



Duke Microbiome Center

December 2024 DMC Newsletter

This quarterly newsletter is provided by the Duke Microbiome Center (DMC) to inform the Duke University community about activities, resources, news, funding and educational opportunities, and recent highlights in the microbiome sciences at Duke and beyond. To suggest items for this newsletter or to add someone to our newsletter listserv, please email [Cindy Wicker](mailto:Cindy.Wicker@duke.edu). For further information on the DMC, please visit the DMC [website](https://www.duke.edu/microbiome).

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A Message from the Director

Dear DMC Community:



As we arrive at the end of the year, I hope that each of you will find time to reflect on the growth and successes that you may have experienced, as well as the challenges and setbacks you might have faced over the last year. All of those experiences make us better prepared to tackle the new year ahead. Below you'll find several important announcements about the DMC leadership team, DMC events, and other Center news.

- **Everyone:** Please consider nominating a colleague for the [DMC Diversity Matters Award](#)! The nomination deadline is January 8, and information about the nomination process and prior awardees can be accessed [here](#).
- **Everyone:** Please save the date of **23 May 2025** for the annual [NC Microbiome Symposium](#) to be held at NCBC in RTP. The keynote speaker will be [Dr. Ami Bhatt from Stanford University](#). Please mark your calendars to attend and to submit poster abstracts.
- **Faculty:** Please mark your calendars for the next [DMC faculty meetings](#) in 2025 on **February 24, May 19 and August 25**. All meetings will be at 1:00 PM in-person in 4122 MSRB3 with a Zoom option.

The DMC exists to support you, so as always, please let us know how we can better support your work.

Sincerely on behalf of the DMC leadership team,

John Rawls
Director, Duke Microbiome Center

DMC Leadership Team Updates

The DMC expresses its deep gratitude and best wishes to [Dr. Matthew Kelly](#) who will be departing Duke to start a new position in February 2025 as the Section Chief of Infectious Diseases at Arkansas Children's. Dr. Kelly has served on the DMC leadership team since 2022, first as an Associate Director then as Co-Director since 2023. He has contributed to the leadership, management, and resourcing of the DMC in innumerable ways, and will be certainly missed. We all wish him the very best in his new endeavours at Arkansas Children's.

The DMC also welcomes [Dr. Neil Surana](#) to the DMC Leadership Team as our newest Associate Director. Dr. Surana is an Assistant Professor of Pediatrics (Infectious Diseases) and also serves as the Scientific Director of the Duke Gnotobiotic Core.

Looking ahead into 2026, the DMC leadership team will consist of John Rawls (Director), Lawrence David, Claudia Gunsch, Dana Hunt, Julia Oh, Nazema Siddiqui, Neil Surana (Associate Directors), Pixu Shi, and Jason Arnold (Assistant Directors).

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DMC Diversity Matters Award 2025 - nomination deadline is January 8

Nominations are now open for the annual [DMC's "Diversity Matters Award"](#) which is designed to recognize individuals within DMC laboratories that have made significant advances towards [the DMC's goals to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion within Duke and our broader scientific and geographic communities](#). Nominees should have contributed to one or more of the ends stated above, and thereby advancing diversity, equity, and/or inclusion. For more information about this award and previous awardees, go [here](#).

- **Application deadline:** 5:00PM EST on Wednesday January 8th, 2025
- **Eligibility of nominee:** Any student, fellow, faculty, or staff employed at Duke University in a DMC laboratory for at least 6 months prior to the nomination deadline.
- **Eligibility of nominator:** Any student, fellow, faculty, or staff at Duke University. The nominator does not necessarily need to be affiliated with the DMC. Self-nominations are not permitted.
- **Nomination package contents:**
 - Nomination letter (2 pages max) written by the nominator describing the specific ways the nominee has contributed to the ends above;
 - Letter of support (2 pages max) written by someone other than the nominator. This referee does not necessarily need to be employed at Duke University or affiliated with the DMC;
 - The nominee's full CV.

