Greetings from the Chair

I am pleased to send you this twelfth annual Department of Human Genetics Newsletter. I enjoyed seeing many of you in San Diego during the recent ASHG meetings.

As regular readers of this Newsletter will know, one of the constants of my chairmanship has been the search for the "Smouse replacement." Our search has now been rewarded by the recruitment of two outstanding faculty (Peter left a large void). The search committee, co-chaired by Mike Boehnke in Biostatistics and David Burke, and including Jeff Innis and Margit Bummeister in Human Genetics, identified an outstanding group of candidates, and I am delighted that we have been able to rebuild and enhance our traditional strength in quantitative genetics.

Julie Douglas, Assistant Professor of Human Genetics, received her Ph.D. with Mike Boehnke in the Department of Biostatistics, carrying out both theoretical and applied statistical genetics. An accomplished teacher (she was an award-winning mathematics teacher prior to entering graduate school), Julie will enhance our research and training activities in statistical genetics. Perhaps ironically, and certainly appropriately, the "Smouse replacement" is completed with Peter's last graduate student in our Department. Jeff Long, Professor of Human Genetics. Jeff comes to us from the NIH, where he was Senior Investigator and Chief of the Section on Population Genetics and Linkage, Laboratory of Neurogenics, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Jeff has carried out important studies on the genetics of alcoholism in Native American populations and brings a wealth of experience in both population genetics and anthropology, as well as deep concerns for biological and cultural human diversity.

With the explosion in genomics, and soon proteomics, bioinformatics has become an essential part of modern genetics. We are delighted to have successfully recruited David States, M.D., Ph.D. from Washington University St Louis, to head the Bioinformatics Program at the Medical School and to join our faculty as a Professor of Human Genetics. As he did at Washington University, David will be establishing graduate training programs in bioinformatics. His major research interest is in transcription factor cluster analysis to identify new genes.

These recruitments, and continuing recruitment activity in the School of Public Health, will complement Charlie Sing's large and very well-funded programs in genetic epidemiology of cardiovascular disease (Charlie has just been awarded a new NIH Center of Excellence in Genomic Sciences), and will dramatically enhance our strength in quantitative genetics, an increasingly important area of contemporary genetics. I am very pleased with the prospects for future development in these areas.

During this past year, the Department underwent its five-year periodic review. Miriam Meisler chaired an able committee that carried out the internal self study. Bob Nussbaum, Steve Warren, and Hunt Willard served as our external reviewers. At this writing, I look forward to meeting with the Dean to discuss the external reviewers' report and to launching a strategic plan for the future of the Department.

The renovation of the Department's research space continues and, in the last few weeks, Tom Glover's laboratory and mine have moved to brand new space on the fourth level of MS II. Renovations have been completed on the third level of Med Sci II, and planning has begun for Phase III of our renovations on the fourth level of MS II.

In May, Jack Schull delivered the First James V. Neel Memorial Lecture, and provided a fascinating account of the development of human genetics at the University of Michigan, a development in which Jack, a long-time collaborator of Jim's, played a major role. The lecture was preceded by a poster session, showcasing genetics research activities across the University of Michigan.

During this past year, Wendy Uhlman completed her term as President of the National Society of Genetic Counselors. She continues to be active on the Secretary's Advisory Committee on Genetic Testing. Diane Baker, Director of our Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling, spent this past year as an AAAS/ASHG Congressional Fellow in the office of Senator Reid. In her absence, Karen Johnson very ably directed the Counseling Program.
George Brewer became Emeritus Professor of Human Genetics in July, and continues his active research programs in the role of copper in human disease. Eric Fearon was promoted to Professor of Internal Medicine, Human Genetics, and Pathology. Tom Glover has completed the transition from joint appointment to split appointment to primary appointment as Professor of Human Genetics with tenure. Tom holds a joint appointment in Pediatrics.

