

Graduate Student Highlights

October 2020 – December 2020

Graduate School News

Seven Postdocs Honored with Achievement Awards



Seven postdoctoral scholars have been honored with Postdoc Achievement Awards as part of Cornell's celebration of National Postdoc Appreciation Week. The recipients are Andy Borum, Yoon Choi, Rachel Cheng, Sarah Sachs, Chase Mayers, Manuela Ramalho, and Erin Soros. Organizers found it especially important to recognize postdocs this year while physically separated by the pandemic.

[Read the full story](#)

Effective Communication Skills: Important Now, Essential Later



Many university career websites list the translational skills they expect students will learn as a byproduct of earning their advanced degrees. At Cornell's Graduate School, a newly enhanced workshop series helps students identify and hone their research communication skills, focusing on communicating complex ideas to general audiences. Topics covered are useful for participation in the 3MT competition.

[Read the full story](#)

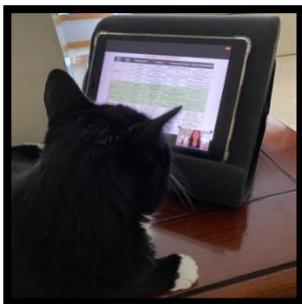
Student-Parent Grant Program Increases Eligibility to Cover Range of Needs



In response to the pandemic's unique financial challenges impacting the student-parent community, Cornell offered a special Summer COVID Hardship Fund, which expanded eligibility to allow more student-parents access to financial support and flexibility to spend money as needed. This program's success has informed eligibility and flexibility for the 2020-2021 Student-Parent Dependent Grant as well.

[Read the full story](#)

Zoom Defenses Draw Large Audiences



Students typically defend their dissertations in on-campus conference rooms with audience size capped by capacity at around 40. Defending over Zoom allowed Elena Michel, Ph.D. '20, and Aaron Joiner, Ph.D. '20, to invite family, friends, and even pets, from around the world to participate. Having spent months using Zoom already, both alumni were familiar with the technology and prepared for their defenses.

[Read the full story](#)

Remaining Socially Connected while Physically Distanced



Studying remotely does not preclude students from being part of the Cornell community. Staff of the Big Red Barn Graduate and Professional Student Center spent the fall semester developing programs to engage students online from wherever they are, bringing them together for trivia, origami, board games, and even cooking classes.

[Read the full story](#)

Over 50 Students Recognized at Fourth Annual Dean's Scholars Pinning Ceremony



In a typical year, Dean's Scholars gather for an in-person ceremony where continuing scholars adorn new scholars with the pin presented to all Dean's Scholars. This year, the process worked a little differently: Students received their ceremonial pins by mail, joined a Zoom meeting where they were formally recognized as Dean's Scholars, and pinned themselves.

[Read the full story](#)

Pollack Leads with Gratitude at GPSA Meeting



Cornell University President Martha Pollack addressed the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) on Nov. 9 over Zoom. She began by expressing gratitude for the work graduate and professional students undertook to determine their needs during the pandemic, which the university was then able to implement. Pollack spoke about several of these initiatives during the meeting.

[Read the full story](#)

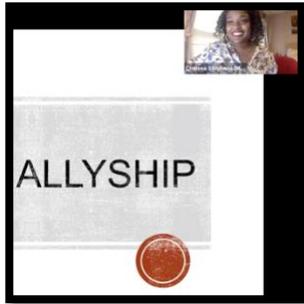
Sharing Writing Tips for Fellowships and Beyond



This fall's fellowship application workshops provided students with tips for completing strong applications, but also generalizable writing tips that will help them in all aspects of their academic and professional careers. Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Jan Allen shared her top tips for successful applications and students share their most valuable workshop takeaways.

[Read the full story](#)

Impact vs. Intent: Becoming Critical Allies Through Workshop Series



The student-organized Building Allyship Series is continuing to provide an essential space for the campus community to engage in productive dialogue about becoming more effective allies. October and November 2020 sessions focused on performative allyship and combatting anti-Blackness, respectively. Three students discuss what it means to be an ally and how to start the process of becoming a better ally.

[Read the full story](#)

ELSO Expands Services to All Multilingual Students



Cornell's English Language Support Office (ELSO) has expanded to support all multilingual graduate students – both from the U.S. and abroad. Previously available only to international students for whom English was not their first language, now multilingual graduate and professional students from anywhere in the world can participate in ELSO programs, including tutoring, workshops, and classes.

[Read the full story](#)

Graduate Student Spotlights

Yingying Zhang | *Biophysics*



Biophysics doctoral student Yingying Zhang's research focuses on the identification of cancer driver mutations across the human genome, which can help uncover new biologically and therapeutically relevant driver mutations. She is a recipient of the 2020 Hsien and Daisy Yen Wu Scholarship, which will allow her to attend scientific conferences and workshops.

