Greetings from the Chair

I am pleased to send you this fifteenth annual Department of Human Genetics Newsletter. For those of you watching for signs, you will have noticed white smoke rising from the Medical Sciences complex — we have a new chair! I am delighted to announce that Sally A. Camper, Ph.D., Professor of Human Genetics and Professor of Internal Medicine, will become the Department's third chair, effective January 1, 2005. Sally was my first faculty recruit; she is an outstanding investigator, mentor, and a wonderful colleague. I am confident that the Department will continue to thrive and to grow under her direction.

The Department continues to be very strong in the research arena, and for FY 2003, the Department ranked tenth nationally in NIH awards to medical school departments of genetics.

George Brewer, M.D., Morton S. and Henrietta K. Sollner Emeritus Professor of Human Genetics, and Emeritus Professor of Internal Medicine, was honored with a symposium, expertly organized by Jeff Innis, and reception and dinner on October 23, 2004. The event was well attended by former students and trainees, friends, family, and colleagues from the University of Michigan, and research collaborators. George was also recognized this past year with an honorary degree from his alma mater, Purdue University.

There have been many significant accomplishments over the past year. David Burke, Associate Professor of Human Genetics and Associate Research Scientist, Institute of Gerontology, received the 2004 Dean's Award for Achievement in Basic Science Research. Eric Fearon is President-elect of the American Society of Clinical Investigation. Gil Omenn is President-elect of AAAS and received the President's Award from the American Occupational and Environmental Medicine Association. Anand Swaroop received the Senior Investigator Award from Research to Prevent Blindness, and Liz Petty was awarded the Elizabeth Caroline Crosby Research Award through the NSF Advance Program. JoAnn Sekiguchi, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Internal Medicine, was appointed Assistant Professor of Human Genetics; she is the recipient of a Pew Scholar Award.

The Fourth Annual James V. Neel Lectureship was given by Arno G. Motulsky, M.D., Sc.D., Professor Emeritus of Internal Medicine and Genetics, and a pioneer in human and medical genetics. His talk, "Impact of Genetics and Genomics on Medicine and the Biomedical Sciences" was given to a standing-room only crowd. The Fifth Lectureship will be presented on May 19, 2005 by Dr. Charles Seriver, Alva Professor Emeritus of Human Genetics at McGill University and Montreal Children's Hospital Research Institute.

For our fall 2004 retreat, we returned to the Kellogg Biological Station at Gull Lake. Jeff Long, the administrative staff, and students collaborated to put on another excellent program that included author Michael Byers, talking on, and reading from, his novel, "Long for this World." Camilla Day from NIH facilitated an NIH Moel Study Section. This event was also attended by a dozen students from Michigan State and Wayne State Universities. The summer picnic was also a successful event, directed by Dave Burke, with the annual tug-of-war trophy going back to the Departmental staff and a new volleyball trophy going to the Camper lab.

Numerically Speaking

Our faculty number thirty-two, including fourteen professors (six joint), six associate professors (three joint), four assistant professors (three 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 $8.2M in direct cost funding during the 2003-04 year and had another $8.7M pending. During the 2003-04 fiscal year the primary faculty supported, on average, 65% of their salaries on external funds.

The Department currently has forty-one graduate students, including four in MSTP, twelve in the Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling, and five masters students. Expenses for student tuition, stipends, and healthcare were over $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

Two of our students were honored by awards from the Medical School's Office of Research and Graduate Studies: Anne Casper for "Overall Excellence in Research and Service," and Jessica Lehoczky for "Overall Excellence in Teaching."

The 2004 James V. Neel Doctoral fellowship was awarded to Anne Casper in Tom Glover's lab, and the first James V. Neel Genetic Counseling Fellowship went to Jessica Mester, a 2nd year counseling student. The 2004 recipient of the Anita and Howard Cramer Family Award was Lisa Privite in Liz Petry's lab.

