The first weeks of September have seen an ironic, but welcome, return of summer weather coincident with undergraduate students to campus. Welcome back to our returning level III and IV students and welcome aboard to our entering class of level II students and to our new graduate students.

The summer has seen a flurry of activity here on campus with the name of the Department officially changing to “Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences” on July 1st. We believe this new name more accurately reflects the current research interests of the Department and is consistent with our plan for strategic growth. Another milestone achieved this summer was the long awaited completion of the Michael G. DeGroote Centre for Learning and Discovery (MDCL). The top floors are now being populated by faculty, staff and students from the Departments of Pathology and Molecular Medicine and Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences with the relocation of several labs from the Health Sciences Centre and the Life Sciences Building. The first floor of the building is comprised of beautiful new lecture halls, and the third floor is also dedicated to education with a number of small meeting rooms and classrooms and the new home of the BHSc program. The paint is barely dry though as construction of a new addition is beginning. This will include a gorgeous new atrium that promises to be a focal point for students, staff and faculty.

On the research side, we learned that an application from Drs. David Andrews and John Hassell to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation and the Ontario Innovation Trust for new laboratories for state-of-the-art (and beyond!) high content cell imaging and genetic profiling was approved. The total value of the project is approximately $11 million and this will bring outstanding equipment and new labs to the Department. We all look forward to seeing the vision of research excellence and cutting edge science behind this proposal come to fruition.

The new term promises to be an exciting and busy one with continued efforts to develop a new and innovative undergraduate education program, a new web site coming on line, several research grant deadlines, and some time set aside as a community to bring professors, staff and students together. Look to our web site for details of new events, seminars and other information.

Have a great term!

Gerard D. Wright, Chair
We begin the new academic year of 2004 by welcoming the Biochemistry class of 2007! And to welcome back all of our undergraduate students, the Department of Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences is hosting its first annual Welcome BBQ on September 16, 2004. Mingling with faculty as they flip burgers, serve drinks and hand out T-shirts bearing the Department's new name is the order of the day! We would like to thank the businesses who have helped support this event through generous donations:

- Beckman Coulter Canada Inc.
- Invitrogen Canada Inc.
- Diamed Lab Supplies Inc.
- VWR International
- Fisher Scientific
- Brinkman Instruments (Canada) Ltd.
- Mandel Scientific Co. Inc.

As a continuation of the Imperial Oil Learning Innovation Grant awarded to the Department to establish active and experiential learning in undergraduate courses, we invested time during the summer months in the redesign of our Biochemistry Laboratory course, Biochem 3L03. The course has been updated with emphasis on scientific writing, basic laboratory skills including pipetting, preparation of solutions and buffers, and two three-week projects which expose students to current techniques in molecular biology.

In the upcoming academic year we look forward to offering four new courses: Biochem 2C03, Inquiry in Biochemistry I; Biochem 3A03, Biochemical Research Practice, a course that will allow students to conduct a research project during the fall, winter or summer term; Biochem 3Y03, Introduction to Computational Biochemistry, an introduction to bioinformatics, biochemical databases, biological data mining and analysis tools, and an excellent precursor to Biochem 4YO3, a senior course in Computational Biology; Biochem 4LL3, a Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Laboratory that will be offered in conjunction with the Department of Chemical Engineering for both our Biotechnology and Genetic Engineering Specialization and Chemical Engineering students.

On October 21st the Department will host its “Twists and Turns” event for the third year as part of the Engineering and Science Olympics. Over 900 high school students will converge on campus to participate in a variety of events to compete for McMaster University entrance awards. We will again be looking for volunteers to assist in the event!

On behalf of all of the faculty and staff, welcome, and we wish you much success!

Michelle MacDonald
Undergraduate Coordinator

We are three exchange students from Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich, Germany and we came to McMaster in May 2004 to do a six month research project for our diploma thesis in the Baron, Nodwell and Brown labs. In order to receive a German degree in biology, you have to attend courses and lectures in general biology for two years that have to be completed with the pre-diploma e.g. exams in biology, chemistry, physics and an oral exam in a subject of your choice. Afterwards you are able to select one major (in our case, microbiology) and three minor subjects for the following three years. After passing four final exams the last step is to do a nine month diploma thesis project in your major subject usually consisting of six months of work in a lab and three months for writing a thesis.

Apart from working in the groups mentioned above we have tried to get to know as much of Canada as possible, including trips to various sights as well as playing softball for the Biochemistry team “The Mighty Chondria” (thank you guys for having us play on the team!).

We are really enjoying our stay in Hamilton and it is pretty safe to say that coming to Canada for our diploma thesis was easily the best thing we could have done.

We would like to thank our PIs, Dr. Baron, Dr. Nodwell and Dr. Brown for providing us with the opportunity to do highly interesting research in the fields of biochemistry and biology.

Christine Kaimer, Claudia Ederer, Tobias Hohenauer
Graduate Program Update

Efforts to increase our intake of new graduate students have paid off; this September, 23 new M.Sc. Candidates, a new Departmental record, joined our laboratories. The overall pool of qualified applicants was also much larger than in previous years and indeed, we turned away many well-qualified students. This all bodes extremely well for continued growth and health of the Department.

There are relatively few changes planned for the coming year, rather, we are hoping to consolidate those we’ve made already. Previously we had instituted a requirement for all M.Sc. Level students planning to take the transfer exam to have three meetings with their supervisory committees during their first 18 months of graduate school. This has been met with enthusiastic approval from most faculty members and students and will be extended to all M.Sc. Level students from now on. The graduate committee is also endeavoring to organize the documentation of program rules for both students and staff as the numerous changes of the past few years have created some confusion.