[Graduate School spotlight](#)

Ella Taagen | *Plant Breeding*



Ella Taagen, a doctoral student in plant breeding, studies the variation and limit of genetic recombination in plants with the goal of developing novel technologies and harnessing the power of selection for plant breeding. As a 2020 National Association of Plant Breeders Borlaug Scholar, she is working with industry professionals to work toward global food security.

[Graduate School spotlight](#)

Jenna Hershberger | *Plant Breeding*



Plant breeding doctoral candidate Jenna Hershberger studies root quality traits of cassava to enable cassava breeders to select high quality varieties more efficiently, in addition to developing open-source software for the analysis of plant breeding programs. As a 2020 National Association of Plant Breeders Borlaug Scholar, she is connecting with other scientists to improve food security.

[Graduate School spotlight](#)

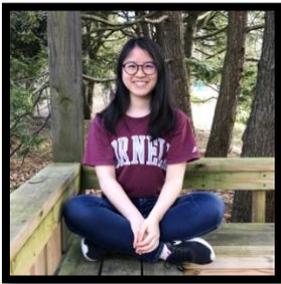
Yun Liu | *Public Health*



Yun Liu, a master of public health student, researches factors that impact public health, including social living situations and environmental factors. She hopes to fill the gaps between social development and health needs by addressing the health needs of all populations, with emphasis on the needs of vulnerable populations, to improve health equity for all.

[Graduate School spotlight](#)

Jianxin Huo | *Public Health*



Master of public health student Jianxin Huo studies how components of food systems affect the health of humans and the environment with a focus on public health nutrition. Since the pandemic began, her efforts to support balanced diets have increased and she has become involved with the COVID behavioral surveillance project which informed Cornell's COVID prevention responses.

[Graduate School spotlight](#)

Anke Kotze | *Public Health*



Anke Kotze decided to pursue her master of public health degree at Cornell due to its 'one health' approach to public health, which incorporates all living things. As a student, she is helping to combat the pandemic by assisting in the distribution of masks to countries in need. On campus, she is demonstrating behaviors for the campus community to mirror, including upholding the Behavioral Compact.

[Graduate School spotlight](#)

Additional Graduate Students of Note

Student, Field	Achievement/Story Feature
<p>Zach Dwyer, genetics, genomics, and development</p>	<p>Doctoral candidate Zach Dwyer helped to write the scripts for liquid handlers to prepare sample pools for RNA processing as part of Cornell's COVID-19 testing program. Learn more...</p>
<p>Zhen Cheng, Kelly Richmond, Andrew Colpitts, and Caitlin Kane, performing and media arts, and Anna Evtushenko, information science</p>	<p>Graduate students Zhen Cheng, Kelly Richmond, Andrew Colpitts, Caitlin Kane, and Anna Evtushenko were all involved in the 2020 10-Minute Play Festival, either as writers or directors. Learn more...</p>
<p>Xiangkun (Elvis) Cao, mechanical engineering, and Alexandra Molina, biomedical and biological sciences</p>	<p>Doctoral candidate Xiangkun (Elvis) Cao discussed the skills essential to his 2017 Three Minute Thesis presentation, which doctoral student Alexandra Molina learned during a workshop offered as part of a series on effective communication. Learn more...</p>
<p>Lucia Borlle, animal science, and Aubryn Sidle, development sociology</p>	<p>The pandemic has created unique challenges for student-parents, which doctoral students Lucia Borlle and Aubryn Sidle detailed in relation to the expanded eligibility and flexibility of the Summer 2020 COVID Hardship Fund and 2020-21 Student-Parent Dependent Care Grant. Learn more...</p>
<p>Benjamin Steeper '19, computer science and Songyun Tao, information science</p>	<p>Graduate students Benjamin Steeper and Songyun Tao are co-authors on a paper about earphones that track and translate facial expressions. Learn more...</p>
<p>Yilai Xu, chemistry and chemical biology, Garrison Komaniecki, biochemistry, and Tatsiana Kosciuk, biochemistry, molecular, and cell biology</p>	<p>Doctoral students Yilai Xi, Garrison Komaniecki, and Tatsiana Kosciuk are co-authors on a paper about signaling pathways and colitis treatment. Learn more...</p>
<p>Annie Sheng, anthropology, and Marcin Sawczuk, civil and environmental engineering</p>	<p>Doctoral students Annie Sheng and Marcin Sawczuk were awarded second prize during the online Pitch for the People competition. Learn more...</p>
<p>Yuyan Wang, biomedical engineering</p>	<p>Doctoral student Yuyan Wang is a co-lead author of a paper investigating the role of a protein in joint injuries. Learn more...</p>

