

# THE VULCAN LETTER

Voice of the UAB MSTP

MARCH 2018

## From the Editor:

*Paige Souder, GS-2*

Springtime is an unavoidable season of change. As temperatures rise (hopefully not too quickly) and nature blooms, we have a physical representation of the change happening in our own lives. Our MS4 students—both our MSTP students and the MD students I began my clinical education with 4 years (4 years?! ) ago—are anxiously awaiting their Match envelopes telling them where they will spend the next 3-7 years of their lives. MS2s are getting ready to take the test-which-must-not-be-named and transition to life as a graduate student, a time which is both liberating and infuriating. MD-PhD applicants are making pro-con lists to decide which program they want to dedicate the next 7-9 years of their lives to. This sounds like a long time right now, but it goes by so quickly. My spring came early this year,

when my PI announced in September that he was moving to Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, TX. I pulled up the deep roots I had laid in Birmingham, AL, selling my house and selling or giving away much of the stuff inside it, and headed west to finish my PhD starting this January. Through this whirlwind of change, one constant has been the UAB MSTP. From the administration, who worked with me to stay in our program and get financial/logistical matters settled, to my classmates and colleagues who are always a phone call away and are motivating me to explore my new city for when they come to visit, to the solid foundation the program sits on that has made it possible for me to do this. For these reasons, I anxiously await my return to UAB for clinical years and will always call Birmingham home.

## Supporting its Own

*Alana Jones, MS-1*

When I attended the student organization fair during orientation week, I, like most people, signed up for nearly every email list that caught my eye. I treated the fair like it was my only chance to get involved, and to be honest, sometimes I wish there was an “unsubscribe” link at the bottom of some of those emails. But my primary interest was the Student National Medical Association (SNMA), which was the undergraduate branch of the NMA, a professional organization founded by African Americans to include physicians of all backgrounds when the AMA did not admit non-white physicians. Little did I know that my work with SNMA would result in undertaking huge community outreach events and face-to-face interactions with highly ranked professionals ranging from the Mayor’s Chief of Staff to a former Surgeon General.



*Left to Right: Taylor Persons (MS1), Lamario Williams (MS1), David Satcher (former US Surgeon General), Melissa Jennings (MS1), Kristina Tymes-Wilbekin (MS2), Alana Jones (MS1), Rob Rosencrans (MS1)*

Kristina Tymes-Wilbekin, fellow MSTP student (MS2) and alumna of the PARAdiGM summer program, was the SNMA President. After executive board elections, Melissa (an MSTP student

*continued on pg 3*

# How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Program

Hayden Pacl, GS-1

When I was fifteen my world turned upside-down—somewhat literally—when I moved with my family to Australia. At this age, I was becoming increasingly aware of everything around me, from the fact that not everyone loves aerosol deodorant to the wisdom of elders. My dad is a palliative care specialist, and as his job was the impetus for our move, I was acutely aware of his practice. In talking with him I discovered a book written by an Australian palliative care nurse, titled *The Top 5 Regrets of the Dying*. The nurse, Bonnie Ware, interviewed many patients and categorized the major regrets of these patients. Over the past decade I have reflected on the regrets discussed in this book, and while they are all relevant, two stand out to me: “I wish I hadn’t worked so hard” and “I wish I had let myself be happier.” I am acutely aware that as MD-PhD students, we are somewhat predisposed to the risks of overworking and constant worry. While I know I would be unhappy pursuing nearly any other profession—apart from, perhaps, the competitive fields of tropical resort certification or beer tasting—I take steps every day to ensure my career is filled with as much happiness as it is hard work.

Most importantly, I have tried to enjoy my work as much as possible. In high school I noticed many of my friends saying “once we’re in college, things will be great!” They weren’t wrong, but in college, I heard the same friends ready to skip forward again: “I can’t wait to get to medical school; this pre-med stuff is useless.” With a certain irony, I find many medical students and graduate students thinking of past happiness in high school and college while they impatiently await residency. With the acute awareness that comes with the first glimpse of responsibility, however, it has dawned on me that I am living in the moments I will look back on with happiness and nostalgia. In this particular instance, I do not yet bear the burden of responsibility that lies ahead. My life as a med student or grad student may not be carefree, but we have limited liability. I am not ultimately responsible for the patient, and I do not bear the full brunt of the hypercompetitive funding environment or the ‘publish or perish’ reality of my mentors. The safety nets in place for us students allow me to navigate this incredible academic environment without the



need for precision created by years of experience, or the final responsibility borne by our mentors and preceptors. While I don’t plan on using these safety nets, nor is their use consequence free, they give me the confidence to

look up and around instead of down at the ground as I walk this stringent path. This simple confidence is enough to keep me planted in the present, enjoying a time I know I will miss.

