

The Department of Infectious Diseases Newsletter 2024-2025

Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence in Infectious Diseases Research and Education!

The Department of Infectious Diseases proudly marks its 20th anniversary this year, commemorating two decades of groundbreaking research, innovative teaching, and impactful service. Originally formed through the merger of the Departments of Medical Microbiology and Parasitology, the Department has grown from a small but dedicated team into a dynamic hub of interdisciplinary excellence.



Graduate Students working in the lab of Mark Tompkins

In 2005, the Department began with 14 faculty and 12 students, primarily focused on parasite-based diseases and animal infectious disease diagnostics. Today, it boasts 52 faculty members, 65 PhD students, 10 postdoctoral fellows, and 30 undergraduate laboratory research students. This remarkable growth reflects the Department’s commitment to expanding the frontiers of infectious disease research and education.

Over the years, the Department’s research portfolio has broadened significantly to include virology, bacteriology, mycology, disease ecology, bioinformatics, and high-containment infectious diseases. Faculty and students have contributed to national and global efforts to combat diseases such as malaria, COVID-19, influenza, tuberculosis, and pneumocystis, resulting in numerous patents and the launch of several start-up companies.

In addition to its robust veterinary teaching, the Department now offers a comprehensive PhD/MS program, an undergraduate laboratory research program, and recently launched an undergraduate certificate and minor in infectious diseases. Its faculty are actively engaged across five Colleges, three Institutes, and four Centers, with collaborations extending from the Athens campuses to Tifton and Aiken, SC.

This milestone is a testament to the vision, dedication, and collaborative spirit of our faculty, students, and partners. We are proud of our legacy and excited for the future as we continue to lead in infectious diseases research and education.

As the Department looks ahead, it remains committed to addressing the world’s most pressing health challenges through innovation, collaboration, and education.

Overview of the Department

Department of Infectious Diseases
College of Veterinary Medicine
University of Georgia

89

Faculty Members

65

Graduate Students

41

Undergrad Students

\$28.1M

FY24 Funding

Contact Information

Alumni, we want to hear from you! Please let us know any status updates, career achievements, or other news! If you are interested in speaking at a seminar or being featured in the newsletter, contact us at cvmidis@uga.edu

Follow us on
our socials!



View our Website!

Faculty and Staff News

New Faculty



Dong An
Assistant Research Scientist



Elyssa Campbell
Assistant Research Scientist



Robert Huigens III
Associate Professor



Brent Simpson
Assistant Research Scientist



Berit Bangoura
Associate Professor

Faculty and Staff News

Promotions



Yung-Yi Mosley
Assistant to Associate Professor



Michael Dzimianski
Associate to Senior Research Scientist

Faculty and Staff News

Grants and Awards

Ash Pathak

\$2,839,000 grant from the DOD to standardize clinical trials for evaluating anti-malarial drugs.

Chet Joyner

Early Career Scholar Award

Daniel Peach

Sarah H. Moss Fellowship

Melinda Brindley

ZOETIS Award 2024

Pejman Rohani

Creative Research Award

Stephen Trent

BOR-Regents' Professorship

Vincent Starai

Team Impact Award along with the Biointerface Translation and Engineering Center (BTEC)



Department Life

Symposium and Retreat



The Department of Infectious Diseases celebrated a dynamic and productive year by hosting both the 16th and 17th Annual Research Symposium and Faculty Retreat. The 16th Symposium, held in Fall 2024 to reflect the 2023–2024 academic year, took place after the previous newsletter was published. We're excited to spotlight it here alongside the 17th Symposium, which convened on August 1, 2025.

Each symposium served as a vibrant forum for faculty, students, and research partners to connect, collaborate, and showcase groundbreaking work. This year's event featured a "Lunch and Learn" session with distinguished guest speakers: Abhijit Bakre (USDA), Samantha "Sam" Wofford (Boehringer Ingelheim), M. Cristina Gingerich (CyanVac LLC), and Aaron Gingerich (CyanVac LLC). Attendees also heard remarks from Dr. Chris King, Interim Vice President for Research, and explored a dynamic science showcase of posters and presentations that highlighted the department's innovative research.

