Greetings from the Chair

I am pleased to send you this fourteenth annual Department of Human Genetics Newsletter, albeit a bit later than usual. The delay is occasioned not just by an exponentially improving ability to procrastinate, but also because I had hoped to give you a report on the search for a new chair. The search continues, with excellent candidates visiting.

There have been many accomplishments over the past year, including the renewal of the Genetics Training Grant that was successfully shepherded by Miriam Meisler. We are now in year twenty-six of funding! During the past year John Moran was promoted to Associate Professor of Human Genetics, with tenure, and Associate Professor of Internal Medicine. Steve Gruber and Donna Martin were approved for joint appointments as Assistant Professors in Human Genetics, and Steve was recently promoted to Associate Professor. Chris Krebs (Robins lab), Susan Dagenais (Glover lab), and Lori Raetzman (Camper lab) were appointed as Research Investigators. Bov Yashar received a joint appointment in the Department of Ophthalmology as an Assistant Professor. Jeff Innis has been named Director of the Division of Pediatric Genetics. George Brewer, who became emeritus professor in 2002, will be honored with a symposium on October 23, 2004.

The Department continues to be very strong in the research arena, and for FY 2002, the latest year for which we have data, the Department ranked ninth nationally in NIH awards to medical school departments of genetics.

Dr. James F. Crow, Professor Emeritus, University of Wisconsin, gave the Third Annual James V. Neel Lectureship on May 14, 2003. His talk was entitled "Jim Neel’s Heritage: Human Mutation Rates." The lecture was given in the James V. Neel Lecture Hall followed by a reception. Dr. Arno Motulsky, University of Washington, one of the pioneers of human and medical genetics, will present the Fourth James V. Neel Lectureship on May 10, 2004. His lecture, entitled "Impact of Genetics and Genomics on Medicine and the Biomedical Sciences," will be given in the Michigan League Vandenberg Room and followed by a reception.

Another successful retreat was held last fall at the Howell Nature Center. Tom Glover, the administrative staff, and students collaborated to put on another excellent program. Joel Howell, Professor of Internal Medicine, presented a provocative review on eugenics. A special student workshop was conducted by Kathy Barker, author of At the Helm: A Laboratory Navigator. The summer picnic was also a successful event, directed by John Moran, with the annual tug-of-war trophy going to the muscular Robins lab.

Awards and Honors

David Ginsburg was named the James V. Neel Distinguished University Professor of Internal Medicine and Human Genetics, and also received the 2003 Basic Research Prize from the American Heart Association. Anand Swaroop was installed as the Harold F. Falls Collegiate Professor of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences. Gil Omenn is the President-Elect of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), the world’s largest general scientific society. Friedhelm Hildebrandt received the 2004 E. Mead Johnson Award for Research in Pediatrics. David Burke was one of thirty faculty who visited fourteen cities as participants in the 2003 Michigan Road Scholars tour. Mike Levine received a Lifetime Achievement Award from his alma mater, Brooklyn College.

Donna Martin received the Janette Ferrantino Award from the Department of Pediatrics, and Miriam Meisler was elected a Senior Fellow of the Michigan Society of Fellows. Eric Fearon was elected to the American Association of Professors (AAP) and Tom Glaser and Steve Gruber were both elected to the American Society of Clinical Investigation (ASCI).

Numerically Speaking

Our faculty number thirty-two, including fourteen professors (six joint), eight associate professors (five joint), three assistant professors (two joint), four primary research faculty, one clinical assistant professor,
and two clinical instructors. Four emeritus faculty complement this group. Our twelve tenure-track faculty with primary appointments in Human Genetics were awarded $7.3M in direct cost funding during this past year and have another $3.2M pending. During the 2002-03 fiscal year the primary faculty supported, on average, 65% of their salaries on external funds.

The Department currently has forty graduate students, including six in MSTP, six in the Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling, and five masters students. Expenses for student tuition, stipends, and healthcare were $1M this past year. In addition to Human Genetics students, we have one CMB student, one Neuroscience student, one Biophysics student, one Chemistry student, and three Bioinformatics students performing thesis research in Departmental laboratories. Sixteen undergraduates worked in Human Genetics primary faculty labs, and there were sixteen postdoctoral fellows in Departmental primary laboratories during this past year.

