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A Review of BBS 300: Seminar Presentation Skills

By: Nina Reiniger (G5)

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As Time Goes By: Reflections on staying connected as an upper year BBS student

By: Mike Boyce (G4)

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The End is Near

By: Renée Ned

Aaah, one of the most anticipated moments in graduate school-getting your "box" checked. You've toiled long hours, read hundreds of articles, and performed some experiments so many times you can do them in your sleep. Finally, your thesis advisory committee (TAC) has decided that you're practically done with experiments and are ready to begin that final stage of your graduate career - writing your thesis. Wonderful! So, how do you prepare now that the end is so near?

Faculty Profiles:

John Collier | Frederick Roth

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Recent BBS Student Publications:

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Wet and Wild

By: Mike Malecki

Summertime makes us all want to get wet. Of course, you can stand under the lab safety shower to accomplish this, but there might be better alternatives. Swimming is a great way to get out, exercise, and, if the location is right, work on your tan. After all, why deal with the obscenely orange look of tanning lotion when you can get a real (albeit slight) brown hue? As such, I have compiled a list of a couple places to go for a dip sometime in these warm months.

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Ghaffari, S.*, **Jagani, Z.*** (G4), Kitidis, C., Lodish, H.F., Khosravi-Far, R. (2003) Cytokines and BCR-ABL mediate suppression of TRAIL-induced apoptosis through inhibition of forkhead FOXO3a transcription factor. Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A. May 15.

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Liu, C.L. (G2), Schreiber, S.L., Bernstein, B.E. (2003). Development and validation of a T7 based linear amplification for genomic DNA. BMC Genomics May 9, 4:19.

Miyamoto, D.T.* (G3), Perlman, Z.E.*, Mitchison, T.J., and Shirasu-Hiza, M. (2003). Dynamics of the mitotic spindle - potential therapeutic targets. In Progress in Cell Cycle Research, 5 (Meijer, L., Jezequel, A., and Roberge, M., eds.). Plenum Press: New York, 349-360.

Nam, Y. (G4), Weng, A. P., Aster, J. C., and Blacklow, S. C. (2003). "Structural Requirements for Assembly of the CSL-Intracellular Notch1-Mastermind-like 1 Transcriptional Activation Complex." J Biol Chem 278(23): 21232-21239.

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Srinivasan, D.G. (recent grad), **Fisk, R.M.** (recent grad), Xu H., and van den Heuvel S., (2003) A complex of LIN-5 and GPR proteins regulates G protein signaling and spindle function in C. elegans. Genes and Development 17, 1225-1239.

Announcements:

Ross Fredenburg (G3) is pleased to announce the birth of his daughter, Elizabeth Genevieve, on April 26, 2003. She weighed 9lbs, 3oz and was measured at 20.5" long. The

proud father tells us, "mother and daughter are doing fabulously, and I believe that she is the smartest and most beautiful baby ever born."

Jason Heindl (G1) is engaged to Karen Wiesenauer of Ann Arbor, MI. They plan to wed in June, 2004.

Marina Kaufman (G2) was engaged to Craig Holz, who works at Brown Brothers Harriman & Co. in Boston.

Kathleen Lindahl (G3) and Michael Pfaff were married on May 10 at the Memorial Church in Cambridge. Kathy would appreciate your restraint from calling her "Kaffy Pfaffie".

Kenna Mills (G4) got engaged to Wyatt Shaw on April 12th. They will be getting married in Amsterdam, New York on August 30, 2003.

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In response to requests from past students to learn more about presentation skills, the BBS program designed BBS 300, which was given as a required course for G4's for the first time this fall. The course was run by Pat D'Amore, Bob Kingston, Cliff Tabin, and Fred Winston. Each student was required to give a 20-minute general lab talk. After each talk, comments were given by both students and faculty on strengths and weaknesses of the presentation.

