

August 2021 | Issue 4

Biomedical Genetics Section

Newsletter

Welcome to the new Biomedical Genetics Section Quarterly Newsletter!

Meet the People

We are pleased to feature our Administrative Director, Hau Nguyen in the Biomedical Genetics Section! Hau has kindly given a background about herself.



My name is Hau Nguyen, and I am the Administrative Director for Biomedical Genetics Section.

In 2003, I began my career at BMC as a Grant Accountant in the Central Research Finance Department. In 2009, I transitioned to the Clinical Trial Financial Analyst Manager.

In 2014, I accepted a position at Boston University's Department of Medicine Central Research Administration (CRA), where I worked at multiple sections including Biomedical Genetics.

For the past 7 years, I have held the position of Administrative Director for the Biomedical Genetics Section. I enjoy my position and the people I work with.

I was born in Vietnam. I came to the United States for education, with the purpose of returning to Vietnam after graduating from university. After graduating, my plans changed and I met my husband. I am now married and have 3 children, a girl and two boys. Spare time? With three children, I don't have too much, but when I do, I like to cook and bake.

Farewell to People

Message from Dr. Farrer.

Dear Biomedical Genetics Section colleagues,

Logan Pulver, our section Research & Administrative Assistant, recently informed me that he will be leaving his position effective Friday July 16. Logan joined our section several months before the covid-19 pandemic started and quickly adapted to our remote working environment. He was instrumental in converting group meetings, classroom teaching and other in-person interactions to the zoom platform, as well as helping novices (me included) use this medium effectively. Logan also had a critical role in maintaining many activities in support of administrative office and research project needs. I hope you will join me in thanking Logan for his terrific service and wish him well in his new endeavors.

Until a successor is identified, Nancy Ortega will be fulfilling many of Logan's duties.

Best Wishes,
Lindsay

Nancy Ortega can be reached at nortega@bu.edu

Boston University News

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

Joining a growing number of colleges and universities across the country, **Boston University will now require faculty and staff—in addition to students, as previously announced—to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by September 2 when fall classes resume, BU President Robert A. Brown says.** The decision to mandate vaccination comes after months of waiting to see if urging, without requiring, BU employees to get vaccinated would be enough to achieve the goal of community-wide vaccination.

“We all share responsibility for the health of the Boston University community,” Brown writes in a Monday letter emailed to employees. “We previously mandated that all our students be vaccinated for the Fall 2021 Semester. It is critically important that our faculty and staff are also vaccinated. We hoped to accomplish the goal of community-wide vaccination without a mandate, but kept the option of requiring vaccination open if we did not reach our goal.”

The key factor in the president’s decision was a survey of faculty and staff during the spring semester. In his letter, Brown says the survey revealed that 71.3 percent of faculty and 73.6 percent of staff are currently vaccinated, or will be vaccinated, by August 1. Even though that means three in every four employees will be inoculated against the coronavirus, it also leaves roughly one in four, perhaps as many as 2,000 people, who may not be vaccinated by September.

“These totals are significantly below what we need to safely return our campuses to near-normal operation in the fall,” Brown writes. To help in the effort, BU will offer walk-in vaccination clinics on the Charles River Campus (Healthway will share additional information about that process, and it will also appear on Back2BU). At Boston Medical Center, vaccination sites are also accepting walk-ins. Other vaccine sites and appointments can be found using the MA vaccine finder. (Employees must upload their vaccination record onto the Healthway portal before September 2.) Healthway will also be sending a memo out this week with links to its upcoming vaccine clinics, according to Judy Platt, director of Student Health Services.

As with students, BU will allow exceptions among employees based on medical conditions and religious beliefs. “The consequences for those failing to get vaccinated and who do not receive an exemption for medical or religious reasons may include additional public health measures not required for vaccinated people,” Brown writes, “and, in some cases, being placed on a leave of absence until the individual is either vaccinated or the risk of infection from COVID-19 is deemed to have ended.”