At the 2024 Faculty Retreat, Dr. Julie Martin of Augusta served as the keynote speaker, offering valuable insights and inspiration to attendees. More than 20 graduate students participated in the symposium, presenting posters and oral presentations. Awards were given to the top three students in each category, as voted by their peers.

2024 Symposium Awardees

Poster Presentations:

1st Place: Taylor Chapman

2nd Place: Maiya Callender

3rd Place: Jillian Masters

Oral Presentations:

1st Place: Grace Vick

2nd Place: Amadis Vivas

3rd Place: Rose Miller

2025 Symposium Awardees

Poster Presentations:

1st Place: Jacob Fairholm

2nd Place: Gavin O'Boyle

3rd Place: Saniya Sabnis

Oral Presentations:

1st Place: Jillian Masters

2nd Place: Nick Foster

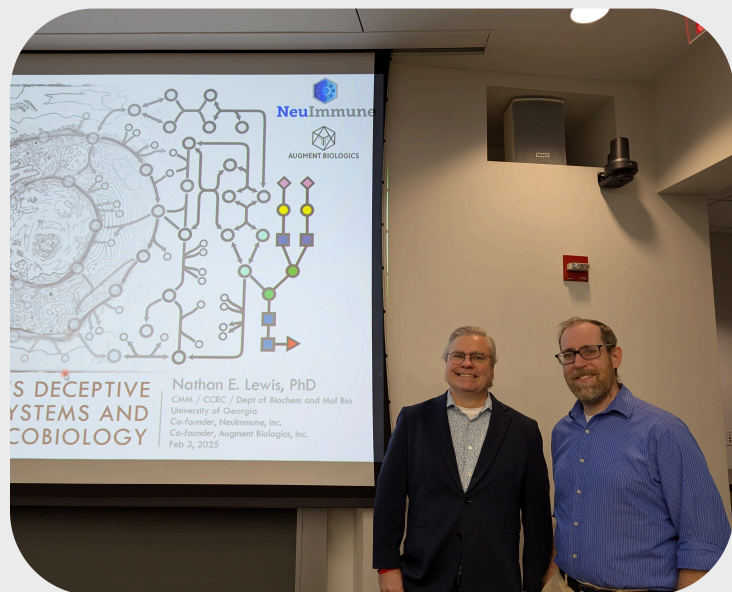
3rd Place: Naveen Gokanapudi

These events continue to foster a culture of excellence, collaboration, and innovation within the department. We look forward to another year of impactful research and community engagement.



Department Life

Seminar Series



Mark Tomopkins and Nathan Lewis (right), GRA Eminent Scholar, Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

The Department of Infectious Diseases Seminar Series had another successful year, welcoming 23 guest speakers who shared their expertise with our graduate students and faculty.

Highlights included engaging talks from UGA professors across multiple disciplines—including the College of Veterinary Medicine, Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, and the School of Medicine—reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of infectious disease research.

We were also honored to host speakers from leading institutions across the country, including: University of California, Santa Cruz, Washington University, and The Ohio State University.

These seminars continue to enrich our academic community and foster meaningful dialogue across research areas.

Department Life

Field Program



In May, Assistant Professor Dr. Dan Peach led students on an immersive Vector Ecology Field Program during the Maymester term. The group traveled across South Carolina and Georgia, exploring key topics in entomology and infectious diseases through hands-on fieldwork and site visits.

This experiential learning opportunity gave students a deeper understanding of vector-borne disease ecology while fostering collaboration and curiosity in real-world environments.

