# 2019
# Biostatistics Department Annual Newsletter

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY**



Biostatistics PhD Graduates

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

I hope everyone had a great summer and came back refreshed and ready for the new academic year!

This fall, we welcomed a new faculty member to the Department of Biostatistics : Prasad Patil. Professor Patil received his PhD from Johns Hopkins University, before moving to Boston to undertake a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Biostatistics at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health. Professor Patil brings expertise in machine learning, prediction, genomics signatures, and reproducible research. His recent work has focused on improving the generalizability of genomic prediction algorithms through multi-study learning strategies and on approaches to assess and communicate the replicability of scientific study results. He will teach BS845, Applied Statistical Modeling and Programming in R, in the spring 2020 semester.
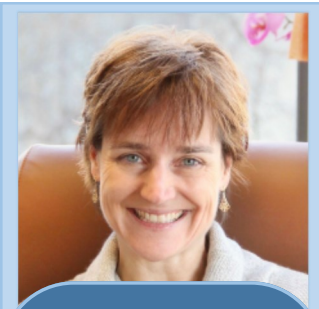
### LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Josée Dupuis, PhD

We also recently welcomed two new post-doctoral fellows: Anastasia Gurinovich and Chathurangi Pathiravasan. Dr. Gurinovich received her PhD from the Bioinformatics program at Boston University, working on the "Discovery and Characterization of Genetic Variants Associated with Extreme Longevity." Dr. Pathiravasan joins us from the University of Illinois, Carbondale where she worked on "Generalized Semi-parametric Approach to one-way Analysis of Variance."

We also welcomed a new grants manager: Mark Chisholm. Mr. Chisholm comes from Northeastern University, where he worked for 16 years, first as a grant and contract specialist and then as a financial analyst. Please feel free to go by and introduce yourself and discuss your next grant submission with him.

Last year we celebrated the outstanding contributions of Cynthia Korhonen, Biostatistics department grants manager, when she retired after 10 years with our department. I want to thank Cynthia for her many years of dedicated service to the department, and for her competent guidance as we greatly expanded our grant portfolio. We also celebrated Amparo (Chary) Ortiz's 12 years with the department of Biostatistics, as she moves on to a new position with the BUSPH Education Office. Chary's willingness to go the extra mile, always with a smile, will be missed, but we are glad that she will not be going too far! Finally, Virginia (Ginger) Quinn, our department Executive Director, will be retiring on November 15th after 17 years with the department. Ginger's knowledge and expertise will be sorely missed, especially her willingness to help in any situations. I would not have survived my first few years as chair without her, and I am grateful for her many years of dedicated service.

Finally, I want to welcome our new Biostatistics Student Association (BSA) officers: Danielle Cook, President; Kristina Yamkovoy, Vice President of Academic Affairs; and Dan DiCorpo, Vice President of Communications. I look forward to working with them during this coming academic year to provide the necessary support to students to ensure everyone's academic success. I also want to extend a big thank you to our past BSA Officers, Taylor Mahoney (President) and Ariel Chernofsky (President) and Ariel Chernofsky (Vice-President of Academic Affairs). Taylor and Ari have been extremely responsive to my many requests for volunteers, help with organizing events, information, and more, and I am grateful for everything that they have done. They leave pretty big shoes to fill!

I hope you had a chance to attend the second annual Boston University Biostatistics/Statistics reception at the Joint Statistical Meetings in Denver Colorado on July 30, 2019.  If you missed it, you can always check out the School of Public Health's [Facebook page](#)!  We had many faculty and former and current students in attendance, and it was great fun to reconnect with old friends.  We will hold an alumni/student/faculty reception in conjunction with the 2020 Eastern North American Region ([ENAR](#)) of the International Biometric Society meeting in Nashville, Tennessee.  Please plan to attend the ENAR reception on Monday, March 23, 2020 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the [Mockingbird](#), 121A 12th Avenue North, in Nashville.   We are also planning the third Boston University Biostatistics/Statistics reception at JSM 2020 in Philadelphia.  Stay tuned for more details.

In addition to our Biostatistics receptions, we have many outstanding events planned for the upcoming academic year.  On November 15th, the School of Public Health, in coordination with the Department of Biostatistics and the Department of Mathematics and Statistics, will be hosting an all-day Symposium titled "Statistics and the Life Course: Making a Healthier World."  The event will take place on the Boston University Medical Campus in the Hiebert Lounge, 72 Concord Street in Boston from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and will include 16 invited speakers centered on three themes:  digital health, machine learning in causal inference, and networks for public health.  Following the symposium, we will hold a reception to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Biostatistics MA/PhD program.  This celebration will also be held in the Hiebert Lounge, from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., and will include reminiscences from faculty members and a student panel. There will be plenty of opportunities to catch up with old friends.  I hope to see all of you at these two events.

