University of Pittsburgh

Department of Chemistry Graduate Student Peer Mentoring Program

University Resources

Ombudsperson
Philippa Carter
pkc3@pitt.edu
412-624-6096

Title IX Coordinator
Katie Pope
titleixcoordinator@pitt.edu
412-648-7861

Graduate Student Administrator
Christie Hay
gradadm@pitt.edu
412-624-8501

Director of Graduate Studies
Dr. Paul Floreancig
florean@pitt.edu
412-624-8727

University Counseling Center Wellness Center
412-648-7930

Care and Resource Support
PittCares@pitt.edu

Sexual Assault Services Wellness Center
412-648-7930 (8:30-5 M-F)
412-648-7856 (after 5pm)

Student Health Service Wellness Center
412-383-1800

Center for Victims
412-392-8582

Office of Student Conduct
Barbara Ruprecht
412-648-7910

Disability Resources & Services
412-648-7890

Pitt Police
412-624-2121 (emergency)
412-624-4040 (non-emergency)

The Graduate Peer Mentoring program was initiated by the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB) to support graduate students and post-docs by creating a space where researchers can openly discuss stressful situations, work through difficult issues, and find the resources they need to help them succeed in graduate school and their career.

All discussions with these peer mentors will be confidential!

Below is a list of the graduate student and post-doc peer mentors along with their e-mail addresses. A short bio and some fun facts about each mentor are provided on the following pages to help you in choosing the right mentor. E-mail a mentor to set-up a time to meet.

Any questions or concerns can be directed to gsabchem@pitt.edu

Name	Year	Email
Natasha Smith	post-doc	nls49@pitt.edu
Amy Ryan	4	aer80@pitt.edu
Alysia Mandato	2	atm75@pitt.edu
Xing Yee Gan	6	xig39@pitt.edu
Bryan Wiedemann	2	brw95@pitt.edu
Elaine Robbins	post-doc	emr72@pitt.edu
Chao Zhang	5	chz62@pitt.edu
Kevin Quirion	3	kpq1@pitt.edu
Dylan Tomares	4	dtt14@pitt.edu
Emily Eikey	5	eae40@pitt.edu
Julisa Rozon	2	jur33@pitt.edu

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Meet the Mentors

Natasha Smith
Post-Doc

Natasha Smith is a post-doctoral researcher in the Asher group, where she also completed her graduate work in the physical chemistry division. Natasha is currently the post-doctoral member of the Graduate Student Advisory Board.

Natasha is experienced in resolving various group conflict situations, including authorship disagreements, working with difficult lab mates, and navigating difficult discussions with an advisor. She is a strong advocate for self-care/mental health wellness, an LGBTQ ally, and a defender of equality for all.

Natasha is from West Virginia, and enjoys biking, singing, painting, and getting lost in the woods to relieve stress. She has two cats, and often dog-sits a golden retriever and a husky.

Amy Ryan
4th Year

Amy Ryan is a 4th year graduate student in the Deiters group. She is in the biochemistry division and has completed the Chemical Biology I and II, Mass Spectrometry, and Analytical Spectroscopy courses. Amy is a member of the Graduate Student Advisory Board.

Amy switched groups early in her second year and would be happy to advise anyone through that process.

Amy lived in Connecticut, New York, and Nevada prior to coming to Pitt. She is an avid fan of the Bachelor franchise (except "Listen to Your Heart") and loves to bake in her free time.

Alysia Mandato
2nd Year

Alysia Mandato just completed her 1st year in the program. Alysia is in the physical division and a member of the Saxena group. She took Chemical Biology I, Statistical Mechanics, and Chemical Symmetry in her first year and will take the Quantum Mechanics course in the fall. Alysia is a member of the Graduate Student Advisory Board.

Alysia's undergraduate background is biochemistry. She would be happy to discuss her experience switching research fields and how she managed the tough switch from biochemistry to research in physical chemistry.

Alysia is from Cleveland, Ohio. She enjoys yoga and playing with her dog, Lucy.

Xing Yee Gan

6th Year

Xing Yee Gan is a 6th year graduate student in the Millstone group. As an inorganic/materials division student, she took Quantum Mechanics, Descriptive Inorganic Chem, Group Theory, Electron Microscopy in Materials Science (ChemEng), and Advanced Scientific Visual Communications (ChemEng).

Xing Yee is a practitioner of self-advocacy. She has experience resolving conflict, navigating difficult conversations, and finding ways to effectively work with difficult group members. She has successfully sought out mentors outside her group and helped many graduate students both within her group and the department.

Xing Yee is an international student and first-generation college student. She plays the piano and enjoys caring for her many plants that brighten up her office space.

Bryan Wiedemann

2nd Year

Bryan Wiedemann just completed his 1st year of graduate school. Bryan joined the Islam group and works in the areas of organic synthesis and biochemistry. Bryan took Advanced Organic Chemistry I and II, Chemical Biology I, and Synthetic Biology.

