Biomedical Scholar Alumni Spotlight

RUTGERS
School of Graduate Studies

Ghislaine Cruz (MBS '18)
Associate Scientist,
Pfizer

Ghislaine entered the Biomedical Scholars track of the Master's Degree program as a stepping stone between the chemical and pharmaceutical industries. While working full-time as a Research and Development Technician at Infineum, Cruz earned a concentration in Pharmacological Sciences which she credits for preparing her for her current position as an Associate Scientist at Pfizer. The fundamental MBS courses provided her a strong, broad base from which she used the electives to dive deeper into pharmacokinetics and dynamics, drug development, clinical trials, and regulation. In Cruz's own words "I loved the electives. They were very valuable". Cruz also added that the education gained during the MBS has helped in opening doors into different areas within the pharmaceutical industry. With the breadth and depth of knowledge gained from the core course, laboratory rotations, and electives, Cruz is able to engage in a large variety of discussions at her current position in Pfizer.

In addition to academics, Cruz urged that the Alliance for Career Advancement (ACA) was critical to her successful transition into pharma. The ACA hosts events exposing graduate students to a wide array of biomedical career paths. Through these events and the extensive network of Rutgers alumni, Cruz learned about various companies and roles in pharma and eventually connected with an alumnus working at Pfizer. This connection unlocked an opportunity to interview for her current position and showcase her expertise. "I've found that networking is extremely important in finding a job in the field you want", says Cruz. "It's hard to stand-out in a pile of 100 cover letters. Networking through the ACA helped me be seen."

-Written by: Tiffany Joyner Edited by: Caitlyn Moore

Alumni, Biomedical Scholars Track, Masters Program

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Kevin Lahey, MS '16
Concentration in Stem Cell Biology

As a student in the Master's of Science program at the School of Graduate Studies, Kevin Lahey (MS '16) seized the opportunity to establish his scientific foundation and develop research skills. Lahey entered the program with several years of work experience in industry, returning to further his education. During his time in the Master's program, Lahey was mentored by Dr. Diego Fraidenraich, Assistant Professor in the Department of Cell Biology and Molecular Medicine. "Dr. Fraidenraich provided me with a foundational opportunity that introduced me to stem cell culture", asserts Lahey. Based on this experience, Lahey decided to pursue a Master's thesis under the supervision Dr. Fraidenraich, where he was also able to co-author a publication. The relationship he developed with Dr. Fraidenraich began simply with Lahey approaching the professor after class and asking questions. Thus, Lahey urges incoming students to "take advantage of the tremendous network here at Rutgers… Don't be shy about approaching professors and students with any questions at all, especially in regard to science."

Currently, Lahey is a 3rd year PhD candidate in the lab of Dr. Raymond Birge, studying immune regulation and cell death in the context of cancer. Lahey feels very fulfilled in his current position and believes that "without the background I received from the Master's program, I doubt I would be in the position I am today". He advises students who are considering the pursuit of a PhD to "spend time in a lab familiarizing yourself with basic research techniques, [because] having a solid scientific foundation prior to entering the PhD program will pay dividends in the future! Also, network, network, network!!!"

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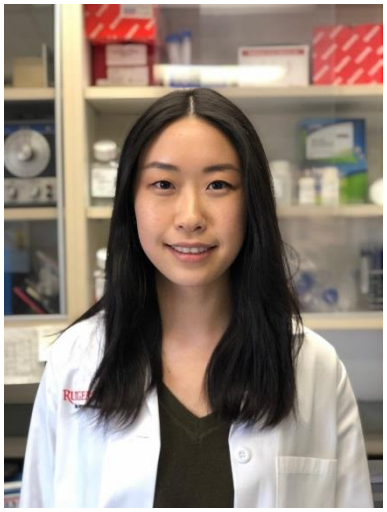

Angela Lu, MS '19
Current PhD Student

Angela Lu (MS '19) entered the Master's Degree program with the goal of gaining pharmacology research experience. Lu believes that "the Biomedical Sciences Master's program at Rutgers allowed me to take coursework relevant to my interests in pharmacological sciences, courses that were not available to me as an undergraduate." During her first semester, Lu began a lab rotation in the lab of Dr. Andrew Thomas, there she was able to "gain a wide variety of lab skills, including bioenzymatic drug assays, flow cytometry, and live single-cell calcium imaging." Lu's lab rotation ultimately culminated in a Master thesis on the effects of a novel class of quinazoline compounds on Plasmodium falciparum death. Lu professes that she is very grateful to "Dr. Andrew Thomas and Dr. Paula Bartlett for their continued support and advice. They have both helped me grow so much during my time as a Master's student in the lab." She also believed "Dr. Carol Lutz, my advisor for the biomedical sciences track, also helped me a lot during my time as a Master's student."

Apart from her time in the laboratory, Lu was also able to gain a great deal of enrichment through her involvement in various extracurricular activities on Rutgers campus. While enrolled as a Master's Student, Lu was a mentor for Students 2 Science (S2S), an organization that partners with local schools to bring science and the laboratory experience to middle and high school students. Through S2S, she also participated in the ISAAC (Improving Student Affinity and Aptitude for Careers in STEM) Program by assisting middle school students with hands-on science experiments such as titrations, melting point determination, UV absorbance, and electroplating. She felt that her involvement in various extracurricular activities allowed her to apply her love of science in a way that benefits today's youth. She would advise all incoming students to understand that "your experience as a Masters student is what you make of it…take advantage of the opportunities here at Rutgers, whether they be in research, networking, or extracurricular".

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Krystopher Maingrette, MS '18
Current PhD Student

Krystopher Maingrette (MS '18) completed a thesis during his tenure in the Master's program. This experience led him to discover his passion for research. Maingrette believes that the academic and supportive culture at Rutgers School of Graduate Studies enabled him to achieve his objective of acceptance into the PhD program. During his time as a the Master's student, Maingrette enjoyed Practical Approaches for Studying Protein Function with Dr. Maha Abdellatif and Dr. Danish Sayed because it reinforced his understanding of techniques learned in the lab. Currently, Maingrette is a 2nd year PhD student in Dr. Terri Wood's lab, where he thoroughly enjoys studying cancer metastasis. He believes that the Master's thesis option, available here at Rutgers School of Graduate Studies, facilitated his transition by providing the opportunity to complete a "dissertation-like project" prior to joining the PhD program. Maingrette believes that Dr. Carol Lutz was a faculty member key to his overall growth and success through his graduate school career. "Dr. Lutz is an amazing resource who is irreplaceable in the application process", he emphasizes.

Maingrette advises other students to "take advantage of all of the recourses that are offered through this program. "There are many PIs (Principal Investigators [to] work with and the faculty and staff are supportive." Additionally, he urges students to "always give it your best, even if you may be unsure of which direction you want to take. Be open and willing to try new experiences and opportunities in other fields of science because your passion may end up being in something that you never initially planned to do."

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