

May 2021 | Issue 3

# Biomedical Genetics Section

## Newsletter

Welcome to the new Biomedical Genetics Section Quarterly Newsletter!

### Meet the People

We are pleased to welcome new Program Manager, Nancy Ortega, to the Biomedical Genetics Section! Nancy has kindly given an introduction about herself and her background.

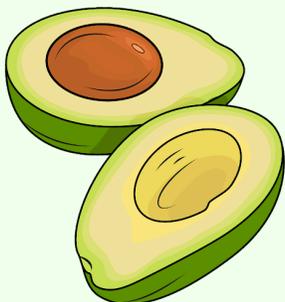


**Nancy Ortega, Program Manager**

*My name is Nancy Ortega, and I am the new Program Manager for the Boston University School of Medicine, Biomedical Genetics Section, Framingham Heart Study Brain Aging Program (FHS-BAP).*

*My career focus has been higher education administration in the Boston area. I worked at Simmons University for nine years, where I managed and created their off-site education programs. Before this, I worked in corporate specializing in business graphics. I was trained in Communications Design at Parsons School of Design in NYC.*

*When I am not working, I push my technical skills as an acrylic painter, focusing on urban landscapes. My inspiration for my art comes from walking city streets. I love to hike, go to the beach in the summer and go for morning jogs throughout the year.*



#### **Fun Facts!**

*Every year, Americans consume close to 80 million pounds of Avocados on Cinco de Mayo!*

Source: #10 <https://www.parents.com/fun/parties/special-occasions/fun-facts-about-cinco-de-mayo/>

## Boston University News

### **President Brown discusses salary increases, plans for fall, vaccinations, and more in State of the University Address**

On May 24, President Dr. Robert A. Brown made an announcement to Faculty and Staff that covered a number of topics, including salary increases to those who are eligible, plans for the fall semester, vaccination information, and more. According to Dr. Brown, Boston University will “implement a special across-the-board 2 percent salary and wage increase for all faculty and staff who are eligible” as a result of the “extraordinary effort of our faculty and staff and made possible by our better-than-anticipated financial performance.” For the fall semester, BU is planning to relax the social distancing protocols, but will likely continue to require masks to be worn in classroom settings. Although it is only required for students, Dr. Brown asks that faculty and staff receive the COVID-19 vaccination before returning to campus. Walk-in vaccine clinics will be located on campus for faculty and staff, until Friday, June 4. Visit the [COVID-19 Vaccination Information webpage](#) for updates. [Read more here.](#)

### **BU’s Commencement Ceremonies during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

On Sunday, May 16<sup>th</sup>, BU held the historic commencement ceremonies for the class of 2021. The commencement was split between separate ceremonies for advanced degrees and bachelor’s degrees, and the event followed mask requirements and provided social distancing in the seating layout. According to a BU Today article outlining the events of the commencement ceremonies, written by Joel Brown, BU President Robert A. Brown began the ceremonies “by noting how the pandemic had drastically changed campus life since early 2020.” There were no family members or guests who were permitted to attend the ceremonies in person, due to COVID-19 restrictions; however, family and friends were able to watch the ceremonies virtually. Commencement speakers included U.S. Representative for Massachusetts, Ayanna Pressley, along with the Cofounder and Chairman of Moderna Therapeutics, Inc., Noubar Afeyan, and student speaker, Archelle Thelemaque. [Read more here.](#)

### **Students required to get COVID-19 vaccine before returning in the fall**

Students returning to Boston University in the fall semester will be required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 before they can return to campus. According to BU President, Robert A. Brown, the goal is to reach a “new normal” that allows for limited social distancing and a full return to campus, but this will require all students to upload their vaccination documentation to BU’s Healthway website ahead of the fall semester. This mandatory

vaccination plan is also being considered for faculty and staff, although it is not yet official. [Read more here](#)