Prior to Brown’s announcement, BU leadership had taken several steps toward creating a safe campus environment this fall, after the year-plus-long pandemic caused by COVID-19. The

University has maintained a strict in-house testing protocol and has performed more than a million tests on students, faculty, and staff. Students were told in April that they must be vaccinated to attend in-person classes this fall. And faculty and staff who have been vaccinated were instructed May 28 to upload their vaccine documentation (unless they got their shots at a BU location, in which case the information was already in the Healthway system), so the University could have an idea of the BU population's vaccination rate. [Read more here](#)

“The consequences for those failing to get vaccinated and who do not receive an exemption for medical or religious reasons may include additional public health measures not required for vaccinated people”

—President Robert A. Brown

Staff and Faculty React to BU COVID-19 Vaccine Mandate BU's Commencement Ceremonies during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Reaction was swift on Monday to BU President Robert A. Brown's announcement that faculty and staff would be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19 by September 2.

BU Today reached out to faculty and staff across the University to ask their reaction to the news. “I think that's great,” says Andy Sellars, School of Law clinical associate professor of law and director of the BU/MIT Technology Law Clinic. “It's a really good way to ensure the safety of the BU community. All evidence indicates that the best way to protect a population is to have a very high vaccination rate.

As for BU offering walk-in vaccination clinics on campus, he says, “obviously it's much easier to get the vaccine now than it was in the spring, but for people who have to be on campus, this is a great gesture.”

Bonnie Brown (COM'04), Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders nurse administrator and health communications specialist, says that as a nurse, she fully supports the mandate.

“I believe, to date, BU faculty vaccinations are reportedly lower than those of employees, although this may be a reflection of not yet having uploaded supporting documentation,” Br

(Find more coverage of faculty and staff reaction to Monday's [news here](#))

BU Updates Its COVID Data Dashboard



Triage nurse specialist Victoria Cunningham at the Moderna vaccine clinic at FitRec May 4. Photo by Cydney Scott

As Boston University transitions from summer to fall and the campus repopulates with thousands of students, faculty, and staff, <https://www.bu.edu/healthway/community-dashboard/> was updated Tuesday, August 24, with numbers showing a sharp increase in the community's vaccination percentages.

The new numbers also reflect the progression over the past few months, from a time when the coronavirus pandemic had forced the vast majority of employees to work remotely to now, with more people returning to work on campus. (All employees have until September 2 to comply with BU's vaccination mandate.)

The revised dashboard shows 92 percent of faculty and 84 percent of staff vaccinated as of August 16, up from the low 70 percent range for both groups previously.

The revised dashboard shows 92 percent of faculty and 84 percent of staff vaccinated as of August 16, up from the low 70 percent range for both groups previously.

Why did the percentages jump? Previously the dashboard reflected all faculty and staff, including those working remotely and who may not yet have been vaccinated or may have failed to upload proof of vaccination. But on Tuesday, the revised dashboard began to include only those who are coming to campus and "are a part of our testing protocol," says Gloria Waters, BU vice president and associate provost for research. [Read more here](#)

BU to Permit Remote Work for Eligible Staff, Up to Two Days a Week

Recruitment, retention, morale seen as key factors for pivoting toward a new work culture in a seismic shift in the 182-year history of Boston University, and a nod to how dramatically the COVID-19 pandemic has altered societal expectations around the culture of work, BU leaders announced Wednesday that certain staff members will be eligible for flexible schedules permitting remote work up to two days per week.

Recruitment, retention, morale seen as key factors for pivoting toward a new work culture

The new policy applies only to staff—and not all staff will be automatically eligible. Managers may approve employees whose jobs can be done independently and without supervision, who don't require extensive in-person contact with students, clients, or the public, who don't need access to files or equipment accessible only on campus, and whose performance evaluations have shown them to be high-performing. (The changes cover nonunion staff members; discussions with unions, representing about 1,400 workers, will take place separately.)

The adoption of remote work emerged from a 72-page report by the Committee on the Future of Staff Work at Boston University. BU President Robert A. Brown formed the committee and asked for recommendations to policy changes around making remote and flexible work a permanent part of the culture at BU—no small pivot for an urban residential and research institution that thrives on the energy produced by 32,000 students, over 3,700 faculty, and more than 6,100 staff members on its Charles River and Medical campuses. After digesting the committee's report, Brown and committee cochairs Ken Freeman, interim vice president for human resources, and Natalie McKnight, dean of the College of General Studies, sent a letter Wednesday to the BU community outlining the changes.