Our annual L. Adrienne Cupples Award presentation will be held on April 2, 2020.  Please consider nominating a colleague.  Nomination information can be found on our [website](#).  We will continue to hold regular tea times for Biostatistics affiliates (students, faculty, and friends) on the second Tuesday and fourth Thursday of the month from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in CT332.  Drop by to catch up with your colleagues and enjoy some cookies and tea.  Please check out the exciting list of seminar speakers we have planned for the academic year on our [SPH Biostatistics Calendar](#).  There are many seminar series including, but not limited to, the regular Biostatistics lunchtime seminars, the Statistical Genetics Seminar Series, and the Clinical Trial Working Groups. Attending seminars and working group meetings provide great opportunities to learn about other biostatistics programs, future jobs in academia or industry, and current research trends and they may even provide ideas for dissertation topics!

We have a great year ahead of us filled with opportunities.  Best wishes for a successful and fun year!

# Biostatistics in the Community



The fourth annual Celebrate Urban Birds (CUB) event, a joint program between the Boston University School of Public Health (BUSPH) and the Blackstone Community Center (BCC), was held on July 23, 2019. This event was funded by a mini-grant from the Cornel Lab of Ornithology to Ms. Chary (Amparo) Ortiz, Financial Administrator for the Biostatistics Department. Ms. Ortiz, also a member of the Board of Directors for the Blackstone Community Center, worked in collaboration with Anita DeStefano, PhD, Professor of Biostatistics BUSPH, to host the 2019 event, teaching children aged 5-12 from underserved communities about nature, conservation, science, and data collection.

In Ms. Ortiz's own words, "City life is always so hectic—I love that this event enables kids to stop and become aware of their surroundings. Birds are part of our everyday life, and it's great to be able to celebrate that connection each year with the children in my community."

She and Dr. DeStefano led the participants through activities, looking through spotting scopes and binoculars to identify and record all the species of birds they could find in 10-minute increments. The species they found includes American robins, common grackles, European starlings, and house sparrows. Once they finished collecting their data, the children drew histograms to display them. This data was then added to the existing Celebrate Urban Birds data on the Cornell Lab's website. Their other activities included planting flowers outside the Blackstone Center and sketching pictures of birds and nature. These activities served the purpose of not only teaching the participants about birds, but really getting them to engage with science and nature.

"I love birds, but as a biostatistician, I also love statistics and science. These activities are a fun way to introduce children, and maybe budding scientists, to these subjects," Dr. DeStefano says. She emphasizes the importance of bird observation and data collection, by telling the children the story of the near loss of the peregrine falcon due to the widespread use of the pesticide DDT and its survival due to scientists identifying the chemical culprit and establishing a recovery plan.

# BIOSTATISTICS STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Dear Students and Faculty,

Welcome back to another academic year! My name is Danielle Cook, and I am a 2nd year MA student and currently serving as the President of the Biostatistics Student Association. The BSA was founded in 2009 by students in the biostatistics department in the hopes of creating a sense of community between faculty and students, and the organization has flourished since then. This year we have many social and academic opportunities lined up for you, and we hope you all will be able to attend! Some of these events include our monthly student faculty lunchtime seminars, an upcoming apple picking event, course registration breakfast sessions, the annual alumni career panel, and many more! If you have any suggestions or questions about anything, please don't hesitate to reach out to BSA (bubsa@bu.edu). Have a great year!


Best,

Danielle Cook



BSA Apple Picking Event

October 2019

Smolak Farms

# 2019 L. ADRIENNE CUPPLES AWARD WINNER

The 2019 L. Adrienne Cupples Award for Excellence in Teaching, Research and Service in Biostatistics was awarded to **Stanley Lemeshow**, Professor in Biostatistics at The Ohio State University.

Professor Lemeshow gave a lecture on entitled "Assessing Calibration of Logistic Regression Models Developed From Extremely Large Data Sets."

In his time at Ohio State, Dr. Lemeshow has served as director of the biostatistics program and director of the Center for Biostatistics amongst several other positions. Prior to joining Ohio State, Dr. Lemeshow taught at UMass Amherst's School of Public Health and Health Sciences and had multiple appointments as a visiting professor in Paris and Bordeaux, France.

In the past 35 years, Dr. Lemeshow has overseen and taught 50 short courses in the field of biostatistics on topics such as logistic regression, categorical data, and sampling methods. In addition, he is a prolific author, writing 13 textbooks, more than 30 book chapters, and 175 manuscripts. He has received numerous honors including the Wiley Lifetime Award, Fellow of the American Statistical Association, and Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The annual Cupples Award recognizes a biostatistician whose academic achievements reflect the contributions to biostatistics exemplified by L. Adrienne Cupples, the award's first recipient. Professor Cupples came to SPH in 1981 and served as the founding chair of the Department of Biostatistics and co-executive director of the Graduate Program in Biostatistics. During her time at SPH, she has advanced the field of biostatistics through extensive publications in major journals, book chapters on collaborative and methodological research, development and implementation of effective teaching in a wide range of biostatistics courses, and mentorship of numerous graduate students and faculty.