Department Life

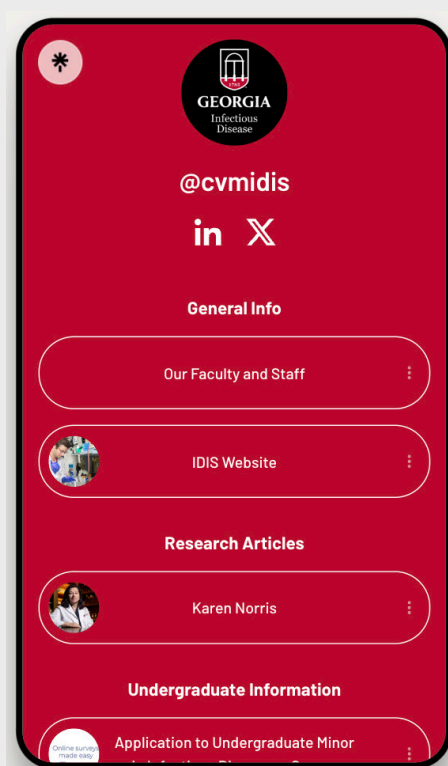
Social Media

With the support of our department's first Public Relations intern, Lanier Pickren and second, Maddie Cannon, IDIS significantly expanded its social media presence over the past year. Starting from scratch, our platforms have grown to include: Instagram: 286 followers, LinkedIn: 1,145 followers, X (formerly Twitter): 395 followers.

Our outreach continues to thrive through engaging initiatives such as the IDIS Faculty Bookshelf series, graduate student spotlights, and regular highlights of departmental achievements.

A new addition this year was the launch of our LinkTree, making it easier than ever to access key resources and updates through a single link in our social media bios.

On campus, the department is also enhancing internal communication by adding more digital display screens throughout the building, featuring timely announcements, event highlights, and important updates.



Find everything you need in our LinkTree, available in the bio of all our socials.



Lanier Pickren
Top 100 Student Employee

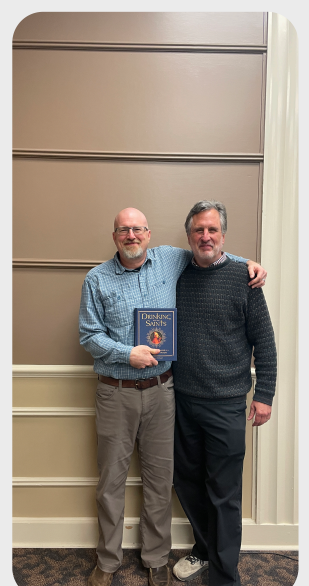
Faculty and students we want to hear from you! Reach out to us to feature your accomplishments on social media or to share news with the department!

Department Life

Holiday Celebration

This past December, the department came together to celebrate the holiday season and bid a fond farewell to Dr. Andy Moorhead, Associate Professor in Infectious Diseases. Dr. Moorhead will be joining North Carolina State University, and while we're sad to see him go, we're excited for the new opportunities ahead in his career.

We thank Dr. Moorhead for his many contributions to our department and wish him all the best in this next chapter!



Graduate Student News

PhD. Graduates 2024–2025



Densie Fahey

Major professor: Wendy Watford



Colleen Sedney

Major professor: Eric Harvill



Caroline Page

Major professor: S. Mark Tompkins

Graduate Student News

Grants and Awards

Audrey Sandoval

M. Terry and Elizabeth S. Coffey Graduate Fellowship

Breanna Timani

2025 ARCS Scholar

Maiya Callender

Graduate School Summer Research Grant

Yeongseo Son

2025 Sisodia–Patel Prize for Outstanding Undergraduate Research in Biochemistry & Molecular Biology and 2025 Knight–Hennessy Scholar



Audrey Sandoval



Breanna Timani



Maiya Callender



Yeongseo Son

Undergraduate Student News

CURO Undergrads

Through UGA's Center for Undergraduate Research Opportunities (CURO), undergraduates pursuing faculty-mentored research gain valuable hands-on experience and the opportunity to present their work at the annual CURO Symposium.

This year, seven undergraduates mentored by IDIS faculty members proudly presented their research at the symposium:

Uditi Srivastava – mentored by Dr. Douglas Paton

Suhas Gaddam – mentored by Dr. Tuhina Gupta

Lexiana Poe – mentored by Dr. Eric Harvill

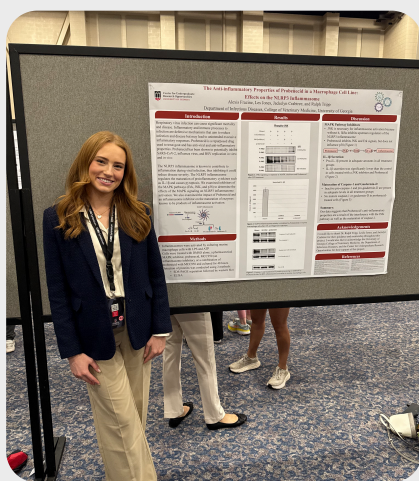
Riza Khan – mentored by Dr. Grazieli Maboni

