Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics

The faculty of the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics perform research in a broad spectrum of biomedically relevant areas, including DNA and RNA structure and enzymology; protein folding, misfolding and aggregation; cellular mechanics; membrane receptor-mediated signaling; and hemostasis, thrombosis and vascular biology. The department offers training opportunities at the crossroads of biochemistry, biophysics, systems biology, computational science and pharmacological sciences.

The department's approaches to research focus on understanding the energetics, structure and mechanisms of biological processes. Investigators employ a variety of experimental methods (e.g., X-ray crystallography, nuclear magnetic resonance, optical spectroscopy, thermodynamics, rapid kinetics) in combination with computational approaches to unravel the molecular underpinnings of processes of relevance to health and disease. Novel single-molecule methods are providing new insight into the molecular details of enzyme mechanisms and macromolecule dynamics. The high-throughput screening of chemical libraries and the use of synthetic medicinal chemistry to develop small-molecule probes of biological systems provide new avenues for translational research and the development of experimental therapeutics.

The faculty in the department organize and teach basic science courses in the medical school curriculum, including Molecular Foundations of Medicine (Biochem 502). In the Graduate School curriculum, the faculty teach courses in Nucleic Acids & Protein Biosynthesis (Biol 548), Chemistry and Physics of Biomolecules (Biol 5357), and Macromolecular Interactions (Biol 5312). The overarching theme of these courses is to understand the principles of the molecular interactions that underlie the biological process of health and disease. Students in the School of Medicine and the Graduate School are eligible for these courses and may elect to pursue biomedical research under the direction of our faculty. A full listing of advanced course topics (https://biochem.wustl.edu/studentinfo/courses) can be found on our website.

Website: http://biochem.wustl.edu

Degrees & Requirements

More information about Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics degrees and requirements (http://bulletin.wustl.edu/grad/gsas/dbbs) can be found in the Graduate School Bulletin.

Research

M15 Biochem 900
Cross-listed with L41 Biol 590

Wayne M. Barnes, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-3351

We are developing a new way to sequence DNA under the "$1000 Genome Project." This project involves the addition of experimental fluorescent probes to DNA polymerase, with the goal of watching a single molecule flicker as it copies DNA. Student involvement may be at the level of making mutations and purifying mutant enzymes, testing ways to prepare the templates, or testing observations of working molecules.

T7 RNA polymerase is used to express our proteins, and we have double and triple mutants of it that improve the expression of problematic proteins. However, we only have a theory as to how they work better: we think they are slower and that slower is better. Student involvement may be in constructing comparative strains that use the enzyme and measuring the speed somehow, in vivo and in vitro.

Greg Bowman, PhD
South Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-7433

The focus of our lab is on systems biophysics. We combine simulation and experiment to understand the conformational changes proteins undergo and how these changes allow information to flow, both within single proteins and within networks of interacting proteins. There are two major application areas: (1) understanding hidden allosteric sites and the opportunities they present for drug design; and (2) understanding the molecular mechanisms of vision, especially the origins of inherited forms of blindness. To facilitate these applications, we also develop enhanced sampling algorithms for simulating long timescale dynamics of proteins and nucleic acids.

Peter M.J. Burgers, PhD
South Building, 1st Floor
Phone: 314-362-3872

Molecular biology of DNA replication; DNA damage response mechanisms; DNA repair in eukaryotes.

John Cooper, MD, PhD
South Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-0287

Molecular mechanisms of cell motility and cytoskeleton assembly.
Carl Frieden, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-3344

Investigation of apolipoproteins E as they relate to Alzheimer’s disease; mechanisms of protein aggregation; fibril formation and bacterial infections.

Eric A. Galburt, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-5201

Use of single-molecule biophysical techniques such as magnetic and optical trapping to study DNA transcription.

Roberto Galletto, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-4368

Mechanistic studies of DNA motor proteins and telomere binding proteins; single-molecule approaches.

Michael Greenberg, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-8670

Our lab is focused on cytoskeletal molecular motors in health and disease. We are currently studying the effects of mutations that cause heart disease.