Bryan graduated from Boston College in 2015. He worked in industry at Roche Molecular Diagnostics for 4 years before coming to Pitt.

Bryan is from Kinnelon, NJ, a very small town in North Jersey unknown to most people in Jersey. Bryan has a love of all things related to sports. He always watches his beloved Miami Dolphins on Sunday and is on the fairways come spring. Bryan loves animals, especially corgis, and hopes to have one someday!

Elaine Robbins

Post-Doc

Elaine Robbins is a post-doctoral researcher in the Michael group, where she also completed her PhD research as a graduate student in the Analytical division. While in grad school, she took Biochemistry I and II, Analytical Spectroscopy, and Electrochemistry.

Elaine worked in a very small group, where they dealt with funding shortages. She worked on projects with multiple collaborating PIs, and in some cases navigated the difficult situation where the PIs had differing ideas of what the project priorities should be. Her research has included work with animal and human subjects, so she understands the stress that comes with working with living subjects.

Elaine is a huge Pittsburgh sports fan and collects sports memorabilia. She even still has her ticket from the last Pirates game ever played at Three Rivers Stadium!

Chao Zhang

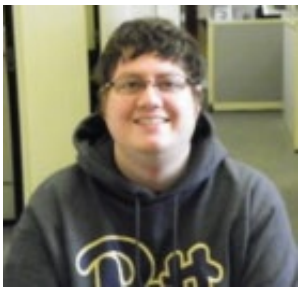
5th Year

Chao Zhang is a 5th year graduate student in the biological division and works in the Childers group. Chao took the Physical Organic Chemistry, Advanced Organic Chemistry, and Chemical Biology courses offered by chemistry department as well as completed the Molecular Biology course offered by the biology department.

Chao is originally from China, completing a BS in pharmaceutics and an MS in chemical biology prior to his graduate work at Pitt. Chao has experience resolving difficult issues, include finding the best fit supervisor, navigating relationships with PIs, and balancing simultaneous teaching and research workloads.

In his free time, Chao enjoys traveling and exploring cities and countries of different cultures.

Kevin Quirion
3rd Year

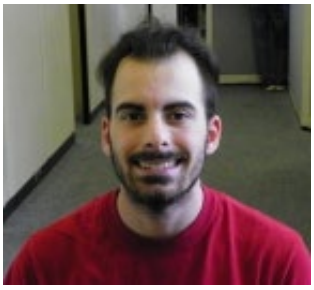


Kevin Quirion is a 3rd year student in Peng Liu's group and a member of the Graduate Student Advisory Board. The focus of his research is on computational/organic chemistry. Kevin has taken Medicinal Chemistry, Advanced Organic Chemistry I and II, and Chemical Biology.

Kevin switched the primary focus of his research from synthetic organic chemistry to computational chemistry and can help advise people who are considering switching groups or switching divisions.

Kevin is from Connecticut and earned his B.S. in chemistry in 2018 from Central Connecticut State University.

Dylan Tomares
4th Year



Dylan Tomares is a 4th year graduate student in the biological division and works in the Childers group. He has completed the Biological Chemistry I and II, Modern Physical Organic Chemistry, and Advanced Organic Synthesis core courses, in addition to the small-molecule NMR spectroscopy minicourse.

Dylan has experience speaking to students about PI-student interactions. He is a member of the LGBTQ community and has spoken with students about LGBTQ concerns directly affecting himself and others as a gay graduate student. Dylan has experience advising others on finding a lab that is a good fit for them.

As a native Marylander, he enjoys putting Old Bay on literally everything. Dylan also likes to make time for playing piano, making cheese, and petting dogs.

Emily Eikey
5th Year

Emily Eikey is a 5th year NSF-GRFP fellow in the inorganic chemistry division, conducting research in the Millstone group. Emily has taken the following courses: Descriptive Inorganic Chem, Analytical Spectroscopy, Chemical Symmetry, Statistical Mechanics, and Advanced Scientific Visual Communication (ChemEng).

Emily has mentored first-year graduate students, currently serves as the group's lab manager and safety officer and has experience with resolving conflict within a group.

Emily is a first-generation college student. She loves going to concerts to see her favorite musicians and cuddling with her pup, Maci!

Julisa Rozon
2nd Year

Julisa Rozon (she/her) is entering her 2nd year in the Laaser group. Her interests lie at the intersection of materials science, physics, and chemistry. She has completed the following courses: Polymer Chemistry, Quantum Mechanics, Descriptive Inorganic, and Chemical Symmetry.

Originally from the NY Tri-state area, Julisa graduated from Kean University in 2017 and served in the NJ National Guard for 6 years. She has experience mentoring high school students from underserved communities and is an advocate for increasing representation of marginalized groups in STEM.

Julisa enjoys going to concerts, getting fancy over cocktails, and engaging in conversation with others. If you run into her in the hallway, don't be surprised to hear her humming a tune to herself!