# 2019 KAYNE PRIZE WINNER

The Herbert Kayne Prize for 2019 was awarded to **Kimberly Greco.** The Kayne Award is presented each year to a graduating Master of Public Health concentrator who has achieved high academic standing and has shown a strong interest in biostatistics and public health in general. This award is named for Dr. Herb Kayne, a former long-time faculty member in the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, who taught biostatistics to most, if not all, of the MPH students in the School of Public Health from its founding until his retirement in 1999.

Kimberly Greco was highly recommended by Dr. Howard Cabral for the Kayne Award. She graduated with an epidemiology-biostatistics certificate, achieving a final GPA of 4.0.

Dr. Cabral had Kimberly in one of his courses, and according to him, her work was stellar and her work ethic unmatched. In his own words, "Kim is as strong a student and candidate for the Kayne Prize whom we have had since the inception of the award. In my view, she is the model candidate for this award and would be someone who would please Dr. Kayne as the awardee for this year."

# BUSPH Biostatistics Academic Excellence Award

Established in 2018 to recognize outstanding academic achievement, the Department of Biostatistics confers this award annually to a graduating Master's student who has consistently demonstrated exemplary academic performance throughout the program. Selection is based on academic performance, rigor and breadth of coursework, and faculty recommendations. This annual award includes a monetary prize. The award was presented at the SPH Awards Ceremony on May 19, 2019.

The BUSPH Biostatistics Academic Excellence Award was awarded to Nicole Roth, an MS student in Biostatistics. According to Dr. Paola Sebastiani who nominated her for the award, and taught her in four separate courses, Nicole was "noticeable for her almost perfect academic performance, her class attendance and participation, and ability to work in teams in various projects". In fact Nicole was the only student in BS806 to receive a perfect score for the presentation of her final project.

# BUSPH Biostatistics Excellence in Research Award

Established in 2018 to recognize the importance of the role of biostatisticians in research, the Department of Biostatistics confers this award annually to a graduating Biostatistics Masters' student who has exceeded expectations in their research activities. The recipient of this award has demonstrated outstanding performance and dedication to research in the field of biostatistics. This annual award includes a monetary prize. The award was presented at the SPH Awards Ceremony on May 19, 2019.

The BUSPH Biostatistics Excellence in Research Award was awarded to Jimmy Kiely, an MS student in Biostatistics. Jimmy was nominated by both Dr. Paola Sebastiani and Dr. Stefano Monti. In Dr. Sebastiani's own words, "He has worked on his research project with extreme dedication, and has shown strong quantitative and programming skills, and clear ability to work independently ." Jimmy worked with Dr. Monti on his research rotation, developing and applying semi-supervised learning methods to the analysis of gene expression data. According to Dr. Monti, "His contribution has exceeded expectation, and has actually helped raise the level of commitment of the other team members, who found themselves having to keep up with Jimmy."

# BUSPH Biostatistics Doctoral Applied Research Paper Award

Established in 2018 to recognize the leadership role of biostatisticians in biomedical research, the Department of Biostatistics confers this award annually to a graduating PhD student in Biostatistics who has completed an outstanding applied research paper. The winner of this award has written a high-quality paper that has either been submitted or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed academic journal. This annual award includes a monetary prize. The Award was presented at the SPH Awards Ceremony on May 19, 2019.

The BUSPH Biostatistics Doctoral Applied Research Paper Award was awarded to Aya Mitani after being nominated by Dr. Kerrie Nelson. Her dissertation paper "Marginal analysis of ordinal clustered longitudinal data with informative cluster size" received one of the Department of Biostatistics' student paper awards for 2019. In addition, she was awarded one of two IBM student awards for this same work at the New England Statistics Symposium in 2018. This paper was also accepted in *Biometrics* in February 2019.

# 2019 BIOSTATISTICS PROGRAM GRADUATES

## PhD

Ansari, Soudeh
*Estimating the Causal Effect of Dynamic Treatment Strategies on Pregnancy Using Electronic Medical Records or Adaptive Clinical Trials*

Baltrusaitis, Kristin
*Comparative Evaluations of Methods that Adjust for Reporting Biases in Participatory Surveillance System*

Li, Shuo
*Methods for Correlated Observations with Applications to Genetics Association Studies*

Lu, Darlene
*Clustering Temporal Gene Expression Data with a Penalized Mixture of Mixed Effects Models*

Ma, Yicheng
*Addressing Censoring Issues in Estimating the Serial Interval for Tuberculosis*

Mitani, Aya
*Modelling Dental Disease Progression in a Longitudinal Study*

Posner, Daniel
*Optimization-based Methods for Kernal-based Association Tests and Phenotype Imputation for Genetic Studies*