Kathleen Hall, PhD
North Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-4196

RNA structure/function; RNA protein interactions; NMR spectroscopy.

Jim Janetka, PhD
Cancer Research Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-0509

Rational structure-based ligand design; synthesis of chemical tools useful for studying cancer and infectious disease.

Andrzej Krezel, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-8482

Structural biology of transcriptional regulation in the gastric pathogen Helicobacter pylori.

Weikai Li, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-8687

Membrane protein crystallography and functional studies.

Timothy M. Lohman, PhD
North Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-362-4393

Biophysical chemistry of proteins, nucleic acids and their mechanism of interaction; mechanisms of DNA unwinding and translocation by helicases and SSB proteins.

Garland R. Marshall, PhD
Center for Chemical Genomics
Cancer Research Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-935-7911

Our lab is targeting epigenetic control in pathology. A major concern regarding the use of therapeutics targeting the epigenetic control of gene expression is undesirable side effects, particularly those associated with fetal development. Despite the intense interest in targeting histone deacetylases (HDACs; eleven zinc-based enzymes expressed in humans) for multiple therapeutic applications and the fact that two non-specific HDACIs are already FDA-approved in oncology, isoform-specific HDACIs are not available. Professor Marshall and his collaborators in Rome have a comprehensive program to develop isoform-specific inhibitors for applications for reversing HIV latency with Professor Lee Ratner for the treatment of HIV; with Dr. Michael D. Onkin for the treatment of uveal melanoma; and for potential antiparasitics with Professors Dan Goldberg, Eva Istvan, Makedonka Mitreva and Audrey Odom. Two uniquely specific inhibitors of HDAC6 have already been discovered in the Marshall lab.

The research involves bioinformatics to identify homologs of HDACs in parasites, molecular modeling to generate homology models of target proteins, virtual screening to identify potential inhibitors, and bioassays to quantitate efficacy. Projects can be customized to fit individual preferences.

Linda Pike, PhD
South Building, 1st Floor
Phone: 314-362-9502

Our focus is on the mechanisms of EGF and ErbB receptor function. We use a combination of radioligand binding and molecular imaging via luciferase fragment complementation to study the interactions of ErbB family receptors. The goal is to gain insight into structure/function relationships within these receptors to better understand how to target them therapeutically.

Andrea Soranno, PhD
South Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-273-1632
Our main research interests are the physical principles and molecular mechanisms determining biomolecular function.

Rui Zhang, PhD
McDonnell Sciences Building, 2nd Floor
Phone: 314-273-1663

We combine single-molecule fluorescence spectroscopy and concepts from polymer physics to investigate intrinsically disordered proteins. We also develop innovative methods to study macromolecular conformations and dynamics within cells and in membraneless organelles.

Faculty

Department Chair
John A. Cooper, MD, PhD

Visit our website for more information about our faculty (http://biochem.wustl.edu/faculty) and their appointments.

B

Jacques Ulrich Baenziger, MD, PHD
Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
MD Washington Univ in St. Louis 1975
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 1975
BA New College of Florida 1969

Wayne Morris Barnes, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BA University of CA Riverside 1969
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1974

Gregory R. Bowman, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Chemistry
BS Cornell University 2006
PHD Stanford University 2010

Peter M Burgers, PHD, MS
Marvin A. Brennecke Professor of Biological Chemistry (primary appointment)
PHD Leiden University 1977
BS Leiden University 1969
MS Leiden University 1972

C

John A Cooper, PHD, MD
Head of the Department of Biochemistry
Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics
Professor of Cell Biology and Physiology
BS Brown University 1977
PHD Johns Hopkins University 1983

MD Johns Hopkins University 1982

Sudha Mahajan Cowsik, MS, PHD
Instructor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
MS Panjab University 1970
BS Panjab University 1969
PHD Institute of Medical Science 1976

D

Roland Ellwood Dolle, MS, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
MS State University of New York 1980
BS Arizona State University 1978
PHD University of Pennsylvania 1984

