV and cancer"

Host: JC Zuniga Pflucker, PhD

Monday, October 16, 2023

[Dr. Landan J. Edgar](#)

[Assistant Professor, Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology, UofT](#)

Talk Title: "T cell Glycosylation in Health and Disease"

Host : David Brooks, PhD

Monday, October 23, 2023

[Dr. June Round](#)

[Professor of Microbiology and Immunology](#)
[University of Utah](#)

Talk Title: "Microbes with benefits: how microbes might prevent metabolic disease and cancer"

Host: Jayne Danska, PhD

Monday, October 30, 2023

[Dr. Ali Ellebedy](#)

[Associate Professor, Pathology & Immunology](#)
[Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis](#)

Talk Title: "B Cell Responses to Vaccination: Lessons from the Pandemic"

Host: Tania Watts, PhD

Lunch with Easton Speakers

There are still available spots. Immunology Trainees, please sign up for this amazing opportunities.



SPECIAL SEMINARS

Monday, October 23, 2023

JEM Editorial Process Workshop

Please join us for an editorial workshop.

Dr. Montserrat Cols, Senior Scientific Editor from the Journal of Experimental Medicine will be at MSB 7231.

Lunch will be provided.

STUDENT SEMINARS

Mondays at 10:00 – 11:00 am at MSB 2172

October 2, 2023

Carol Nassar (Wither Lab)

Ling Ling Tai (Mortha lab)

October 16, 2023

Yue Ru (Ruth) Li ((Zúñiga-Pflücker Lab)

Julius Landas (Zúñiga-Pflücker Lab)

October 23, 2023

Martin Mak (Crome Lab)

Aniqa Khan (Robbins Lab)

October 30, 2023

Meghan Kates (Ohashi / Saibil Labs)

Robbie Jin (McGaha Lab)

POSTDOC/RA Seminars

October 4, 2023, 3:30 -4:30 p.m.

"TIFA-mediated regulated control of immunopathogenic responses"

Cynthia Guo (Scott Gray-Owen Lab)

"Characterizing human FAM72 gene family and its implicated role in cancer"

Yuqing Feng (Martin Lab)



HELLO FROM THE W.I.D.E. COMMITTEE

BOO! We hope everyone is settling in well as we roll into October, and trick or treating yourselves to some fun out of lab activities!

We had such a great time participating in the IMMazing Race at the Fall retreat! Thanks to all the teams who embraced our "Inclusion and Diversity Flower" activity and got to know a little bit about what they had in common with their teammates, and what made their team diverse.

This month, WIDE would like to recognize and commemorate several days of importance:

- In **October**, we celebrate **Global Diversity Awareness**. Did you know the D in WIDE stands for Diversity? Whether it is Inclusion, gender and sexual diversity, or race and cultural diversity, the Department of Immunology and the university as a whole are committed to protecting and promoting a diverse campus. Check out the DoI WIDE page for more info: <https://immunology.utoronto.ca/wellness-inclusion-diversity-and-equity-wide-committee>
- **October** is also **Women's History Month**. We are more than excited to celebrate this month with the introduction of our first female Chair, **Dr. Jennifer Gommerman**! Dr. Gommerman is one of many, strong female PIs leading this department with their ground-breaking research.
- This month is full of special celebrations, including **Learning Disabilities Awareness Month**! Learning disabilities come in all colours and shapes, however they should never hold you back from achieving any of your research and educational goals. If you have a learning disability or are experiencing difficulties affecting your learning, do not hesitate to register with Accessibility Services for learning accommodations (<https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/department/accessibility-services/>) or reach out to our DoI administrators.
- Chag Sameach! **Shemini Atzeret** is on **October 6th – 8th** this year, part of the High Holiday season observed by our Jewish friends. Did you know this holiday is started off with a prayer for rain and is celebrated with tons of singing and dancing?
- **Thanksgiving** is on **October 9th**, we hope you all take the day off and celebrate all the things you are thankful for and share a beautiful meal with all of your loved ones! If you are feeling extra giving this year, consider donating a hot thanksgiving meal to someone in need: <https://ugm.ca/thanksgiving>
- This **October 10th** is **World Mental Health Day**. Your mental health is just as important as your physical health; check out the mental health resources available to you as a student at the University of Toronto: <https://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/>
- We celebrate **Rural Women's Day** on **October 15th**. On this day, we recognize the contributions of rural and indigenous women in the agricultural industry.
- **October 17th** is the **International Day for the Eradication of Poverty**. Almost 8% of Canadians are living in poverty, and 13% face food insecurity. If you are able to, consider supporting your local food bank here: <https://foodbankscanada.ca/find-a-food-bank/>

We would also like to highlight some EDI workshops that are coming up this fall, and we encourage everyone reading this to take advantage of these opportunities – **all of us** have room to grow and learn in making our department and UofT a more inclusive, equitable, and safe environment.