Bev Yashar received funding from the Duke Genetics Interdisciplinary Faculty Training Project to develop genome based educational programs that will foster the development of genetic competency for allied health professionals. Bev also coordinated a day-long workshop for Genetic Counseling supervisors and a separate half-day workshop for genetic counselors (held in conjunction with WSU).

Since our last newsletter, six students completed their doctoral training: Kelly Bronfield Cha (Camper lab, "Growth Insufficiency: Bone and Pituitary Development") is completing her M.D. in the MSTP program. Rich McEachin (States lab, "An Integrated Experimental and Computational Approach to Understanding Complex Disease: Differential Gene Expression in Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus") is continuing work in the States lab. David Van Mater (Fearon lab, "A Role for B-Catenin in Development and Disease") has also returned to the Medical School to complete his M.D. training. Melissa Williams (Innis lab, "Transgenic Analysis of the Genetic Requirements for Hox Posterior Prevalence") is expecting in February and will take off time for family. Tom Williams (Innis lab, "Between Gene and Phenotype: Molecular Mechanisms of HOX Transcription Factor Function") will begin a postdoctoral fellowship with Dr. Sean Carroll at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. Anne Casper "Common Fragile Sites: Mechanisms of Instability") will begin a postdoc this summer at Duke University with Dr. Tom Petes.

Administration

Linda Peasley served as interim administrator for the Bioinformatics Program for six months, and represents the basic sciences on several committees in Medical Administration. She and her staff continued to manage over 100 accounts, processed new and competing renewal applications, implemented a new online ordering system for lab supplies, and were involved in the planning of the Neel Lectureship and the Brewer Symposium. Linda has done a superb job over the past sixteen years and deserves a great deal of credit for making this Department outstanding.

In Closing...

In my last newsletter, I wrote of the increasing costs of maintaining our excellent graduate training program and the financial constraints under which we operate. We have begun to receive contributions to the James V. Neel Fellowship sent in response to a recent fundraising letter, and I encourage you to continue to support the outstanding graduate training programs of the Department. We very much appreciate your support.

Finally, as the year ends, I will complete seventeen years and four months as chair of the Department of Human Genetics. While it is fashionable for faculty to complain about the burdens of administration, I will freely admit that it has also been great fun. It has been an exciting, challenging, and satisfying job to recruit faculty and build an outstanding Department. Of the eleven primary faculty and twelve joint faculty who have joined the Department during my tenure, 21 are still here and all have established excellent programs in research, teaching and training that contribute to our strength. I am proud of our accomplishments over the past seventeen years and excited as I look forward to great things to come under Sally Camper's leadership. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to chair this great Department.

Sincerely,

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


Faculty Activities

George Brewer was an invited speaker for the Robert Farini Association in Padua, Italy and gave a series of lectures in Japan, sponsored by Novopharm Company. 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 Case Western Reserve and the spoke for the NSF at the Universidade Metropolitana in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He continues as Associate Editor of Genome Research and serves on our Medical School’s Biomedical Research Core Faculty Advisory Committee. He is also a Lecturer for the Mathematical and Theoretical Biology Institute in Los Alamos, New Mexico which provides research experience for Latino, Native American and African American undergraduates.

Margit Burneister gave invited seminars at Washington University and Emory. She is a member of the Access Committee of the Marshfield Mammalian Genotyping Center and serves on the editorial boards of Mammalian Genome and Human Molecular Genetics. Margit is a member of the Medical School Advisory Committee on Appointments, Promotion and Tenure.

Sally Camper was an invited speaker at the Gordon Conference on Mechanisms of Hormone Action and at the 17th International Mouse Genome Conference in Braunschweig, Germany. Sally is an advisor on the NIDDK External Advisory Board for Beta Cell Biology Consortium and continues as Director of the University’s outstanding Transgenic Animal Model Core.

Julie Douglas is a member of the NCHGR Methods Working Group for the Haplotyping Map Project and the Analysis Subcommittee of the NHLBI GxE Interaction RFA Program. Julie also raised $18K this past year for the American Cancer Society for breast cancer research, outreach and education.