Short, Meghan
*Confidence Intervals and Hypothesis Testing for Single Proportion with Clustered Binary Outcome Data*

Weir, Isabelle
*New Statistical Methods with the Restricted Mean Survival Time for Randomized Controlled Trials*

Zhao, Qiang
*Statistical Analysis Methods for Confounded Two-Sample Comparison Data and Clustered Time-to-event Data*

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**MA**

Huang, Qiuxi

Pinheiro, Adlin

**MS**

Chopra, Arjun

Hsu, Michelle

Gully, Teresa

Kataria, Shivangi

Kiely, Jimmy

Lai, Po Ying

Li, Shuang

Matharu, Namita

McLoone, Dylan

Rashid, Azman

Roopcharan, Kevin

Roth, Nicole

Schenck, Tyler

Smith, Blake

Taylor, Michaela

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## CONGRATS!

Our recent graduates are going on to employment with the following organizations:

- Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
- Boston Medical Center
- Center for Biostatistics in AIDS Research
- Firma Clinical Research
- Framingham Heart Study
- Frontier Science & Technology Research Foundation
- Jaeb Center
- LLX Solutions LLC
- Massachusetts General Hospital
- Merck
- Microsoft
- Nektar Therapeutics
- Novartis
- Pfizer
- PPD
- Prometrika
- Sanofi

# Faculty News

Professor **Paola Sebastiani** was recently awarded a UH2/UH3 grant (multiple PI with Thomas Perls at BU-SM) to characterize genomic profiles of centenarians and other species. This is an award of ~5 million dollars per year.

Professor **Yorghos Tripodis** was elected by the National Alzheimer Coordinating Committee Data Core Steering Committee for a three-year term.

Professor **Michael Lavalley** will be receiving the 2019 Distinguished Scholar Award from the Association of Rheumatology Professionals at the American College of Rheumatology/Association of Rheumatology Professionals Annual Scientific Meeting in Atlanta this November. In addition, Michael Lavalley has assumed the role of Associate Chair for the Department of Biostatistics starting July 1, 2019.

Professor **Debbie Cheng** has assumed the role of Associate Chair of the Department of Biostatistics beginning with the start of the Fall 2019 semester, sharing the position with Michael Lavalley.

# BIOSTATS RECOGNITION

**Dr. Anita DeStefano** received a U01 grant entitled "Therapeutic target discovery in ADSP data via comprehensive whole-genome analysis incorporating ethnic diversity and systems approaches" from the National Institutes of Aging. The grant focuses on statistical analysis of ~20,000 whole genomes sequenced as part of the Alzheimer Disease Sequencing Project (ADSP) Follow up Study to identify genes that either confer risk or are protective for AD. Specific statistical challenges include analysis of genomic regions outside the exome and analysis across the ethnically diverse populations being sequenced. The research will be conducted in collaboration with investigators at Baylor College of Medicine, University of Texas Health Science Centers at Houston and San Antonio, Columbia University, University of Washington and the University of Pennsylvania. Collaborators within the Biostatistics Department include Drs. Dupuis, Peloso, Sarnowski, and Pitsillides, and graduate students Elise Lim and Yanbing Wang. The funding awarded totals10.8 million dollars over five years.

# WELCOME NEW
# BIOSTATISTICS STAFF AND POST-DOCS

**Anastasia Gurinovich, PhD in Bioinformatics**

Hi, my name is Anastasia (or Nastia for short). I grew up in Russia where I finished my undergraduate degree in Computer Science. Shortly after, I moved to Canada where I worked as a research assistant in Memorial University of Newfoundland. I discovered and got fascinated by the field of bioinformatics there which led me to BU Bioinformatics Program where I finished my PhD this May 2019. Currently I am a postdoctoral associate at the Biostatistics Department working with Professor Sebastiani and the rest of the New England Centenarian Study to better understand the genetics of human extreme longevity.

**Mark Chisholm, Grants Manager**

I am a new Grants Manager for the Department of Biostatistics as of September and have been working in the area of research administration for over 26 years, mostly at Northeastern University. As a Grant & Contract Specialist in the main office, I coordinated all financial oversight of sponsored proposal review and submissions for the College of Arts and Sciences at Northeastern University as well as post award set up and compliance. Eventually my area transitioned to cash management of the US Department of Health and Human Services and related through the Payment Management System. This included subcontract invoicing and administrative research as well as reporting. I am a member of the National Council of University Research Administrators, tax preparer, investor, life-long drummer, and love fishing.

