

*11th Annual*

# FALL FRONTIERS

**UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH  
POSTER EXHIBITION**

**October 18, 2023**

5:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Wilbur Cross North Reading Room

**Sponsored by the  
University of Connecticut**

Office of Undergraduate Research  
Enrichment Programs



## **About Frontiers in Undergraduate Research**

The Fall Frontiers Poster Exhibition is a multidisciplinary research forum showcasing undergraduate research, scholarship, and creative projects at the University of Connecticut. Fall Frontiers complements the longstanding spring Frontiers exhibition, providing an additional opportunity for UConn's student researchers to share their exciting work.

This is the eleventh fall event sponsored by the Office of Undergraduate Research (OUR). This year's exhibition includes 90 students presenting posters for 75 research and creative projects.

Students' projects span the disciplines and include both independent research and work pursued in collaboration with other undergraduates. The projects presented reflect the invaluable contributions of research mentors, including graduate students, postdoctoral scholars, staff, and faculty members. We hope you enjoy meeting our wonderful students and learning about their innovative projects.

## **About the Office of Undergraduate Research**

The Office of Undergraduate Research is a resource for students interested in enriching their undergraduate experience through participation in research, scholarship, and creative activity. The OUR provides information and advising to assist students in identifying relevant opportunities, as well as several funding programs to support the students and their faculty mentors.

Many of the Fall Frontiers presenters have received financial support for their projects from the OUR, which awarded over \$640,000 in 2022-23 in support of students' research and creative endeavors. These awards are funded by the Office of Undergraduate Research with generous support from the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Research, the Deans of the schools and colleges, and private donations from alumni, parents, and other friends of UConn and undergraduate research.

# **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Fall Frontiers Poster Exhibition**

## **Poster Exhibition**

Wednesday, October 18, 2023

5:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.

## **Speaking Program**

5:30 p.m.

## **Welcome and Introductions**

**Micah Heumann**

Director, Office of Undergraduate Research

## **Keynote Speaker**

**Lindsay DiStefano**

Associate Vice President for Research Development  
and Professor, Department of Kinesiology

## **Closing Remarks**

**Caroline McGuire**

Executive Director, Enrichment Programs

## **Sequential Listing of Poster Presentations**

This listing of projects includes the undergraduate student authors and their faculty mentors. Please note that this is not a comprehensive listing of mentors: many projects also reflect the contributions and mentorship of dedicated graduate students, post-doctoral scholars, and research staff members. An alphabetical listing of presenters is included at the end of the program.

### **1. The Mansfield Training School Project**

Ally LeMaster, Journalism & English

Lillian Stockford, History

Ashten Vassar, Psychological Sciences & Human Rights

Madison Bigelow, English

Advisor: Brenda Brueggemann, Professor, English

### **2. Reading in Talking Books**

Kanny Salike, Linguistics/Philosophy

Advisor: Sam Sommers, Assistant Professor in Residence, English

### **3. Space and People in Accessing Food Pantries: A Mixed-Method Study of Hartford, CT**

Timothy Yanchak, Anthropology & Geographic Information Science

Advisor: Peter Chen, Assistant Professor, Geography

### **4. Immigrant or Migrant? Puerto Rican Migration During the 1950s**

Benjamin Pitruzzello, History

Advisor: Fiona Vernal, Associate Professor, History & Africana Studies

### **5. Puerto Rican Traditions of Civic and Political Engagement in Hartford, Connecticut**

Rémi Dupuis, Anthropology

Advisor: Fiona Vernal, Associate Professor, History & Africana Studies

### **6. DeSantis Policies' Effects on Latino Community in Orlando, Florida**

Annabel De La Cruz, History

Advisor: Melisa Argañaraz Gomez, Assistant Professor in Residence, Urban and Community Studies

### **7. Between Human Rights and Neoliberalism: The UN's Balancing Act**

Christina Clouser, Political Science

Advisor: Zehra Arat, Professor, Political Science

### **8. Understanding Barriers to Healthcare that Foreign-Born Brazilian Women Experience in Bridgeport, CT**

Victoria Marina Pigoretti, Allied Health Sciences

Advisor: Fumilayo Showers, Assistant Professor, Sociology

### **9. Transitional Justice and the Rule of Law**

Matthew Koleszar, Political Science & Economics

Advisor: Christopher Shay, Post-Doctoral Research Fellow, T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Harvard University

### **10. Tracking Armed Conflict in Myanmar**

Nishi Kapoor, Political Science & Human Rights

Sophie Lemire, Economics & Human Rights

Advisor: Michael Rubin, Assistant Research Professor, Human Rights

### **11. Emotional Well-Being Among Children With Specific Learning Disabilities**

Arta Berisha, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Fumiko Hoeft, Professor, Psychological Sciences