## **Statement from President Brown discusses plans for returning to campus**

In a statement to faculty and staff, BU President, Dr. Robert A. Brown, has announced plans for a return to campus by the fall semester. With a decline in the number of positive COVID-19 cases and a rising number of people who are fully vaccinated, Dr. Brown plans for a “near normal Fall Semester.” According to Dr. Brown’s message, BU plans to have faculty and staff return to campus with “likely full population of the campus before the end of August.” Administrative and Academic leaders have been selected to help with the process of having staff return to campus safely. While all students will be required to provide proof of vaccination before returning, faculty and staff are not yet required, but it is strongly recommended. Everyone is encouraged to upload their vaccination documentation to the [Healthway portal](#). [Read more here](#).

## **BU reaches 1 Million COVID tests**

BU reached a major milestone in the battle against COVID-19 as the number of COVID tests given has reached over one million. According to the BU Today article by Doug Most, the initial goal of the testing lab, assembled in the Rajen Kilachand Center for Integrated Life Sciences & Engineering, was to reach 6,000 tests per day. One of the keys to reaching this milestone for the lab was the use of robotics. By hand, it would have taken scientists up to four hours to process 96 tests, but with the use of robotics, they were able to process over 1,100 tests in half the time. [Read more here](#).

## **BU adds Juneteenth as University Holiday**

According to an article by Joel Brown for BU Today, Boston University will begin to recognize Juneteenth as an official holiday while Columbus Day will be renamed Indigenous People’s Day. Juneteenth is traditionally celebrated on June 19 to “mark the last day enslaved people were told they were free.” The University will observe Juneteenth on Friday, June 18, as June 19 falls on a weekend. The addition of Juneteenth, along with the change of Columbus Day to Indigenous People’s Day, was “recommended by a six-member subcommittee of the Antiracism Working Group.” These changes are part of an effort to make BU a more diverse and inclusive community. [Read more here](#).

## St. Elizabeth's Medical Center added to BU School of Medicine

Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, St. Elizabeth's Medical Center will expand its relationship with BU and become a Boston University Teach Hospital. According to Michael S. Goldberg, the author of this BU Today article, the expanded affiliation "will bring more opportunities for BU medical clerkships for students to practice clinical rotations at SEMC's 308-bed hospital." This partnership will also help faculty with finding more collaborations on research. Physicians at SEMC will also be able to "enjoy broader clinical collaboration with MED that could lead to career and teaching opportunities," according to President of Steward Health Care's North Region, Harry Bane. [Read more here](#).

### Fun Facts!

*The Empire State Building was first opened on May 1, 1931!*

Source: #6 <https://www.webinars4you.com/studyabroadblog/6-interesting-facts-about-the-month-of-may-that-you-didnt-know/>



## Biomedical Genetics Section Updates

### Announcement from Dr. Farrer discusses plans for return to campus & details about office renovations

On May 25<sup>th</sup>, Biomedical Genetics Section Chief, Dr. Lindsay A. Farrer, made an announcement to section faculty, staff, and trainees, addressing plans for returning to campus and details regarding the new office renovations. While there is still no official return date set, Dr. Farrer estimates that the "process will begin this summer (as early as July)." Before returning to campus, "every person who works on campus must be fully vaccinated." Please visit the [BU Healthway website](#) to upload your vaccination documentation.

The section office space will look new and more spacious when faculty and staff are able to return to campus. The renovations to the section office space began in mid-February and are now almost completed. According to Dr. Farrer’s announcement, the renovations have “yielded four new offices, a new conference room (in addition to our classroom), and an open spacious lounge area adjacent to the lunchroom.” The front desk area has been given a new makeover and will now house two people. Visitors will also need to be “buzzed in” in order to gain access to the space. See photos of the renovations below. [Read more here.](#)