Nomination packages should be emailed to Cindy Wicker by the January 8 deadline above. ***Please consider nominating a deserving colleague for this important award this year!***

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[Heitman Elected to National Academy of Medicine](#)

Joseph Heitman, MD, PhD, has been elected to the National Academy of Medicine (NAM). Election to the Academy is considered one of the highest honors in the fields of health and medicine and recognizes individuals who have demonstrated outstanding professional achievement and commitment to service. Click [here](#) to read the official School of Medicine announcement in its entirety. The National Academy of Medicine's announcement can be found [here](#).

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Dr. Neil Surana receives 2024 Nature Awards Microbiome Accelerator



Dr. Neil Surana was one of four recipients of the 2024 Nature Awards Microbiome Accelerator. This recognition includes funding to support the commercialization of his research, attendance at an immersive residential training program (with commercialization experts, microbiome leaders, Springer Nature editors and cross-functional representatives from Seed Health), the opportunity to engage with Seed Health to explore mutual interests in forming a collaboration and accessing further funding.

Read more [here](#).

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[Duke Research Summit](#)



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[Duke Research Summit](#) is a showcase of the groundbreaking research and innovation happening across the institution. This full day event will bring together *thought leaders*, *researchers*, and *innovators* to explore transformative solutions for today's most pressing challenges, including climate, social determinants of health, and other topics impacting local and global communities. Please consider attending!

DMC Faculty participate in "Development 101" workshop

The DMC partnered with the offices of Duke Health Development and Alumni Affairs, Duke Science and Technology (DST) to provide a faculty workshop entitled "Development 101". The meeting covered various aspects of Duke University's development and alumni affairs, including the organization of teams, alumni data management, and fundraising strategies. Discussions focused on engaging alumni, accessing and updating donor information, and identifying potential donors, with an emphasis on aligning proposals with foundation goals and cultivating relationships. The team also explored strategies for communicating the importance of specific projects, such as the Microbiome Center, and discussed the upcoming public phase of the Duke campaign set to begin in 2025. If any DMC faculty would like to have access to the recording of this meeting or the slides presented, please email Cynthia Wicker.

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[New Requests for Proposals from the Duke Office of Interdisciplinary Studies](#)

The Duke Office of Interdisciplinary Studies has issued two new interesting internal RFPs to support interdisciplinary research and education at Duke. If you are interested in either of these mechanisms, please contact anyone on the DMC Leadership Team.

- [Multiyear Interdisciplinary Hubs](#)
 - Seeking term-limited interdisciplinary “hubs” in areas that can galvanize emerging intellectual connections, research collaborations and links to external partners, as well as create compelling pathways of inquiry for students at all levels. Hubs are intended to support broad interdisciplinary areas of inquiry, as opposed to singular research projects. Hubs should envision a mix of research, education and network-building activities, but each hub has latitude to decide which mix of activities will best catalyze its work.
 - **Deadline: December 13, 2024** (letters of intent); final proposals, if invited, due March 19, 2025

- [Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Collaboratives](#)
 - Seeking new Interdisciplinary Graduate Education Collaboratives (IGECs) for Ph.D. students. IGECs will provide opportunities for students to engage with a cohort outside of their primary intellectual community through interdisciplinary seminars, working groups, and projects. IGECs can be organized by a range of units partnering together but those units must include at least one Ph.D. program and must span at least two [academic divisions of The Graduate School](#). Students will graduate with a Ph.D. in their degree program and an interdisciplinary certificate specific to their IGEC.
 - **Deadline: March 19**

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News & Awards

Students:

- [Paola Ramos Irizarry Wins Best Poster Award at ISFUS 2024](#)

Faculty/Alumni:

- [David Honored With Schmidt Sciences Polymath Award](#)
- [Gusa Featured in "Duke Today"](#)
- [Letourneau, David Explore How Gut Microbes May Help Chew Your Food](#)
- [Surana Receives 2024 Nature Awards Microbiome Accelerator](#)

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DMC Microbiome Office Hours

Open to anyone within the Duke Microbiome Center community – at any background level.

This event is designed to provide real-time assistance with any aspect of ongoing or upcoming microbiome research projects.

Topic experts in **bioinformatics**, **biostatistics**, **microbiology**, and **general microbiome-science** will be in attendance each week, so feel free to bring any questions/problems that you have.