I also have the need for something besides work to keep me going. In a basic sense, I need gratification that won’t take months and years of hard work to attain. Having something else to work toward and improve provides a balance for my sometimes lopsided life. It can replace obsessive thoughts of unfinished and upcoming work and preserves my passion for my academic interests, as well. Similarly, now seems like the right time to start checking things off of the bucket list—big or small. I signed up to spend nearly a decade in this program—and a prime decade at that! What might seem like perks of this program, such as the stipend and affordability of Birmingham, have enabled me to already start achieving life goals, many of which just can’t wait until I retire. Unfortunately, I find it tempting to wait until everything in my life is in order before taking time for myself. This may only be the case every few years, such as after Step 1, qualifying, or the thesis defense (which couldn’t seem farther away). By all means, I have and will continue to celebrate these events; but by accepting the discomfort that comes with leaving my work at an unnatural break, I know I can create opportunities to get out in the world and live how I want to live.

I’m not one for seeing work and play as mutually exclusive competing interests; rather I see them as a yin and yang that come together to as a larger picture. My life is ongoing—it doesn’t start at the end of the program. In our line of work there will always be another program, another deadline, another obligation that will vie for our time, so I am working now to mitigate that. At the end of the day I want #noregrets!

in my MS1 cohort) and I began working together with Kristina to plan SNMA's Annual Integrative Healthcare Summit (IHS), a one-day conference for underserved high school and college students interested in careers in health professions. We quickly recruited Lamario Williams, another MSTP in my cohort (notice a pattern yet?), to join the IHS committee. The result was a phenomenal conference that was the culmination of SNMA's Black History Month. Even though we endured five incredibly stressful months of planning, we awarded a \$2500 scholarship, organized a college fair with exhibitors from 15 programs, and facilitated interactive workshops and sessions for 150 students from underrepresented and underexposed backgrounds and their parents. We also had a record number of attendees at the IHS, including keynote speaker Dr. Erica Stringer-Reasor, a physician-scientist at UAB who recently won a prestigious grant from the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation. Did I mention we did this as full-time medical students?

When I began school, I did not think that I would have time for extracurricular activities and a personal life. After making the time for both of those, however, I found myself participating in projects that I enjoyed and meeting incredible

people. This included discussing health disparities with one of the top public health scholars in the world and former US Surgeon General, Dr. David Satcher, during his SNMA-organized visit to UAB. Dr. Satcher is an Alabama native and the first African American MD-PhD graduate from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. Birmingham mayor Randall Woodfin was so excited about his visit that, even though he was out of town, he sent his Chief of Staff to welcome Dr. Satcher back to Birmingham on his behalf. It was a pretty outstanding year, and the UAB MSTP went out of its way to be supportive simply because its students were involved, including attendance at the lecture with Dr. Satcher by Dr. Lorenz. The MSTP office was also available to us to print IHS conference badges and plan logistics. And multiple MSTP students who are not in SNMA supported our fundraisers and volunteered at the IHS. I've been at UAB for almost a year, and I've felt the tremendous support of my program, both from the administration and the students. This year has taught me that I can still be involved in the activities that interest me, and this program, in fact, seeks to nurture those interests even when they aren't directly related to our didactic training a physician-scientist.



“I’ve been at UAB almost a year, and I’ve felt the tremendous support of my program, both from the administration and the students.”

*-Alana Jones*



# Birmingham Brews

Joe Ladowski, GS-4

An underrated feature about Birmingham is the burgeoning brewery scene – local establishments where you can often kick back and enjoy live music and nationally renowned beers. Several of these establishments are dog- and kid-friendly and boast lawn games, food trucks, and are in close proximity to more traditional bars and social activities. Detailed here are six of the subjective top breweries:

## Cahaba Brewing

An open floor plan tap room adorned with reclaimed wood, a glass panel tank view, and most importantly: free ski ball. A good rotation of small batch experimental microbrews can be found here most nights.

♦**Recommended:** American Brown or Rye Imperial Stout



## Good People Brewing



A Birmingham staple and arguably the most famous of the breweries. Home of numerous award-winning IPAs, adjacent to Regions Field and Railroad Park, and sporting a large

outdoor area with corn hole and mega-Jenga, this is a must-visit location if you are bringing visitors to Birmingham.

