

**Department of Genetics**  
**Genetics Major's Preference for a Faculty Mentor**

*What is a Faculty Mentor?*

A unique 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 your meeting with your faculty mentor is complete, the faculty mentor will e-mail the adviser so that he can 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 Director of Undergraduate Studies (Dr. Rodney Mauricio). Dr. Mauricio 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. Katherine Billmyre*

I work on understanding various aspects of meiotic chromosome biology using *Drosophila* (fruit flies) as a model system. My lab uses a combination of imaging, genetic, and genomic techniques to investigate how chromosomes accurately undergo meiosis. I received my bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan, where I studied intestinal development in mice. From there I completed a PhD in Cell Biology at Duke University studying the etiology of birth defects. I did my 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 I finished my postdoc with Dr. Scott Hawley. It was during my postdocs that I became fascinated with the genetics and cell biology of the germline. I started my lab at the University of Georgia in the Department of Genetics in 2023.

### *Dr. Jonathan Eggenschwiler*

I am an Associate Professor of Genetics and a developmental biologist. I started teaching and conducting research at UGA in 2012. I grew up in southern California and did most of my scientific training in New York and New Jersey. My research focuses on understanding how cells communicate and establish their unique identities as the mouse embryo grows and develops. Specifically, I study 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. I currently teach GENE 4310 (Developmental Neuroscience).

### *Dr. Laramie Lemon*

I received my bachelor's degree in biology from Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, LA. As an undergraduate, I investigated the function of chromosome fragile sites using budding yeast as a model. During college, I 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. I then earned my Ph.D. in Integrative Molecular and Biomedical Sciences from BCM and completed my postdoctoral work at Emory University, where I investigated novel mechanisms by which cancer-associated mutations in histone proteins affect gene expression. While at Emory, I also taught various undergraduate courses and mentored numerous students interested in STEM careers. In August 2021, I joined the Department of Genetics as a Lecturer. I am passionate about teaching, mentoring, and training the next generation of scientists. I am also dedicated to highlighting diversity in science and showing students that anyone can pursue and succeed in a career in STEM.

### *Dr. Rodney Mauricio*

I have been at UGA since 1998 and spent most of my career studying plant evolutionary ecology. I grew up in Massachusetts and was the first generation in my family to attend college. I attended Harvard College and had every intention of attending medical school (even taking the MCAT), before deciding in my senior year that graduate school was a better fit. I did undergraduate research jointly in 2 labs as an undergraduate and it was the most formative experience of my college career. Before moving south to get my PhD at Duke, I got on a plane for the first time to do research in Alaska, and then lived in Brazil and Costa Rica for a year, beginning a deep interest in travel, which included stints as a naturalist/guide on the Amazon through graduate school. I completed postdoctoral training at the University of Chicago before coming to UGA. I teach GENE 3000 (Evolutionary Biology) and GENE 4000 (Advanced Evolutionary Biology) and have a daughter in college, who listens to some of my advice.

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*Dr. Morgan Myers*

My research background is on marine plankton responses to climate change stressors, specifically in San Francisco estuaries and New Zealand waters. I 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. I completed my Doctorate in marine zooplankton ecology at the University of Otago in New Zealand and then joined the Department of Genetics at the University of Georgia as a Lecturer in August 2021. Currently, I teach introductory biology for non-majors at UGA and work to help 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. Brent Shuman*

After being admitted to Winthrop University (Rock Hill, SC) without a major and changing my career trajectories three times, I discovered my love for research and teaching. After college I was accepted into UGA's Integrated Life Sciences program through which I earned my PhD in fungal genetics. My experiences as a graduate teaching assistant confirmed to me that I wanted to teach full-time, and as I was finishing my PhD, I applied for my current job as a lecturer. I teach introductory genetics and honors classes, and care deeply about developing the learning and teaching skills of the students with whom I get to work.

*Dr. Kaixiong Ye*

I am an associate professor at the Department of Genetics and the Institute of Bioinformatics. My research lab works on Nutritional Genetics, basically gene-diet interactions in human evolution and human health. I received my undergraduate training in Biology. At that time, I was very interested in the theory of evolution and the diversity of life. Following this interest, I started undergraduate research in a plant ecological evolution lab. Later, I participated in a summer school on the topic of molecular evolution and population genetics, which basically uses DNA to study evolution. I was fascinated by this research direction, so I changed to a lab working on human population genetics. After college, I worked in a biotech company, where I learned Bioinformatics. Later, I got an opportunity to pursue a PhD's degree in an evolutionary lab, but in a Nutrition graduate program. Since then, my research has integrated genetics, evolution, and nutrition. Our evolutionary history shaped our genetic backgrounds, which partly explain our individual differences in dietary preference and metabolism. My research aims to develop genome-informed precision nutrition to avoid chronic diseases.