

**Department of Genetics**  
**Preference of a Faculty Mentor for Genetics Majors**

*What is a Faculty Mentor?*

A key feature of being a Genetics major is that you are assigned 2 people to help you navigate the major. The University assigns an academic adviser (Mr. Michael Hill) and the Department of Genetics assigns a faculty member to serve as your academic mentor. Faculty mentors are drawn from the Department of Genetics faculty Undergraduate Affairs Committee and are highly interested in your success and well-being.

*How Does it Work?*

Once your faculty mentor has been assigned, all Genetics majors are required to meet with her/him after meeting with the academic adviser. Once the faculty mentor meeting is complete, your mentor will send an e-mail to Mr. Hill so that he knows to clear you to register for next semester's classes. **You will not be cleared to register without meeting with both Mr. Hill and your faculty mentor.**

When your faculty mentor is determined, you will learn how she/he prefers to set up meetings. Some, for example, will send a Doodle Poll, allowing you to choose a meeting time; others prefer you contact them by email. Regardless of the method, responsibility for following the mentor's guidelines lies with the student.

*Specifically, what am I Expected to Do Now?*

The Department makes every effort to match you with a mentor you choose. However, since the Department must balance faculty workloads, you may not be matched with your first or second choice mentor. Remember, all faculty mentors care deeply about you and your success in the major.

Answer the questions below and choose your first and second choice from the mentor biographies on the following pages. Once you have done that, save this form as a PDF and email it to the department's Undergraduate Coordinator (Dr. Jonathan Eggenschwiler). Dr. Eggenschwiler can be reached at [jeggensc@uga.edu](mailto:jeggensc@uga.edu) and will contact you with your assigned mentor.

STUDENT'S FULL NAME:

UGA email address:

Student ID Number:

Your expected graduation semester (*e.g.*, spring '25):

Your first choice:

Your second choice:

## *Faculty Mentor Biographies*

### *Dr. Jonathan Eggenschwiler*

Dr. Eggenschwiler is an Associate Professor of Genetics and a developmental biologist. He started teaching and conducting research at UGA in 2012. He grew up in southern California and did most of my scientific training in New York and New Jersey. His research focuses on understanding how cells communicate and establish their unique identities as the mouse embryo grows and develops. Specifically, he studies signaling pathways in the context of the formation of the central nervous system as well as the molecular and morphological differences that arise between the left and right sides of the body. He currently teaches GENE 4310 (Developmental Neuroscience) and GENE4950 (capstone).

### *Dr. Katie Billmyre*

Dr. Billmyre works on understanding various aspects of meiotic chromosome biology using *Drosophila* (fruit flies) as a model system. The Billmyre lab uses a combination of imaging, genetic, and genomic techniques to investigate how chromosomes accurately undergo meiosis. Katie received her bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, where she studied intestinal development in mice. From there she completed a PhD in Cell Biology at Duke University studying the etiology of birth defects. She did postdoctoral training with Dr. Shawn Ahmed at the University of North Carolina for two years before moving to the Stowers Institute for Medical research where she finished her postdoc with Dr. Scott Hawley. It was during her postdoctoral training that she became fascinated with the genetics and cell biology of the germline. She started her independent research group at the University of Georgia in the Department of Genetics in 2023.

### *Dr. Laramie Lemon*

Dr. Laramie Lemon received her bachelor's degree in biology from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA. As an undergrad, she investigated the function of chromosome fragile sites using budding yeast as a model. During college, she also participated in two summer research programs- one at Baylor College of Medicine (BCM) in Houston, TX and another at the University of California, Berkeley. Laramie then earned her Ph.D. in Integrative Molecular and Biomedical Sciences from BCM and went on to perform her postdoctoral work at Emory University where she studied novel ways in which cancer-associated mutations in histone proteins impact gene expression. While at Emory, she was a member of the Fellowships in Research and Science Teaching program where she taught a variety of undergraduate courses and mentored numerous students interested in pursuing careers in STEM. In August 2021, Laramie joined the Department of Genetics as a Lecturer where she teaches introductory biology courses and GENE 3200. Laramie is passionate about teaching, mentoring, and training the next generation of scientists. She is also dedicated to highlighting diversity in science and showing students that anyone can pursue and succeed in a career in STEM.

### *Dr. Morgan Myers*

Dr. Morgan Meyers has conducted research on marine plankton responses to climate change stressors in San Francisco estuaries and New Zealand waters. She received a Bachelor of Science in biology and a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish from Iowa State University, and a Master of Science in marine biology from San Francisco State University. Morgan competed her Doctorate in marine zooplankton ecology at the University of Otago in New Zealand, after which she joined the Department of Genetics at the University of Georgia as a Lecturer in August 2021. Here at UGA, Morgan teaches introductory biology for non-majors and is dedicated to helping students apply and appreciate biology in ways that can improve their own lives, the well-being of their communities, and the health of the planet.

### *Dr. Tania Rozario*

Dr. Tania Rozario works in the intersection of parasitology and developmental biology, studying stem cells and regeneration in tapeworms. Her research is focused on understanding the regulatory mechanisms that enable tapeworms to exhibit feats of growth, regeneration, and reproduction. Originally from Malaysia, Dr. Rozario received her bachelor's degree from Wesleyan University where she studied gene silencing in yeast. She then received her PhD from the University of Virginia where she studied early embryonic development in *Xenopus* (frogs). She completed her postdoctoral work with Phillip Newmark at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and then the Morgridge Institute for Research, Madison, WI. During her postdoc, she resurrected *Hymenolepis diminuta* (the rat tapeworm) as a new tractable model organism with the aim of using developmental genetics to better understand parasite biology. She started her independent research group at UGA in 2021. Dr. Rozario is fascinated by animals with extreme physiological traits and wants to understand how they do what they do.

### *Dr. Jan Westpheling*

Jan Westpheling has been a member of the faculty of the Genetics Department for more than 25 years and has advised students preparing for post-graduate activities including medical school, graduate school and jobs in biotechnology for all of that time. She works closely with students preparing for both medical school and graduate school applications and interviews. She was an undergraduate at Purdue University and worked as a technician in a pharmaceutical company for two years before going to graduate school in England. She was a post-doc at Harvard and has been at UGA ever since. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Genetics and Microbiology, trains undergraduate research students in her lab and her research focuses on the conversion of plant biomass to fuels and chemicals.

### *Dr. Kaixiong Ye*

Dr. Kaixiong Ye works on human genetics, trying to understand human evolution and health through genetics. His lab research applies approaches from not only typical molecular genetics but also computational biology (or bioinformatics). Kaixiong received his bachelor's degree in Biology from Wuhan University. He worked briefly in the industry as a bioinformatician before he joined the graduate school at Cornell University, where he earned his Ph.D. degree in Nutritional Genomics. He received his postdoctoral training in Computational Biology. Kaixiong started his own research group at UGA in 2018. Kaixiong's research has been driven by his curiosity of the evolution and diversity of life, and by his passion for improving human health.