Dear friends and alumni of the Graduate School:

We have so much to celebrate in the Graduate School at Texas Tech!

This spring, four Texas Tech Graduate Students earned the prestigious Fulbright Fellowship to conduct research on the international stage which highlights the elevated status that our students have achieved in their studies. These students will be traveling to Ireland, India, Colombia and Spain to pursue their research.

Our 16th annual Graduate School Poster Competition, hosted on March 24th, was a smashing success. We had a record number of entries this year with 150 posters being selected for judging. The poster competition allows our students to hone their presentation skills in a friendly venue and report research that has broad significance and economic impact. Watching this competition grow over the last 16 years has been a wonderful experience.

The graduate programs at Texas Tech continue to push innovation and help meet the demands for a highly knowledgeable workforce. Our graduates gain the expertise, creativity and courage to take on the world’s most complex challenges. Their work in all fields of work continue to make a difference and enrich lives. As part of our May graduation we awarded more than 700 Masters degrees and 116 Doctoral degrees, with an additional 106 graduate certificates being awarded.

A hallmark of the graduate experience at Tech is our commitment to student success. We provide a comprehensive professional and career development program that complements disciplinary training in five core areas: communication, critical thinking, leadership and management, professionalism, and ethics. Later sections of this newsletter highlight some of the students and alumni who make significant and lasting impacts in these core areas.

Texas Tech’s continued prominence as a leader in graduate education depends on our ability to recruit and support the very best students and assure that they acquire the skills they need to succeed while at Tech and after they graduate. Please visit our new website for up-to-date events, accomplishments and opportunities to give back to the Graduate School.

“From here, it’s possible.”

Best wishes,

Mark A. Sheridan, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs
Dean of the Graduate School
Kembra Albracht-Schulte

Kembra Albracht-Schulte is currently a doctoral student studying Nutritional Science. Kembra earned her Bachelors Degree in Exercise Science at Lubbock Christian University (LCU), graduating Suma Cum Laude. Kembra continued her education at Texas Tech University and received her Master’s Degree in Exercise Science in 2014.

In Kembra’s last semester of master’s work, she took a class in the nutritional sciences department where she learned about the research projects of doctoral students in the program. “I was very interested in the work that they were doing and immediately applied to the program. Even though my previous research had focused on human subjects, I chose to work with Dr. Naima Moustaid-Moussa and further my knowledge in basic/bench work science. I believe my experiences here, along with my background in exercise science, will help me to pursue work that focuses on clinical and translational research.”

Albracht-Schulte is a member of the Nutrigenomics, Inflammation and Obesity Research Lab that focuses on adipose tissue in triggering and/or potentiating obesity and associated co-morbidities.

“When I’m not conducting research at Texas Tech she enjoys being involved in the community. Last semester, she taught nutrition for a few weeks at the Boys and Girls Club in Shallowater. She was also involved in teaching for Science: It’s a Girl Thing in the summer at Texas Tech.”

“After graduation, I hope to teach and conduct research at the collegiate level. I would like to use my position in a university to continue learning through research and contribute to the community by sharing my knowledge and inspiring healthy decisions.”

Logeswari Ponnusamy

Logeswari Ponnusamy is an international student from India, and currently a PhD candidate in the Department of Environmental Toxicology. Before enrolling in the doctoral program, Ms. Ponnusamy earned DVM and Master’s degrees in Pharmacology and Toxicology from Veterinary and Animal Sciences University, India, in 2009 and 2012.

“I chose Texas Tech University over other schools for the following reasons: uniqueness of program I wanted to pursue, established value on diversity and inclusion, wonderful and inviting ambiance for employer relationship, and, finally, the afford-ability and funding opportunities. The program I am currently pursuing, Environmental Toxicology, is unique given only few universities in the USA offer a similar program. As an international female student I was looking for a department as well as a mentor who has a track record of empowering female scientists to pursue my advanced education in a welcoming, and encouraging environment. My admission to Texas Tech University and to Department of Toxicology under a wonderful mentor was the best choice without any second thought. In addition, the positive experience I heard from international alumni of the program as well as Texas Tech made my decision strong and comfortable.”

“I strongly believe with my research training through the Environmental Toxicology program will have significant impact on my future goal of pursuing a career as a Molecular Toxicologist in the public health care and research based industry.”

Dr. Shu Wang, Dr. Shaikh Rahman and Dr. Nishan S Kalupahana. I have also had several wonderful opportunities, such as traveling to conferences and working on collaborative projects with the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka.”

Currently, she is working to understand the molecular mechanisms for chemotherapeutic resistance in breast cancer using the environment-gene interaction (epigenetics) approach. She has presented her research in various scientific meetings, winning several awards. Ms. Ponnusamy has been an active member of professional societies including Society of Toxicology (SOT) and American Association for Cancer Research (AACR).
Cukrowicz Receives Award for Mentoring

During her years as an undergraduate, graduate and doctoral student, Kelly Cukrowicz had numerous mentors who left a lasting impression on her, steering her in the right direction during her academic pursuits to help her become a well-rounded educator.