♦**Recommended:** Snake Handler or Urban Farmer

## Avondale Brewing

Located in the heart of Avondale, this is the spot if you are trying to listen to music while enjoying your beers. Avondale Brewing has a large outdoor grass area with a giant stage and will occasionally bring in pretty decent music shows. The beers here are on the sweeter side, including the famous Spring Street Saison, but IPA fans can check out the



Battlefield IPA. Before, or after, be sure to hit up Post Office Pies (See “Community Spotlight: Avondale”).

♦**Recommended:** No Joka Mocha or Battlefield IPA

## TrimTab Brewing

This is more of a brewery first, tap room second venue. The indoor area isn’t as finished as its competitors (though a reno is underway this year), but there is normally a decent supply of local artwork on the walls. The draw of TrimTab is a low-key artsy/indie music scene with a healthy dose of eccentricity from events like “The Happening,” a monthly event featuring live performers including fire dancers and aerial gymnasts.

♦**Recommended:** Rye Brown and Imperial City



## Ghost Train Brewing

One of the more playful/festive breweries in Birmingham that is small but mighty. If you are lucky enough to buy tickets they host a tall bike joust contest that is pretty hysterical. More of an industrial feel inside but within walking distance of Pepper Place.

♦**Recommended:** Switchman IPA or Kaleidoscope Sour



## Red Hills Brewing

This space boasts a family friendly environment with a few gaming consoles set up in the corner and lawn games, located in the Homewood area next to Steel City Pops (another must visit location for anyone visiting Birmingham). The facility itself is mainly indoor with doors that open to expose to the Steel City Pop/Octane/Little Donkey parking lot. The beers are not as well renowned as other breweries but still solid.

♦**Recommended:** Homewood Hefeweizen or Tribute Session IPA.



# Community Spotlight: Avondale

Emily Hayward, MS-2

Throughout my time in Birmingham, I have found that one of the most unique aspects of the city lies in the areas that surround it. Most residents have discovered that there are many pockets of diversity and culture within the city, where each area (Highlands, Southside, Avondale, Crestwood) has an extraordinarily different “vibe.”

This article will feature one of my favorite places in the Greater Birmingham area: **Avondale**. The area began as a small settlement centered on a natural spring near Red Mountain (a long ridge/rock structure across the city) and was initially incorporated in 1889 as an independent suburb. The neighborhood was then officially annexed into Birmingham in 1910. In 2013, the Avondale area and particularly the strip of the neighborhood along **41st Street South**, was largely revitalized into the vibrant center that many students have come to enjoy today.

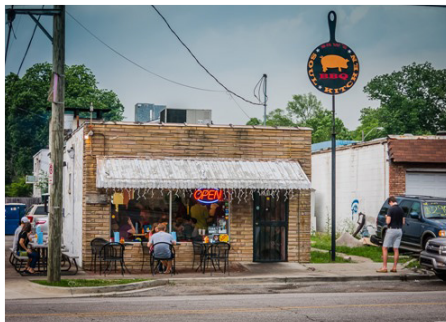
Sometimes, Avondale is the place to go when a few friends and I want to grab some coffee and study. At other times, it's a general area where a large group of medical students will plan to meet up since there's typically a little bit there for everyone to enjoy. While these types of outings may seem incredibly different, Avondale has the ingredients to make it all work.

## There's a lot of food ...

### Saw's Soul

#### Kitchen

♦A small BBQ joint with some of the best classics.



### Post Office Pies (POP)

♦A delicious pizza place with super yummy garlic cheese bread. Oftentimes, groups of med students will order some pizza from here and then carry it a few doors down to Avondale Brewery (see below).



### Melt

♦If you like cheese (or even if you don't) this is the place to be. If you really like cheese, try the “mac melt.” It's grilled cheese with multiple types of cheese, plus mac & cheese stuffed into the sandwich. One of my favorite desserts is also found here – Texas toast stuffed with



Nutella and banana, and drizzled with honey. Yum!

### Wasabi Juan's

♦One of my favorite restaurants in the city. An Asian-Mexican fusion, Wasabi Juan's brings the concept of the “sushi burrito” to Birmingham. Their 4:20 nachos, an appetizer that can serve as a full meal, are my favorite: a base of Doritos covered in spicy tuna, avocado, spicy mayo, and sweet unagi sauce.



## Some incredible coffee ...

### Satellite

♦An eclectic, fun shop with a few old arcade games, video games (Mario Kart, anyone?!), and excellent homemade doughnuts.