In my section, there were many great presentations. These presentations and the follow-up discussions left me with a

few pointers for making a successful presentation. Here are a few of the topics we touched on:

- Keep your slides simple! Everything that shows up on your slide has to be explained, so if it isn't worth taking the time to explain, leave it off! An easy trap to fall into is to use a figure from a paper as a slide. Figures are usually too complicated for this format and should be broken down into parts that are easier for an audience to digest.
- Use colors, font styles and font sizes that can be easily seen. Remember that colors and fonts sometimes come out differently when they are projected by the LCD projector. Viewing your presentation on the projector before your talk will help you to catch these problems.
- Refer back to the big picture to help your audience put the work in context. This can be done using a model or diagram that is updated after each section of data.
- Before jumping into your data, hook your audience by telling them why they should care about the work you are about to present. Think about why you found the topic exciting to work on in the first place and try to convey that enthusiasm.
- Talk slowly! It's natural to speed up when you are nervous. Try to be aware of this and make pauses between thoughts.

Reviews of the course from students were mixed. Some students found the course very valuable while others found it a waste of time. Some students felt that their time would have been better spent doing a presentation on their own thesis topic. The faculty felt that it was important to create a new presentation for the class in order to really focus on presentation skills. While most G4's and above already have a presentation of their thesis work prepared, presenting these talks without modifications, misses the point of the course.

I spoke with Cliff Tabin about his perspective on this year's course. He said that for the most part, the presentations were very good, which might indicate that a required course

might not be necessary. He was disappointed in the decrease in attendance over the course of the semester, where less than a quarter of the students were present at the last few sessions. This resulted in loss of valuable feedback and less support for these presenters.

Based on the feedback from students and what the faculty observed in the classrooms, they have decided to drop the requirement for all G4's to take this course (G3's take note: this means you!). It will still be offered as an option for students (G4 and above) to take in the fall of 2003.

Whether or not you choose to take the course, it is important to find opportunities to present your work, as it is a valuable skill to learn no matter where your future career leads you. Although as a G5, I was not required to take BBS 300, I was glad that I did. I picked up several good tips to improve my presentations, which I've already incorporated into my talks. While the course will not appeal to everyone, I hope that all BBS students take advantage of whatever forum will help them work on these skills.

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Faculty Profiles:

John Collier | Frederick Roth

John Collier

Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics
By: Y. Raymond Shao (G3)

John Collier

Research Interest: Studying structure function relationships of bacterial toxins, such as diphtheria toxin and anthrax toxin, and understanding their effects on eukaryotic cells.

Beginnings: Collier was born in Tipton, Oklahoma, where his father was a doctor. His family moved to Fort Worth, Texas, when he was ten, so he spent the rest of his youth in Texas. Influenced by his family, Collier was always interested in science and medicine. Collier went to Rice University to study Biology. He eventually switched to Math, but found he didn't like solving proofs, so he quickly switched back to Biology. During college, Collier worked in Allen Enders' lab studying why Armadillos always have identical quadruplets. He found that he liked the atmosphere of science, and his advisor persuaded him to apply to one graduate school in addition to the many medical schools he applied. This led to a very difficult decision for him, but he finally decided to try graduate school for one year and see if

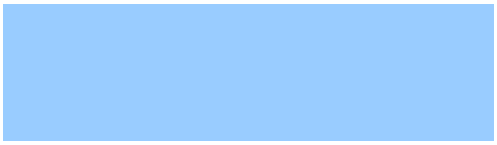
he liked it.

Graduate School and Beyond: Collier went to graduate school in the Biological Labs at Harvard. He failed the first exam in genetics, which gave him great doubt that he was "Harvard material," but he did well on the other exams, so it wasn't a big problem. He joined the lab of Alwin Max Pappenheimer, where he studied the action of diphtheria toxin. Providing hope for all struggling graduate students, he says that during his first three years, he did not generate any interesting results. Then things began working suddenly, and he generated all of the data for his thesis within six months. In the 50's and 60's, it was very much the fashion to do research in Europe for a couple of years, so Collier went to work with Alfred Tissières and Pierre Spahr in a new molecular biology institute at University of Geneva, Switzerland. There he identified the cellular target of diphtheria toxin - protein synthesis Elongation Factor 2. Collier started as an Assistant Professor in UCLA in 1966, and moved to Harvard in 1984. He served as the head of DMS between 1988 and 1995.

Outside Activities: Collier and his wife enjoy hiking in White Mountains, Blue Hills, and Mount Monadnock. They have a half-an-acre garden, with a fountain pool and plants such as Korean Mountain Ash and Dogwoods. They enjoy spending part of their summer in Woods Hole on the Cape, the place where Collier first met his wife. Collier and his wife have three daughters, and four grandchildren, and they have a big family get-together every week. He enjoys classical music and blues. As for movies, Collier enjoys foreign films, and one of his favorites is Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon.