Graduate Education

John Bernat (MSTP, Ginsburg lab) was selected to receive an Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor Award for 2003, which honors the accomplishments of talented and dedicated graduate students who have demonstrated exceptional ability as teachers, and excellence as advisors. John served as the TA for the Medical Genetics course for the past three years. The 2003 recipients of the Anita and Howard Cramer Family Award were Amy Hulme (Moran lab) and Mara Steinkamp (Robins lab).

Nine of our students completed their doctoral training since the last Newsletter. Ken Myrie (Petty lab, "Analysis of Molecular Mechanisms Underlying Mitotic Spindle Checkpoint Function in Malignancy") is now a postdoctoral fellow with the NIH/NCI-Genetics Branch. Sara Hamon (Sing lab, "Evidence for Single Nucleotide Polymorphisms Having a Non-Additive Influence Within the Apolipoprotein E Gene") is a Research Associate in the Sing laboratory. Ed Oliver (Glaser lab, "Belly Spot and Tail, A Mouse Minute") returned to UJ Medical School to complete his training in the Medical Scientist Training Program. Janet Leung (Fearon lab, "Identification and Functional Analyses of β-catenin/TCF Target Genes") has begun a postdoctoral fellowship with Joseph Nevins at Duke. David Buchner (Meisler lab, "Sen1 Modifies the Severity of a Neurological Disease in Mice") has begun a postdoctoral fellowship in the Ginsburg laboratory. Lee Lawton (Burke lab, "Molecular Mechanisms Controlling Epigenetic Stability of Gene Expression") is a postdoctoral fellow in the Georgopoulos laboratory at Harvard. Reid Alisch (Morni lab, "Unconventional Translation of Human Line-1 ORF2") is a postdoctoral fellow in the Warren laboratory at Emory University. Ayse Elif Ercan (Petty lab, "The Early G2/M Checkpoint and Ubiquitination: Implications for Breast Tumorigenesis") will be returning to the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Turkey, and Bryan MacDonald (Meisler lab, "Phenotype to Genotype: Genetic Variants of SCN1A and Dkk1") is a postdoctoral fellow in the Xi laboratory at Harvard.

In fall 2003, the Genetic Counseling Program unveiled a revised training curriculum. Novel elements include expanding the training cycle to two years and increasing the class size to six students. The Class of 2005, the first student cohort to train in the revised program, will have the opportunity to benefit from the academic and clinical experiences that have characterized Michigan genetic counseling graduate training for the past twenty-four years, but will also enjoy an expanded clinical training schedule, a wider variety of classroom experiences, and the opportunity to develop an individualized research project.

Also in 2003, the Medical School launched a new medical curriculum, which began with "Patients and Populations." This month-long block, including medical genetics, medical decision-making (with biostatistics and epidemiology), and general pathology was directed by Tom Gelehrter, who also directed and taught much of the medical genetics section. It was an exciting opportunity to introduce students to medicine with a focus on genetics.

Administration

Linda and her staff processed 28 new and competing grants during FY02, and managed 115 accounts. Linda also served as interim Administrator of the Department of Biological Chemistry during the months of January through April of 2003. In this capacity, she helped transition the department to its new chair and hired its new administrator.

In Closing...

The costs of supporting our outstanding graduate training programs have continued to rise. To maintain these programs, and to expand them to match the expansion of our faculty with the new chair recruitment, will require significant additional funds beyond those available from training grants and general fund
allocations. Donations to the James V. Neel Fellowship, which supports graduate education in the Department, will be critical to accomplish our goals and to keep the Department in the forefront of training tomorrow's leaders in genetics. We will be writing later in the spring to formally request your support.

Finally, we hope to announce in our next Newsletter, the recruitment of a new chair of Human Genetics. Chairing the Department for the past 17 years has been a wonderful experience for me, challenging and satisfying. I am very proud of the accomplishments of our faculty in research and training, the expert and devoted support of our staff, the exciting contributions of our talented students and postdoctoral fellows, and the support of our alumni. It has been an honor to lead this organization. Thank you!