Doubles as a nighttime bar (under the pseudonym Saturn, see below) with swanky drinks



continued on pg 7



# Accessible Mental Healthcare

*Shreya Kashyap, MS-2*

I find myself at one the most challenging points of my MSTP career: gearing up for the ultimate test of time...STEP 1. While racking my brain for the mechanism of the antibiotic tetracycline or the pathophysiology of McCune-Albright syndrome, I sometimes lose track of why we are all here in the first place. It is easy to forget the reason we decided to embark on this journey, with all of its trials and tribulations. It is easy to let the sacrifices take the spotlight, and to forget to nourish the passion that got you here in the first place.

It is for these reasons that I cherish the time I have spent with Equal Access Birmingham (EAB), UAB School of Medicine's student-run free clinic dedicated to serving the homeless and underserved populations in the Greater Birmingham area. I have served as the co-coordinator of the EAB Mental Health Clinic (EAB MHC) over the past academic year, and it has been an incredible experience. EAB MHC is almost four years old now and has grown considerably since its conception, now taking referrals from clinics, shelters and counseling practices all across the state of Alabama.

Medical students have the opportunity to sign up for volunteer shifts with EAB at the beginning of each academic semester. On the day of clinic, students are taught how to take basic vital signs and a comprehensive mental health history. Many times, patients are just thankful to have a safe space to talk about their struggles with mental health. For medical students, this is a great opportunity to remind us of the world outside the classroom, and more importantly, what the classroom is truly preparing us for. Many students have told me that the EAB MHC has helped them practice history taking skills (listening actively, asking open ended questions, asking difficult questions, etc.) that are taught in the introductory clinical medicine course as part of the preclinical curriculum. During clinic, volunteering psychiatrists guide students through a

critical evaluation of their exam findings and help students with an assessment and plan of action. EAB fundraisers and the UAB School of Medicine have generously financed the EAB dispensary at no cost to patients. All in all, EAB MHC addresses a severe need for affordable mental health care in the state of Alabama, and contributes to the development of empathetic and compassionate physicians.

EAB MHC has been a huge part of my preclinical education at UAB. Running a clinic is an eye-opening and humbling experience at the same time. You quickly realize that you cannot procrastinate, and that multiple people can be affected by the decisions that you make. A clinic coordinator can be likened to the conductor of an orchestra: someone who brings together a team of incredibly talented and motivated people, be it musicians or medical students and psychiatrists, to create something beautiful. Over the past year my co-coordinator and I have made numerous pre- and post-appointment phone calls, and helped many patients receive not only medical care but also access to services for the under- or un-insured. Through this experience, I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of our patients very well. There is no way to describe the feeling when a patient expresses his or her gratitude to you. Being directly involved with and responsible for the healthcare of patients at EAB MHC has taught me more about myself than I could ever have imagined.

EAB encompasses everything that I think is at the heart of medicine: service, integrity, and compassion. Not only is volunteering at EAB a noble and selfless way to spend a Saturday or Sunday or Wednesday, but it is also necessary, I think, to get you through those long nights at the library racking your brain about the mechanism of action of tetracycline. If nothing else, I'm pretty sure I've got all the psychiatric medications down.

**“There is no way to describe the feeling when a patient expresses his or her gratitude to you.”** *-Shreya Kashyap*

## Community Spotlight: Avondale, cont.

(Old Fashioned Tuesdays), less swanky drinks (Slurpies), and live music.

### The Abbey

♦ My personal favorite place in the whole city. Coffees, milk teas, excellent pastries, and the most welcoming employees in Birmingham. It normally feels pretty empty and quiet, so it's a great place to study.



### Places to grab a drink . . .

#### Avondale Brewery



♦ As mentioned in Birmingham Brews (pg. 4), this is one of the more popular places that students tend to meet up if they want to be around some restaurants

and other activities as well. The wonderful thing about Avondale is that the businesses there really seem to support each other, and the brewery exemplifies that as they allow you to bring in your Post Office Pies pizza or Saws BBQ to chow down while you imbibe.

### The Sour Room

♦ Right next door to Wasabi Juan's, the Sour Room is an extension of Avondale Brewery specializing in sour beers—just in case you're ever wanting to cool down that Asian-Mexican food with a unique drink, or want to drink beer without actually drinking beer.



### Fun places in the evening . . .

#### Saturn:

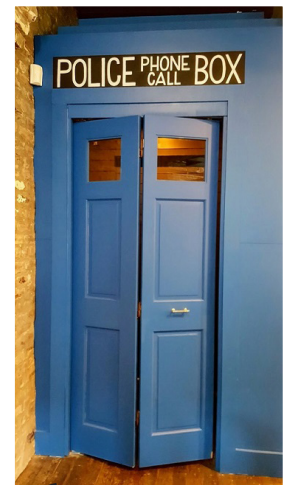
♦ This is actually in the same building as Satellite, the retro-style coffee shop mentioned earlier. At night, however, the door to a large room next door opens, and the "fun" begins. There are oftentimes comedy shows, trivia nights, concerts (including

established indie acts and free concerts featuring local artists), and more at Saturn. If you're looking for a unique event in the city, there's a good chance it's being held here!