What was his favorite journey? A two-week trip to China in the early summer of 2001. It was arranged by a former postdoc of Collier's, who also accompanied him. He thought the experience was very intriguing and the food was absolutely fantastic. In fact, he says he'd make the trip again just for the food.

Which historical figures does he most admire? Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, for their courage, compassion,



and leadership.

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If you are like me, you will probably have many things to juggle at this stage. These may include writing, finishing experiments, securing a post-Ph.D. job, and eventually moving. Speaking as one who is currently going through this process, I have found there is one key to progressing efficiently from getting your box checked to finishing your thesis and moving on: planning.

1) Make a timeline. My first bit of advice is to write out a timeline for yourself. Know how long it should reasonably take for you to complete writing your thesis. This largely depends on how much you've published so far, your writing style, and how long you still have to spend at the bench. When you do start writing, begin with the easiest sections first (i.e., Materials & Methods and Results). Plan by week or

by month what chapters, or parts of chapters, you will have written. Finish chapters on work that has been completed but won't be published. Fortunately, any publications can serve as chapters unto themselves and be put into the thesis in reprint form. Plan your experiments in the same way, giving yourself the necessary leeway we all have grown to understand is required in science. And remember, even though it can be overwhelming, you can begin to write even though you are still running experiments.

2) Check into DMS forms and deadlines. Read the appropriate sections of the "DMS Academic Requirements" which you should have received in the mail (DMS has extra copies if you need one), and schedule a meeting with Dee Groom in the DMS office. She will give you a packet of information on what paperwork needs to be filed (such as the Application for Degree, the Proposed Examiners Form, and the Program Approval Form), the deadlines you need to meet (for each of the 3 "degree" times-in November, March, and June), the GSAS guidelines on format of the thesis, etc. Coordinating with someone in the DMS office is critical for making sure you don't miss a step on the way to graduation and should help you determine the necessary deadlines in order to defend by your ideal date.

3) Organize your defense committee early. Start gathering names of potential defense committee members and their schedules as soon as possible. The "DMS Academic Requirements" packet outlines who can be on your committee. Ask appropriate faculty at least a few months in advance of when you plan to defend and set the defense date. If you think planning a TAC meeting is difficult, getting a defense date can be harder. I've found it downright painful trying to coordinate the schedules of so many busy people, particularly for the end of summer.

4) Prepare for life after graduation. Remember to reserve some time to write cover letters, update your resume/CV, and get letters of recommendation if you are still job searching. Leave some time in your planning for visiting schools/institutions/companies. For academic postdoc applications, this process should be started ~ 1 year prior to when you plan to finish, while for other jobs 6-9 months may

be sufficient.

In the end, just like the bulk of your graduate work, your progress toward finishing your thesis is largely self-determined. It can take 6 months or more than a year. Setbacks will happen. Laziness may set in. If you are motivated to finish, a good plan and time management are your best tools for getting out in a timely manner without totally stressing out. So, congrats, "the end is near." Now get back to work!

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A Quick Guide to Personal Safety

By: BBS Bulletin Staff

In general, crime rates tend to increase once the weather warms up, as Sergeant Wilmon Chipman of the Harvard University Police Department notes. Many crimes, however, are preventable - all it takes is a few sensible and simple precautions. As a starting point, students should be aware of the safety resources available to them.

All of this information, including safety tips, is also available at the HUPD website at www.hupd.harvard.edu.

Safety Services

Longwood

- Longwood Walking Escort Service (432-1379)
  - Available 24 hours a day. A Security guard will escort caller to the nearest MBTA stop or to the individual's vehicle.
- Free Taxi Escort Service from Vanderbilt Hall and FXB (HSPH) lobby
  - 6 PM to 5 AM. The service is free within one mile of Longwood campus.

Cambridge

- Cambridge Safety Walk (496-5656)
  - This service is provided by a student volunteer organization that provides a walking escort in the Cambridge campus area typically over routes not traveled by the shuttle bus. Student escorts carry cellular phones and operate out of the Science Center. Safety Walk escorts are provided from 10:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. Sundays through Thursdays.
- Shuttle Bus and Evening Shuttle Van Service for Cambridge and Allston area (495-0400)
  - The Evening Shuttle Van Service, a supplement to the Shuttle Bus, is designed to provide transportation throughout the Cambridge and Allston campuses. Rides are free and available on request between 7:00 p. m. and 3:00 a.m. Calls are taken until 2:40 a.m. This service may require up to a 30-minute wait.