Advisor: Caroline Richter, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Advisor: Jacqueline Chen, Associate Professor, Psychology, University of Utah

### **12. Novel Virtual Reality Intervention Reduces E-Cigarette Dependence and Cravings in Undergraduate Students**

Linnea Budge, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Robert Astur, Associate Professor, Psychological Sciences

### **13. Examining the Effects of a Dual Joystick Operated Ride-On Toy Training on Bimanual Coordination of Arms in Children with Hemiplegic Cerebral Palsy**

Aarthi Tippireddy, Physiology and Neurobiology & Sociology

Emily Tully, Biological Sciences

Advisor: Sudha Srinivasan, Assistant Professor, Kinesiology

#### **14. Public Perception of Gender-Based Violence as Torture: A Survey Experiment**

Alexandra Kapell, Human Rights & Political Science

Advisor: David Richards, Associate Professor, Political Science & Human Rights

#### **15. Associations Among Maternal PTSS, Positive and Involved Parenting, and Child Externalizing Behavior**

Ethel Dvoskin, Psychological Sciences & Human Development and Family Sciences

Advisor: Carolyn Greene, Associate Professor, Psychiatry

#### **16. Professional Futures for Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Majors and Minors**

Morgan Keating, Psychological Sciences & Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

Kate Wagner, Political Science

Advisor: Ariana Codr, Assistant Professor in Residence, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

#### **17. Analyzing the Home Environments of People with Aphasia: Does Treatment Generalize Into Life at Home?**

Allison Shane, Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences

Advisor: Jennifer Mozeiko, Associate Professor, Speech, Language, and Hearing Sciences

#### **18. Unlocking the Power of Context: Learning Hard Nouns From Observation**

Kosta Boskovic, Cognitive Science

Advisor: Sumarga Suanda, Assistant Professor, Psychological Sciences

#### **19. A Single Gene Association Study for Dyslexia: Expanding Our Understanding of the Relationship Between NRSN1 and Reading Disorders**

Rhea Koyambreth, Psychological Sciences & Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Nicole Landi, Professor, Psychological Sciences

#### **20. Late-Life Depression and Markers of Immunosenescence**

Medha Illindala, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Breno Diniz, Associate Professor, Psychiatry

**21. Modeling Encephalomyosyngiosis After an Ischemic Stroke**

Vraj Patel, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Rajkumar Verma, Assistant Professor, Neuroscience

**22. Understanding the Role of Minor Intron Splicing in Spermatogenesis**

Jade Rosado, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Rahul Kanadia, Associate Professor, Physiology and Neurobiology

**23. The Identification of Olfactory Receptors Underlying Ammonia Attraction in *Drosophila***

Lina Layakoubi, Biological Sciences

Advisor: Karen Menuz, Professor, Physiology and Neurobiology

**24. Cloning of dCas9 gRNAs for Combinatorial Perturbation Experiments**

Rahiq Rashid, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Stefan Pinter, Assistant Professor, Genetics and Genome Sciences

**25. Quantifying SH2-Phosphotyrosine Interactions within B-Cell Signaling in Vitro**

Klea Ajazi, Molecular and Cell Biology

Marilia Gonzalez, Allied Health Sciences

Advisor: Bruce Mayer, Professor, Genetics and Genome Sciences

Advisor: Kazuya Machida, Associate Professor, Genetics and Genome Sciences

**26. Assessing the Therapeutic Potential of Flavonoid Derivative of Cannabis in Preclinical Models of Metastatic Pancreatic Cancer**

Suheera Haq, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Sayeda Yasmin-Karim, Instructor, Radiation Oncology, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

**27. Using Dead Space Ventilation Obtained Through SHAPE Testing to Screen for CTEPH**

Aldo Sharofi, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Raj Parikh, Assistant Professor of Medicine, Department of Pulmonology, Hartford Healthcare



### **28. Murine Immune Responses to Novel Pichinde Viral Vector-Based Vaccines**

Nathan Velazquez, Pathobiology

Advisor: Yuying Liang, Professor, Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, University of Minnesota

Advisor: Hinh Ly, Professor, Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences, University of Minnesota

### **29. Using Modified Bacterial Artificial Chromosomes to Develop Transgenic Mouse Models Containing Human Genes with Disease Causing Mutations**

Srilekha Kadimi, Diagnostic Genetic Sciences

Advisor: Aamir Zuberi, Director, Technology Evaluation and Development, The Jackson Laboratory