## **Framingham Heart Study Brain Aging Program hosted a Symposium on Cognitive Reserve, Resilience and Resistance**

On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the Framingham Heart Study Brain Aging Program, led by Dr. Lindsay Farrer and Dr. Rhoda Au, held a virtual symposium on Cognitive Reserve, Resilience, and Resistance. The symposium featured presentations by renown leaders in the fields of neurology,

neuropsychology, radiology and geriatrics. The speakers gave half-hour presentations based on their research related to cognitive reserve, resilience and resistance, and included Yaakov Stern, Ph.D. of Columbia University, Dorene Rentz, Psy.D. of Harvard University, Prashanthi Vemuri, Ph.D. of Mayo Clinic, Timothy Hohman, Ph.D. of Vanderbilt University, Thomas Perls, M.D., M.P.H of Boston University, and Claudia Kawas, M.D. of UC Irvine. The symposium attracted and hosted over 900 registrants. [Read more here.](#)

## Biomedical Genetics will host a virtual seminar, presented by speaker Mabel Seto



Mabel Seto,  
Vanderbilt University

The Biomedical Genetics Section will be hosting a virtual seminar presented by Mabel Seto, of the Department of Pharmacology at Vanderbilt University. The seminar, titled *“Using multi-omic approaches to identify novel factors contributing to Alzheimer’s disease,”* will be held Monday, June 7<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm. For more information, please email Logan Pulver at [lpulver@bu.edu](mailto:lpulver@bu.edu).

## Reminders

### The Department of Medicine Evans Days Abstract Submissions will open on July 1<sup>st</sup>

The annual Evans Days, hosted by the Department of Medicine, are scheduled for October 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> this year. Abstract submissions for the poster session will be open from July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 30<sup>th</sup>. [Read more here.](#)



#### Fun Facts!

*In any given year, no month ever begins or ends on the same day of the week as May does!*

Source: #2 <https://www.webinars4you.com/studyabroadblog/6-interesting-facts-about-the-month-of-may-that-you-didnt-know/>

## Enhancements made to the BU Retirement Savings Program

According to an announcement from Boston University Human Resources, BU will be enhancing the Retirement Savings Program. Effective July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, Fidelity will become the sole service provider for the BU Retirement Savings Program. This change will offer a number of new advantages, including: Lower service provider costs, simplified and more effective Program service operations, and more. BU employees will also have the option to invest in the New York Life Guaranteed Interest Account (GIA) through Fidelity. Benefits under the Program will not be affected. You can read more about these enhancements in the [Announcement Brochure](#). [Read more here](#).

## Summer 2021 Workplace Adjustment Update for Staff

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, Interim Vice President for Human Resources, Kenneth Freeman, sent an announcement on the updated workplace adjustment process for Summer 2021 for staff. The process to extend workplace adjustment has been modified for Summer 2021, and staff who are currently on a workplace adjustment for Spring 2021 “will not need to apply and re-verify eligibility.” Instead, each staff member who was eligible for a Spring 2021 workplace adjustment will be “automatically verified as eligible for approval for a Summer 2021 workplace adjustment.” Approval, modification, or denial of continued workplace adjustment will be determined by “unit leaders, who will review staffing needs and unit back-to-campus plans.” The workplace adjustment for summer 2021 will extend through August 13<sup>th</sup>. [Read more here](#).

## Reminder to Upload Your COVID-19 Vaccination Information

Kenneth Freeman, Interim Vice President for Human Resources, sent an announcement to BU Faculty and Staff encouraging everyone to submit their COVID-19 vaccination information. Doing so will “help the University determine the level of vaccination participation by the BU community.” You can submit your COVID-19 vaccination information through the Healthway/Occupational Health Connect Portal, using your BU username and Kerberos password. For more detailed instructions, read more here or contact BU COVID-19 Employee Support at [covidhelp@bu.edu](mailto:covidhelp@bu.edu). [Read more here](#).

## Resources

### **Submit an Announcement Request Form and share your news in the next issue of the Biomedical Genetics Section Newsletter!**

Do you have exciting news that you want to share in the next issue of our quarterly Biomedical Genetics Section Newsletter? Submit an [Announcement Request Form](#), located on the Resources page of our [website](#)!