Cukrowicz tries to take that same approach with the students she now mentors, helping them grow in their knowledge, independence and confidence. She earns high marks from her students while also gaining satisfaction from watching them become well-rounded and unlimited as they earn their degrees.

Cukrowicz, an associate professor in the Department of Psychological Sciences in the College of Arts & Sciences, was rewarded for her mentoring approach and efforts with the Nancy J. Bell Graduate Faculty Excellence in Mentoring Award.

“It is difficult to put into words how much this award means to me,” Cukrowicz said. “I love my students. Truthfully, mentoring is hard work. It involves a lot of time reading drafts, thinking about what I can do to best facilitate each of their career paths, and being concerned about each of them as people. To be nominated by my students means the world to me.”

The award is presented by the Texas Tech University Graduate School to recognize graduate faculty who have shown exceptional mentoring of graduate students. Award winners are nominated by students and faculty who believe recipients embody the spirit of a great mentor and have assisted graduate students greatly not only by supervising their research, but also by advancing their personal and professional development and, ultimately, helping them realize their career objectives.

“Dr. Cukrowicz’s dedication to and deep passion for mentoring graduate students is much appreciated and highly valued,” said Mark Sheridan, dean of the Graduate School. “As a faculty member, there really is no higher calling than preparing those who will follow after us.”

Cukrowicz started as a mentor while pursuing a master’s degree at Florida State University. Since arriving at Texas Tech in 2006, she has mentored six students who have completed their doctorate degrees and is currently mentoring six other students working on their doctorates.

“Most students come in with a lot of enthusiasm but need the mentoring and education that is part of our doctoral program to carry out their goals,” Cukrowicz said. “In the final years of a student’s education, I find my students become experts on the topic they are pursuing for their dissertation study, and I learn from them. I find that aspect of collaborative mentoring truly rewarding.”

Cukrowicz encourages all of her colleagues to become mentors but cautions it is a time-consuming endeavor that also requires kindness, flexibility and the collaborative approach.

“Students who have good mentors are able to learn what they need to be competitive for jobs or graduate school when they graduate,” Cukrowicz said. “This includes taking classes that employers might look for, getting practicum or internship experiences or obtaining research experience. Mentors are also able to share their experiences of success and failure that may help students during difficult times.

“In addition, mentors typically know what employers or graduate programs are looking for in applicants and can help students write their essays, resumés or CVs and other materials in a way that will enhance their competitiveness.”

Texas Tech Graduate Student Receives President’s Excellence in Diversity and Equity Award

Gayle Jeffers is a graduate student at Texas Tech University. Originally from Nevis, an island in the Caribbean, she was one of the recipients of the Texas Tech President’s Excellence in Diversity and Equity Award Student Division.

As president of the Texas Tech Alpha Phi chapter of Sigma Delta Pi, Gayle spends considerable time hosting a variety of activities; Spanish discussion tables, free Spanish and English lessons, visits and talks at bilingual schools within the Lubbock community, bilingual reading programs and so much more. She has also been a mentor in the Lauro Cavazos & Ophelia Powell-Malone Mentoring Program for four years.

As a mentor, she advises and supports students as they navigate life as a college student such as choosing classes, deciding a career path, and writing a resume. Her protégés also benefit from Gayle’s source of wisdom as it relates to personal matters outside of the classroom. Gayle also participates in the Black Graduate Student Organization where she is responsible for recruiting new members who arrive at Texas Tech University. She also participates in the organization’s yearly research symposium as one of the presenters.

As a doctoral student in bilingual education and instructional technology, Gayle has performed research in Spain while participating in a study abroad program through Texas Tech University’s faculty led program. Locally, some of her research has been related to autism spectrum disorder within the West Texas region as well as teaching strategies to use in a Spanish language classroom. As an ardent learner of Spanish, she aspires to be a professor of Spanish and seeks every opportunity to inspire others to study another language.
Four Texas Tech students received Fellowships from the Fulbright U.S. Student Program, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, and earned the opportunity to conduct research in foreign countries.

**Erin Grogan**, a Doctoral Fine Arts candidate, will travel to Ireland to conduct research on Irish identity on stage. She is interested in both the turn of the 20th century, when nationalism was at the forefront of Irish culture, as well as contemporary creations of identity.

“I’m really looking forward to the culture. Of course I’ll be there conducting archival research, but I’ll also get a chance to see Irish theatre and experience Irish lifestyles on a daily basis,” Grogan said. “My main goal is to come back with a very solid foundation for my dissertation. Outside of my research, I hope to immerse myself in Irish culture and create lasting memories and connections.”

**Ivette Noriega**, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, will travel to Colombia to research the neurocognitive effects of post-traumatic stress disorder on children exposed to violence and trauma.

“I’ve never been to South America, so I am excited to learn more about Colombia. I’ve met students from Columbia at Texas Tech, and they have all been incredible and warm people,” Noriega said. “I am looking forward to the professional relationships I will make with Colombian faculty and students there. I also will be volunteering for a nonprofit organization that uses art therapy for children affected by violence.”