Advisor: Xiaofan Li, Scientist, Technology Evaluation and Development, The Jackson Laboratory

### **30. Exploring the Function of TOMM70A, MTX2, and MTCH2 in Regulating DELE1's Trafficking**

Christina Snicer, Diagnostic Genetic Sciences

Advisor: Xiaoyan Guo, Assistant Professor, Genetics and Genome Sciences

### **31. Determining How the TM3, Sb Ser Balancer Chromosome Contributes to the Meiotic Drive of the B Chromosomes in *D. melanogaster***

Ryan Gado, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Stacey Hanlon, Assistant Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology

### **32. Role of Carbonic Anhydrase Beta in Carbon Fixation in the Human-Associated Methanogen *Methanobrevibacter smithii***

Jacob Goldstein, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Michel Santiago-Martinez, Assistant Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology

### **33. Determining the Timing of Post-Mitotic Readthrough Transcription**

Sindy Gorka, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Leighton Core, Associate Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Jessica Costa-Guda, Assistant Research Professor, Center for Molecular Oncology

Advisor: Jaci VanHeest, Associate Professor, Educational Psychology

### **34. Contribution of Foreign Body Giant Cells in Foreign Body Reaction to Implantable Devices in CD13KO Mouse Model**

Andy Dong, Biological Sciences

Fraser McGurk, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Mallika Ghosh, Assistant Professor, Center for Vascular Biology

Advisor: Linda Shapiro, Director, Center for Vascular Biology

### **35. Visualizing the CD13-Dependent Implant Foreign Body Response**

Fraser McGurk, Molecular and Cell Biology

Andy Dong, Biological Sciences

Advisor: Mallika Ghosh, Assistant Professor, Center for Vascular Biology

### **36. Genetic Loss of BMP Signals Regulate Skeletal Stem Cell Populations in Growing Long Bones**

Krithika Santhanam, Molecular and Cell Biology & IMJR: Health Policy and Racial Disparities

Isabella Martindale, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Caroline Dealy, Associate Professor, Craniofacial Sciences, Biomedical Engineering, Orthopedic Surgery & Cell Biology

Advisor: Melanie Fisher, Research Associate, Orthodontics

### **37. Blood Levels of an Alternative EGFR Isoform Implicated in Cancer Diagnosis**

Hailey DeWalt, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Caroline Dealy, Associate Professor, Craniofacial Sciences, Biomedical Engineering, Orthopedic Surgery & Cell Biology

### **38. Measuring Motility of Hematopoietic Progenitors by Time-Lapse Imaging and Single Cell Tracking to Elucidate a Role for PAR1 in Osteoclastogenesis**

Rebecca Abirached, Medical Laboratory Sciences

Advisor: Vanessa Scanlon, Assistant Professor, Regenerative Medicine

Advisor: Joseph Lorenzo, Professor, Endocrinology

### **39. Effect of Anti-Inflammatory Drugs and Local Anesthetics on Microtubule Organization**

Alexander Greb, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Lakshmi Nair, Associate Professor, Orthopedic Surgery

#### **40. Impact of a Walnut-Rich Diet on the Murine Gut Microbiome and Metabolism**

Darren Lee, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Yanjiao Zhou, Associate Professor, Medicine

Advisor: Yair Dorsett, Instructor, Medicine

#### **41. Investigating the Role of TEAD1 in UO Induced Renal Fibrosis in Mice**

Oliver Sabet, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Melanie Tran, Instructor, Nephrology

#### **42. Functional Analysis of Cancer Associated Variants in the *MSH6* Mismatch Repair Gene**

Olivia Amodeo, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Chris Heinen, Professor, Center for Molecular Oncology

#### **43. All Together Now: The Relationship Between Predatory Protists and Bacterial Multicellular Structures**

Alexandra Carabetta, Diagnostic Genetic Sciences & Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Lindsay Triplett, Chief Scientist, Plant Pathology and Ecology, Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

#### **44. USP7 Mutations in Hao-Fountain Syndrome Patients Affect MAGEL-2 Interaction with Both the TRAF-like and UBL1-2 Domains of USP7**

Gabriela Soriano, Structural Biology and Biophysics & Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Irina Bezsonova, Associate Professor, Molecular Biology and Biophysics

#### **45. Exploring the Structure and Assembly of Janus-Based Nanotubes (JBNts) Through Multiscale Molecular Dynamics Simulations**

Rey Carten, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Eric May, Associate Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology

#### **46. Characterizing Cell Attachment to Novel Substrates to Promote Radial Organization of Neural Precursor Cells In Vitro**