This year’s Freeman award winners will be announced at Monday’s graduate seminar (September 20, 12:30 pm in HSC 1A5).

Four of our students, William Chiuman (Li lab), Mark Pereira (Brown lab), Dmitri Satsoura (Fradin/Andrews labs) and Nancy Sheeler (Nodwell lab) tried and passed the transfer exam this past year. Rachael Summerfield (Junop lab) defended her M.Sc. Thesis and two students defended their Ph.D. theses: David Piluso (Capone lab) and Matthew Annis (Andrews lab). Congratulations and good luck to you all!

Justin Nodwell, Graduate Coordinator

BBS Graduate Students Association Update

The Biochemistry and Biomedical Sciences Graduate Student Association aims to enhance the graduate school experience from both an educational and social perspective. Through our activities and events, we endeavor not only to provide students with an opportunity to get to know each other, but also to acknowledge excellence in research, and keep students as informed as possible of career opportunities and upcoming deadlines.

The members of the BBS GSA Executive for 2004-2005 are:

Vanessa D’Costa (Wright lab)
Gladys de Leon (Wright lab)
Marcus Eccleston (Nodwell lab)
Simon McManus (Li lab)
Omar Hassani (Capone lab)
Chris Delvecchio (Capone lab)
Emma Griffiths (Gupta lab)
Ayesha Ahmed (Trigatti lab)
Kevin Cheung (Ananth lab)
Iva Bruhova (Zhorov lab)

If you have any ideas, suggestions or concerns please feel free to contact us.

For Fall 2004 we have a number of exciting activities planned to welcome new students to the Department. Upcoming events include a rock-climbing excursion in September, a Halloween trip to Niagara Falls in October, a casino night in November and Paycheck Thursdays every month at the Phoenix. Hope to see you all there!

Biochemistry & Biomedical Sciences GSA Executive

BBS SOFTBALL TOURNAMENT CHAMPIONS!

Lisa Kush, Michael D’Elia, Tamara O’Connor, Marcus Eccleston and Denis Daigle were members of the 2004 Mary Keyes League A-division Mixed 3-pitch Softball Phoenix Cup Tournament winning team called “Funnilingus”, part of a ragtag group of players from five Departments on campus (Biochemistry, Immunology, Philosophy, Psychology and Anthropology). Following a loss in their first match versus last year’s champions, Funnilingus finished round robin play with a 2 and 1 record which guaranteed them a spot in the semi-finals. Semi-final play saw Funnilingus defeat a rival squad, Be the Ball, handily and a sweet victory against the Anal Chemist under rainy conditions in the final match shored up the teams bid for the cup. Congratulations to all the team members, and especially Lisa Kush as she has formally announced her retirement from the sport!
Faculty Highlights

David Andrews. David has agreed to be on the editorial board of the journal BMC Cell Biology.

Jonathan Bramson, Karen Mossman, Mark Loeb and Jim Mahoney were recently awarded a large research contract from NIH to study the population genetics of West Nile virus infection. The budget will be approximately $13M and they will be looking for single nucleotide polymorphisms that are associated with susceptibility to neuroinvasive West Nile virus infection. This program will be carried in collaboration with the McGill Genome Center, the University Health Network and a number of partners across the U.S.

Alba Guarné gave an invited talk at the ACA (American Crystallographic Association) in July. She had a paper accepted in the EMBO Journal in August and she has accepted 2 new M.Sc. students into her lab (Shirley Ng and Lisa Naylor).

Giuseppe Melacini was awarded two operating grants, one from NSERC and the other from CIHR. He was also appointed to serve on the scientific review committee of the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada.

Evert Nieboer and his colleagues at the University of Tromso in Norway had a letter published in the July 23rd issue of Science on “Cancer Risk and Salmon Intake”. It reports never-before published epidemiologic data on cancer risk in relation to salmon consumption in Norway. He was also a contributor to the successful McMaster University “AllerGen” Network Centre of Excellence application by Judah Denburg.

Gerry Wright After a very productive graduate career, Dr. David Boehr left us to take on a postdoctoral position at the Scripps Institute in San Diego, CA. New graduate students Tushar Shakya, Laura Thompson and Jen Baysarowich joined the lab in September. The lab published papers in Infection and Immunity, Biochemistry, Chemistry and Biology, and Bioorganic and Medicinal Chemistry.

Staff vs. Students Softball Match

The 2nd Annual Departmental Staff vs. Students softball game was a huge success! The rivalry between the two teams escalated as the staff exacted their revenge on the students for losing last year’s inaugural contest. The staff came out in full force to almost double the score of the students this year! Peace was made at the Phoenix following the game.

L to R: Chair, Gerry Wright, Biology Prof, Herb Schellhorn; Laura Rossi (Tech); back row: Murray Junop, Assist Prof., Lisa Kush (admin assist), Naveen Kumar (PDF)

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Alumni—Register Online at http://www.mcmaster.ca/ua/alumni so you can keep in touch with former classmates, find lost friends or network with other alumni.

Science Career Services is looking for presenters for Career Nights. If you are interested in sharing your career experiences with current students then we want to hear from you! This is a great way to give back to the University, and more specifically, the students. It doesn’t take much time—we ask that presentations be no longer than 15 min and the format is informal. Please email scs@mcmaster.ca or call Susan Fekecs, Science Career Services Coordinator at 905-525-9140 x27921. SCS also offers resume & interview panels, company information sessions, free online job postings for employers and much more. Visit our website at http://www.science.mcmaster.ca/scs/