



Duke Microbiome Center

February 2025 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](#). For further information on the DMC, please visit the DMC [website](#).

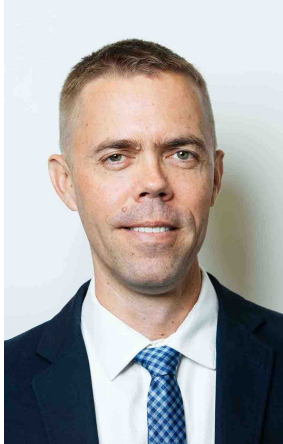
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A Message from the Director

Dear DMC Community:



As microbiome scientists, we know that resilience of any community is defined by its ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity. Further, we know that any community's resilience typically correlates with the diversity and connectivity within its membership. By those measures, the community of scientists within the Duke Microbiome Center is well poised to withstand, adapt to, and recover from the adversity and uncertainty created by the recent executive orders that have destabilized our national research landscape. As individuals and as a community, let's take this opportunity to remember, recommit and reconnect. Let's **remember** that our research and educational missions are more important than ever, as we strive to advance knowledge across the microbiome sciences and support our trainees as they rise up to become the next generation of leaders and innovators. Let's **recommit** ourselves to conducting and communicating the highest quality and most impactful research that we can, and thereby continue to earn the public trust in these challenging times. Finally, let's **reconnect** with our purpose and calling as scientists, with the collegial community we are so fortunate to have here at Duke, and with the broader public to remind them about the value and importance of our nation's research enterprise. No matter what course adjustments we might be compelled to make as we navigate these turbulent waters, our destination and mission as a scientific community will remain unchanged. For up-to-date information and guidance on navigating the recent executive orders, please go to <https://myresearchpath.duke.edu/updates-navigating-recent-executive-orders>.

Despite the current turbulence, there are still many exciting things happening in the DMC. In the newsletter below, you'll find announcements about recent faculty awards, upcoming events including the NC Microbiome Symposium, and new DMC initiatives including a new DMC Red Team pre-submission grant review program. The DMC exists to support your work, so as always, please let us know how we can help.

Sincerely on behalf of the DMC leadership team,
John F. Rawls
Director, Duke Microbiome Center

DMC launches new DMC Red Team for pre-submission grant review

Beta DMC "Red Team" - Grant Review

We are piloting a grant review service for faculty members of the DMC. Our goal is to develop and

launch a formal service for providing conceptual feedback (that is, not proofreading) to help hone your latest NIH, NSF, etc. grant. For additional information visit the [DMC Webpage](#) for more details.

To give reviewers and you enough time to capitalize on the process, we require an SPS record and internal grant deadline from your department - and the deadline for documents to be reviewed is 6-weeks prior to this date, with expected turnaround within 2 weeks. Suggested reviewers (we will aim for 2 reviewers per grant) are also requested.

Submissions are through [Google Forms](#):

If you are interested in being a reviewer (small stipend provided), or have additional questions, please contact Julia.oh@duke.edu and cc Cynthia.wicker@duke.edu

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2025 North Carolina Microbiome Symposium

We are pleased to announce that the [2025 NCBC Microbiome Symposium](#) will take place in person on Friday, May 23 at the North Carolina Biotechnology Center.

This event will feature insightful presentations, including one by keynote speaker Dr. Ami Bhatt, MD, PhD. Dr. Bhatt is a Professor of Medicine and Genetics and the Director of Global Oncology (Center for Innovation in Global Health) at Stanford University.

The symposium will also feature poster sessions, networking time for trainees, keynote speakers, and companies. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. This will be a great opportunity for researchers to reconnect with fellow academia and industry scientists.

All attendees must [register](#) and purchase a ticket by April 15, 2025. Also, the deadline to submit an abstract is April 15. Space is limited, especially for poster abstracts, so we recommend registering and submitting your abstract as soon as possible.

Poster Session Guidelines:

Trainee poster submissions will be accepted for this symposium. Anyone wishing to participate in the poster session must submit a title and abstract in **PDF format** by Tuesday, April 15 to [Hannah Cole](#). Abstracts should be 250 words or less.

Posters must be microbiome-related and no larger than 4 feet by 4 feet. Mounting materials will be provided. Please contact us directly with any questions about eligibility.