Sanjana Nistala, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Jean Hebert, Professor, Dominick P. Purpura Department of Neuroscience, Albert Einstein College of Medicine

**47. Degradation of 17 $\alpha$ -Ethinylestradiol by Genetically Engineering the CotA Laccase Gene of *Bacillus licheniformis***

Nathan Shaw, Biological Sciences

Alex Frutos, Molecular and Cell Biology

Srishti Tandon, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Lisa Nigro, Assistant Research Professor, Institute for Systems Genomics

**48. Demineralized Cartilage-Bone Matrix as a Model for Studying Extracellular Control for Mineral Deposition**

Ryan Westervelt, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Jungwoo Lee, Associate Professor, Chemical Engineering, University of Massachusetts Amherst

**49. Proteoglycan-4 (PRG4) as a Prognostic Biomarker for Post-Cardiopulmonary Bypass Lung Injury in Pediatric Patients**

Emma Slavin, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Tannin Schmidt, Associate Professor, Biomedical Engineering

**50. The Effects of Labile Carbonate on Bone-Like Apatite Dissolution**

Caroline Flanagan, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Alix Deymier, Asst Prof/Basic Sci, Biomedical Engineering

**51. Screw-Assisted 3D Printing of Customized Biomaterials for Bone Defect Reconstruction**

Feiyang Li, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Ali Tamayol, Associate Professor, Biomedical Engineering

**52. Can Bisphosphonate Treatment Prevent Rotator Cuff Degradation During Disuse?**

Sydney Whittaker, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Alix Deymier, Assistant Professor, Biomedical Engineering

**53. A HaloTag-Based Hybrid Sensor for Gauging Intracellular Tensile Forces**

Aiden Reilly, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Yi Wu, Associate Professor, Center for Cell Analysis and Modeling

**54. Investigating the Effect of Acvr1<sup>(R206H)</sup> Expression in Muscle Stem Cells on Skeletal Muscle Regeneration**

Fariha Fardin, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: David Goldhamer, Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology

**55. Impact of Storing Aspirin Tablets in a Car for the Summer in CT**

Lyla White, Pharmacy Studies

Advisor: Bodhi Chaudhuri, Professor, Pharmaceutical Sciences

**56. Secure Two Party Computation for V2X Deep Learning Tasks**

Joshua Lee, Statistical Data Science

Advisor: Yuan Hong, Associate Professor, Computer Science and Engineering

**57. The First Genome Reference for the Tropical Legume, *Inga vera*, and Comparative Analysis of Genes Involved in Nitrogen Fixation Among the Fabaceae**

Harshita Akella, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Jill Wegrzyn, Associate Professor, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

**58. Fast, Easy, Green Preparation of a Novel Biologically Active Molecule**

Katrina Doherty, Chemistry

Advisor: Nicholas Leadbeater, Associate Professor, Chemistry

**59. Analyzing the Impact of Environmental Contaminants in Conjunction with Microplastics on Soil Protist Motility and Abundance**

Mehr Chhatre, Chemical Engineering

Advisor: Leslie Shor, Professor, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering

**60. The Synergic Role of Electrical and Chemical Stimulation for Wound Healing Applications**

Laxmi Vobbineni, Biomedical Engineering

Advisor: Sangamesh Kumbar, Professor, Biomedical Engineering

**61. Exploring the Synthesis and Reactivity of  $\beta$ -Thiolactones: New Templates for Drug Discovery**

Brandon Davis, Chemistry

Advisor: Amy Howell, Professor, Chemistry

**62. Antimicrobial Peptide-Ruthenium Conjugates – An Answer to the Drug Resistance Epidemic**

Megan Schmitt, Physiology and Neurobiology

Advisor: Alfredo Angeles-Boza, Associate Professor, Chemistry

Advisor: Scott Pierce, Assistant Professor in Residence, Chemistry

**63. Energy Efficiency Solutions for Small/Medium Manufacturers**

Nicholas Bailey, Management and Engineering for Manufacturing & Anthropology

Stewart Peng, Mechanical Engineering

Advisor: Liang Zhang, Associate Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering

**64. One Size Does Not Fit All: The Opportunity in Artificially Intelligent Personalized Education**

Jada Vercosa, Management and Engineering for Manufacturing

Advisor: Arash Zaghi, Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering

**65. A Game-Theoretic Model for *Schistosoma japonicum* Transmission Dynamics in the Philippines**

Yuan-Jen Kuo, Biomedical Engineering

Gian Paras, Engineering, University of Guam

Advisor: Hyunju Oh, Associate Professor, Division of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Guam