Event Location: MSRB3 Conference Room 4122

Event Time: Friday 2:30pm – 3:30pm

Office Hours for December - 6th and 20th

After winter holidays an updated schedule will be sent to Microbiome Center email list!

For more info, or any questions regarding office hours, please contact jason.arnold@duke.edu.

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[DMC 2024-2025 Research-in-Progress Series](#)

The DMC Research-in-Progress Series highlights ongoing research in the Duke Microbiome Center.

These informal seminars take place on the Third Friday of each month **11:45am and 1:30pm in MSRB3 – Room 1125**.

Zoom link will be available for those who cannot attend in person.

[See this month's event here!](#)

Lunch is provided, and talks begin promptly at 12:00pm.

If you are interested in presenting, or want to see our tentative presenter list, please check the [scheduling calendar](#).

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Funding Opportunities through the DMC

[DMC Rolling Voucher Program:](#)

Duke University has established shared resources that avail diverse technologies to Duke investigators that can be used to advance microbiome science. To facilitate DMC investigators' access to these shared resources, particularly for microbiome projects that are not yet externally funded, we are pleased to announce the DMC Rolling Voucher Program. This rolling voucher program offers vouchers in amounts ranging up to \$10,000. Each DMC faculty member cannot receive more than \$10,000 of funds through this mechanism within any two year period. These vouchers are redeemable at any of the [Duke University School of Medicine's many core facilities](#), and applicants are required to contact the directors of these shared resources to develop project budgets. Learn more [here](#).

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Upcoming DMC Meetings

DMC Faculty Meetings: The next Faculty meeting will be Monday, February 24, 2025 at 1:00 PM in-person in 4122 MSRB3 with a Zoom option.

Please mark your calendars!

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Highlighted Microbiome Funding Opportunities

- **Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Leveraging Microbial Exposure for Improving Mouse Models of Human Immunity:** <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-AI-24-078.html>
- **Human Virome Program: Developing novel and innovative tools to interrogate and annotate the human virome (U01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed):** <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-24-009.html>
- **Enhancing Mechanistic Research on Precision Probiotic Therapies (R61/R33 Clinical Trial Optional):** <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-25->

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- **Enhancing Mechanistic Research on Precision Probiotic Therapies (R33 Clinical Trial Optional):** <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-25-210.html>
- **Microbial-based Cancer Imaging and Therapy - Bugs as Drugs (R01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed):** <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-25-107.html>
- **Microbial-based Cancer Imaging and Therapy - Bugs as Drugs (R21 Clinical Trial Not Allowed):** <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-25-108.html>

See more microbiome funding opportunities [here](#)

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Highlights of Recent DMC Publications

Names of primary DMC faculty authors are bolded.

Şimşek, E; Kim, K; Lu, J; Silver, A; Luo, N; Lee, CT; **You, L** (2024) "A 'rich-get-richer' mechanism drives patchy dynamics and resistance evolution in antibiotic-treated bacteria" *Molecular Systems Biology* (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1634871>)

Popowitch, E. B., Boiditswe, S. C., Patel, M. Z., Aquino, J. N., Sozat, A. K., Caiazzo, A. J., Maldonada-Barragan, A., **Hurst, J. H.**, **Kelly, M. S.** (2024). *Dolosigranulum savutiense* sp. nov., isolated from human upper respiratory samples collected in Botswana. *Int J Syst Evol Microbiol*, 74(8).
<https://doi.org/10.1099/ijsem.0.006498>

Sulaiman, J. E., Thompson, J., Qian, Y., Vivas, E. I., Diener, C., Gibbons, S. M., Safdar, N., **Venturelli, O. S.** (2024). Elucidating human gut microbiota interactions that robustly inhibit diverse *Clostridioides difficile* strains across different nutrient landscapes. *Nature Communications*, 15(1), 7416.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41467-024-51062-w>

Cheng, Y. T., Thireault, C. A., Zhang, L., Paasch, B. C., Sohrabi, R., & **He, S. Y.** (2024). Roles of microbiota in autoimmunity in *Arabidopsis* leaves. *Nature Plants*, 10(9), 1363–1376.
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41477-024-01779-9>

See additional DMC publications [here](#).

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