Sincerely,

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

Faculty Activities

George Brewer was an invited speaker at the 5th ISTERH Conference in Quebec City, and at the Universities of Padova and Rome. He continues as 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 was an invited speaker at Duke and Vanderbilt Medical Schools. He serves on the Advisory Committee on Gender Equity in Science and Engineering at the University of Michigan, and is an associate editor of Genome Research.

Margit Burmeister organized a session on psychiatric genetics at ASHG, and serves on the editorial boards of Mammalian Genome and Human Molecular Genetics.

Sally Camper presented the Dean's Distinguished Seminar at the University of Colorado Health Science Center, the 2002 Charlotte Bronchard Memorial Endowed Lecture at McGill University, and the Presidential Symposium at the 6th Joint Meeting of The Japan Society of Histochemistry and Cytochemistry. She continues on the editorial board of Mammalian Genome.

Julie Douglas is a member of the Mathematical and Theoretical Biology Institute at Cornell University and is a member of the NHGRI Haplotype Map Project Methods Working Group and the Analysis Subcommittee of the NHLBI GxE Interaction RFA Program.

Eric Fearon gave the Keynote Lecture at the 13th Meeting of the Japanese Society for Gastroenterological Carcinogenesis in Osaka, Japan and was a guest speaker at the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences Colloquium in Amsterdam. Eric is the Senior editor of Molecular Cancer Research and is on the editorial boards of Cancer Research, Journal of Clinical Investigation, Neoplasia, Current Biology, and Genes, Chromosomes and Cancer. He is currently chair of the NIH Cancer Genetics Study Section.

Thomas Gelehrter was an invited speaker for the NIH Conference on Basic and Clinical Implications of Glucocorticoid Action. He is a member of the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee, of the Council of the International Society of Fibrinolysis and Proteolysis, and of the Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues Committee of the American College of Medical Genetics. He also serves on the Advisory Board of Endocrine Reviews.

David Ginsburg was the Baldini Visiting Professor at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. David serves on the editorial boards of The American Journal of Medicine, The Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis, and Molecular Medicine, and is a consulting editor of The Journal of Clinical Investigation. He is the chair of the Board of Scientific Counselors of NHGRI, a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for Rockefeller Brothers/Charles E. Culpeper Foundation and a member of the Review Panel for the National Competition of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Thomas Glaser was an invited speaker at the NIH Workshop on Classification of Congenital Eye Disease in St. Louis, and an external grant reviewer for the Telethon Institute for Genetics and Medicine (TIGEM) in Naples, Italy. Tom was also a panel member on the NIH Lens and Cataracts Policy Committee and a scientific advisor for the International Children's Anophthalmia Network.

Thomas Glover was an invited speaker at the Hutchinson-Gilford Genetics Consortium of the Progeria Research Foundation, at the FASEB Summer Research Conference on Genetic Recombination and Genome Rearrangements, and at the Gordon Conference on Molecular Mechanisms in Lymphatic Function. Tom serves on the Research Advisory Board of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation, and on the editorial board of Human Molecular Genetics. He also continues on the Medical School's Executive Committee.

Jerome Gorski is an associate editor of Genetics in Medicine, and a member of the Michigan State Department of Public Health Genetics Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Council of the National Incontinentia Pigmenti Foundation.
Stephen Gruber presented invited lectures at the national meetings of ASHG, American Society of Clinical Oncology, and the American Association of Cancer Research, as well as symposia in Hawaii and Tasmania. He is a member of the editorial board of Clinical Cancer Research.

Friedhelm Hildebrandt gave a symposium presentation at the International Congress of Nephrology meeting in Berlin, and at the annual meeting of the American Society of Nephrology in San Diego. Friedhelm serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of the American Society of Nephrology, Kidney and Blood Pressure Research, Nephrology Dialysis Transplantation (Cellular and Molecular Basis of Renal Disease), and Pediatric Nephropathy.