# WELCOME NEW
# BIOSTATISTICS STAFF AND POSTDOCS

### Chathurangi Pathiravasan

I am keenly interested in exploring new frontiers of statistics. I obtained both masters (August 2015) and PhD (August 2019) at the Southern Illinois University Carbondale.  My masters research is about bootstrapping hypotheses tests. For my PhD research, I proposed a generalized semi-parametric approach for a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

I always like to apply theoretical concepts to real world problems and obtain hands-on experience. My research interests focus mainly on statistical methodologies with real life applications, including, but not limited to, bio-medical research, acoustics, forestry and ecology. In particular, analysis of variance models through information theory, statistical inference, machine learning for high dimensional data, and computational statistics are my main research interests. I am also involved in applied and collaborative projects dealing with a wide range of data and design structures in a large number of scientific settings. In fact, I was a student PI of two NSF funded team projects: "Predicting Hospital Readmission for Diabetes Patients by Classical and Machine Learning Approaches" and "Identifying Shifts in Forest Communities Using Machine Learning Techniques".

I would consider it's a privilege to join the department of biostatistics as a postdoctoral associate. I am currently working on the electronic Framingham Heart Study (eFHS) under the supervision of Prof. Joanne Murabito and Dr. Chunyu Liu. This project involves data collected from a smartphone app paired with a wireless blood pressure device and smart watch to collect heart rate and step counts. I would like to develop and implement advanced innovative statistical methods for this longitudinal cohort study.

### Qiuxi Huang

I enjoy traveling and meeting new people and cultures. I earned my BS in pre-medicine from Penn State University and my MA in biostatistics from BU. Being the only child in my family, I grew up in Beijing, China. My research interests lie primarily in refining or developing new methodologies for survival analysis. I'd also love to read, cook, and practice yoga outside of school.

### Julia Kobe

Hi everyone! I'm from the Boston area, and have lived here my whole life. I graduated with my B.S. in Applied Mathematics from Wentworth Institute of Technology, and have spent the past two years working at The Fenway Institute. I'm excited to start classes, and my research assistantship at BEDAC. In my free time I enjoy cooking, watching movies, and I'm a fan of all of the Boston sports teams.

### Samantha Malatesta

I am originally from the south coast of Massachusetts. I recently earned my BS in statistics from NC State University. During my time at NC State, I conducted research with the EPA to investigate alternative air quality sensors to measure air pollution. I also attended the SIBS program at the University of Colorado Denver where she researched the efficacy of a hypertension drug. My research interests include spatial statistics and clinical trials.

### Zeyuan Song

I am originally from China and went to Zhejiang University for my BS in Biology. I worked as a research assistant for one year in a pathology lab at University of Alabama at Birmingham, where I was intrigued by the power of applying bioinformatics and biostatistics methods on deciphering disease mechanisms. Thereafter I obtained my MS in Applied Biostatistics at BU and continued my research career here. Aside from academics, I love reading, cooking and watching movies, especially horror and fiction movies.

# WELCOME NEW PHD STUDENTS
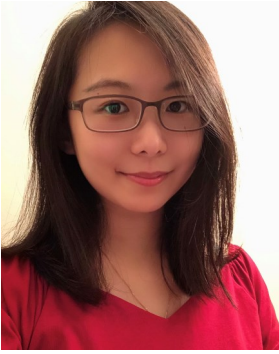
### Jianing Wang

I am a doctoral student in Biostatistics, working with Dr. Benjamin Linas and Dr. Laura White at Boston Medical Center. My research investigates the statistical and mathematical methods to calibrate compartmental simulation models and improve the performance of model fitting. Specifically, I am working with a research team under the mentorship of Dr. White on Bayesian calibration for the researching effective strategies to prevent opioid death model. Prior to the study in Biostatistics, I was working in research unit of infectious disease at Boston Medical Center as a statistical analyst, where I was focusing on investigating the comparative- and cost-effectiveness of interventions to identify and treat HIV, HCV and Opioid Use Disorder, employing methods of statistics and epidemiology.

### Xutao Wang

I did my undergraduate study at BU, majoring in Math and Economics, and obtained my Master's degree at Yale majoring in Statistics. I did statistical genetics before but I am open to other research areas in the future. In my spare time, I like watching movies, shopping, and trying different kinds of food.

### Xuzhi Wang

I was born in Shandong, China. I earned my Master's degree in Applied Math and Statistics at Johns Hopkins University and my Bachelor's degree in Statistics at Shanghai University of International Business and Economics. In my spare time, I like reading, exercising and watching movies. I'm very happy to join BU Department of Biostatistics to continue my study and research.

### Luke Zheng

I got my B.S. in Statistics from University of Wisconsin: Madison. I've done a lot of work in contract research organizations for clinical trials and a data monitoring committee over the past few years, so I have a large interest in clinical trial design and the issues that may come up when conducting trials. Outside of my schoolwork, I'm a competitive table tennis player that used to compete for the UW Madison team, and I take interest in many other sports such as various martial arts and more recently biking.

