

The Aubieclave Report



THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT Dr. Yoonsung Hu

Meet Dr. Yoonsung (Yoon) Hu, a postdoctoral researcher in Dr. Shankumar Mooyottu's lab, who joined Auburn University one year ago. Originally from South Korea, Yoon's academic journey has taken him through Iowa, Mississippi, and Arkansas before settling in Auburn.

Yoon is passionate about the collaborative environment within the Pathology Department, where he works closely with faculty across disciplines. In just his first year, he's already published a paper and is actively involved in multiple grant proposals—an impressive start to his postdoctoral career.

His research in Dr. Mooyottu's lab centers on gut pathogens, particularly *Clostridioides difficile*. The team explores the wide-ranging effects of gut dysbiosis and *C. difficile* infection, including its impact on the brain, liver, and kidneys. They're also investigating a promising bacterium that may help prevent *C. difficile* germination in the gut.

Outside the lab, Yoon is a proud father of two—his 6-year-old son and 4-year-old daughter. He cherishes family time and enjoys outdoor adventures like camping and sports with his wife and children.

GIVE TO
PATHOBIOLOGY

THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Jordan Towns

Dr. Jordan Towns, Assistant Clinical Professor of Clinical Pathology, is an Auburn alum through and through—earning her undergraduate, veterinary, residency, and Ph.D. degrees here. After several years as a GP and emergency veterinarian in Birmingham, she returned in 2017 for her residency and Ph.D., completed in 2024, and joined the faculty this April.



Jordan's favorite part of her role is teaching and interacting with veterinary students, graduate students, and residents. She also emphasizes the critical work her team does in Clinical Pathology—providing timely, high-quality lab results such as bloodwork, cytology, and urinalysis to ensure prompt patient care.

Outside of academia, Jordan has some fascinating talents. She's a college football referee on fall weekends, competed on Team USA in Modern Pentathlon from 2018–2024, and even plays the pipe organ—a truly unique mix of skills!

THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

Heather McGrady

Heather McGrady, Lab Assistant II in the Media Lab, has been an integral part of Auburn for nearly 24 years! Originally from Jacksonville, Florida, Heather appreciates the flexibility and low-stress environment of the Pathology Department, which has kept her passionate about her work for over two decades.

Her role is critical to maintaining safety compliance within the department. Heather ensures that biohazard waste materials are properly submitted for autoclaving and disposal—a process that protects both staff and the integrity of the lab environment.

Outside of work, Heather is a talented artist with a special love for photography. She's currently focused on developing her macro photography skills, capturing the beauty of small details in everyday life.

A large, orange and white tiger mascot, wearing a blue jersey with the number 01 and the word AUBURN, is surrounded by a crowd of people. The tiger is waving its arms and has its mouth open as if roaring. The background is a blurred crowd of people.

Welcome to The Jungle!

A portrait of Dr. Nickolas DeLuca, a man with dark hair and a mustache, smiling. He is wearing a dark blue suit jacket over a light blue shirt. The background is blurred red foliage.

Dr. Nickolas DeLuca

OUR NEW LECTURER

Dr. Nickolas DeLuca joined the Department of Pathobiology on November 17th as a Lecturer in the Public and One Health Program. Dr. DeLuca joins Auburn University after a 28-year career with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). At CDC he worked on a variety of domestic and global health issues in the areas of communication, education, training, and behavioral science. His area of expertise includes infectious diseases such as HIV and

tuberculosis. During his time at CDC, he had a four-year assignment as a prevention advisor in CDC Namibia. Dr. DeLuca also participated in several of CDC's Emergency Response efforts, including a deployment to Sierra Leone to support the 2014 Ebola response, as well as leadership roles in CDC's Zika, COVID-19, and Mpox responses. In his last position at CDC, Dr. DeLuca oversaw the Communications, Education, and Behavioral Studies Branch in the Division of Tuberculosis Elimination. Dr. DeLuca received his Ph.D. in Health Education and Health Promotion from the Department of Health Behavior at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Dr. DeLuca enjoys the outdoors, including hiking and biking, and is looking for pickleball or squash partners who are interested in playing. Get in touch! He is also a (very) amateur potter and likes to get his hands dirty working with clay occasionally!

Welcome to The Jungle!



Dr. Reuben Buckley

OUR NEW RESEARCH FELLOW

Reuben Buckley received a PhD in genetics/genomics from the University of Adelaide in Australia. Before coming to Auburn, he was a postdoc at the University of Missouri College of Veterinary Medicine and at the National Institutes of Health. His work has been focused on using the genetic structure of dog and cat breeds to identify trait-associated genes with relevance to human health. These include chondrodysplasia in Munchkin cats and orofacial clefts in Turkish Pointers.