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Dr. Diego Bohorquez receives Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers



This is the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. government on outstanding scientists and engineers early in their careers. The award was established by President Clinton in 1996. The award recognizes scientists and engineers who show exceptional potential for leadership early in their research careers. Please see the link for the official announcement from the White House: DMC faculty member Dr. Diego Bohorquez has received the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) from President Biden.

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Dr. Nazema Siddiqui is the 2024 recipient of the DMC's Diversity Matters Award

Dr. Siddiqui is being honored for her exceptional contributions to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in the microbiome sciences and women's health. Her groundbreaking research on the urogenital microbiome has transformed understanding and treatment of pelvic floor disorders, directly improving care for women and addressing longstanding health disparities.

Beyond her research, Dr. Siddiqui has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to mentorship, building trainees from underrepresented backgrounds and fostering a more inclusive scientific community. Her leadership and advocacy embody the values of the Diversity Matters Award. Her work continues to inspire and advance the mission of equality and inclusion in microbiome science and medicine.

The Diversity Matters Award is awarded by the Duke Microbiome Center celebrating individuals at any academic level who demonstrate outstanding dedication to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in microbiome-related research, education, and service. Nominations for the 2025 Diversity Matters Award will be open later this year. You can learn more about the DMC's Diversity Matters award and prior recipients here: <https://sites.duke.edu/microbiome/diversity-matters-award/>

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Request for applications for the 2025 DMC Development Grant Program

Application Deadline: May 4 2025

The DMC leadership team is pleased to announce that we are now accepting applications for 2025 DMC Development Grants with the deadline of 4 May 2025. These research awards for up to \$50,000 are available to support all [faculty](#) within the Duke Microbiome Center for the acquisition of data essential to the growth of interdisciplinary and collaborative research programs. For full eligibility criteria and additional details about how to submit, please review the [program guidelines](#).

Apply here: bit.ly/4hqDzQ1

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Fungi: Earth's Friend and Foe



In the [Feb. 5 issue of Nature](#), Duke University School of Medicine researchers and colleagues lay out the dual role of fungi – as a species-threatening force capable of devastating bats and frogs, and yet vital to the ecosystem and everyday life. Fungi recycle nutrients, trap carbon, make bread rise and beer taste good, and produce antibiotics and other pharmaceuticals. Read more [here](#).

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Finding Funding Workshop on Thursday March 6



Looking for funding? Seeking a fellowship to support research? Want to fund travel for a summer project? Need dissertation support? Take this opportunity to learn how to search for funding by using a variety of tools, including the Duke Research Funding database, MyResearchHome, and Pivot. Open to Duke grad students, postdocs, faculty, and staff. Zoom link will be provided after you [register](#). This event will be held **Thursday, March 6th, from 10:30-11:30AM**.

These workshops are restricted to those with Duke affiliations. Registration is required.

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News & Awards

DMC Faculty/Alumni: [Emily Derbyshire and Amy Schmid promoted to Full Professor](#)

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DMC Microbiome Office Hour schedule has changed!

To better accommodate DMC Research-In-Progress series attendees, we have moved office hours to immediately follow the seminar.

Open to anyone within the DMC 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: First and Third Friday of each month - 1:30pm – 2:30pm

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 [here](#) 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](#).

See above about the current RFA for DMC Development Grant proposals.

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Upcoming DMC Meetings

DMC Faculty Meetings: The next Faculty meeting will be Monday, May 19, 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

- Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria Interdisciplinary Units (CARBIRUs) (P01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/combating-antibiotic-resistant-bacteria-interdisciplinary-units-carbirus-p01-clinical-trial-not>
- 2025 Regional Ecosystem Research (RER) Program: Understanding Species, Habitat Usage