Awards and Honors

David Ginsburg delivered the E. Donnall Thomas Lecture at the 2000 meeting of the American Society of Hematology, and received a MERIT Award from the NIH. He is President of the American Society for Clinical Investigation. George Brewer was elected a Fellow of AAAS and received a lifetime achievement award for his work on Wilson’s disease. Gil Omenn was elected to the Association of American Physicians and to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and Jerry Gorski was elected to membership in the American Pediatric Society. Tom Glaser was the recipient of the Jerome W. Conn Award for Distinguished Research by a Junior Faculty Member in Internal Medicine from the University of Michigan.

Comings and Goings

After twenty-two years at the University of Michigan, eight of those as Co-Director and eleven as Director of our Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling, Diane Baker has decided to make a career change and seek new opportunities in public service. Diane is responsible for establishing, nurturing and growing the Genetic Counseling Program into one of the very best in the nation. A past president of the National Society of Genetic Counselors, she has trained more than sixty members of the profession, two of whom have also served as president of NSGC. We will miss her and we wish her well in the future. She leaves behind a very strong program. A national search has begun to find a new director.

Ajay Malik, Ph.D., Research Investigator in the Kurachi laboratory, has gone to Genetech in San Francisco. Kathy Klos, Ph.D. has been appointed a Research Investigator working with Charlie Sing, and Donna Martin, M.D., Ph.D., Instructor in Pediatrics, has been appointed a Research Investigator working with Sally Camper.

Numerically Speaking

Our faculty numbered twenty-eight in 2000-01, including eleven professors (four joint), seven associate professors (five joint), three assistant professors (two joint), three primary research faculty, one clinical associate professor and three clinical instructors. Three emeritus faculty complement this group. Our eleven tenure track faculty with primary appointments in Human Genetics were awarded $5.8 M in direct cost funding during this past year and have another $12 M pending. The Department again ranked seventh nationally in NIH funding. All of our primary tenure track faculty were funded and during the 2000-01 fiscal year supported, on average, 70% of their salaries on external funds.

The Department had forty-two graduate students during the past year, including four in M.T.S.P., eight in the Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling, and one masters student. Expenses for student tuition, stipends, and GradCare totaled over $800,000. In addition to Human Genetics students, we have six CMB students, (including one in the M.T.S.P.), one Neuroscience student and one Physiology student performing thesis research in Departmental laboratories. Eighteen undergraduates worked in Human Genetics primary faculty labs and there were twenty-three postdoctoral fellows in Departmental primary laboratories during this past year.

Graduate Education

Didi Robins has become the Director of Graduate Studies and, during this past year, managed a record number of thirteen qualifying examinations. Four students from the Program in Biomedical Sciences, plus two in the Medical Scientist Training Program, have chosen Human Genetics for their thesis research. There are four new genetic counseling students and three new masters students. The 2001 James V. Neel Fellowship Award has gone to Heidi Rottschaefer, and the Anita and Howard Cramer Family Award to Anne Casper. Both are also the holders of NSF Fellowships.

Three of our students completed their doctoral training during this past year. Elliott H. Margulies (Innis lab, "A comprehensive bioinformatics approach toward the molecular characterization of vertebrate limb specification and development") has taken a postdoctoral position with Eric Green at the NHGRI. Lisa J. Cushman (Camper lab, "Molecular genetics of pitiutary gland development in disease") has entered the masters program in genetic counseling at Indiana University. Pamela E. Bennett-Baker (Burke lab, "Age-associated reactivation of the X chromosome") is staying, temporarily, in the Burke laboratory for postdoctoral research. Accidentally omitted from last year’s list, Atac Turkyay (Kurachi lab, "Developing gene-based therapy for protein C deficiency") is currently Assistant Professor of Medicine and Rheumatology at the University of Pittsburgh.
Four genetic counseling students graduated last December. Elyse Muller is at the University of Chicago, Nicole Tecd at Oakwood Hospital in Detroit, Amy McCandell at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Christina Settler at Genzyme Genetics in Austin, Texas.

Administration

Linda Peasley continues to manage our continuing renovations and laboratory moves, turning chaos into highly efficient and organized activity. Linda and her staff processed 30 new and competing grants during this past year and managed 125 accounts.