At Auburn, as a member of Prof. Xu Wang's lab, Reuben will work with DCSITE, analyzing genomic data to identify key genes related to the performance of scent detection dogs. In his spare time, Reuben enjoys learning the mandolin and taking his dog Brie for walks around the neighborhood.

Dr. Deepti Pillai

OUR NEW ASSOCIATE CLINICAL PROFESSOR

Dr. Pillai is a board-certified microbiologist, a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Microbiologists. She earned her B.V.Sc. (equivalent to a DVM) and master's degree in veterinary microbiology from the Nagpur Veterinary College, India, followed by a Ph.D. from Kansas State University. Dr. Pillai has served as an instructor, consultant clinical microbiologist, and immunodiagnostic section head.

Her research interests include antimicrobial resistance in pathogen causing infectious disease in veterinary medicine, with a particular focus on improving diagnostic stewardship through rapid test development and identifying bacterial virulence factors as potential vaccine candidates. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, gardening, and creating art.





From dedication to new direction: CVM recognizes Walz, formally welcomes Narayanan!

Last month, the college honored Dr. Paul Walz for nearly six years of service and leadership as head of its Department of Pathobiology and formally welcomed Dr. Sanjeev Narayanan as its new department head. Narayanan (pictured at left with Walz and Dean Calvin Johnson) had previously served as professor and head of the Department of Comparative Pathobiology at Purdue University. He also served as interim associate dean for research and graduate studies in Purdue's College of Veterinary Medicine and led college-level initiatives in artificial intelligence in education.

Auburn's 2025-26 Research Communications Fellows Program Highlights Patho Faculty

Faculty members Dr. Jeba Jesudoss Chelladurai and Dr. Katharine Horzmann are among the 21-member cohort for Auburn University's 2025-26 Research Communications Fellows program. Sponsored by Auburn's Office of the Senior Vice President for Research and Economic Development (OSVPRED), in collaboration with the Office of Communications and Marketing (OCM), the program equips researchers with the strategies and skills to communicate the broader impact of their work.



CONGRATULATIONS!

On October 22nd 2025, Shelby McAlister successfully defended her thesis titled, *Multi-site Neuromodulation as a Potential Therapy for Improving Metabolic Function in Domestic Cats*.

IN THE NEWS



Dr. Samira Salimiyan won 3rd Place in poster at the 2025 CCTS Translational Science Symposium

Over 120 trainees, scholars, faculty, and research professionals from across the [CCTS Partner Network](#) gathered in Gulf Shores, Alabama, for the 2025 CCTS Translational Science Symposium (TSS25), a one and a half day in-person event hosted October 30–31 at The Lodge at Gulf State Park. Designed to foster connection and collaboration across disciplines, this year's symposium featured interactive workshops, skill-building sessions, and a celebration of research excellence.

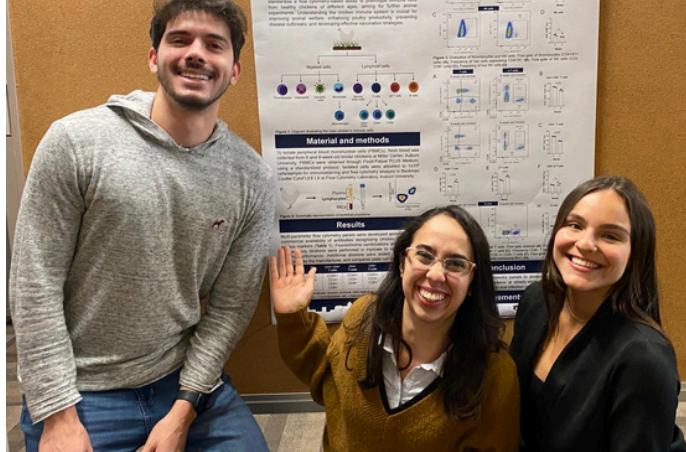
As in past years, the Three-Minute Thesis (3MT) and Poster Presentation competitions provided a platform for emerging scientists to showcase their work in engaging formats.



The Fall 2025 issue of "[Auburn Research](#)" highlights Dr. Kathryn Reif's efforts to understand what makes vector-borne diseases "tick."

Reif, associate professor and Bailey-Goodwin Endowed Professor of Parasitology, uses electropenetography (EPG) to monitor the feeding behavior of ticks and other blood-loving arthropods. Gluing tiny wires to the backs of live ticks has its challenges, but the findings help improve understanding of how quickly and effectively tick control products work or how environmental factors may influence tick feeding behaviors.