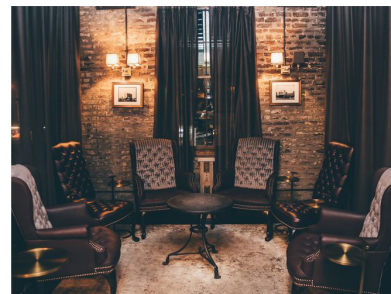


### The Marble Ring

♦ This is one of the cooler attractions around for those looking for something different. It's a 1920s style speakeasy, named after an old and mysterious Zelda Fitzgerald quote. So prepare to travel through time!!! In order to find this hidden venue, you actually have to travel up a flight of stairs and cut through Hot Diggity Dogs, a hotdog place (also super delicious) near the corner of Avondale. You then have



to use a phone outside of The Marble Ring to see if there are any seats available inside. Once you enter, you are thrust back into the '20s (so be sure to dress for the occasion!),



with a large chandelier and appropriate music and décor.

### A venue to check out the scenery (or a movie!) . . .

#### Avondale Park

♦ This park at the end of the street is beautiful, and many residents will walk their dogs here or just enjoy the scenery before grabbing a bite to eat somewhere in town. Additionally, there is a large amphitheater here (pictured). One of my first events with other MSTP students in the program was to gather here for a free movie night on a big

continued on pg 10

## Student Sketch: Steve Witte, MS-4

Paige Souder, GS-2

Our next Student Sketch features MS4, Steve Witte, who is unique in that he was a dual scholar in the UAB MSTP and the NIH Oxford-Cambridge Scholars (OxCam) program. Steve grew up in Grand Rapids, MI and attended college at Central Michigan University (CMU) in Mount Pleasant. Read on to learn about his adventures in Michigan, Cambridge (England), Washington D.C., and Birmingham, as well as his future plans for a residency in Internal Medicine and Rheumatology.

**Paige:** What was your research experience prior to applying to MSTP programs?

**Steve:** At CMU, I started out my freshman year studying the evolution of euglenoids, a single-celled organism, using DNA sequencing, bioinformatics, and phylogenetic analyses. For the next three years of college, I worked on stem cell transplantation therapies for Huntington's disease. I still have a scar on my finger from getting bitten by a rat! I also did an internship at the NIH in Washington, D.C. one summer through the NIH Intramural Summer Internship Program and really liked my experience at the NIH. It was very inspiring to work with famous scientists at a place where so many important discoveries in medicine were made. There are lots of scientists and staff scientists who taught me wet lab and big data analysis skills, and it was also a very good place for networking. It was this experience that first inspired me to go into rheumatology.

**Paige:** That seems like a very diverse and extensive research background! Why did you decide to pursue MSTP programs?

**Steve:** The main reason I applied to MSTP programs was be well-trained to do translational research. I want a career that will allow me to both see patients as well as help solve important medical problems through research.

**Paige:** And why did you choose the UAB MSTP?

**Steve:** UAB has a very good community of immunologists and rheumatologists. And I thought the program was very well run. The leadership was



top-notch and provided all the support I would need to be successful. I liked the culture and student community and thought it was a better fit than some of the other programs I interviewed at.

**Paige:** How was Birmingham compared to Michigan?

**Steve:** Almost as different as England compared to the US. The culture and architecture and weather are all pretty different. It's interesting [in a good way].

**Paige:** Your PhD experience was unique in that you completed your training in not one, but two, off-site locations (Cambridge and the NIH). How did end up in the OxCam program and what was different about your Ph.D requirements?

**Steve:** I applied to the OxCam program the same year that I applied to medical school and MSTP programs. I was accepted into UAB and the OxCam program, and I talked to Robin [Dr. Robin Lorenz, director of the UAB MSTP] and the director of OxCam and we worked out the details. My PhD is from the University of Cambridge, and the British system is a little different from how things are done in the USA. Splitting my time between Cambridge and the NIH also allowed me to broaden my skills.