# WELCOME NEW PHD STUDENTS

# WELCOME NEW MA STUDENTS

### Lindsey Furton

I am originally from Menominee, Michigan. I earned a Bachelor of Science in Mathematics with a minor in biology from Regis University. Afterwards, I worked as a Clinical Research Coordinator at the University of Colorado. I am fascinated with the process of turning data into meaningful information with the potential to improve patient outcomes, and so I am excited to learn more in the MA in Biostatistics program at Boston University! In my free time, I enjoy kickboxing, hiking, and cooking.

### Borui Li

I studied statistics in Beijing Forestry University for the past four years. My favourite sport is swimming, and I really love Rhythm Gymnastic. Plus, I like watching horror movies. I like the book "The Gadfly" best, which is written by Irish woman writer Ethel Lilian Voynich.

Looking forward to meeting you at BU!

### Yi Li

I am an MA student. I love animals and wish to make contributions to creating a healthier and more harmonious environment for human beings and animals. Also I like appreciating musicals and operas which make my life colorful.

[Read about our MA program here](#)

# WELCOME NEW MA STUDENTS



**Elizabeth Mulvey**

I have been full-time lawyer in Boston for 35 years, and am now delighted to be a part-time part student in the M.A. program in Biostatistics. I have a particular interest in using statistics and health care data to identify factors that affect the quality of care received by patients, and to identify patients at risk for adverse outcomes due to various types of medical error. I live in Hingham with my husband, who is an Episcopal priest, and without our two children, who are away at school.



**Jiewei Ruan**

My name is Jiewei Ruan and I am from China. I received BA at China Agricultural University and BS in Math at University of Colorado Denver. I am interested in statistics, programming and public health. In my spare time, I love reading and playing soccer.

[Read about our MA program here](#)

# WELCOME NEW MA STUDENTS

**Xinyi Wang**

I grew up in China and just finished my undergraduate studies in Sichuan University. I would say I am an open minded and friendly person, although I may seem a bit quiet in large groups and with people I am not totally familiar with. But once I get to know someone better, I become enthusiastic. I'm also a huge sports fan and I like playing basketball and snowboarding.

**Kefei Wu**

I am a student in MA in Biostatistics program. I am quite interested in the public health area and I want to make my contribution to it. I am an outgoing person and I have a lot of interests, like playing the guitar, hiking and reading. I look very forward to my future study at Boston University and I really hope to make progress in it.

**Yijing Zhang**

I am a newly admitted MA student coming from Shanghai, China. (You can also call me Ginny.) I majored in Pharmaceutical Preparation for my undergraduate and would be pursuing a career in bio-data interdisciplinary. I so appreciate diversity and novelty that everything could be my interests. All of reading, traveling, music (especially singing), sports (good at table tennis; now interested in skating a lot cuz new to Boston!) and electronic gaming are parts of my life. I'm actually open and easygoing but maybe a little shy at first glance, so welcome to be in touch with me! Hope everyone a great academic year!

[Read about our MA program here](#)

# WELCOME MS STUDENTS

### Emma Block

I am originally from Sudbury, Massachusetts. I recently graduated from Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana with a Bachelor of Science in Management. My minors were Mathematics and Public Health. Although I will miss the Big Easy, I am extremely excited to be in Boston studying Biostatistics. My interests include tennis, skiing, traveling, and spending time with my two dogs.

### Courtney Goodrich

I am originally from the Albany, NY area. I completed my undergrad in Biochemistry at St. Lawrence University in 2015. I have always had an interest in medical research and worked on several pre-clinical projects during my undergrad. After graduating I worked as a clinical research coordinator in neurology and vascular surgery clinical trials. I hope to continue in clinical trials upon completion of my Biostatistics degree. In my spare time I enjoy hiking, swimming and recently took up cycling and scuba diving.

### Erika Furtado

I grew up in Peabody, Massachusetts and recently graduated with my B.S. in mathematics from Southeastern University in Lakeland, FL. I have always enjoyed math and decided to pursue a degree in the subject out of pure curiosity, not knowing exactly what career field I would enter. When learning about the MS in Applied Biostatistics at BU, I was immediately intrigued as I would be able to do what I love while creating a positive impact on Public Health. In my free time, I enjoying serving at my local church, listening to NPR podcasts, and cooking meals for friends and family.

### Xuehan Hou

I'm a graduate from the University of Liverpool with a major in mathematics with a focus in finance. I love travelling, parachuting, and other outdoor activities. I am also a big fan of LFC.

[Read about our MS program here](#)

# WELCOME MS STUDENTS

### Wentong Li

I just finished my under-graduate study of bio-technology in China and I am so excited to meet you all here. I am now an Applied Biostatistics graduate student and I was impressed by the guys I met in the course BS 800 in August. I have great interest of biostatis-tical analysis in public health though I don't have strong data analysis background. I love eating and outdoor activities like skiing, tennis, and hiking. I'm new here and wanna seek for the new life. Feel free to talk with me anytime.