IN THE NEWS



2025 Phi Zeta Research Emphasis Day Pathobiology Highlights

Auburn Pathobiology proudly represented at the 2025 Phi Zeta Meeting! The platform or poster presentations from undergraduate, veterinary and graduate students, postdoctoral and research fellows, and faculty highlighted all of the exciting research happening in the College of Veterinary Medicine.



Pathobiology Phi Zeta Winners:

Best Platform Presentation – Veterinary Student

Second Place (tie): Rae Kantzler (mentor Chengming Wang)

Best Platform Presentation – Graduate Student

First Place: Dr. Kira Noordwijk (mentors Bruce Smith, Lindsey Boone)

Second Place: Nicola Darzenta (mentor Maria Naskou)

Best Poster Presentation – Veterinary Student

First Place (tie): Claire Carrico (mentor Jeba Jesudoss Chelladurai) & Holly Chauvin (mentor Maninder Sandey)

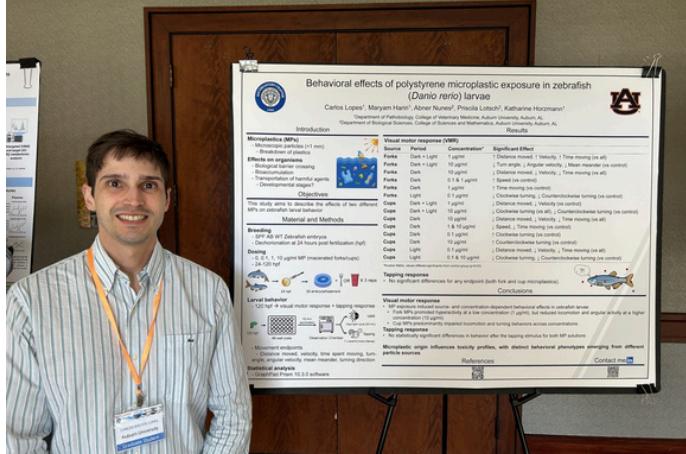
Best Poster Presentation – Graduate Student

Second Place (tie): Vinicius Apolloni (mentor Miria Criado) & Samira Salimiyan (mentor Emily Graff)

Best Poster Presentation – Postdoctoral and Research Fellow

First Place: Alinne Santana Pereira (mentor Laura Huber)

IN THE NEWS



2025 Southeastern Region of the Society of Toxicology

Dr. Carlos Eduardo Bastos Lopes, represented AU Pathobiology at the 2025 Southeastern Region of The Society of Toxicology under Dr. Horzmann's mentorship.



Carter Hague, Phi Zeta Podium

Carter Hague, a sophomore researcher (genetics and PAOH double major) in Dr. Xu Wang's lab, presented his work, "Pangenome and transcriptome analysis of virulence factors in pathogenic *Salmonella* isolated from natural outbreaks," at the Phi-Zeta Day research symposium. He is the only selected podium presentation among 11 undergraduate abstracts. Congratulations to Carter!

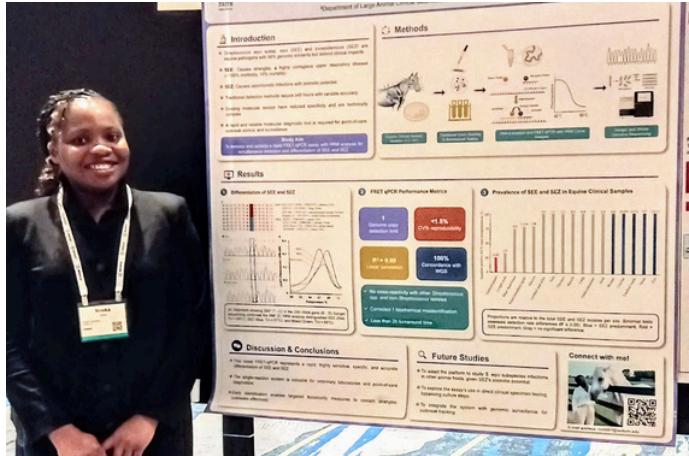


Dr. Horzmann won the Zoetis Award for Veterinary Research Excellence

The award recognizes researchers whose innovative studies have advanced the scientific standing of veterinary medicine.

Dr. Horzmann is one of only a handful of faculty members nationwide who blend biomedical research and clinical-diagnostic service in the discipline of toxicologic pathology. While Dr. Horzmann is a prolific researcher, having earned a major NIH R15 research award and published 29 peer-reviewed articles as first or corresponding author, her impact also shows through the students she guides and educates!