Michelle Jones, a master’s student specializing in special education and visual impairment, will travel to India to research how vocational training impacts the social mobility of women who have disabilities. She will conduct her research at the Sharp Memorial School for the Blind, informed by her work as a teacher at the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

“I’m really looking forward to collaborating with the teachers at the school for the blind,” said Jones. “Since we teach in really similar settings, but in a different culture, it will be interesting to see the differences in techniques of teaching students and how we advocate for students in the community.”

**Gretchen Williams**, a doctoral candidate in the Department of History, will travel to Spain to research the history of the Calé people in 16th Century Spain. Williams’ father, Jeffrey Williams, a professor in the department of Sociology, Anthropology and Social Work, also received a Fulbright Specialist Award this year.

“I’m very excited about the project I am doing,” Williams said. “I am working on a dissertation about a group of people who have not yet been incorporated in this period of Spain’s history. I’m really excited to be able to contribute something new to the field that could also help us to better understand this community.”

Texas Tech had a total of 10 students apply for the Fulbright Program. Five students advanced to the semifinalist stage, including undergraduate nursing student, Rebecca Metzler.

“I am so proud of the hard work and dedication each of our Fulbright applicants put into the process. They truly exemplify the top scholars at Texas Tech,” said Wendoli Flores, the director of National and International Scholarships and Fellowships. “Although many of us work diligently to support our students with these award processes, it is the work and talents of the student that earns prestigious awards.”

This year, the Graduate School partnered with NISF to develop a mentoring program. Each Fulbright candidate was given a Fulbright Scholar or faculty mentor to assist with the application process. The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program is a branch of the Fulbright Program that awards professionals with research or teaching opportunities around the world.

Grogan worked with Andrew Gibb and Paul Reinsch, both professors in the Department of Theatre and Dance. Noriega was mentored by Elizabeth Trejos-Castillo, associate professor in the department of Human Development and Family Studies, and Gary Elbow, a professor in the Honors College. Jones studied with Rona Pogrund and Nora Griffin-Shirley, both professors in the College of Education. Williams was mentored by Aliza Wong, associate dean of the Honors College.

Dr. Tim Dallas a Professor of Electrical & Computer Engineering and an Associate Dean at the Graduate School emphasised the prestige of the Fellowship.

“The Fulbright US Student Program is a highly competitive program that sends top students to over 100 countries to conduct research, teaching, and service. We are very proud of all of this year’s applicants and we are very excited for the four women that have been awarded fellowships.”

“We highly encourage upper level undergrads and graduate students to consider the Fulbright program. Those with a desire to make a difference in the world should investigate the possibilities available in the US Student Program.”

For more information: [http://www.cies.org/](http://www.cies.org/)  
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[https://www.depts.ttu.edu/nisf/Scholarships/Fulbright.php](https://www.depts.ttu.edu/nisf/Scholarships/Fulbright.php)
Friday, March 24th, the Texas Tech Graduate School held the 16th Annual Graduate Student Research Poster Competition in the Helen DeVitt Jones Sculpture Court at the Museum of Texas Tech University. This competition is a chance for students to present their research to fellow students, faculty, staff, and Lubbock community members. The competition is a professional development opportunity for graduate students to build their communication skills before they represent Texas Tech at both national and international research conferences. The students presented research in many diverse fields including: Education, Engineering, Human and Agricultural Sciences as well as various other disciplines.

There were a record number of poster entries this year with 150 being selected for judging. From the selected posters, the Poster Competition Award Recipients were announced on Thursday, March 30th, at the Graduate Student Award Ceremony in the Helen DeVitt Jones Sculpture Court at the Museum of Texas Tech University. We kindly thank everyone who participated and made the event a wonderful success! Specifically, we would like to express our appreciation to the Museum of Texas Tech for hosting this year’s poster session and Awards Ceremony. We also would like to thank the Teaching, Learning, and Professional Development Center, as well as the Communication Training Center, for hosting the poster tutorials.
Alumni Spotlight: Wendee Langdon, Ph.D.

Wendee Langdon was born in San Antonio and first moved to West Texas in 2002 after being admitted to West Texas A&M to complete her undergraduate degree in animal science. After completing her degree at West Texas A&M she was admitted to the Graduate School of Texas Tech University where she earned her MS and then her PhD in Animal Science with special emphasis in reproductive physiology.

Wendee has always had a passion for working with animals, especially cattle and horses. Between her various graduate degrees, she worked on ranches as an equine breeding and herd health manager. During her doctoral program in 2012, she was one of the founding members of the Graduate School Advisory Council, a group of elected graduate students who are committed to enhancing graduate student life at Texas Tech. Since 2013, she has been working for Pearson as a higher education learning consultant. In 2015, she joined the Dean’s Advisory Council where she currently serves as Chair of the Networking Committee.

Wendee currently resides in Lubbock and continues to remain active with local non-profit organizations and Texas Tech alumni events.

Has your information changed?

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