**Paige:** Can you speak more on your experience in the OxCam program?

**Steve:** I was able to get plugged in to the



## Student Sketch

European research community, and I also worked at the NIH as a graduate student, which is a rather unique experience, since most researchers at the NIH are post-doctoral. I picked my two labs to allow me to learn complementary skills and complete a more complex research project. In Cambridge, during the first half of my training, I worked for Dr. Allan Bradley. He was the first to isolate pluripotent stem cells from mouse blastocysts in Martin Evans's lab the early 80s [who later won the Nobel Prize] and really advanced the field of genetic engineering in eukaryotic cells. I also picked up a third co-mentor at the European Bioinformatics Institute - Dr. Anton Enright - a bioinformatician from whom I learned genomics and how to do high-performance computing. Back at the NIH, I worked in Dr. John O'Shea's lab, who is a Rheumatologist that pioneered the use of JAK inhibitors. In his lab I learned experimental immunology techniques, studying cytokine immunoregulation and lymphocyte biology in the context of autoimmunity.

**Paige:** What was it like having multiple PhD mentors?

**Steve:** My mentors worked in different fields, so they talked to each other pretty infrequently, and it was usually my responsibility to make sure we were all on the same page. My time was split 50/50 between my two main labs at Cambridge and NIH, but I also spent 6 months at my third co-mentor's lab at the EBI.

**Paige:** What was it like living in England?

**Steve:** Cambridge, about 45 minutes from London, is a small university city with several surrounding English villages. I went to the second oldest college at the University of Cambridge, Clare College, which was endowed about 700 years ago by Lady Elizabeth de Clare a.k.a. "The Black Widow," who became the wealthiest individual in Spain when she was alive and had a reputation for marrying very wealthy men who would mysteriously die a few months later (so she accumulated wealth overtime). Jim Watson also studied there when he and Francis Crick discovered the molecular structure of DNA. It was like living in a castle with everything made of stone. It was a cool experience at first, but things like heat and Wi-Fi didn't work so well. I opted to move out after my first term and lived in a flat with a few friends in the center of Cambridge. Cambridge is a very good place for someone pursuing a scholarly career to

spend a couple of years. Moving to Cambridge was tricky at first because I had to get a student visa, and the bureaucracy was a hurdle. However, the university had a lot of assistance and guidance for international students and there were a lot of social events so it was easy to meet people and make friends. Getting around was a bit different too, since most people use bikes to get around town or the train to travel further distances.

**Paige:** Did you get to travel while you were in Europe, and do you have any plans to return?

**Steve:** The flights over there were very inexpensive because the airlines compete with the bullet trains. I managed to visit over 20 European countries, in addition to exploring London. In Scotland, we visited distilleries and saw the Lochs (but not the Loch Ness monster). My favorite country I visited was Norway. They had the best scenery I've ever seen in my life, and I got to drive by the #1 World Heritage Site. And, of course, the fjords. I traveled with my some of my friends to their home countries, allowing me the opportunity to see countries from a local perspective and avoid the touristy areas.

I may return for a future May Ball, which is a formal British event and tradition that started at Oxford and Cambridge. At the end of the academic year, they throw a swanky ball that starts in the evening and extends overnight with live music and performances, food, dancing, and fireworks.

**Paige:** How was the move back to the States to complete your PhD at the NIH in Washington, D.C.?

**Steve:** I was very happy to return to D.C. I had a lot of fun there as an undergraduate. The neighborhood I lived in, Kalorama Heights, is actually the same neighborhood that the Obamas moved to after they left office. I got a great deal on an apartment there.

**Paige:** What is an elevator pitch of your thesis project?

**Steve:** I investigated the factors governing CD4+ T helper fate decision and macrophage cell activation, to better understand inflammatory responses and find novel approaches for treating autoimmune disorders.

**Paige:** How was the transition back to Birmingham and medical school?

*continued on pg 10*

## Community Spotlight (cont.)



projector, under the stars and with blankets to lay on!

Again, the best thing about each of these places is that they're really all within the stretch of maybe two

blocks. Most of it is right next door or across the street. This little neighborhood works well for those who like to plan an entire evening of fun ahead of time without having to travel to multiple locations and risk losing a big group along the way. But it's also great for groups with people who are flat-out indecisive and won't know what they want until you all get there.

More often than not, just driving down to Avondale won't disappoint!



## Student Sketch (cont.)

**Steve:** The transition to Birmingham was great. A lot of my friends were still living in Birmingham, because they were Residents or were still students. The transition to clinic was definitely a challenge because I had forgotten a lot of medical knowledge. It was a lot of work during the first month to catch up, but other than that it's really been an amazing experience.

**Paige:** And now you've almost made it! How has the interview trail for residency been treating you?

**Steve:** The interview trail was a lot of fun. I met a lot of people who want to do similar things as me, and learned a lot about different institutes and the amazing work being done around the country.