IN THE NEWS



Ms. Nneka Iduu received the Brenda Love Best Bacteriology Poster Presentation Award

Her poster titled, *"High-Resolution Melting Curve FRET-qPCR Rapidly Distinguishes *Streptococcus equi* subsp. *equi* and *zooepidemicus*"*, highlighted the development of a novel, rapid, and highly-specific molecular assay for differentiating two clinically important *Streptococcus equi* subspecies (*equi* and *zooepidemicus*).

This award recognizes outstanding research in diagnostic bacteriology presented at the 68th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticicians (AAVLD) and the 129th Annual Meeting of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA), held October 22–26, 2025, in Aurora, Colorado, which brings together more than 1,200 diagnostic professionals, scientists, and researchers nationwide.



INSTITUTE
on TEACHING
and MENTORING

2025 Southern Regional Education Board Institute Meeting on Teaching and Mentoring

First-year Pathobiology graduate student Samantha Mejia, a recipient of a Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Graduate Fellowship, and her mentor, Dr. Bruce Smith, attended the SREB 2025 Institute on Teaching and Mentoring, in Atlanta, Ga, October 30 – November 2, 2025. The meeting was held in conjunction with the Sloan Foundation and provided an opportunity for current and past Fellows to meet and interact with each other, as well as faculty and administrators from a variety of universities. Presentations at the meeting focused on professional development topics and provided opportunities for attendees to learn about many aspects of being academic faculty.

IN THE NEWS



2025 American College of Veterinary Pathologists (ACVP) Conference

Auburn Pathobiology proudly represented at the 2025 ACVP Meeting in New Orleans! Our residents and faculty showcased outstanding research, posters, and well-deserved awards.



Dr. Carlos Eduardo Bastos Lopes won the 2025 ACVP Young Investigator Poster Award

Dr. Carlos Eduardo Bastos Lopes won the 2025 ACVP Young Investigator Poster Award (Diagnostic Pathology category) & the 2025 ACVP Young Investigator Award (Industrial and Toxicologic Pathology category)!



Discover the Flow Lab Online!

The Flow Cytometry Lab now has its own website, designed to make life easier for researchers and curious minds alike! From quick guides on sample prep to details about the lab's powerful instruments, the site is packed with helpful resources. Whether you're planning an experiment or just want to learn more about how flow cytometry helps unlock the secrets of cells, this is the place to [GO](#).

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IN THE NEWS



2025 Pathobiology Thanksgiving Potluck

On behalf of the Department of Pathobiology, Dr. Narayanan, and the admin team, we would like to extend our sincere gratitude to each of you for your participation in this year's potluck. Your contributions of time, effort, and delicious dishes made the event truly special.

This year's gathering was one of our best turnouts yet, and it would not have been possible without your enthusiasm and generosity. Beyond the wonderful food, what made the occasion memorable was the spirit of community, collaboration, and camaraderie that everyone brought to the table.

We are grateful for the opportunity to come together outside of our usual routines, to share laughter, stories, and a sense of connection. Events like these remind us of the strength of our team and the value of celebrating together.



IN THE NEWS



Ying Zhang (PhD candidate) in Dr. Xu Wang's lab published a first-author publication!

Her publication is on transcriptome analysis on cryopreserved catfish sperm in the *Journal of Reproduction*, one of the two flagship journals in the area of animal reproduction. Thu Dunkleberger, a Research Assistant in the lab, also contributed to this research. This project is in collaboration with Dr. Ian Butts' group in AU School of Fisheries and funded by an USDA-NIFA award.

Spotlighting Parasitology Research

Both hookworms (left) and ticks (right) are common parasites that pose health threats to humans and companion animals alike. The newest issue of the *American Journal of Veterinary Research* highlights the parasitology research of Auburn Patho. faculty members Jeba R. J. Jesudoss Chelladurai and Kathryn E. Reif.



Help us make dreams a reality!

Your impact begins here – choose the Auburn causes that are important to you. Whether you give to empower students through scholarships, drive groundbreaking research and life-changing outreach, or enrich the Auburn Experience, you are shaping our future.



