Welcome

Happy New Year from everybody in the Faculty of Medical Sciences here at Newcastle! Welcome to the January 2013 version of our newsletter. We hope that you find this edition interesting and informative. This month we include news about our students’ success in BBSRC Policy Placements, Travel Grants and Doctoral Thesis Prizes. We also have information on some great events that have taken place at Newcastle and on our updated website.

BBSRC Policy Placements

Newcastle PhD graduate, Catriona Manville recently concluded a three-month policy placement in the British Library’s Science team. Throughout her placement, Catriona was responsible for organising TalkScience, a quarterly event run by the British Library, which brought together the different perspectives from across the research community to debate the impact agenda.

After working in an academic lab here at Newcastle University, Catriona found her three months were full of new experiences. During her time at the British Library, Catriona interviewed some famous people from academia and erudite societies, wrote an article for the Cheltenham Science Festival, spent two days in Parliament and planned the whole TalkScience event.

Catriona said: "This placement provided an invaluable opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the science landscape beyond academia and to fully appreciate the opportunities available to me to use my skills in a variety of contexts. My work at the Library also allowed me to clearly demonstrate I have the skills that future employers require." (Please visit www.bbsrc.ac.uk/business/people-information/policy-placements.aspx for the full article and more information on the Policy Placements).

Lewis Tomalin of Institute for Cell and Molecular Biosciences (ICaMB) has also recently been awarded a BBSRC Policy Placement working for the Society of Biology. He is excited to be starting his placement and we will give you an update of his progress in a future newsletter!

Nutrition Society postgraduate student conference in Newcastle

The inaugural Nutrition Society Postgraduate Conference was held at Newcastle University on 10th and 11th September 2012. The conference was jointly run by students at Newcastle University and the Nutrition Society Student Body and was exclusively open to student members. The conference gave students the opportunity to network with peers and to present their work by submitting a poster or presenting an oral communication. The programme also included Plenary lectures, oral communications, career sessions and workshops. Prizes were awarded to the students who were deemed to have given the best oral and poster presentations. The winners were Rosalind Fallaize (University of Reading) - oral presentation runner up, Georgia Billing (MRC Human Nutrition Research) - oral presentation winner, Sebastian Achterfeldt (Institute of Food Research) - poster presentation winner and Fiona Malcomson (Newcastle University) - oral presentation runner up. The keynote speech was given by Professor Mike Gibney of University College Dublin on major challenges in food and nutrition.
Reports from Recent Travel Grant Winners

Postgraduate research students may apply to the Faculty of Medical Sciences Graduate School Travel Fund for grants, awarded on a competitive basis, to travel to scientific conferences or other laboratories. It is extremely pleasing to note the benefits to our students of this travel funding scheme. Students report overwhelmingly positive experiences of their attendance at conferences or workshops or visits to other laboratories. Here are just a handful of quotes from students who recently benefited from the scheme. You can read the full reports, plus some selected recent reports by other students, at www.ncl.ac.uk/fms/postgrad/funding/TravelFundReports.htm.

Matthew Burke—Society for Neuroscience Conference, New Orleans, USA

The SFN Meeting in New Orleans was my first major international conference and gave me the opportunity to present some of the work carried out during my postgraduate study to a number of researcher from the US and EU. During the presentation of my poster I received constructive comments and criticism as a result of which I have a clear idea of further analysis and experiments to carry out.

Wan Adnan Bin Wan Omar—Professor Lucia Migliore’s Laboratory, University of Pisa, Italy

Getting funding to travel to Italy for a week’s placement at Professor Lucia Migliore’s Laboratory was an eye opener. It is a genetic lab at the University of PISA which focuses on gene polymorphism. As I’m currently looking at the effect of folic acid on MTHFR polymorphism the placement was a great opportunity to learn some new techniques.

Sarah McGarrity—International Conference on the Systems Biology of Human Disease 2012

This travel grant allowed me to attend the “International Conference on the Systems Biology of Human Disease 2012” in Heidelberg between 2nd and 4th May 2012. This conference covered many aspects of the systems biology of model organisms, systems medicine and systems pharmacology. These are subjects involved in my own PhD research into the metabolism of thiopurines using computational dynamic modelling.

Winners of FMS Doctoral Thesis Prize

The Faculty of Medical Sciences is a recognised centre of excellence, bringing together internationally respected research in basic and clinical biomedical sciences in an innovative environment. In order to recognise outstanding quality of research carried out during doctoral research studies, a limited number of Prizes are awarded biannually on the nomination of examiners of PhD and other doctoral research theses. The January-June 2012 awards have recently been presented. Edward Schwable from the Northern Institute of Cancer Research was one of the winners for his thesis entitled Molecular Subclassification of Medulloblastoma and its Utility for Disease Prognostication. It was commented that the thesis showed exemplary presentation of a substantial body of work and deep knowledge of the field displayed in viva, with important contributions to numerous publications. The second winner of the Doctoral Thesis Prize went to Kristoffer Winther of the Institute of Cellular and Biosciences. His thesis entitled Molecular Target of Enteric VapC Toxins and Regulation of vapBC Transcription by Conditional Cooperativity was described as a thesis of very high scientific quality, with very novel and very innovative results, published in major international specialist and discovery journals. Congratulations to both our winners!

New Look Website

The Faculty has recently revamped its website. Why not take a look at www.newcastle.ac.uk/biomedicine?

Postgraduate Open Day

Newcastle University will be holding a Postgraduate Open Day on Wednesday 6th February 2013. The Open Day will give potential new applicants an opportunity to find out more about our courses but also to provide an opportunity to students already holding offers to meet current postgraduate students, find out more about funding and finance and also to meet members of our award-winning careers team. To find out more and for details on how to register to attend, please visit www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/visit/open/index.htm.