



THE GRADUATE STUDENT PORTFOLIO REVIEW SESSION

In our effort to enhance our trainees' communications skills, they are requested to have a career portfolio, which is submitted twice a year. This helps them organize, track and store professional and personal documents relevant to their graduate studies and career and assist with RISE annual evaluations and discussions of their progress with their research mentors.

Our Program Coordinator, Jean M. Schmidt, gave the annual session on portfolio on August 12th, 2022. After the presentation, the students were divided into two groups to receive feedback and tips from their senior peers on how to compile and organize their portfolio. They also shared suggestions given by their mentors to improve this.

A special thanks to our former RISE trainees, Alexandra Aquino & Elliot Rodríguez, for joining us and sharing useful information with their peers.

We received very positive feedback from the students who found the session very informative!



Welcome to the New Academic Year 2022-2023

Welcome to the start of the new academic year! We hope you share our enthusiasm for the year ahead. Under our new grant, our RISE Program (now G-RISE Program) is entering the 15th year of support to selected students pursuing a PhD in Biomedical Sciences at Ponce Health Sciences University. We are very pleased with what we have accomplished. Our trainees for the current year are: (L-R) Yobet Pérez, Yesenia Rivera, Joshua Pérez, Paola Flores, Yadiel Rivera, Jonathan López, Nashaly Irizarry, Luinet Meléndez, Joel Orenge, Nelly Arroyo and (not pictured) Sheila Valle and Elvin Hernández. The students attended a RISE orientation session on August 5 to review RISE requirements and assign mentoring teams. We encourage them to remain focused on their classes and research, in order to comply with the RISE Program criteria, and achieve their goals. We look forward to a happy and productive year!

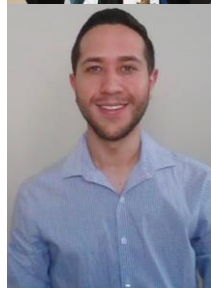


WELCOME TO OUR NEW TRAINEES!

The beginning of a new academic year brings new students to the PhD and RISE Programs! We wish them much success in this new journey and we thank current and new student (peer) mentors for their participation and willingness to help a fellow graduate in his/her personal and professional development. Join us in welcoming our new trainees, Luinet Meléndez & Joel Orenge!



Luinet Meléndez is originally from Ponce, PR. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology with a minor in Neuroscience from Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts. As an undergraduate, she had the opportunity to establish and lead research in the area of ovarian cancer, with the objective to develop a diagnostic test for ovarian cancer in its early stages of development. She stood out as an athlete, being part of the institution's volleyball team, as well as a leader in different student organizations. Luinet decided to continue her studies and professional career in the field of biomedical research because she is passionate about acquiring knowledge in this area and sharing it. Her hobbies include playing volleyball, watch kdramas, walking her puppy, journal writing and thrift shopping.



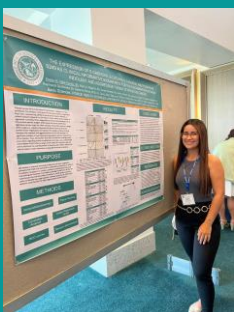
Joel Orenge is originally from Peñuelas PR. He holds a bachelor's degree in Biomedical Sciences from the University of Puerto Rico, in Ponce and a master's degree in Biotechnology from the Pontifical Catholic University of PR, in Ponce. As an undergraduate, he was awarded the Amgen Bio talents training award "Training in Biotechnology Manufacturing & Management", where he had hands-on experience of several laboratory techniques. He also presented at the 41st Senior Technical Meeting Biomaterials in Applied Chemistry by ACS to demonstrate how the Chemistry and Physics Student Association from UPRP promotes professional development through community service. As a graduate student, he collaborated on a research project which tested mangiferin extract to determine its inhibitory effect on the growth of E. coli and Pseudomonas. After graduating, he worked as a Science Laboratory Technician at the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, in Ponce. His hobbies include listening to music and reading.



2022 FLASCO Puerto Rico Oncology Symposium

Congratulations to our 4th year RISE trainee, Sheila Valle, who presented her poster titled "The Expression of E-Cadherin, B-Catenin, N-Cadherin, and Phospho-RB S249 as Clinical Informative Biomarkers for the Discrimination Between Indolent and Aggressive Forms of Prostate Cancer" at the 2022 FLASCO Puerto Rico Oncology Symposium, that took place August 5-6, 2022, at the San Juan Marriott Resort.

Great job, Sheila!



DR. GARCÍA RINALDI FOUNDATION SUMMER PROGRAM 2022

Dr. García Rinaldi Foundation is a non-profit organization established in 1993. It has stood out for maintaining an activity of service to the Puerto Rican community through financial aid programs for patients, educational programs, prevention programs, carrying out and promoting research with the purpose of contributing to the reduction of death from cardiovascular disease in Puerto Rico and contributing to quality of life. It promotes education to encourage high school and undergraduate students to pursue a health career.