E

Elliot L Elson, PHD
Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BA Harvard University 1959
PHD Stanford University 1966

F

Carl Frieden, PHD
Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BA Carleton College 1951
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1955

G

Eric A Galburt, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Washington 2002

Roberto Galletto, MS, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
MS University of Genova 1996
PHD University of Texas Galveston 2002

Michael Jonathan Greenberg, PHD
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BS Brandeis University 2004
PHD Boston University 2010

H

Kathleen Hall, PHD
Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD University of CA Berkeley 1985
BS University of Minnesota 1974
I
Maxenia Garcia Ilagan, PHD
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
Assistant Professor of Developmental Biology
PHD University of Missouri 2000
BS School Not Listed 1992

J
James W Janetka, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BS University of Illinois 1990
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1996

K
Michael S Kinch, PHD
Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
Professor of Radiation Oncology
BS Ohio State University 1989
PHD Duke University 1993
Alexander Kozlov, PHD, MS
Instructor in Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD Moscow State University 1994
MS Moscow State University 1983
Andrzej Modest Krezel, MS, PHD
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (_pending Executive Faculty Approval) (primary appointment)
MS University of Warsaw 1986
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1991

L
Weikai Li, PHD, MS
Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD Yale University 2004
MS University of Tenn Chattanooga 1998
BS East China Univ of Sci & Tech 1993
Timothy M Lohman, PHD
Brennecke Professor of Biophysics in Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BA Cornell University 1973
PHD Univ of Wisconsin Madison 1977

M
Garland R Marshall, PHD
Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
Professor of Biomedical Engineering
BS California Institute Technolo 1962

PHD Rockefeller University 1966
Joseph B Monahan, PHD
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BS State Univ of NY Buffalo 1977
PHD Univ South Carolina Columbia 1983

Michael D Onken, PHD
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BA Washington Univ in St. Louis 1990
PHD Washington Univ in St. Louis 2000

Linda J Pike, PHD
Alumni Endowed Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD Duke University 1980
BS University of Delaware 1975

Janice Lee Robertson, PHD
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
BS University of Toronto 2002
PHD Cornell University 2009

Andrea Soranno, PHD, MS
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Milan 2008
MS University of Milan 2005

Gabriel Waksman, PHD, MS
Adjunct Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD School Not Listed 1982
BS School Not Listed 1979
MS School Not Listed 1980

Katherine Anne Henzler Wildman, PHD
Adjunct Associate Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD University of Michigan 2003
BS Cornell University 1998

Rui Zhang, PHD
Assistant Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics (primary appointment)
PHD Baylor University 2010
BS Nanjing Medical University 2005

Courses

The Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biophysics also offers courses through the Graduate School. For a full listing of courses offered, please visit the university online course catalog (https://courses.wustl.edu/CourseInfo.aspx?sch=L&dept=L41&crslvl=5-9).


M15 Biochem 502 Molecular Foundations of Medicine
This course is designed primarily for medical students and will cover fundamental aspects of biochemistry and cell biology. The course begins with a treatment of protein structure, the function of proteins in the cytoskeleton, and cell motility. The principles of enzyme kinetics and regulation are then discussed, and basic pathways for the synthesis and metabolism of carbohydrates and lipids are introduced. This leads in to a discussion of membrane structure and the function of cellular organelles in biological processes, including energy production, protein degradation, and protein trafficking. Small-group case study sections serve to link the basic science to the clinic. 
Credit 46.5 units.

M15 Biochem 5068 Fundamentals of Molecular Cell Biology
This is a core course for incoming graduate students in Cell and Molecular Biology programs to learn about research and experimental strategies used to dissect molecular mechanisms that underlie cell structure and function, including techniques of protein biochemistry. Enrolling students should have backgrounds in cell biology and biochemistry, such as courses comparable to L41 Biol 334 and L41 Biol 4501. The format is two lectures and one small group discussion section per week. Discussion section focuses on original research articles. Same as M04 5068 and Arts & Sciences L41 Biol 5068.
Credit 47 units.