The new policy, still awaiting final guidelines from Human Resources that are likely to come in early August, should be considered a privilege that is earned, Brown, Freeman, and McKnight wrote: "It is not a right."

In the end, three key factors drove the committee's recommendations and Brown's decision that the status quo—with staff required to commute to campus jobs five days a week—was no longer sustainable:

Retention: Current employees might seek new jobs at workplaces that embrace more flexible work schedules. **Recruitment:** Potential employees in a competitive job market where higher education institutions are a dominant player will no doubt compare perks like remote schedules.

Morale: The assumption is that happy, productive employees with remote work schedules will make for a happy, productive BU. [Read more here](#).

Why Global COVID Vaccinations Are Dangerously Lagging: Six Things to Know as Delta variant spreads rapidly, BU-led panel explains why vaccination rollout isn't keeping pace

As the United States flounders to meet its coronavirus vaccine targets—only 49 percent of Americans are fully vaccinated to date—the especially contagious Delta variant has the daily number of new cases back on the upswing, with a 171 percent increase in new cases compared to two weeks ago. Around the world, the situation is even more dire. Despite the fact that experts predict nearly 11 billion doses of vaccine will have been manufactured by the end of 2021, vaccines are not accessible by the vast majority of people who live outside the world's highest-income countries.

On Wednesday, Boston University's Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases Policy & Research (CEID) convened a panel of experts to provide a briefing on the pitfalls that have so far prevented coronavirus vaccines from reaching the world's most vulnerable populations, and what challenges lie ahead in pursuit of the goal for 40 percent of the world population to receive a COVID vaccine by the end of 2021. That goal, and a longer-range one of having 60 percent of the world vaccinated by mid-2022, was proposed earlier this year at the G20 Global Health Summit by Kristalina Georgieva, managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

US Congresswoman Lois Frankel (D-Fla.), kicked off the panel with opening remarks, saying, “the pandemic has taught us how truly connected we are on this planet.” Given that the coronavirus has shown no regard whatsoever for state or national borders, and due to the influence that globalization has had on spreading COVID-19 across all seven continents, Frankel (CAS'70) said “we have a lot of work to do in preventing and responding to [future] pandemics” like this one.

The arrival of vaccines in the US has lulled us into believing the pandemic is dwindling

In the briefing—moderated by Amy Maxmen, senior reporter for Nature—global health experts Nahid Bhadelia, founding director of BU's CEID, Josh Michaud, associate director of global health policy at the Kaiser Family Foundation, and Mosoka Fallah, president and CEO of Refuge Place International, discussed ways that US policymakers can help ensure people around the world have equitable access to coronavirus vaccine—a strategy that will also protect the health of Americans. [Read more here](#)

Returning to Campus, Hybrid Meetings with Zoom



While many BU faculty, staff, and students are returning to campus, for many, collaborative, team-based hybrid meetings (a combination of in-person and remote participants) are an appealing option. In this guide, we provide a framework for hosting successful hybrid meetings in Zoom. We offer some key terms, an example setup, and highlight settings and etiquette for presenters, in-person attendees, and remote attendees. We conclude with some further resources to explore to get the most out of your hybrid meetings.

Best Practices for Presenters, In-Person Attendees and Remote Attendees

Please note: This guide presumes a typical room setup with some sort of projector or screen, one computer (whether desktop or laptop) connected to said screen, and participants (remote and in person) all logged into Zoom. Also, our example setup is one model for hosting hybrid meetings. It may not exactly fit your groups' needs, but hopefully it provides you with a model and shared terminology that you can use to adapt your specific setup.

Getting Started with Zoom

Terminology:

Presenter View: This is the view from the presenter's computer screen. This can mirror either the Room View or the Zoom View, depending on your preferences

Room View: This refers to whatever is displayed on the projector screen.

