

UAB Civitan International Research Center Research Awards 2019-2020

On October 3, 2019 faculty, students, staff and members of the Civitan International Board of Directors convened to present the annual Civitan International Research Center Emerging Scholar, Whit Mallory Research Fellow and Civitan McNulty Scientist awards. All of these awards provide significant financial support for new research on developmental disabilities and recognize scientists for their efforts in this field.

The McNulty Civitan Scientist Award

This major award recognizes an established faculty member who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in research on developmental disabilities. This year's winner is **Dr. Kristina Visscher**, an associate professor in the Department of Neurobiology and co-director of the Civitan International Neuroimaging Laboratory. She is focused on the human brain's ability to process information from its environment flexibly and the underlying mechanisms that support this ability. In addition to this award from the CIRC, Kristina was also recently recognized by the Girl Scouts of America for being a 2019 Woman of Distinction, making contributions to the community through civic, academic, or professional efforts and for being an exemplary role model for today's girls.



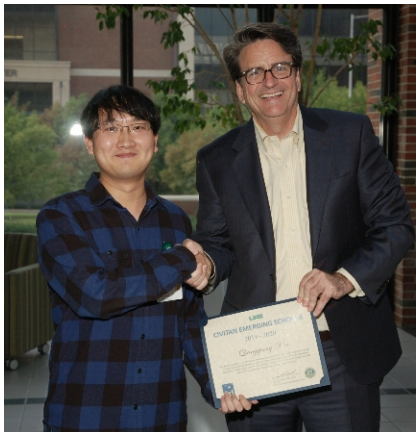
Kristina Visscher (right) Civitan McNulty Scientist, is shown with Jo Ann O'toole, Executive Officer of the Foundation for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. The FCIDD helps fund Civitan Emerging Scholar and Civitan Scientist awards as well as other major programs at the CIRC.



Emerging Scholar Nicholas Boyle is shown here with Civitan International President Patsy Perkal.

Civitan Emerging Scholars

Nicholas Boyle earned the Emerging Scholar Award to support his project “Targeting Progranulin and GCase in Lysosomal Storage Disease”. He did his undergraduate work at UAB, graduating *summa cum laude*, and was accepted into the highly competitive Medical Scientist Training program. He works in the lab of Dr. Erik Roberson in the Department of Neurology. Dr. Roberson said of Boyle: ‘Nicholas is a talented young graduate student who has proposed a unique project that will better our understanding of both NCL and Gaucher Disease and will potentially broaden the horizon of therapeutic avenues for each of these diseases.’

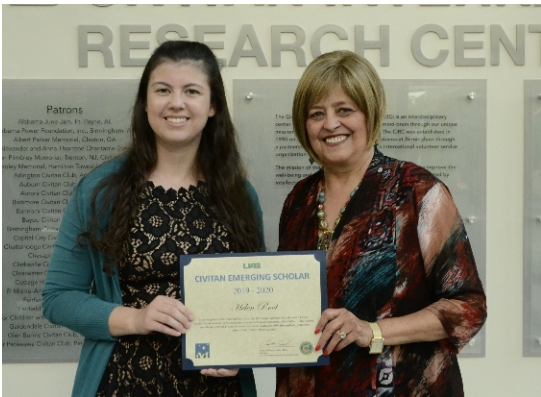


Emerging Scholar Qiangqiang Xia receives the award from CIRC director Dr. Craig Powell. Qiang is a member of Dr. Powell's lab.

Qiangqiang Xia, Ph.D. earned the Emerging Scholar Award for his project: “Understanding the role of Cu13, an autism gene, in Mammalian Neurons”. Qiang works in the lab of Dr. Craig Powell, Chair of the Department of Neurology and Director of the UAB CIRC. Powell said of Qiang: “Qiang’s work is actively involved in translating findings in genetic animal models of autism into potential therapeutic approaches for patients. His future is very bright and I am convinced he has potential to develop into a leading figure in Neuroscience.”

Whit Mallory Research Fellow

Helen Root is in the UAB Medical/Clinical Psychology program and is a trainee in the UAB Leader Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities program. She received the award for her project: “Presence and Phenotype of Autism Spectrum Disorder within Pitt-Hopkins Syndrome”. She has a specific interest in the expression of symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder within populations of children with genetic disorders and syndromes. She works with Sarah O’Kelley, Ph.D., the 2018-2019 McNulty Scientist Award recipient. Dr. Kelley says of Helen: “Helen is clearly an emerging leader in the field of neurodevelopmental disabilities.”



Emerging Scholar Helen Root (left) poses here with Civitan International President Patsy Perkal.

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Funds provided by Civitan International and Civitan Clubs around the world are crucial to research at the Civitan International Research Center. Along with the Foundation for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities they help make our annual research awards to outstanding students and faculty possible.



Members of the Civitan International Board of Directors attended the awards event. Present were:

Front row right to left: Marcia Dechand, Region Seven Director, Topeka, KS; Julia Floyd, Region One Director, Cullman, AL; Bob Jones, Immediate Past President, Concord, NC; Patsy Perkal, International President, Aurora, CO; Pat McKinney, Region Five Director, Orillia, Ontario, Canada; Ann McCarty, Region Eight Director, Pocatello, ID; Dianne Hansard, Region Two Director, Cumming, GA; Mogens Brun, European Division Director, Ålbæk, Denmark

Back row right to left: Michael Morgan, Region Six Director, Maryville, TN; Scarlet Thompson, Civitan International Executive Vice President; Tony Workman, Region Three Senior Director; Frank Kelley, President-Elect, Saint Robert, MO; Carol Wolters, Region Four Director, Columbus, OH; Dr. Craig Powell, director UAB CIRC.



Staff members from Civitan International are shown here with CIRC director Dr. Craig Powell (center-back row).



Faculty, students, staff and Civitans attended the awards reception held in the CIRC atrium.



CIRC director Dr. Craig Powell (center) is shown here with Civitan International President Patsy Perkal (left) and Jo Ann O'toole, Executive Officer of the Foundation for Children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.