

Thomas Jefferson University

Speed Networking Event

Jefferson College of Life Sciences

**Hosted by the Graduate Student Association (GSA), Jefferson
Postdoctoral Association (JPA), Business and Biotechnology Group
(BizBio), and the JCLS Office of Postdoctoral Affairs**

May 1, 2025

Scientist – Pharma

Ashlyn Bassiri, PhD

Senior Vice President, Immunology and Bioanalysis

Kriya Therapeutics

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Dr. Ashlyn Bassiri, PhD, is a highly accomplished Immunologist with over 20 years of experience with increasing responsibility in drug discovery, target validation, nonclinical toxicology, and clinical safety or pharmacovigilance for small molecules, large molecules, and gene therapy portfolios across both large pharma and small biotech companies. Her career has progressed along the process of drug discovery and development with roles in target validation and early development at Centocor/Johnson & Johnson, and immune safety in both the toxicology and clinical development groups at GlaxoSmithKline.

She then spent 2 years at Spark Therapeutics where she supported the development and approval of LUXTURNA and progressed hemophilia gene therapies in clinical development. Most recently, she spent 4 years at Kriya Therapeutics, where she was Senior Vice President of Immunology, progressing a diverse portfolio of gene therapy candidates into the clinic. She is about to embark on a new Leadership role at Bridgebio, returning to her passion for clinical safety / pharmacovigilance.

Scientist – Contract Research Organization

Atis Chakrabarti, PhD

Director, Purification and Chiral Separation

Wilmington PharmaTech Company LLC

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Dr. Atis Chakrabarti, PhD, currently leads the purification and chiral separation business at Wilmington PharmaTech (WPT), where he oversees business development, project management, and strategic planning. He leads a dynamic team, driving innovation in customized chromatography solutions for pharmaceutical development. He collaborates closely with company management to identify new opportunities, develop operational procedures, and ensure adherence to Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) and High Potent API (APAPI) standards. His role also involves internal and external audits, recruitment, training, and task delegation.

Additionally, he manages customer communications, including Request for Proposals (RFPs) and technical packages.

With over 20 years of experience in multinational pharmaceutical companies, he specializes in analytical and process chromatography. He has extensive expertise in a wide range of liquid chromatography techniques, including SEC, AEX, RPC, HILIC, and chiral separations. Throughout his career, he has purified and analyzed biomolecules such as peptides, monoclonal antibodies, vaccines, and ADCs. His work has contributed to several peer-reviewed publications and presentations at prestigious global industry events.

Scientist – Pharma

Brian Tomkowicz, PhD

Vice President, Head of R&D and Virology Fellow

SK pharmteco

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Dr. Brian Tomkowicz, PhD, is currently a VP leading internal vector engineering efforts for Adeno-Associated Virus, Lentivirus, and Adenovirus, as well as manufacturability assessment / platform development to support commercial manufacturing. Brian has over 15 years of biotech/pharma experience and worked for close to a decade at Janssen Pharmaceuticals where he established Janssen’s internal gene therapy program and viral production capabilities (LV and AAV). He was a member of Janssen’s acquisition team that led to the purchase of 4 clinical stage (Ph1/Ph2) ocular disease gene therapy programs. Brian has dozens of peer-reviewed publications, many published in high-impact journals, along with multiple issued patents pertaining to novel inventions in antibody and gene therapy areas. He has a BS in Microbiology from The Pennsylvania State University and a PhD in Molecular Virology from Thomas Jefferson University.

Academic – Teaching

Catherine Yankowski, PhD

Assistant Professor

Thomas Jefferson University, East Falls



Dr. Catherine Yankowski, PhD, is an Assistant Professor of Biology at Thomas Jefferson University – East Falls, where she currently teaches genetics. She completed her PhD in Immunology & Microbial Pathogenesis from Jefferson in 2023, focusing her research on the immune response to recombinant rabies virus-vectored vaccines against emerging viruses. Originally from northeast Pennsylvania, she completed her undergraduate studies at the University of Scranton. Her passion for teaching and mentoring students inspired her career goal of working at a primarily undergraduate institution, and she is thrilled to have started full-time teaching in the Fall of 2024.