Zoom View: This refers to the Zoom meeting view, typically viewing a shared screen or the speaker/gallery view of participants in Zoom. [Read more here](#)

Revised Guidelines on Campus Visitors and University-Sponsored Travel Students required to get COVID-19 vaccine before returning in the fall

As we plan for a return to in-person teaching and learning in fall 2021, we are writing to update you on BU's policies for University-sponsored travel and campus visitors that will go into effect on August 16, 2021.

As you know, over the last year, BU [instituted restrictions](#) limiting sponsored domestic and international travel for faculty, staff, and students, as well as access for outside visitors to our campuses in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These policies – in concert with testing protocols and coordinated safety measures – have been key to our success in maintaining healthy learning, living, and working environments across the University.

We continue to follow trendlines and remain in close conversation with medical and public health professionals as we approach updates to campus health and safety measures. Following consultation with experts and recent changes in federal and local guidelines, BU will be updating its University-sponsored travel and campus visitor policies as follows:

Campus Visitors

Beginning August 16, 2021, the more restrictive visitor policy instituted last year will be lifted. Moving forward, short-term visitors to campus, including those who are briefly on campus to attend a gathering or event, will simply be required to follow [BU mask-wearing requirements](#), as well as municipal, state, and federal regulations. Hosts are responsible for ensuring that their visitors follow these rules.

As outlined in the [visiting student](#) and [visiting faculty and research scholar](#) policies, host faculty and departments are responsible for ensuring that longer-term visitors adhere to all University policies and external requirements related to the performance of work at Boston University, including regular COVID-19 testing and the vaccination requirement.

University-Sponsored Travel

Beginning August 16, 2021, previous restrictions on University-sponsored travel will be lifted for all members of the BU community who are in compliance with the COVID-19 vaccine requirement. The University advises against travel to high-risk destinations, including Level 4 high-risk COVID areas as defined by the Centers for Disease Control, but such travel may be approved by the appropriate dean or vice president if there is a compelling reason to do so.

Students and employees traveling abroad should follow the registration requirements in the [International Travel Risk Policy](#), and undergraduate students intending to travel to high-risk destinations must seek permission through the Global Travel Risk Assessment Committee

globalhss@bu.edu). All University students and employees taking part in University-sponsored travel should also follow the [BU travel and business expense policy](#) that was in place prior to last year.

We are excited for a return to in-person, residential teaching and learning and to welcome our community back to Boston. At the same time, BU remains fully committed to ensuring that everyone is safe as we come back to campus, and, as a reminder, has instituted a number of important measures including [required vaccinations](#) and indoor masking, HVAC system upgrades, and enhanced building sanitation protocols. We will continue to follow federal and state guidance – particularly with an eye to emerging COVID variants – and update you on any changes to these protocols and policies as warranted. We encourage you to visit the [Back2BU website](#) for additional information on public health requirements for the fall term.

Biomedical Genetics Section Updates

Biomedical Genetic Faculty Promotions:

Associate Professor



Gyungah Jun, BUSM, Medicine/Biomedical Genetics, is a genetic epidemiologist who focuses on “big data” driven drug discovery for Alzheimer’s disease (AD). Dr. Jun has been involved in the large U.S. and international consortia to identify AD risk genes with or without stratification by APOE genotypes across multi-ethnic populations. This effort led to an innovative and novel therapeutic concept for AD based on the well-established protective effect of the APOE ϵ 2 allele, while she is a site PI for a new cohort for prevention and treatment trials to target APOE in AD therapeutics. Dr. Jun is a Director of the Genome Guided Drug Discovery (GGDD) Core at the AI4AD consortium, which is a large coordinated national initiative for AD therapeutics and features transformative Artificial Intelligence (AI) approaches using human big data. She is a founding member of the Asian Cohort for Alzheimer’s Disease (ACAD) Consortium and Chairs two workgroups, Data Management and Data Analysis, as well as a steering committee member for the Framingham Heart Study Brain Aging Program (FHS-BAP), leading to identify genetic and molecular signatures from blood and brain. Dr. Jun recently joined in BU Alzheimer’s Disease Research Center as an Associate Director of the Genetic and Molecular Profiling Core.

Congratulations, Dr. Jun!