Workshops for Students:

Understanding your responsibility to preventing racial discrimination & harassment in the work and learning environment(s)

November 1, 2023 – 11:30am-1:30pm – Virtual

Addressing Racial Microaggressions: Tools, Strategies and Discussions

November 15, 2023 – 11:30am – 1:30pm – Virtual

Workshops for Faculty and Staff:

Addressing Racial Microaggressions: Tools, Strategies and Discussions

October 24, 2023 – 10am – 12pm – In-person

What is Harassment? Tools to Identify and Address Racial and Sexual Harassment

Part 1: November 9, 2023 – 1pm – 3pm – Virtual

Part 2: November 16, 2023 – 1pm – 3pm – Virtual

To register for these and other workshops, please visit the [Anti-Racism and Cultural Diversity Office website](#).

Wishing you all a healthy and happy month!

-Your WIDE Committee

Follow us on Twitter @IMM_WIDE for more updates

GRADUATE PROGRAM UPDATE

Upcoming Award Deadline

CGS-M applications are due December 1, 2023 at 8:00 PM

1st year graduate students and 4th year undergraduates planning to apply to grad programs for 2024 are encouraged to apply!

Please check eligibility requirements carefully before starting your application, and email graduate.immunology@utoronto.ca with any questions.

Graduate Student Health and Wellness

Temerty Faculty of Medicine has [two dedicated on-site counsellors](#) available exclusively to FacMed graduate students. These services are entirely confidential and the wait for an appointment will not be very long at all. Please reach out if you are in need of support.



UPDATES FROM IGSA

Hello fellow Immunologists!

Get ready for another exciting season with a return of our departmental athletes, the IMMUNODOMINATORS! Our volleyball team is prepped and ready to go for another semester of competitive intramurals. We have also been waitlisted for dodgeball intramurals, so keep an eye out on your emails in case we get admitted to the league! Games are held on Monday evenings at the Athletic Center. No matter if you're a professional player or just starting out, everyone is welcome to drop by and play!

We will also be having a return of our departmental tradition: the annual Wonderland trip! Signups have already gone out and the big day is coming up fast on Sunday, October 1st. The sunny weather appears to be holding strong and we hope everyone has a great time at Canada's number one amusement park. It's a great opportunity to kick back and relax (or let out some stress by screaming at the top of a 245ft drop)!

Elections are also currently in progress to determine the 2023-2024 IGSA team. The platforms from interested candidates have already been submitted and our Annual General Meeting (or Election Night) is going to be held on Wednesday, October 4th. Feel free to come out and support your fellow peers as they make their campaign speeches for their respective roles. Voting will begin right after Election Night for a period of one week, and the results will be announced via email to the entire department. We wish all the hopeful candidates best of luck!

Lastly, with the academic term now in full swing, we would like to extend an incredible thank you to all of those who have accompanied us through the past year. There have been ups and downs, celebrations, and goodbyes, but no matter what happened we were able to move forward with the camaraderie and support of our departmental community at our side. It was a great honor and pleasure to have served as your IGSA Co-Presidents, and we look forward to seeing what wonderful surprises the next IGSA team will bring. Thank you all for being a part of this incredible journey with us, and we hope your futures are all filled with significant data and great returns.

Signing off for the last time,

Bobby and Meggie
IGSA Co-Presidents 2022-2023



UPDATE FROM IMMSA

Hi Immunologists,

We trust that the start of this academic year has treated you well and that you've had the opportunity to make new friends and become more acquainted with our campus.

September was a month filled with excitement and successful events for the Immunology Students' Association (IMMSA). We were thrilled to see such enthusiastic participation in our in-person events, including the Clubs Fair, Mentorship Meetup, and the Welcome Back Lunch. Your support inspires us to continue fostering a warm and inclusive community within the Immunology Department.

As we step into October, we recognize that many of you will be immersed in exams and assignments. However, we encourage you to take breaks and explore engaging activities to rejuvenate your spirits.

Here's what we have in store for you this October:

1. Graduate School Seminar:

Are you considering pursuing a career in research? Join us for an insightful seminar where an academic or industrial professor will introduce their research or company. If you are interested or unsure of your post-grad career, make sure to join and chat with the professor 1-on-1! The professor may give you insights that will be very helpful in the future.

2. Mentorship Meetup:

The bond between mentors and mentees is a vital part of our community. In the spirit of fostering these relationships, we are excited to host another Mentorship Meetup this month. It's a chance for mentors and mentees to catch up, share experiences, and simply enjoy each other's company. With October being midterm season, it's also an excellent opportunity for mentees to seek guidance and study tips from their mentors and peers. Keep an eye on our social media channels for event specifics.

We understand that this month may be filled with academic commitments, but we hope you can find time to relax and recharge with your fellow immunology enthusiasts.

That wraps up our October events lineup. We believe in your ability to conquer the challenges of the upcoming exam season, and we can't wait to see you at our events!

Cheers,

Catherine Chi and Jason Yang
IMMSA Co-presidents 2023-2024 Immunology Students' Association (IMMSA)
Website: <https://immsauoft.com> | Instagram: @immsta



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