Since mentoring is such an important component of our G-RISE Program, we want to recognize our 2nd year RISE trainee, Yadiel Rivera, as well as our former RISE trainees, Alexandra Aquino and Elliott Rodríguez, who served as mentors to a group of students at the Foundation's Summer Program 2022 (Research Component), from May 27-August 6, 2022. The participants were able to do a written work and presentation about Yadiel's research project titled "Effect of Chronic Stress on the Ovarian Cancer Tumor Microenvironment", as well as Alexandra's project titled "Chronic stress and its effects on ovarian cancer T cells" and Elliott's project titled "HIV-1 Mechanisms of Replication and Inhibition".

Great job everyone!



(L-R) Itzamar Ferreras, Gabriela Martínez, José Moure, Yadiel A. Rivera (RISE trainee), María V. González, Lia Bermúdez & María Alejandra Jove.



Christian Otero, Carelys Berríos, Alexandra Aquino, Alondra Rodríguez & Jeidy Marie Arroyo.



César Carreras, Isaias Pica, Roberto Sosa, Ariana González, Auriani Gómez, Elliott Rodríguez.

POSTDOC SERIES FORUM

By: Paola N. Flores (2nd year RISE trainee)

On August 26, 2022, Dr. James Porter (G-RISE Program Associate Director) moderated the PD session of the Postdoc Series Forum. Former RISE trainees, Dr. Omar Soler and Dr. Siomara Hernández, talked about their experience as postdoctoral fellows. Our current G-RISE trainees had the opportunity to hear about postdoctoral life, the difficulties, the success, the dos and don'ts, and the importance of communication and having a support network. Some of the advice included: look for postdoc opportunities as soon as possible, network with different students and mentors, develop soft skills, and publish scientific articles. Finally, Drs. Soler and Hernández encouraged students to persevere and never give up on proposed goals, to know the value you have as a person and always give your best.



Dr. Omar Soler & Dr. Siomara Hernández



RISE trainees, faculty & staff



MEET DR. YISEL RIVERA

(Former RISE trainee)



Senior Scientist, ARC Platform

“After three years of working as a Scientist I and II in a Cell therapy department for the development of CAR-T cells to treat solid tumors, I decided to explore more opportunities in the development of cancer therapy. That is why I accepted the new challenges as part of a new position as a Senior Scientist in another company. I am part of a platform called Agonist Redirected Checkpoint (ARC platform). This platform was founded with the idea of developing therapeutic candidates that consolidate checkpoint blockade and Tumor Necrosis Factor Receptor Superfamily (TNFRSF) agonism into single therapeutics for the treatment of cancer and autoimmune disease. This therapy has shown superior tumor rejection when compared to traditional antibody therapeutics. I am very excited to see what the future holds as part of the new role in my professional career. If I can be of any help to the current PHSU G-RISE Program trainees, please contact me at”:

yisel_aixa@yahoo.com

Practical Approach to Molecular Biology Course 2022

By: Ivelisse Rivera, MS



During August, the RISE Lab offers the research course: A Practical Approach to Molecular Biology. This is a 2-credit course that provides first-year graduate students with specific technical skills. Among the skills students learn through the month are how to make clear written laboratory reports, reading and interpreting relevant scientific papers, and predicting experimental outcomes. Students performed multiple techniques in a laboratory setting while gaining an understanding of the theories behind those techniques—including technical limitations. In this way this research course furthers the goals of the G-RISE program and complements the existing Ph.D. curriculum assisting the trainees with faster adaptation to the research labs.

TRAINEE PUBLICATIONS

Lubriel Sambolín-Escobales, Adariana Feliciano-Quiñones, Lizmarie Tirado-Castro, Cristina Suárez, Dariangelly Pacheco-Cruz, **Nashaly Irizarry-Méndez**, Wilfred Fonseca-Ferrer, Anixa Hernández-López, María Colón-Romero and James T. Porter. Infusion of C20:0 ceramide into ventral hippocampus triggers anhedonia-like behavior in female and male rats. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 24 August 2022 Sec. Motivation and Reward <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2022.899627>

STUDENT UPDATES!

Fellowship Awarded



We are very happy to announce that Jessalyn Pla Tenorio (former RISE trainee) was granted the NIH-NIDA F31 NRSA Fellowship Award (F31DA054814) under the mentorship of Dr. Richard Noel and Dr. Marian Sepulveda. The F31 fellowship is a prestigious award granted by NIH to support promising doctoral candidates who will perform dissertation research and training for a PhD degree in a scientific health-related field relevant to the mission of the NIH. Jessalyn's project titled "Interaction of HIV-1 Nef and glutamate homeostasis in the nucleus accumbens during cocaine addiction", seeks to elucidate the role of HIV-1 viral protein Nef in the comorbidity of HIV and cocaine through the glutamatergic circuitry in the brain and on drug seeking-behavior. Her findings may result in a deeper understanding of the synergistic effects of HIV infection and cocaine use and may help identify a novel therapeutic target. Jessalyn was accepted into the PhD Program in Biomedical Sciences at our institution and as a RISE trainee in 2018 and we look forward to her continued success. So far, Jessalyn has a published manuscript as second author, many poster and oral presentations of her work, and a submitted review article as a first author. Congratulations, Jessalyn!



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