<p>Dan Adler and Vincent Tseng, information science</p>	<p>Doctoral student Dan Adler is first author of a study on using smartphone data to predict schizophrenia relapses. Doctoral student Vincent Tseng is co-first author on a separate paper that used the same data and machine learning to better understand and predict symptoms. Learn more...</p>
<p>Owen Morgan, developmental psychology</p>	<p>Owen Morgan, a first-year student in developmental psychology, led an origami night hosted by the Big Red Barn Graduate and Professional Student Center as part of their fall online programming. Learn more...</p>
<p>Hailey Scofield, neurobiology and behavior, and Nathan Oakes, computational biology</p>	<p>Complex, a startup founded by doctoral students Hailey Scofield and Nathan Oakes, won \$500K in the 2020 76West Clean Energy Competition. Learn more...</p>
<p>Marty Cain and Breanna Leslie-Skye, English language and literature</p>	<p>English doctoral candidates Marty Cain and Breanna Leslie-Skye's projects were selected for the Cornell University Library's annual Grants Program for Digital Collections in Arts and Sciences. Learn more...</p>
<p>Andrew LaPierre, animal science</p>	<p>Doctoral candidate Andrew LaPierre received Kermin Industries' Charlie Sniffen Award for his work on amino acid requirements of lactating dairy cattle. Learn more...</p>
<p>Anuj Bhargava, materials science and engineering</p>	<p>Doctoral student Anuj Bhargava is lead author of a paper on ceramic conductivity. Learn more...</p>
<p>Sean Medin, biological and environmental engineering</p>	<p>Doctoral student Sean Medin is part of a team working to extract rare-earth elements using microbes. Learn more...</p>
<p>Sofia Franco, government, Drea Darby, entomology, Jonathan Albo, biomedical engineering, Katie Randolph, biological and environmental engineering, and Josh Garcia, horticulture</p>	<p>First-year doctoral students Sofia Franco, Jonathan Albo, and Katie Randolph reflect on what it means to be selected as a Graduate School Dean's Scholar, while continuing doctoral student Drea Darby and doctoral candidate Josh Garcia discuss their experiences as Dean's Scholars. Learn more...</p>
<p>Austin Hickman and Reet Chaudhuri, M.S. '16, electrical and computer engineering</p>	<p>Doctoral students Austin Hickman and Reet Chaudhuri reflect on their experiences as fellows in Cornell Engineering's Commercialization Fellowship program. Learn more...</p>

<p>Yuqing Zhang, city and regional planning, Apratim Jash and Patrick Schulz, food science and technology, Marcin Sawczuk, civil and environmental engineering, Annie Sheng, anthropology, Tiffany Agard, public administration, and Chelsea Stephens, biomedical engineering</p>	<p>Yuqing Zhang, Apratim Jash, Patrick Schulz, Marcin Sawczuk, Annie Sheng, Tiffany Agard, and Chelsea Stephens were selected for the student startup accelerator eLab. Learn more...</p>
<p>Annie Sheng, anthropology</p>	<p>Doctoral student Annie Sheng speaks about the origins of milk bread. Learn more...</p>
<p>Millie Dibble, Marc Anthonisen, and Angel E. Benitez Collante, public administration, and Xuan (Vicki) Li, public health</p>	<p>Graduate students Millie Dibble, Marc Anthonisen, Angel E. Benitez Collante, and Xuan (Vicki) Li reflect on their participation in a global journaling project that welcomed COVID-19 stories. Learn more...</p>
<p>Alexandre Cheng, biomedical engineering</p>	<p>Doctoral candidate Alexandre Cheng presented results of a study on cell-free DNA. Learn more...</p>
<p>Amelia-Juliette Demery and Monique Pipkin, ecology and evolutionary biology</p>	<p>Doctoral students Amelia-Juliette Demery and Monique Pipkin published a paper on safe fieldwork strategies for at-risk individuals, their supervisors, and institutions. Learn more...</p>
<p>Cameron Mailhot, government</p>	<p>Government doctoral student Cameron Mailhot was awarded a Peace Scholar Dissertation Fellowship from the U.S. Institute of Peace. Learn more...</p>
<p>Stephanie Enloe, development sociology</p>	<p>Development sociology doctoral student Stephanie Enloe has received a Fulbright U.S. Student Award. Learn more...</p>
<p>Karin van der Burg, ecology and evolutionary biology</p>	<p>Graduate student Karin van der Burg is first author of a paper on genes responsible for changing the color of butterfly wings. Learn more...</p>
<p>Mary Kate Long, Asian literature, religion, and culture</p>	<p>Doctoral candidate Mary Kate Long discussed possible explanations for why Buddhist nuns are often not allowed to reach the highest status. Learn more...</p>
<p>Christopher Pierce, M.S. '19, physics, and Brennan Hyden, plant breeding</p>	<p>Doctoral candidates Christopher Pierce and Brennan Hyden have been selected by the U.S. Department of Energy for the Office of Science Graduate Student Research Program. Learn more...</p>