The 2000 fall Departmental retreat was held at the Kellogg Biological Station, and recently the 2001 retreat was held at the Howell Nature Center. In addition to providing an opportunity for faculty, students, and postdoctoral fellows to interact in an informal setting, the presentations and poster sessions again demonstrate the richness of research and training activities in the Department.

In Closing...

I am delighted that we have recruited Julie Douglas, Jeff Long, and David Stakes to the Department and rebuilt our strength in the critical areas of population, qualitative, and computational genetics. These areas will clearly be in the forefront of developments in the "postgenome era." We are sorry to be losing Diane Baker, but she leaves us a legacy of a nationally renowned graduate program in genetic counseling. We look forward to recruiting a new director and to new directions for this program.

We appreciate your continued support for the Neel and Cramer fellowships and for the Neel Memorial Lectureship. We depend on our alumni and friends to direct outstanding students and trainees to Michigan to continue our traditions of excellence.

With all best wishes in these troubling and anxious times,

Sincerely,

Thomas D. Gelehrter, M.D.
Professor and Chair

Faculty Activities

George Brewer was an invited speaker at the 8th International Conference on Wilson's Disease in Leipzig. He is the Associate Editor of the American Journal of Hematology and serves on the editorial boards of Progress in Clinical and Biological Research, the Journal of Trace Elements in Experimental Medicine, and Biochemical Genetics.

David Burke completed a sabbatical in Nice, France where he was also a guest speaker on several occasions at the Université de Nice. He also gave several lectures throughout the state of Michigan for the Alumni Association and the Life Sciences Initiative. David is an Associate Editor of Genome Research.

Margit Burmeister co-chaired the session on animal models of the 2001 Human Genome Meeting in Edinburgh, UK. She serves on the editorial board of Mammalian Genome and is a member of CBRC Study Section of the NIAC.

Sally Camper was an invited speaker at the Endocrine Society Meetings in Toronto, at the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor, and at the International Mammalian Genome Conference in Riken, Japan. Sally serves on the editorial boards of Mammalian Genome, Genomics, and Molecular Endocrinology. She is on the Mammalian Genetics Study Section and serves on the Secretariat for the International Mammalian Genome Society.

Eric Fearon is the Editor of Cell Growth and Differentiation, and is an Associate Editor of the Journal of Clinical Investigation, and serves on the editorial boards of Genes, Chromosomes and Cancer, as well as Human Molecular Genetics, Laboratory Investigation, Clinical Cancer Research, Current Biology, and Neoplasia. Eric is also a member of the NIH Pathology B Study Section and was the Chair of the 2001 Gordon Research Conference on Cancer.

Philip Gage is a member of the Advisory Committee on Primary Research Appointments, Promotions, and Titles.

Thomas Gelehrter presented invited seminars at the Japanese Cancer Research Institute in Tokyo, and at the First Chianti Meeting on Plasminogen Activation in Siena, Italy. He is a member of the Council of International Society of Fibroanalysis and Proteolysis, and presented one of six sections (Genetics in Medicine) in the University of Michigan Medical School's "Mini-Medical School."

David Giusburg was a speaker at the XVIIIth Congress of the International Society on Thrombosis and Haemostasis in Paris. David is Deputy Editor of the Journal of Clinical Investigation, and serves on the editorial boards of The American Journal of Medicine and Thrombosis and Haemostasis. He is a member of the Board of Scientific Counselors of NIHGR.

Thomas Glaser was an invited speaker at the First International Symposium on Basic Helix-Loop-Helix Genes in Amsterdam, and at the FASEB Research Conference on Vision in Tucson.
Thomas Glover serves on the Research Advisory Board of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation and on the NIH Mammalian Genetics Study Section. Tom is the Co-Director of the Clinical Cytogenetics Laboratory in the Department of Pathology.

Jerome Gorski was selected to provide the article on Aarskog-Scott Syndrome for the 8th edition of The Metabolic and Molecular Basis of Inherited Disease. He is also an Associate Editor of Genetics in Medicine and a member of the Michigan State Department of Public Health Genetics Advisory Committee.