### Emily Murphy

I am originally from Wiscon-sin (Go Pack Go!) but have been in Boston for 5 years. I completed my undergraduate at BU as well, studying Bio-chemistry and Molecular Bi-ology. I am an avid golfer in the summer and skier in the winter. I am excited to be back in the BU community!

### Christian Love

I grew up just outside of Salt Lake City, UT enjoying the mountains, especially for skiing. I received my undergraduate degree in Biology with a minor in molecular bioscience from Washington State Univer-sity Vancouver, which is located just outside of Portland, OR. When I'm not in school or studying I love playing basketball, golfing, reading, and cooking or finding new places to eat. I look for-ward to being a part of the Biostatistics program here at BU!
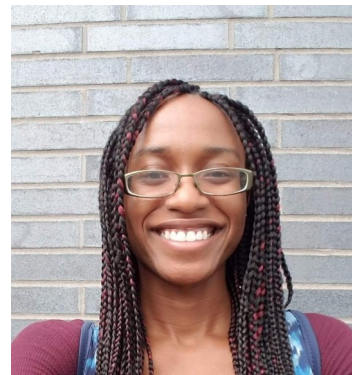
### Aliyah Olaniyan

I studied Cognitive Neuro-science as an undergradu-ate and have a lot of ex-perience with animal re-search as a result. I am very interested in mental health and the effect that the environment has on it, particularly the presence of green space as well as socioeconomic factors. My hobbies include capoeira, an Afro-Brazilian martial art, and adult coloring. I am happy to join the BU SPH Biostatistics community.

[Read about our MS program here](#)

# WELCOME MS STUDENTS

### Lisa Piasecki

I am originally from Philadelphia, and I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Statistics and minor in Mathematics from The Pennsylvania State University this May. Last summer I participated in the NHLBI's Summer Institute in Biostatistics at BU, and the experience really encouraged me to apply here for my Master's. My main interests include clinical trials and epidemiology, with a special focus on Alzheimer's Disease and cancer research. I hope to work in the pharmaceutical industry post graduation. Outside of academics, I enjoy traveling, spending time with friends, and reading. I look forward to the experience I will gain in this respected program and to exploring Boston while I am here.

### Gabriela Rabasa

I graduated from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in December 2018 with a B.S. in biochemistry and biophysics. I am is interested in statistical methods used in clinical trials and in statistical genetics. Outside of school, I enjoy reading and candy making.

### Morgan Rosser

I come from a small town in upstate New York and am a recent graduate of St. Lawrence University where I obtained a bachelor's degree in neuroscience with a minor in mathematics. I decided to pursue a Masters degree in Applied Biostatistics here at Boston University because I found that when I participated in research projects, my favorite part was conducting the data analysis. My past projects have included working on improving hand function in spinal cord injury patients, some survey analysis for my local public health department pertaining to drug addiction and treatment options, and looking at the relationship between perceptual load and unconscious learning. Needless to say, I have an interest in medical research that pertains to disease tracking and management as well as drug development. In my free time, I enjoy being relatively active as a former collegiate track and field athlete, so Boston has been great because it has a very active atmosphere. I also enjoying reading, going to shows and listening to music as well as watching any and all movies and TV shows that I can- I have quite the collection! All in all, I'm really excited to be a part of this program and this department and I am looking forward to a great year!

### Alexander Pogrebinsky

I was born in Moscow and grew up in the Boston Area. I completed my undergrad in Statistics and Economics at Umass-Amherst in 2005. I have spent the last 12 years working at AIG as a reserving actuary. Starting in Sep 2019, I began pursuing an MS in biostatistics at BU full time. In my spare time I enjoy cooking, weightlifting, travel, and real estate investment.

[Read about our MS program here](#)

# WELCOME MS STUDENTS

### Leah Santacroce

I am originally from the east end of Long Island, NY. I just graduated from Muhlenberg College with a BS in Environmental Science and minors in Computer Science and Public Health. I hope to use my biostatistics training in public health research, particularly environmental health or epidemiology research, and I'm also interested in statistical programming. Outside of academics I enjoy playing the flute, doing yoga, hiking and reading.

### Joseph Tumblin

I'm originally from Malden, Massachusetts. I graduated from the College of the Holy Cross in 2016 with a degree in Mathematics while also completing the pre-med coursework. I then worked as an analyst at Partners HealthCare in the Population Health Department for close to 3 years on the Evaluation and Research team working to evaluate various patient programs using SAS. In my spare time, I enjoy tennis, golf, hiking, and skiing.

### Sarah Szvetecz

I recently graduated from James Madison University with a Bachelor's degree in Statistics. My interest in Biostats began after taking a Statistical Genomics course undergrad and then further developed after I worked in the QSURE program at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center last summer. I am so excited to be in the Applied Biostatistics program and look forward to building on my skills and to continuing research in genomics. Aside from academics, I also enjoy going to see live music, watching movies, and spending time with friends. I am new to Boston and can't wait to explore the city more!