Announcement from Dr. Farrer discusses return to campus September 7, 2021 & details about office renovations

On August 16th, Biomedical Genetics Section Chief, Dr. Lindsay A. Farrer, made an announcement to section faculty, staff, and trainees.

Several months have elapsed since I last contacted you to describe our section's recent renovation project on Evans 2 and alert you to forthcoming plans for return to campus. Since that time, the University has established a general policy and suggested several guidelines about working on campus and remotely. Activity on the medical campus became more noticeable last month with the start of the semester for medical and dental students. Teaching has resumed to the pre-pandemic state of classroom instruction, so we can expect a more bustling atmosphere when the fall semester starts in about two weeks.

Here, I will briefly outline our section's policy for on-site/remote working that will become effective after the Labor Day holiday starting **September 7, 2021**.

Per University requirements, every person who works on campus must be fully vaccinated, get a weekly covid19 test, and report covid symptom status. Thus, if you have not done so already, [BU Healthway website](#) to upload your vaccination document. This website will also allow you to schedule appointments for covid19 testing and report daily your symptom status.

- Per BUMC requirements, everyone must wear a face mask in common areas of university and hospital buildings (e.g., hallways, laboratories, classrooms, conference rooms, lunch rooms, etc.). Face coverings are not required when working alone in an office or lab. Thus, persons sharing an office or lab with others must be mindful when there are other persons in the room.
- As a general rule, everyone is expected to work on campus. Several factors contribute to this guideline including: (1) The frequency of interaction between students/staff with their supervisors/mentors is correlated with productivity and sense of doing things correctly; (2) In-person interactions foster collegiality and teamwork; and (3) Spontaneous interactions often lead to better problem solving and discourse of ideas.
- **However**, remote working for some individuals whose work-related activities can be conducted off-campus will be allowed for a **maximum of two (2) days per week**. Scheduling remote working days should be coordinated with your direct supervisor.
- Although the spread of the covid19 virus has been slowed by vaccination and mask-wearing, and the rate of new infections in our area is lower than in other parts of the country, vaccinated persons may experience break-through infections and thus infect other persons. The latest findings from the CDC suggest that vaccinated persons who are exposed to the virus are unlikely to become infected, even less likely to experience symptoms and will very rarely develop a serious illness. In order to further minimize the possibility of spreading infection,

face-to-face meetings will be limited to five or fewer people. Meetings including 4 or 5 people should be held in large offices, conference rooms, or our new large lounge area across from the lunchroom.

Note that our section's work policy may and, in fact, is likely to change as University and MED camps policies evolve, and external circumstances warrant. Please check with your supervisor or Hau Nguyen, the section Administrative Director, if you have any questions or concerns

Updates about space

All of the renovations I described in my May letter are complete. In addition, we have a new much larger refrigerator and a new water cooler in the lunchroom. We purchased a large screen, camera and white board for our new conference room. The "Zoom Room" equipment arrived but is not yet installed. The key-card entry to the main door of the E2 suite was activated and you will need your ID to enter. Those of you who moved offices since the pandemic or did not previously have an office on campus should arrange with Hau to get a room key which will open your office, the rear entrance to our suite, the classroom (E201) and conference room (E246).

This fall, renovations will begin in other areas adjacent to our current space on E2 to provide additional offices. These offices are needed to accommodate the anticipated growth of our section.

Biomedical Genetics and BU ADRC Lecture Series

September 29, 12:00-1:30pm (Virtual)

Dr. LaDu, Dept of Anatomy and Cell Biology, College of Medicine, University of IL at Chicago

“Modeling the effect of sex on APOE4-induced AD pathology in a novel transgenic mouse: Therapeutic implications”



Dr. Mary Jo LaDu, Professor in the Department of Anatomy and Cell Biology, graduated from Grinnell College with a BA in Art History and a PhD in Physiology and Biophysics from the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine (UIC-COM). She continued her training as a post doc and junior faculty at the University of Chicago studying the role of apolipoprotein E (apoE) in cardiovascular disease when the greatest genetic risk factor for Alzheimer’s disease (AD) was identified as the *APOE4* gene in 1993 and she has been studying *APOE4* and AD ever since. She moved her lab to UIC in 2005 from a tenured position at Northwestern

University and now runs a large NIH- and pharma-funded lab focusing on understanding AD via the universal biological variables of AD (age, *APOE* genotype, and sex). Mary Jo is dedicated to the UIC mission of serving under-represented communities and is continuously inspired by her clinical and research colleagues and all trainees.