**Paige:** What are your plans for residency?

**Steve:** Internal Medicine and then fellowship training in Rheumatology. I want to do a traditional physician-scientist career with 80% of my time doing research and 20% doing clinical work. I would like to study the pathogenesis of autoimmune diseases and develop drugs that target that pathogenesis. Specifically, I want to work on developing precision

## Thoughts for Applicants: UnABridged MSTP Blog Articles

Head on over to our MSTP blog ([unabridgedmstp.wordpress.com](http://unabridgedmstp.wordpress.com)) to check out the Application Corner and more relevant posts as you prepare to transition into an MD-PhD program!

- ♦ **Acceptances and the Post-Interview Period**
- ♦ **Why UAB MSTP?**
- ♦ **A Week in the Life of an MS-1: How do classes work?**
- ♦ **Reflections from our MS1s: The White Coat Ceremony Experience**
- ♦ **Unique Pre-Clinical Opportunities: EAB**
- ♦ **Exam Week, as told by Michael Scott**
- ♦ **How to Crush the Transition to Medical School, as told by Michael Scott**
- ♦ **Settling in to the MSTP: Finding New Values and Strengths**
- ♦ **Choosing Your MD-PhD School List**
- ♦ **Overview and Timeline for MD-PhD Applications**

medicine for rheumatologic diseases.

**Paige:** Very cool, and focused! Looking back on your time in the program, what was your favorite year or phase of the MSTP?

**Steve:** That's a tough question. I really liked learning the basic medical sciences and about how systems in the body work, but I also enjoyed doing research and returning to work in clinic. I don't think I can pick a favorite.

**Paige:** Do you have any advice for other trainees in the program or hoping to start MD/PhD training?

**Steve:** The earlier you can determine what you want to work on and what area of medicine you go into, the easier things will be. Don't try to keep all of the options available.

**Paige:** And finally, what do you do for fun?

**Steve:** I like to play piano, hike, and paint. For painting, I mostly use oil paints and like doing landscapes and abstract pieces.



## Dissertations

Congratulations to our new doctors!

**Joe Ladowski**, PhD PBMM

**Jon Lockhart**, PhD BSSB

## Events

**Physician Scientist Social Hour** March 8 in the MSTP/PSDO Office from 4:30-5:30 PM. Surgery-themed!

**Match Day** is March 16! Good luck to our MS4s!

**APSA National Meeting** is April 20-22 in Chicago, IL.

## Volunteer Spotlight

**Stephen Gragg, GS-3**

♦Griffin Society

"Stephen is a joy to work with. organized and on top of it, he always goes above and beyond. For the past few years, he has made sure that NEJM cases run smoothly, and he makes a concerted effort to diversify the case presentations and faculty facilitators to ensure the best experience for all students."

-Sushma Boppa (GS2) Griffin Society Committee Chair



Lamario Williams (MS1) featured in Birmingham Times for his volunteer work in teen mentoring



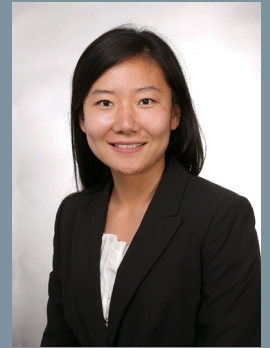
Blake Frey's (MS2) 1st author pub on HIV cross-presentation featured by Journal of Immunology



Mika Guzman (MS4) wins Karlsson (MS4) wins 2018 UAB President's Diversity Champion Award

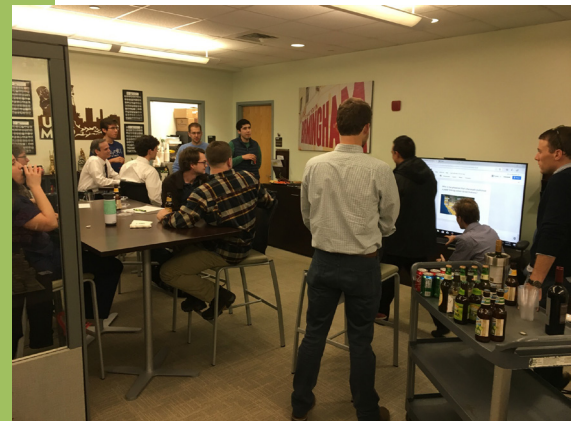


Mark Pepin (GS3) granted F30 from NHLBI for his project on metabolic memory in heart failure



Muhan Hu (GS3) granted F30 from NICHD for her project on the role of TGFb in fertilization

"I want a career that will allow me to both see patients as well as help solve important medical problems through research." -Steve Witte



Getting our trivia game on at the Physician Scientist Social Hour held by APSA and the PSDO