Seyanna Castro – mentored by Dr. Gregory Phillips

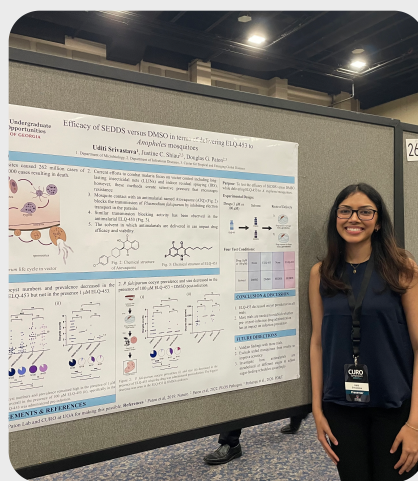
Alexis Frazine – mentored by Dr. Ralph Tripp

Raja Srinivasan – mentored by Dr. Russel Karls

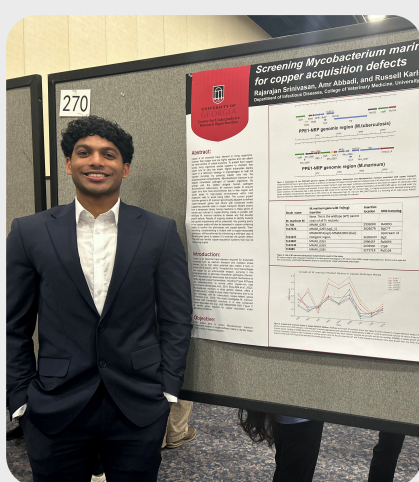
We're proud of these students and their faculty mentors for contributing to the advancement of infectious disease research through undergraduate scholarship.



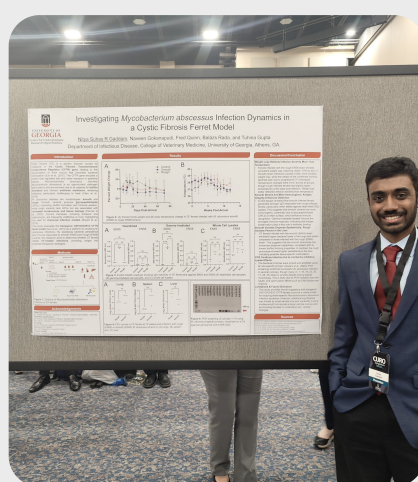
Alexis Frazine



Uditi Srivastava



Rajarajan Srinivasan



Nitya Suhas Gaddam

Undergraduate Student News

Academic Program Updates: Minor & Certificate in Infectious Diseases

This fall, the Undergraduate Minor in Infectious Diseases officially launched, welcoming its first cohort of students. The minor offers an in-depth exploration of pathogen biology, host-pathogen interactions, and disease management, requiring 17 credit hours of focused coursework. Designed to complement a wide range of majors, the program equips students with the knowledge and skills to pursue careers in healthcare, life sciences, and other infectious disease-related fields.

Meanwhile, the Certificate in Infectious Diseases, introduced in 2023, continues to grow in popularity. With 65 students currently enrolled and 13 graduates to date, the certificate requires a minimum of 12 credit hours and provides both practical and theoretical training in infectious diseases from diverse biological science perspectives.

These academic offerings reflect the department's commitment to preparing the next generation of scientists and healthcare professionals through rigorous, interdisciplinary education.

Learn more about
the undergrad
minor here!

Learn more about
the undergrad
certificate here!

Contact Information

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Any comments or inquiries please reach
out to cvmidis@uga.edu



Department of Infectious Diseases
College of Veterinary Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

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Give to IDIS

Support more decades of groundbreaking discoveries in infectious diseases by giving to our graduate student fund!