Information on Crime

- Crime Statistics
  - Crime statistics are available for both Longwood and Cambridge Campuses.
    - Access the information at www.hupd.harvard.edu/crime_statistics.php
- Community Advisory distribution list
  - This list sends out community advisories after a serious or violent crime is reported to the Department or local police departments and includes advisories from both the Cambridge and Longwood areas.
    - Sign up at www.hupd.harvard.edu/overview.php
- Weekly police log
  - The Weekly Police Log is circulated electronically as part of the Department's ongoing effort to provide information about incidents occurring on campus and to promote awareness. This is not the official police log.
    - Access the log at www.hupd.harvard.edu/

weekly_log.php

Courses

- Women's Self Defense Courses
  - These courses are offered both in Cambridge and Longwood.
    - Find out more at www.hupd.harvard.edu/prevention_defense.php or by calling 495-1795.
- Safety Talks
  - These talks are given by the HUPD and are intended to provide an overview of how individuals can protect themselves to minimize their chances of becoming a victim. In addition, the talks also provide an overview of the resources provided by the HUPD.
    - Sign up at www.hupd.harvard.edu/about_community.php

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Frederick Roth

Assistant Professor of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology

By: Roy Auty (G5)

Frederick Roth

Research Interest: Analyzing functional genomics data to predict characteristics of genes

Beginnings: Frederick "Fritz" Roth was born in San Francisco, but he spent most of his formative years in Salt Lake City, Utah. He recalls being an experimentalist from a very early age. When his father, a bacterial geneticist, took a sabbatical at CSHL, seven-year old Roth attempted to turn one of the springs into Cold Spring Reservoir by means of some quick-drying cement with a couple of other CSHL "lab brats." Scientific collaboration continued as he stole dry ice from Barbara McClintock's lab to put in soapy water in Dad's lab. It was around this time Roth decided he wanted to be a scientist. Roth went to U.C. Berkeley, and began there as a physics major. He spent two summers in physics labs working on solid state physics, cosmic ray and gamma ray detectors. The former involved fashioning superconductors

by polishing crystals until they were completely smooth. This had to be done by hand using what Roth described as "the Karate Kid's 'wax on, wax off' technique" and also as "not a high point." A summer in Jasper Rine's lab "spending more time mastering sterile technique than accomplishing yeast genetics," and another at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography studying the role of the inner ear in prey detection by fish, led him to add a second major in biology. He leaves chemistry to his wife, a synthetic organic chemist whom he met at Berkeley.

Graduate School and Beyond: After a stint in industry-programming computers and making DNA at Operon Technologies-Roth joined the biophysics graduate program at Harvard. He rotated with Jack Szostak, Dan Jay and George Church, who became his thesis advisor. He says "George could dream up 10 years of work in about 5 minutes", so a critical skill became the ability to prioritize ideas. Roth believes this skill is increasingly important "as the functional genomics field begins to realize that they can't do all possible experiments". After graduating, Roth joined Millenium Pharmaceuticals to do bioinformatics with a much larger data set. After working there for two years, he realized that the best way to set your own research agenda was to run your own lab. He joined the faculty at Harvard Medical School in 2000. Although Roth's group has a wet lab, they'd much rather convince collaborators to do the pipetting to test their predictions and limit wet work to the lab's annual Poolside Lab Meeting. One recent collaboration happened to be with his father and resulted in their first joint publication (which had nothing to do with soapy carbon dioxide bubbles).

Hobbies: Roth swapped Quake and Civilization for his three children, his biggest ongoing hobby. He also enjoys playing board games at the lab's annual Game Day and showing people who don't enjoy playing Frisbee the error of their ways.

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As Time Goes By: Reflections on staying connected as an upper year BBS student

By: Mike Boyce (G4)

How do you stay in touch with your classmates when you become an upper-year graduate student? I suspect the answer is simple: you don't. At least, you don't stay in the same sort of touch you did at the start of grad school. After we join labs and begin to worry in earnest about our projects, our worlds contract, focusing less on whom to sit with in Genetics 201 and more on our lab work, labmates, and a smaller circle of friends. My own class struck me as remarkably friendly and cohesive during our days as G1s, often going out en masse to bars or restaurants on the weekend (or, really, on any day at all). These days, though, I'm more likely to grab coffee with a friend who works near my lab than I am to descend on Pravda with sixteen fellow fourth-years.