Jeffrey Innis was an invited speaker for the Society for Integrated and Comparative Biology in Chicago, and serves as a Consulting Editor for Pediatric Research. Jeff was also a member of an NICMS Special Emphasis Panel for Postdoctoral Training and is the Medical Director of the UM Medical Genetics Residency Program her at U of M.

Karen Johnson has served as the Acting Director of the Genetic Counseling program since January of 2001. Karen delivered the Joan Ashley Fiteck Memorial Lecture in Akron, Ohio and was appointed to the National Society of Genetic Counselors Special Projects Fund Committee. Locally, Karen participated in the University Research Opportunity Program, the Pipeline Summer Program through the School of Dentistry, and the Medical School's Macy Scholars Program for talented high school minority students.

Dave Kohnman was a guest lecturer at the University of Toledo's Department of Medicinal and Biological Chemistry and served as our Department's Admissions representative for the Program in Biomedical Sciences (PBI).

Kotoku Kurachi has begun his new job as the Director of the Gene Discovery Research Center at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology (AIST) in Tsukuba, Japan. His laboratory will be joining him next spring. Ko continues on the editorial boards of Bioscience, Biotechnology and Biochemistry and on Gene Therapy/Molecular Biology.

Miriam Meisler presented invited lectures at the Novartis Symposium on Ion Channels and Disease in London, at the Cold Spring Harbor Meeting on Mouse Molecular Genetics, and at the Jackson Laboratory in Bar Harbor. Miriam was also appointed to the Mouse Genomics and Genetics Scientific Panel (MSP) at NIH.

John Moran was an invited speaker at the Workshop on Site-specific Recombination & Transposition at Woods Hole, at the University of Virginia Medical School, and at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey. John also serves on the editorial boards of Analytical Biochemistry and Biomedicine and Biotechnology.

Gilbert Omenn was a guest speaker at the Third National Conference on Genetics and Public Health in Ann Arbor. Gil is Chair of the Institute of Medicine Committee for the Evaluation of Selected Federal Health Care Quality Activities, and Chair of the AAAS Section on Medical Service.

Elizabeth Petty presented lectures at the NHGRI during its celebration of the first ten years of the ELSI Program, and Internal Medicine Grand Rounds at Vanderbilt University. Liz serves as Medical Director of our Genetic Counseling Training Program.

Diane Robins was invited to be a dissertation defense opponent at the University of Helsinki. Didi is a member of the American Cancer Society Council for Extramural Grants and represents ACS on the Council for the Union Internationale Contre le Cancer in Geneva. In addition, Didi serves on the editorial boards of Steroids, Genetics, and Endocrine Reviews, and on the NICMS Biomedical Research and Research Training Subcommittee B, and the US Army Medical Research and Material Command Breast Cancer Research Program.

Jane Schuette is a member of the Michigan Department of Health's Working Group on Genetic Literacy, and was the Coordinator for the 2001 Summer Science for Middle School Girls, U of M Women in Science and Engineering Program.

Charles Sing was an invited speaker at the NICHD meeting on Risk Factors in Childhood for Atherosclerosis, at the Michigan Conference on Organic Agriculture at Michigan State University in Lansing, and at the New Avenues in Atherosclerosis Research Conference in Montreal. Charlie continues on the editorial board of the Journal of Molecular Medicine and is a Consulting Editor for Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis, and Vascular Biology.

Anand Swaroop completed a sabbatical at the Salk Institute and gave guest lectures at The University of Washington, UCLA, and Stanford Medical School. Anand serves on the editorial review board of Molecular Vision, is a member of The Genetics Committee of The Foundation Fighting Blindness, and is the Director of the University of Michigan Center for Retinal and Macular Degeneration.

Wendy Uhlmann was appointed to the American Society of Human Genetics Social Issues Committee. Wendy gave invited lectures at the 3rd National Conference on Genetics in Public Health in Ann Arbor, the America Bar Association Workshop on Medical Information and Privacy in Washington, and at the Banbury Center in Cold Spring Harbor.