<https://aub.ie/PathoGift>





PUBLICATIONS

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IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS



Pathobiology Holiday Party

Date: Monday, December 15

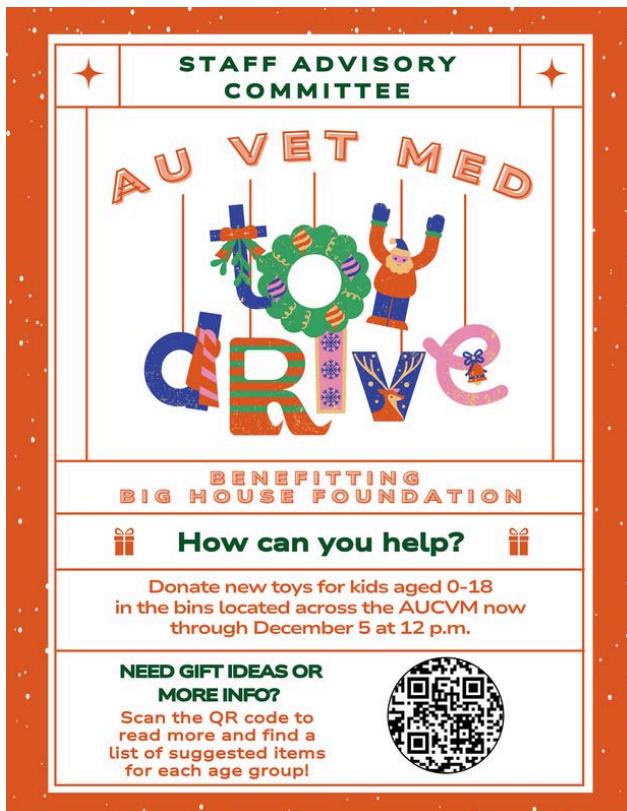
Time: 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

Location: VEC 246/248

What to Bring:

- A dessert to share
- One wrapped, anonymous gift per participant (**\$25 value**)

The Holiday Game ("Dirty Santa") kicks off at 2:00 PM, right after we've enjoyed food and good company!



AU Vet Med Toy Drive

The Staff Advisory Committee is accepting contributions to the CVM Toy Drive to benefit Big House Foundation. Toy collection bins will be stationed in the Vet Med Library, Vaughan Large Animal Teaching Hospital, VEC, the Bailey Pharmacy, and the Pathobiology administrative office. Donate new toys for children ages 0-18 through noon on December 5. Wish list items for each age group are available on the **Big House Foundation website**.

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS



Next Faculty Meeting:

Dec. 3 in GH 168 from 1-3 PM

Next Staff Meeting:

Jan. 8 in VEC246/248 from 9:30-10:30 AM

A list of official holidays for Auburn employees, including schedules for 2025 and 2026, is available on the University Human Resources website.

As a reminder, Auburn will be closed for the Christmas holiday from Friday, Dec. 19, at 4:45 pm, to Monday, Jan. 5, 2026, at 7:45 am.

2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Holiday	Weekday(s) Observed	Date(s) Observed
New Year's Day	Thursday	Jan. 1, 2026
Martin Luther King Jr. Day (2026)	Monday	Jan. 19, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday	May 25, 2026
Juneteenth Day	Friday	June 19, 2026
Independence Day	Friday	July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday	Sept. 7, 2026
Thanksgiving	Wednesday-Friday	Nov. 25-27, 2026
Christmas*	Friday	Dec. 25, 2026

* In addition to the above dates for Christmas Day and New Year's Day, we will close campus on Friday, Dec. 18, 2026, at 4:45 p.m. and re-open on Monday, Jan. 4, 2027, at 7:45 a.m.

- Friday, Dec. 18, 2026: All offices will remain open and operating until 4:45 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 4, 2027: All offices will re-open and resume operations at 7:45 a.m.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Bixler, Brenda M.	6-Dec
Bottura Apolloni, Vinicius	3-Dec
Gillespie, James W.	15-Dec
Jesudoss Chelladurai, Jeba R.	9-Dec
Juszczynski, Erica B.	14-Dec
Kazemian, Shakiba	12-Dec
King, Kevin B.	12-Dec
Liyanage, Samitha S.	25-Dec
Walz, Heather L.	26-Dec





Farewell and Best Wishes!

As we close this chapter, we want to take a moment to celebrate and thank the incredible staff, faculty, and students who are moving on to new adventures—whether through transferring to other departments, graduating, relocating, or retiring.

Your dedication, hard work, and collaboration have helped shape our programs and strengthen our community. We are grateful for the time, energy, and passion you've shared with us, and we know you'll continue to achieve great things in your next steps.

We're excited for what the future holds for each of you! Thank you for being an important part of our story—you will always have a place in our hearts and in the legacy of this department.

Wishing you success, happiness, and new adventures ahead!

Thu Dunkleberger - Research Assistant I (Dr. Xu Wang)

Dr. Kelley Steury - Co-Director of PAOH & Asst Clinical Professor

Tammy Denney - Tech, Central Receiving Services

Dr. Valery A. Petrenko - Professor