The LaDu lab developed a novel AD transgenic mouse that mimics the genetics and pathology of the human disease by expressing the human *APOE* genotypes in 5xFAD mice. While age is the greatest risk factor for AD, *APOE4* is the greatest genetic risk factor, increasing risk up to 15-fold compared to the common *APOE3*. Sex plays a major role in AD risk, with females exhibiting an almost two-fold increase in risk compared to the males. Importantly, female sex and *APOE4* interact synergistically, causing female *APOE4* carriers to exhibit a greater lifetime risk and an increased rate of cognitive decline compared to male *APOE4* carriers. The development of these mice is enabling the investigation of multiple pharmaceutical interventions for AD, as well as the study of the basic mechanisms of the disease.

Dr. LaDu’s research has generated 100+ publications, 35 research grants as PI (continuous NIH funding since 1995), 80+ grants/awards for undergraduates, graduate students, and post-docs, UIC-COM Innovator of the Year, Fellow of the Year from the UIC Undergraduate Honor’s College, University Scholar, member of the William Root Society and life membership in the University of Illinois Presidents Council. Her institutional service includes Chair of the Faculty Senate, Faculty Advisory Committee for the Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs (VCHA), Faculty Advisory Committee for the Vice Chancellor for Innovation (VCI), member of the COM Executive Committee, and chair of her department search and PT committees. For more information

For more information please contact Nancy Ortega nortega@bu.edu or Samrana Bertrand sbertran@bu.edu

Reminders

October 7, 2021, 8:30am begins and October 8, 2021, 1:30pm ends

The Department of Medicine Evans Days

Join us (virtually) as we celebrate the research, educational, clinical and administrative achievements of our faculty & staff!

Schedule Thursday, October 7, 2021

8:30 a.m. -9:30 a.m.	Oral Presentations
9:30 a.m. -12:30 p.m.	Poster Sessions
12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Dr. Coleman Interviews speaker
1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	ARC Presentations
1:15 p.m.	Opening remarks by Drs. Katya Ravid and David Coleman
1:20 p.m.	Precision Medicine for Alzheimer Disease & Related Disorders ARC:

Dr. Rhoda Au, Prof of Epidem, SPH, “Using FHS to Enable New Research Opportunities.”

Dr. Lindsay Farrer, Prof, Section Chief, Biomedical Genetics, “Precision medicine for Alzheimer disease: Findings from team science”

1:40 p.m.	A Multi-Disciplinary Program to Identify Predictors of Efficacy and Resistance to Cancer Checkpoint Inhibition (PIPER-C) ARC: Dr. Matthew Kulke, Prof. Hem & Med Oncology, “Predictors of response and resistance to cancer checkpoint inhibitors: the role of tryptophan.” Dr. Evan Johnson, Assoc. Prof Computational Biomed. “...Role of the microbiome”
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Registration link is open:

Web Site: <https://dom-evans-days.heysummit.com/>

Contact: Robin MacDonald | remac@bu.edu | (358) 353-8244

Date: Thursday, Oct. 7 | 1:15-2:15 p.m.

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Wilkins Visiting Professor Lecture
Wilkins Visiting Professor
Drew Weissman, MD, PhD
Professor of Medicine
Perelman School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania

Schedule Friday, October 8, 2021

12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. – Ingelfinger Visiting Professor Lecture
Use DOM Grand Rounds Zoom link

Ingelfinger Visiting Professor
Dale Abel, MD, PhD
Professor of Internal Medicine – Endocrinology and Metabolism
University of Iowa
Roy J. & Lucille A. Carver College of Medicine
Department of Internal Medicine

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](#)!

FUN Local Resources Summer/Fall Farms

Local Summer Farms [Hutchins Farm – Concord MA, Lexington Community Farm, Lexington, MA](#)