- and Connectivity in and around Marine Protected Areas <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/2025-regional-ecosystem-research-rer-program-understanding-species-habitat-usage-and-connectivity>
- FY2025 NMFS-Sea Grant Fellowship in Population and Ecosystem Dynamics and Marine Resource Economics <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/fy2025-nmfs-sea-grant-fellowship-population-and-ecosystem-dynamics-and-marine-resource-economics>
 - Discovery and Development of Novel Therapeutics for Select Fungal Pathogens (R21/R33 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/discovery-and-development-novel-therapeutics-select-fungal-pathogens-r21r33-clinical-trial-not>
 - Centers for Accelerating Phage (Bacteriophage) Therapy to Combat ESKAPE Pathogens (CAPT-CEP) (P01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/centers-accelerating-phage-bacteriophage-therapy-combat-eskape-pathogens-capt-cep-p01-clinical>
 - Building Synthetic Microbial Communities for Biology, Mitigating Climate Change, Sustainability and Biotechnology (Synthetic Communities) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/building-synthetic-microbial-communities-biology-mitigating-climate-change-sustainability-and>
 - AHRQ -- Large Research Projects for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria (CARB) (R01, R18) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/ahrq-large-research-projects-combating-antibiotic-resistant-bacteria-carb-r01-r18>
 - Microbial-based Cancer Therapy -Bugs as Drugs (R01, R21 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/microbial-based-cancer-therapy-bugs-drugs-r01-r21-clinical-trial-not-allowed>
 - Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Leveraging Microbial Exposure for Improving Mouse Models of Human Immunity <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/notice-special-interest-nosi-leveraging-microbial-exposure-improving-mouse-models-human-immunity>
 - Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Advancing Biomedical Research in Pulmonary Non-Tuberculous Mycobacterial (NTM) Infections <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/notice-special-interest-nosi-advancing-biomedical-research-pulmonary-non-tuberculous-mycobacterial>
 - Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): Administrative Supplements to Prepare Data Assets for Infectious and Immune-mediated Diseases for Inclusion into the NIAID Data Ecosystem <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/notice-special-interest-nosi-administrative-supplements-prepare-data-assets-infectious-and-immune>
 - Advancing understanding of plant cuticle-fungicide interactions <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/advancing-understanding-plant-cuticle-fungicide-interactions>
 - Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria Interdisciplinary Units (CARBIRUs) (P01 Clinical Trial Not Allowed) <https://researchfunding.duke.edu/combating-antibiotic-resistant-bacteria-interdisciplinary-units-carbirus-p01-clinical-trial-not>

See more microbiome funding opportunities [here](#)

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Highlights of Recent DMC Publications

Names of primary DMC faculty authors are bolded.

Bhatt, A.P., **Arnold, J.W.**, Awoniyi, M., Sun, S., Feijoli Santiago, V., Coskuner, D., Henrique Quintela, P., Walsh, K., Xiao, J., Ngoben-Nyambi, R., Hansen, B.,

Gulati, A.S., Carroll, I.M., Azcarate-Peril, M.A., Fodor, A.A., Swann, J., Bartelt, L.A. (2024). "Giardia antagonizes beneficial functions of indigenous and therapeutic intestinal bacteria during protein deficiency." Gut Microbes (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1652663>)

Steele, J. J. B., Thellman, A. N., Vought, O. K., Rosi, E. J., Wooster, T., Solomon, C. T... **Bernhardt, E. S.** (2024). "Bryospheres in oligotrophic headwater streams provide nutrient-dense habitats and dominate stream nutrient cycling" Freshwater Science (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1650385>)

Estrada-Graf, A., Koneru, H., Arnold, J., Calhoun, S., Grigoriev, I. V., **Johnson, Z. I.** (2024). "Genome assembly and annotation of microalga Nannochloropsis oceanica C018". Microbiology Resource (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1661050>)

Sulaiman, J. E., Thompson, J., Cheung, P. L. K., Qian, Y., Mill, J., James, I., ... **Venturelli, O. S.** (2025). "Phocaeicola vulgatus shapes the long-term growth dynamics and evolutionary adaptations of Clostridioides difficile." Cell Host & Microbe (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1661632>)

Cardones, A. R., Emiola, A., Hall, R., Sung, A. D., Zhang, J. Y., Petty, A. J., ... **Oh, J.** (2025). "Cutaneous dysbiosis characterizes the post-allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation period". Blood Adv. (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1663577>)

Coelho, M. A., David-Palma, M., Aylward, J., Pham, N. Q., Visagie, C. M., Fuchs, T., ... **Heitman, J.** (2025). "Decoding Cryptococcus: From African biodiversity to worldwide prevalence". PLoS Pathog, 21(2), e1012876 (<https://scholars.duke.edu/publication/1664802>)

See additional DMC publications [here](#).

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