July 30, 2020

Dear BB Community,

It gives me great pleasure to announce that from among our very talented class of first year students, Brittany Lasher has been selected as the 2020-21 Christopher and Catherine Mathews Graduate Fellow. According to criteria developed by the Biochemistry and Biophysics faculty, this Fellowship is awarded each summer to a student entering the second year of the Ph.D. program, with the award being based upon academic merit, teaching acumen and research potential. In her first year here, Brittany excelled in all these criteria.

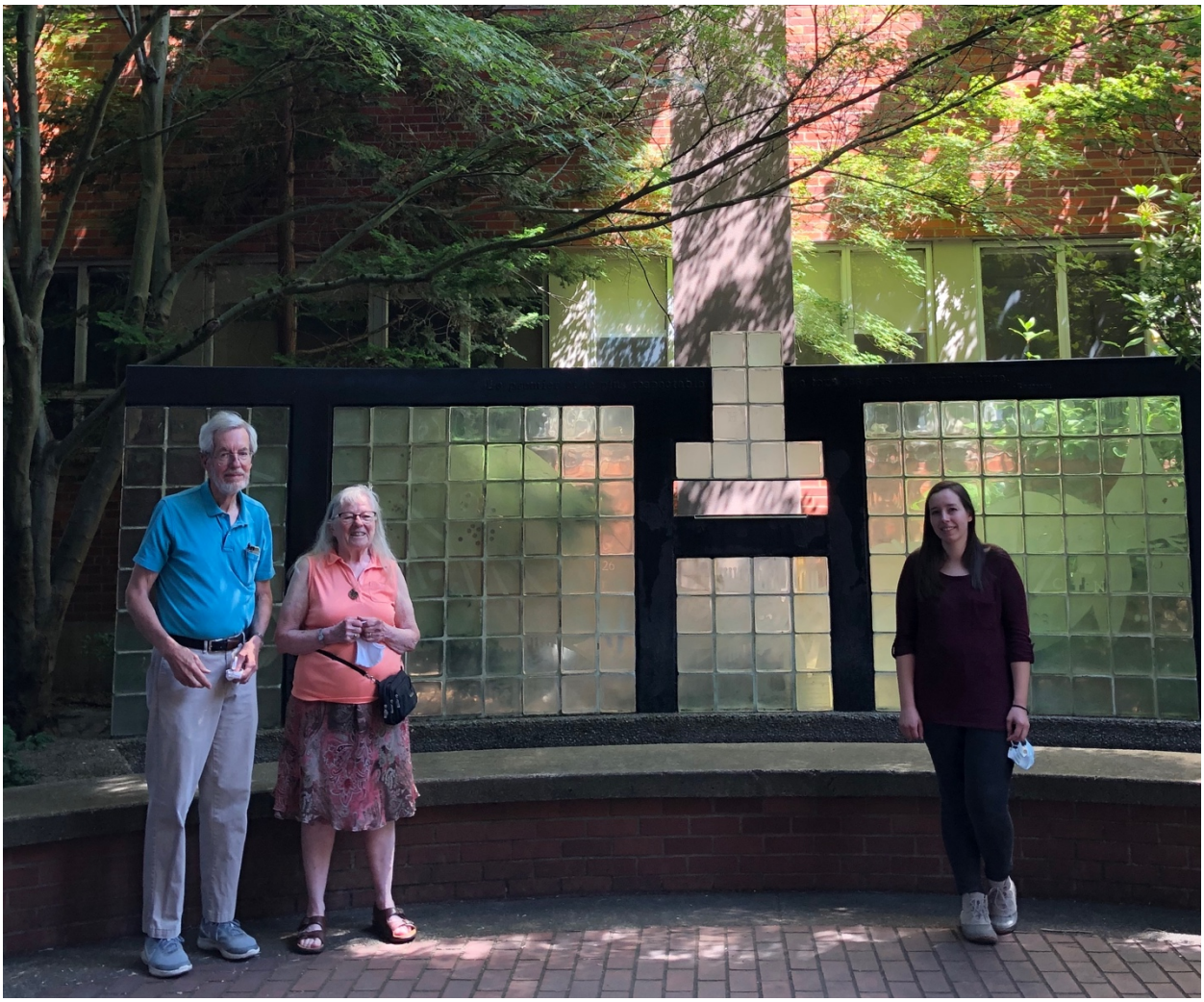
This endowed fellowship was established in 2015 through the generosity of Chris and Kate Mathews with the purpose of helping the BB doctoral program recruit and retain top notch students. Their gift has been leveraged through the Provost Graduate Fellowship Match Program which is a partnership of the OSU Foundation, the Biochemistry & Biophysics department and the OSU Graduate School. Chris is now an Emeritus Distinguished Professor in the department who has had huge positive impacts on the department and program through his leadership as Chair from 1978-2002, his leading research in the area of nucleotide metabolism, his co-authoring of well-regarded biochemistry texts, and his continued activity as a colleague and mentor.

This year's awardee, Brittany Lasher, grew up in the Pacific Northwest, obtaining her bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Washington. There, she developed an interest in biological processes, working with MD simulations, focusing on protein-surface interactions. To further her knowledge about biological systems, she pursued her master's degree in Biomolecular Engineering at Johns Hopkins University. Working with Professor Jeffrey Gray for her thesis, she studied the accurate prediction of helical features within transmembrane proteins, generating a structural library for use in protein prediction and refinement.

After spending two years on the East Coast at Johns Hopkins, she was excited to move back to the PNW to pursue her PhD at Oregon State University in the Biochemistry and Biophysics department. Within her first year, she has rotated with Professors Elisar Barbar, David Hendrix and Afua Nyarko. In this time, she has had the opportunity to work on different projects, from protein purification and thermodynamics measurements of protein interactions to development of computational models for fitting complex experimental ITC data for multivalent systems, to detecting human gene rhythmicity and associated changes with age. Joining David Hendrix's lab this summer, she has continued her work on gene rhythmicity, building network models for prediction of time that corresponds to a gene expression sample. Labeling these samples will enable the use of expression datasets in which time-of-day is absent, and ultimately uncover gene-regulatory mechanisms that cause age-related alterations of the circadian system.

Please join me in congratulating Brittany on this well-deserved honor, and also in again thanking Chris and Kate for their highly impactful support of our program.

Elisar Barbar
Professor and Dept. Head



Chris and Kate congratulated Brittany in person, pictured here with masks and 6 ft apart on July 28th, 2020.