Ironically, when I sent out a message to the G4 e-mail list about this article, asking people what strategies they've used to stay in touch with each other, I received three responses from my 60 or so classmates: two were answers to my question and the other was a note essentially saying, "Haven't seen you in a few months, we should get together sometime." A degree of this social dispersion is probably inevitable at any graduate program, where your attention

becomes laser-focused on your own work as you progress towards your PhD. And, I would guess, the effect may be exacerbated in the specific case of BBS, whose students are spread over hundreds of balkanized labs across the greater Boston area.

But is this gradual loss of touch a bad thing? Should we really worry if upper-year students focus more on their own labs and a close group of friends than on daily contact with their 60-odd classmates? I don't think so. Much as I enjoyed the days of trying to win lobsters at Whiskey's with dozens of other G1's, I doubt that I'd make much progress in my PhD if that were a regular feature of my week. Also, just because we upper-year students lose daily touch with most of our classmates doesn't mean we've lost affection for them. True, the march of time might leave us with fewer opportunities to hang out than we'd like, but many students nevertheless enthusiastically seize those opportunities when they do arise. This is where certain events that draw relatively large groups of people are important - they serve as reunions of sorts, making a time and place for busy friends to meet and catch up with each other in a group. Luckily, we have a dedicated program staff and student body who organize several of these events each year, from the BBS retreat and the annual Barbeque, to Data Club and recruiting events at the Fogg. To my mind, these reunion-style events are the best and most realistic way for entire classes to stay in contact throughout graduate school, provided we're willing to take time out from our schedules and take advantage of these opportunities to reconnect.

Apparently, at least some of my classmates agree with this assessment: a few days after my e-mail to the G4 class, two people wrote back to invite everyone to hang out together at the Pig one evening, saying they had been inspired by this mention of upper-years staying in touch.

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Wet and Wild

By: Mike Malecki

Summertime makes us all want to get wet. Of course, you can stand under the lab safety shower to accomplish this, but there might be better alternatives. Swimming is a great way to get out, exercise, and, if the location is right, work on your tan. After all, why deal with the obscenely orange look of tanning lotion when you can get a real (albeit slight) brown hue? As such, I have compiled a list of a couple places to go for a dip sometime in these warm months.

For the fitness geek, Harvard's main aquatics facility is Blodgett Pool, located just across from Harvard Square in Allston. The pool is accessible by car or bus. Your bussing options are taking the M2 to Harvard Square and walking about 5 minutes, or taking the dreaded 66 bus directly to the pool. The pool itself is Olympic size, and is open in both short course and long course, depending on the time. Blodgett pool is open for lap swim from 10am-2:15pm and 5-10pm. For more information, go to their website at http://www.athletics.harvard.edu/aquatics/.

The outdoorsy may enjoy Walden Pond, located in Concord. A popular swimming destination, the park also provides canoeing, fishing and hiking. The parks service restricts the number of visitors at any given time, so calling ahead to check on availability is suggested. Parking is $5 per day.

More information is available at: http://www.state.ma.us/dem/parks/wldn.htm or by calling 978-369-3254.

Sandy Beach - part of the Mystic Lakes Reservation - is located just north of Arlington, and is good for freshwater swimming. The park also contains facilities for picnicking and bicycle trails. For information on Sandy Beach call 617-622-5230, or check out http://www.state.ma.us/mdc/mystic.htm for more general park info.

There are a number of local pools in the Boston area available for recreational swimming. A couple are Reilly Memorial Pool in Cleveland Circle (617-277-7822) and Veterans Memorial Pool (617-354-9381), located on Memorial Drive across the river from BU. A more complete listing can be found at http://www.state.ma.us/mdc/activ.htm#pool.

No list of places to swim would be complete without some reference to Revere Beach, America's first public beach. Located conveniently on the Blue Line (Revere Beach or Wonderland stops), Revere Beach is the place to be seen for the fashion-conscious grad student. Check out daily water quality info at http://travel.boston.com/seasons/summer/beaches/beach_daily_updates/index.html

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