Rachel Schlund , industrial and labor relations	Doctoral student Rachel Schlund is co-author of a paper that found entitled people are less likely to follow COVID guidelines. Learn more...
Hedan Bai '16 , mechanical engineering	Doctoral student Hedan Bai and Shuo Li, Ph.D. '20, are co-lead authors of a paper on a stretchable sensor that could give robots and virtual reality technology the ability to feel tactile sensations. Learn more...
Akane Wakai , mechanical engineering	Doctoral student Akane Wakai is co-author of a paper on a 3D printing technique that can create cellular metallic materials with supersonic speed. Learn more...
Allison Stout , biomedical and biological sciences	Doctoral student Allison Stout discussed prevalence of SARS-CoV-2 in cats during the Cornell COVID-19 Summit. Learn more...
Olivia Graham , ecology and evolutionary biology	Doctoral candidate Olivia Graham helped create a map to show where the ocean's mid-sized predators are most active. Learn more...
Bam Willoughby and Zifeng Liu , Africana Studies	Doctoral candidate Bam Willoughby provided responses after a lecture, which doctoral candidate Zifeng Liu moderated. Learn more...
Tiffany Tang , M.S. '19, chemical engineering	Doctoral candidate Tiffany Tang discussed learning about SARS 2 after studying SARS 1. Learn more...
Rebecca Harrison and Amanda Domingues , science and technology studies	As teaching assistants, doctoral candidates Rebecca Harrison and Amanda Domingues helped create an alternative final assignment for a course, several of which have since been included in a journal. Learn more...
Gustavo Escalante , mechanical engineering, and Aaron Wheeler , chemical engineering	Doctoral students Gustavo Escalante and Aaron Wheeler share their top takeaways from this fall's fellowship application writing workshops. Learn more...
Mariaenrica Giannuzzi , Germanic studies	Graduate student Mariaenrica Giannuzzi contributed an individual video work to the December 2020 Mini Locally Grown Dance showcase. Learn more...
Yuanning Liang , applied economics and management	Doctoral candidate Yuanning Liang is co-lead author of a paper on the ways in which air

	pollution laws benefit birds as well as humans. Learn more...
Josh Jones , biomedical and biological sciences	Doctoral student Josh Jones discusses his immunology research as part of Black in Immunology Week. Learn more...
Marguerite Pacheco and Chelsea Stephens , biomedical engineering, and Brianna Tate , animal science	Doctoral students Chelsea Stephens and Brianna Tate share takeaways from their presentations as part of the Building Allyship Series, which doctoral student Marguerite Pacheco helped to organize. Learn more...
Hao Shi , physics, and Benjamin Grodner , biomedical engineering	Doctoral student Hao Shi is lead author of a paper on spatial maps of the gut microbiome, to which doctoral student Benjamin Grodner contributed as a co-author. Learn more...
Daler Kaziev , natural resources, and Yingyi Zhong , nutrition	Graduate students Daler Kaziev and Yingyi Zhong started participating in the English Language Support Office (ELSO)'s offerings early on in their respective programs and have since become a larger part of the ELSO community. Learn more...
Farshid Salimi Jazi , biological and environmental engineering, and Jaehwan Kim , chemistry and chemical biology	Doctoral student Farshid Salimi Jazi is lead author of a paper on new and efficient ways to absorb and store renewable energy from the sun while sequestering carbon dioxide, to which doctoral student Jaehwan Kim contributed as a co-author. Learn more...
Manish Raghavan , computer science	Computer science doctoral candidate Manish Raghavan, who studies bias in algorithms, commented on the computer science program at the University of Texas at Austin's choice to use a machine-learning system to evaluate applicants for its doctoral program. Learn more...
Yikun Jiang , physics	Physics doctoral student Yikun Jiang contributed to research exploring the possibility that the new theory of Hawking radiation also applies to the early universe. Learn more...
Erin McCauley , sociology	Sociology doctoral candidate Erin McCauley received funding from the National Institute for Drug Abuse to support her research analyzing the effects of COVID-19 on jails. Learn more...

Justine Zhang , information science	Justine Zhang, a doctoral candidate in information science, is first author of a paper exploring factors that determine an effective conversation. Learn more...
Ning Zhao , systems engineering	Doctoral student Ning Zhao is an author of a paper examining whether New York State can achieve carbon goals by 2050. Learn more...
Melissa White , genetics, genomics, and development	Doctoral candidate Melissa White is first author of a paper on how a sex peptide causes female fruit flies' guts to expand after mating. Learn more...
Nazih Kassem , biological and environmental engineering	Doctoral candidate Nazih Kassem commented on the sustainability of using fuel from cow manure to heat campus. Learn more...