Jeffrey Innis serves as a consulting editor for Pediatric Research and is a member of the NIGMS Human Genetic Cell Repository Working Group. Jeff is also the director of the Medical Genetics Residency Program at U of M and the newly appointed director of the Division of Pediatric Genetics.

Dave Kohrman was a guest lecturer at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, and gave an invited platform presentation at The Jackson Laboratories in Bar Harbor. Dave is also the co-director of the Resident Research Committee in Otolaryngology.

Jeff Long was an invited speaker at the American Anthropological Association, and at the University of Cusco, Peru. He is a member of the NIH Mammalian Genetics Study Section and of the NIH Center for Inherited Disease Research Access Committee. He also serves as a member of the NSF/Yale University Alliance Frequency Database Advisory Board and the National Human Genome Center Advisory Board at Howard University.

Donna Martin was an invited speaker at the 2002 Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience in Orlando and is a member of the Professional Advisory Board of the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation.

Miriam Meisler presented the IMGS Verne Chapman Memorial Lecture in San Antonio. She is on the editorial boards of Genome Research and Mammalian Genome, and serves on the Advisory Council for NINDC and the Advisory Board for the NIH Mouse Mutagenesis Program.

John Moran was an invited speaker at a Keystone Symposium on transposition, at a workshop at St. Catherine's College, Oxford, and was a plenary speaker at the ESF meeting on retrotransposition in Ljubljana, Slovenia. John is also an associate editor of The American Journal of Human Genetics.

Gilbert Ommen gave the Parker B. Francis Lecture at the University of Colorado Aspen Lung Conference. He was an invited speaker at the American Association for Cancer Research meetings in Boston, the 2nd HUPO World Congress of Proteomics in Montreal, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting in Denver. Gil continues on several editorial boards, and serves on the Board of Directors of the University Musical Society and the United Way of Washtenaw County.

Elizabeth Petty was an invited speaker for the American College of Rheumatology Summer Clinical Symposium in Santa Barbara and gave Cancer Center Grand Rounds at University of Wisconsin, Madison. Liz serves as medical director of the Department's Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling.

Diane Robin was an invited speaker at the Vancouver General Hospital's Prostate Centre and the Hormone Action Gordon Conference, and gave a plenary talk at the 2nd International Conference on Prostate Cancer Research in Iowa City. She finished a term as member of the American Cancer Society Council for Extramural Grants and is a member of the NIGMS Biomedical Research and Research Training Committee. Didi is an associate editor of Genetics and served on the editorial boards of Steroids, Endocrine Reviews, and Molecular Endocrinology.

Jane Schrader is a member of the State of Michigan's Genetic Advisory Committee. Jane continues as the coordinator of the Summer Science for Middle School Girls with the U of M Women in Science and Engineering Program.

Charles Sing was an invited speaker at NIH, at the IBM Corporation Computational Biology Center, and at Rockefeller University. Charlie continues on the editorial board of the Journal of Molecular Medicine, and is a consulting editor of Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology.

David States is the director of University of Michigan's Bioinformatics Program and serves on the Board of Directors of the International Society for Computational Biology. He is on the editorial boards of the Journal of Computational Biology, Bioinformatics, and Applied Bioinformatics.

Anand Swaroop was an invited speaker at the International Conference on Eye Research in Lund, Sweden, at the XVth International Congress of Eye Research in Geneva, Switzerland, and the Bio-Frontier Symposium of the Japan Biological Society in Tsukuba, Japan. Anand continues on the editorial boards of Molecular Vision and Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science, and is a member of the NIH Visual Studies C Study Section.

Wendy Uhlinn spoke at the NSGC Region IV Annual Education Conference. Wendy is a member of the Genetic Alliance's Board of Directors, the Nominating Committee of ABGC, and continues to serve on the American Society of Human Genetics Social Issues Committee.

Bey Yashar was an invited speaker at the National Society of Genetic Counselors Region IV Meeting in Chicago, and at NHGRI. She is on the Region IV Planning Committee of NSGC and on the editorial board of Perspectives. Bey is a board member of the IRBMED at the University of Michigan.