Advisor: Leslie Aquino, Associate Professor, Division of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Guam

Advisor: Jan Rychtář, Professor, Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Virginia Commonwealth University

Advisor: Dewey Taylor, Professor, Mathematics and Applied Mathematics, Virginia Commonwealth University

**66. Constraining Ice Core Paleofire Proxies During Dansgaard-Oeschger 8**

Caroline Wexler, Earth Science & IMJR: Geoscience Communication and Visual Media

Advisor: Eric Saltzman, Professor, Department of Earth System Science, University of California, Irvine

**67. Effects of Poor Maternal Nutrition During Gestation on F0 and F1 Ewe Colostrum and Milk Composition and Colostrum IgG**

Julianna Bosco, Animal Science

Advisor: Kristen Govoni, Professor, Animal Science

**68. Sustained Lipopolysaccharide Challenge in Sheep**

Laura Centanni, Animal Science

Advisor: Steven Zinn, Professor, Animal Science

### **69. Designing Dynamic Conductive Coiled-Coil Peptide Fibers**

Charlotte Chen, Materials Science and Engineering & Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Allon Hochbaum, Associate Professor, Materials Science and Engineering, University of California, Irvine

### **70. Picky SWD Parasitoids: Exploring Interactions and Host Selection Behavior on Different Berries**

Dom Rowland, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology & Sustainable Plant and Soil Systems

Advisor: Gregory Loeb, Professor, Entomology, Cornell AgriTech

### **71. Uncovering New Depths of Hidden Algal Diversity and Geographic Distribution within Fog Desert Lichens**

Reilly Stiefel, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology & Sustainable Plant and Soil Systems

Advisor: Louise Lewis, Professor, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

### **72. DNA Metabarcoding of Marine Zooplankton Samples for Biodiversity Collected in the Northeast US Continental Shelf From Time-Series Ecosystem Monitoring Surveys**

Vicki You, Marine Sciences & Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Advisor: Paola Batta-Lona, Assistant Research Professor, Marine Sciences

### **73. The First Genome Assembly of Pumpkin Ash (*Fraxinus profunda*) to Identify Resistance to the Emerald Ash Borer (*Agilus planipennis*)**

Owen McEwing, Biological Sciences

David Baukus, Molecular and Cell Biology

Laurel Humphrey, Biological Sciences

Emily Strickland, Molecular and Cell Biology & Nutritional Sciences

Advisor: Jill Wegrzyn, Associate Professor, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

### **74. Quantifying Resistance in the Butternut and Japanese Walnut to an Invasive Fungal Pathogen**

Stefan Wnuk, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Karl Fetter, Postdoctoral Research Assoc, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

**75. Advancing Conservation Efforts for an Endangered North American Walnut (*Juglans cinerea*) with a Chromosome-Scale Reference Genome of Japanese Walnut (*Juglans ailantifolia*)**

Cristopher Guzman, Molecular and Cell Biology

Amanda Mueller, Molecular and Cell Biology

Keertana Chagari, Molecular and Cell Biology

Stefan Wnuk, Molecular and Cell Biology

Advisor: Jill Wegrzyn, Associate Professor, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Advisor: Rachel O'Neill, Professor, Molecular and Cell Biology



## **Special Thanks**

The Office of Undergraduate Research wishes to thank the deans of the represented schools and colleges, the Office of the Provost, the Office of the Vice President for Research, and the generous donors to Enrichment Programs and to the Honors Program for their support of undergraduate research.

In addition, we thank the following individuals for their support:

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Anne D'Alleva, *Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs*

Gladis Kersaint, *Vice Provost for Academic Affairs*

Jennifer Lease Butts, *Associate Vice Provost, Enrichment Programs and Director, Honors Program*

# **Office of Undergraduate Research**

## **Staff**

Micah Heumann, *Director*

Melissa Berkey, *Assistant Director*

Jodi Eskin, *Program Administrator and Advisor*

Emily Schwab, *BOLD Program Director and Advisor*

## **Peer Research Ambassadors**

Emma Beard '24 (CLAS)

Riley Beckham '24 (ENG)

Anabelle Bergstrom '25 (CLAS)

Fariha Fardin '25 (CLAS)

Sana Gupta '24 (CLAS)

Lina Layakoubi '24 (CLAS)

Darren Lee '25 (CLAS)

Lucie Lopez '24 (CLAS)

Fraser McGurk '25 (CLAS)

Romir Raj '24 (ENG)

Krithika Santhanam '25 (CLAS)

Grace Vaidian '24 (CLAS)

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