Eric Fearon continues as chair of the NIH Cancer Genetics Study Section. He is the senior editor of Molecular Cancer Research and is on the editorial boards of Cancer Research, Lab Investigation, Clinical Cancer Research, Journal of Clinical Investigation, Neoplasia, Current Biology, and Genes, Chromosomes and Cancer.

Thomas Gelehrter was an invited speaker at the symposium honoring E. Brad Thompson at the University of Texas Health Branch in Galveston. He served on the Advisory Board of Endocrine Reviews and continues as a member of the NIH Recombinant DNA Advisory Committee and of the Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues Committee of the American College of Medical Genetics.

David Ginsburg was an invited speaker at Tel-Aviv University, at the XVIIth International Congress on Fibrinolysis and Proteolysis in Melbourne, Australia, and gave the ASCI Award Lecture in Chicago. David serves on the editorial boards of The Journal of Thrombosis and Haemostasis, and Molecular Medicine, and is a consulting editor of The Journal of Clinical Investigation. He is a member of the Scientific Advisory Committee for Rockefeller Brothers/Charles E. Culpeper Foundation and a member of the Investigator Advisory Committee for the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Thomas Glaser gave several seminars at the Hospital for Sick Children’s Departments of Genetics and Ophthalmology in Toronto and is on a panel member on the NIH Lens and Cataract Policy Committee, and a scientific advisor for the International Children’s Anophthalmia Network.

Thomas Glover was appointed to the Editorial Board of Human Molecular Genetics and serves on the Research Advisory Board of the Progeria Research Foundation. He was an invited speaker at the FASEB Summer Research Conference in Aspen and gave a lecture at the Progeria Research Foundation Workshop in Bethesda. Tom just completed his three-year term on the Medical School’s Executive Committee and continues as the Co-Director of the University of Michigan’s Clinical Cytogenetics Laboratory.

Jerome Gorski is a associate editor of Genetics in Medicine, and a member of the Scientific Advisory Council of the National Incontinentia Pigmenti Foundation. Jerry is also Associate Director of the University of Michigan’s Center for Organogenesis.

Stephen Gruber gave invited seminars at Amgen, at the Institut Catalan d’Oncologia in Barcelona, and at meetings in Israel. For the 2004-05 academic year, Steve is on sabbatical leave at Institut Catalan d’Oncologia in Barcelona.

Friedhelm Hildebrandt gave the E. Mead Johnson Award Lecture at the Annual Congress of the Society for Pediatric Research in San Francisco. He also presented at the 8th Annual Pauline Wilson Honor Genetics Symposium at Case Western Reserve University and at the American Society of Nephrology meeting in San Diego. Friedhelm serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of the American Society of Nephrology, Pediatric Nephrology, and the advisory board for Cellular and Molecular Basis of Renal Disease. He also serves as Editor for Chromosome 2 for the Human Genome Organization.

Jeffrey Innis was the organizer of, and a speaker at, the Mason Barr Retirement Symposium here at the University of Michigan. He is a member of the NIGMS Human Genetic Cell Repository Working Group. Jeff is the director of the Medical Genetics Residency Program and the Director of the Division of Pediatric Genetics at the University of Michigan.

David Kohrman gave an invited seminar for the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at Michigan State University. Dave is also the co-director of the Resident Research Committee in Otolaryngology.
Jeffrey Long delivered a workshop course entitled "Genomic Variation of Humans and Pathogens" at the University of Cusco, Peru, and was an invited speaker at the American Anthropological Association in Chicago. Jeff is a member of the NIH Genetic Variation and Evolution Study Section and also serves as a member of the NSF/Yale University Allele Frequency Database Advisory Board and the NSF Advisory Panel for Human Origins.

Donna Martin was an invited speaker and Session Chair at the Society for Pediatric Research in San Francisco, and a speaker at the Center for Genome Regulation in Barcelona, Spain. She is a member of the Professional Advisory Board of the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation.