## Publications

- ♦ **Joshua D. Bernstock**, Daniel G. Ye, Allison Griffin, Yang-ja Lee, John Lynch, Lawrence L. Latour, Gregory K. Friedman, Dragan Maric, and John M Hallenbeck. Cerebral Ischemia Increases Small Ubiquitin-Like Modifier Conjugation within Human Penumbra Tissue: Radiological-Pathological Correlation. CASE REPORT ARTICLE Front. Neurol., 12 January 2018 | <https://doi.org/10.3389/fneur.2017.00738>.
- ♦ Brewer RA, Collins HE, **Berry RD**, Brahma MK, Tirado BA, Peliciari-Garcia RA, Stanley HL, Wende AR, Taegtmeyer H, Rajasekaran NS, Darley-Usmar V, Zhang J, Frank SJ, Chatham JC, Young ME. Temporal partitioning of adaptive responses of the murine heart to fasting. Life Sci. 2018 Mar 15;197:30-39. doi: 10.1016/j.lfs.2018.01.031. Epub 2018 Feb 1. PMID: 29410090.
- ♦ **Fox BM**, Becker BK, Loria AS, Hyndman KA, Jin C, Clark H, Johns R, Yanagisawa M, Pollock DM, Pollock JS. Acute Pressor Response to Psychosocial Stress Is Dependent on Endothelium-Derived Endothelin-1. J Am Heart Assoc. 2018 Feb 16;7(4). pii: e007863. doi: 10.1161/JAHA.117.007863. PMID: 29453306.
- ♦ Myers RM, Kimberly RP, Roberts BS, **Hardigan AA**, Moore DE, Jones AL, Fitzgerald MB, Cooper GM, Wilcox CM, **Ramaker RC**. Discovery and validation of circulating biomarkers of colorectal adenoma by high-depth small RNA sequencing. Clin Cancer Res. 2018 Feb 28. pii: clincanres.1960.2017. doi: 10.1158/1078-0432.CCR-17-1960. [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 29490987.
- ♦ Cooper DKC, Gaston R, Eckhoff D, **Ladowski J**, Yamamoto T, Wang L, Iwase H, Hara H, Tector M, Tector AJ. Xenotransplantation-the current status and prospects. Br Med Bull. 2017 Dec 8. doi: 10.1093/bmb/ldx043. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 29228112.
- ♦ **Ma E**, Fu Y, Garvey WT. Relationship of Circulating miRNAs with Insulin Sensitivity and Associated Metabolic Risk Factors in Humans. Metab Syndr Relat Disord. 2018 Jan 23. doi: 10.1089/met.2017.0101. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 29360415.
- ♦ Roberts BM, Lavin KM, Many GM, Thalacker-Mercer A, Merritt EK, Scott Bickel C, **Mayhew DL**, Craig Tuggle S, Cross JM, Kosek DJ, Petrella JK, Brown CJ, Hunter GR, Windham ST, Allman RM, Bamman MM. Human neuromuscular aging: Sex differences revealed at the myocellular level. Exp Gerontol. 2018 Feb 23. pii: S0531-5565(17)30911-7. doi: 10.1016/j.exger.2018.02.023. [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 29481967.
- ♦ **Olson KM**, Tang J, Brown L, Press CG, Geisler WM. HLA-DQB1\*06 is a risk marker for chlamydia reinfection in African American women. Genes Immun. 2018 Feb 26. doi: 10.1038/s41435-018-0014-3. [Epub ahead of print]. PMID: 29483614.
- ♦ **Peabody JE**, Shei RJ, Bermingham BM, Phillips SE, Turner B, Rowe SM, Solomon GM. Seeing Cilia: Imaging Modalities for Ciliary Motion and Clinical Connections. Am J Physiol Lung Cell Mol Physiol. 2018 Mar 1. doi: 10.1152/ajplung.00556.2017. [Epub ahead of print] PMID: 29493257.
- ♦ Musoke P, Hatcher A, **Rogers AJ**, Achiro L, Bukusi E, Darbes L, Kwenza Z, Oyaro P, Weke E, Turan JM. Men's hopes, fears and challenges in engagement in perinatal health and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV in rural Kenya. Cult Health Sex. 2018 Feb 21;1-14. doi:



1825 University Blvd, SHEL 121  
Birmingham, AL 35294-2182  
[www.mstp.uab.edu](http://www.mstp.uab.edu)  
[unabridgedmstp.wordpress.com](http://unabridgedmstp.wordpress.com)



## Contributors

Alana Jones	Joe Ladowski
Hayden Pacl	Emily Hayward
Shreya Kashyap	Paige Souder