### Ziyi Wang

I'm originally from China. I finished my undergraduate at Cal State University, Long Beach and I have been in the U.S for more than 5 years now. I like spin biking, cooking and dogs. I studied Statistics for my BS degree and now study Biostatistics. I love Chinese food and travel everywhere!

[Read about our MS program here](#)

Recent Graduate Darlene Lu and Current PhD Student Kendra Plourde at Convocation

## STUDENT RECOGNITION

♦ Aya Mitani, Elise Lim, and Yicheng Ma won the Fall 2019 student paper competition

♦ Elise Lim won the best poster presentation award at the CHARGE Consortium this year in St. Louis, MO and received an award for her oral presentation at the BUMC Genome Sciences Institute Research Symposium in 2018

♦ Aya Mitani (PhD '19) is now doing her postdoc at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health Department of Biostatistics

♦ Kristin Baltrusaitis (PhD '19) worked with Science Friday to create educational materials related to flu surveillance. She was even featured on in their episode "Was The Flu Near You?"

♦ Sarah Conner has been awarded an F-31 grant and has had three first author publications, and a fourth has been accepted for publication

# SPOTLIGHT ON STUDENTS

**Vanessa Xanthakis (PhD '12)** received the Research Mentoring Fellowship Award from the BU School of Medicine Internal Medicine Residency Program, was inducted as a Fellow of the American Heart Association by the Council of Epidemiology and Prevention, and Served as the Program Director and Mentor for the T32 Training Program in Cardiovascular Epidemiology at Boston University Section of Preventive Medicine and Epidemiology. In addition to her impressive professional work, Vanessa is also enjoying toddler life with her two children Nefeli and Alexandros.

**Usha Govindarajulu  (PhD '04)** has been serving as Program Chair in the American Statistical Association's Section of Statistical Computing this past year, and next year she will be Chair-Elect. In addition, she became an Editor for *Computational Statistics* so please send her your articles!

# SUMMER INSTITUTE IN BIOSTATISTICS

In 2003, the NIH initiated the Summer Institute for Training in Biostatistics (SIBS) program to help to overcome a national shortage of biostatisticians.  One of the original recipients of the NIH grant, and just renewed this year for another seven years, the Biostatistics Department at BUSPH has continued to run the program each year since its inception.

2019 was another successful year for SIBS at BUSPH, with 20 students participating in the six-week intensive summer program, complete with hands-on training in SAS and R, and a final presentation analyzing data from the renowned Framingham Heart Study and Jackson Heart Study data sets.

Learn more about SIBS on our website or here: "Undergraduate Program Builds Pipeline of Biostatisticians"



Profs. Jacqueline Milton and Anita DeStefano, directors of the BUSPH SIBS program

**Alisa Manning (PhD '11)** and **Han Chen (PhD '13)** received an R01 grant in July 2019 from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute to develop efficient statistical methods and computational algorithms for large-scale gene-environment interaction studies, and to implement them in open-source software programs and cloud-based analysis pipelines. Their work will facilitate gene-environment interaction research on complex cardio-metabolic, lung, blood and sleep diseases and related conditions using hundreds of thousands to millions of samples.

**Fernando Ramirez Del Val (MPH '17)** is working as a General Surgery Resident at Houston Methodist Hospital in Houston, Texas. In 2019 he won best presentation at the John., Jr & Carolyn Bookout Surgical Research Symposium, and in 2018 he won the Andrew Foster Young Investigator Award for Outstanding Abstract Based Scientific Presentation.

**Rachel Hunter-Merrill (MA '10)** recently started working at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center as a biostatistician studying biomarkers. Earlier in the year, she and a colleague won the Best Representation of the "Responsibility" NSC Essential Learning Outcome Award for their poster "Math Readiness in Incoming Chemistry Classes".

# Contact Information

## STAY CONNECTED

Faculty, staff, students,
alumni, and friends:
we want to hear your updates!
Please stay in touch!

biostat@bu.edu

(617) 358-2222

801 Massachusetts Ave

Crosstown Building

3rd floor

Boston, MA 02118

## SPECIAL EVENTS & CONFERENCES

Biostatistics Department and SPH Events Calendar

APHA Annual Meeting & Expo

November 02-06, 2019 | Philadelphia, PA

Dean's Symposium: Statistics and the Life Sciences: Creating a Healthier World

November 15, 2019 | Boston, MA

MA/PhD Biostatistics 30th Anniversary Celebration

November 15, 2019 | Boston, MA

ENAR Spring Meeting

March 22-25, 2020 | Nashville, TN

SCT Annual Meeting

May 17-20, 2020 | Baltimore, MD

JSM 2020

August 01-06, 2020 | Philadelphia, PA