Miriam Meisler presented the Annual Standaert Memorial Lecture for the Departments of Pharmacology and Neuroscience at Georgetown University, and was a speaker at the Conference on Mouse Initiatives at the Jackson Laboratory. She is on the editorial boards of Genome Research and Mammalian Genome, and serves on the Board of Scientiffic Counselors of NIDCD, the Advisory Board for the NIH Mouse Mutagenesis Program, and the NIMH Mouse Scientific Panel. Miriam is also a Senior Fellow of the Michigan Society of Fellows and the director of our Predoctoral Genetics Training Program.

John Moran was an invited speaker at the Gordon Research Conference on Chromosome Dynamics and at the Genetics Society's Annual Meeting in Warwick, England. John is an associate editor of The American Journal of Human Genetic and on the editorial board of Analytical Biochemistry and Biomedicine and Biotechnology. He will be the Co-Organizer of the 2005 FASEB Conference on mammalian transposable elements.

Gilbert Omenn was an invited speaker at the American Association for Cancer Research meetings in Orlando and for the Institute of Biochemistry, Laboratory of Protein Analysis in Shanghai, China. Gil serves on the editorial boards of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Journal of Human Genetics, and Journal of Protein Research. He is a member of the international HUPO council, and serves on the Board of Directors of the University Medical Society and the United Way of Washtenaw County.

Elizabeth Petty gave an Office of the Vice President for Research distinguished faculty seminar, and was an invited speaker for the 2004 Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference in Louisville and for the Cancer Education Consortium/AstraZeneca Molecular and Translational Oncology Workshop in Virginia Beach. Liz serves on the American College of Medical Genetics Recertification Examination Committee for Molecular Genetics and as Medical Director of the Department's Graduate Program in Genetic Counseling.

Diane Robins presented invited seminars at UCLA, at Case Western Reserve and at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences in Durham. Didi serves on the editorial boards of Steroids, Endocrine Reviews, and Molecular Endocrinology. She is a member of the NIGMS Biomedical Research and Research Training Subcommittee B and on the Research Advisory Committee for the Population Council in New York. Didi is the Director of Graduate Studies of the Department.

Charles Sing was an invited speaker for Bristol-Myers Squibb in Princeton and is a member of the Baker Endowment Advisory Council for Excellence in Agronomy at Iowa State University of Science and Technology. He continues on the editorial board of the Journal of Molecular Medicine, and is a consulting editor of Arteriosclerosis, Thrombosis and Vascular Biology.

David States was an invited speaker for the HUPO Plasma Proteome Meetings in Bethesda and Montreal. He is on the editorial boards of the Journal of Computational Biology and Applied Bioinformatics. He is also on the Board of Directors of the International Society for Computational Biology and on the NIH Biological Data Management Analysis Study Section.

Anand Swaroop was an invited speaker at the 8th Oxford Workshop of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes and Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation in London and gave a seminar for the Macula Vision Research Foundation in Philadelphia. He also was a guest speaker at the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in New Delhi, India. Anand continues on the editorial boards of Molecular Vision and Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science, and is a member of the American Federation for Aging Research's National Scientific Advisory Council and a regular member of the BDPE (previously Visual Sciences C) study section.

Wendy Uhlmann spoke at the National Society of Genetic Counselors 22nd Annual Education Conference in Charlotte and is a Board Member of the NSGC's Jane Engelberg Memorial Fellowship Advisory Group. Wendy serves on the Board of Directors of the Genetic Alliance and was appointed to a 3-year term as the NSGC's liaison to the National Advisory Council for Human Genome Research.

Beverly Yashar was an invited speaker at the National Society of Genetic Counselors Annual Education Conference in Charlotte, and at NIHGR. Bv is on the editorial board of Perspectives and continues as a board member of the IRBMEI at the University of Michigan. Bv is Director of our Graduate Training Program in Genetic Counseling.