Consulting

Erika Deppenschmidt, PhD

Life Science Strategy Consultant

EY-Parthenon

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Dr. Erika Deppenschmidt, PhD, is a Fishtown-born Philadelphian with the heart of the city always in her mind. Erika became interested in science and research from a very young age, when she had to communicate to kindergarten classmates about her hair loss autoimmune disease, Alopecia. Erika has strived to make an impact on society whether it be at the bench during her academic research or serving as a life science strategy consultant. She earned her Ph.D. from Stony Brook University, in August 2022, where her dissertation focused on muscle stem cells and their genetic lineage / protein expression. Erika started at EY-Parthenon in September

2022 and has served clients across the life science ecosystem supporting transformational change, operating model design, go to market strategies, and clinical development / research. Outside of work, she enjoys traveling, live music, spending time with friends and family, and hanging out with her wife and cats.

Non-Profit

Garima Singh, PhD

Senior Scientific Program Manager

American Association for Cancer Research

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Dr. Garima Singh, PhD, is a Senior Scientific Program Manager at the American Association for Cancer Research (AACR), where she oversees a portfolio of oncology grant programs aimed at advancing cancer research and treatment. She plays a key role in developing funding opportunities, managing peer review processes, and supporting grantees to drive impactful scientific progress. Prior to joining AACR, Dr. Singh served as a Research Assistant Professor at Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, where she conducted investigations into the epigenetic mechanisms underlying lead neurotoxicity. Her interest in epigenetics was shaped during her

PhD in Molecular and Human Genetics at the National Institute of Immunology, India, and further developed through postdoctoral research at the National Cancer Institute (NCI), Bethesda, and Thomas Jefferson University.

Dr. Singh is passionate about supporting early-career researchers and fostering a strong scientific community. Beyond her professional commitments, she enjoys spending time with her two young children, who are at the center of her world.

Scientist – Project Manager

Kasturi Banerjee, PhD

Senior Clinical Scientist

CSL

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Dr. Kasturi Banerjee, PhD, is a translational immunologist currently working as a Senior Clinical Scientist in the Immunology Department at CSL Behring. In her current role, she is involved in designing and developing clinical trials for rare diseases caused by immune system dysregulation.

She earned her B.S.-M.S. degree from IISER Mohali, India, and her PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology from the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) in Omaha, USA. She completed her postdoctoral training at Stony Brook University in New York.

Her research has spanned immunotherapy, cancer, infectious diseases, and vaccine development.

Dr. Banerjee has received several honors, including the IDSA IDWeek Trainee Travel Fellowship (2019) and the AAISCR Young Investigator Award (2017). She currently serves as a reviewer on the IDSA G.E.R.M. Committee.

A passionate advocate for science, Dr. Banerjee actively engages in public discourse around scientific research and the scientific community. She has been featured as a guest speaker on podcasts, in published interviews, and across various webinars.

Commercial Strategy

Lebaron Agostini, PhD

Commercial Partnerships Director, Precision Oncology

Exact Sciences

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Dr. Lebaron C. Agostini, PhD, is currently the Commercial Partnerships Director, Precision Oncology for Exact Sciences where he leads cross-functional teams in all phases of the account strategy planning process, which included leading internal and external projects, and external engagement at the D and C suite level at strategic accounts. Previously, Dr. Agostini was the Senior Manager of Precision Oncology Programs at Caris Life Sciences. His role involved building relationships and providing strategic guidance to cancer centers to optimize their precision oncology programs by leveraging Caris Life Sciences' molecular profiling technologies. He also served as an oncology SME within his core team and managed projects in a matrix environment to improve the efficiency of precision oncology workflows. Before joining Caris Life Sciences, Dr. Agostini was a Life Science Analyst for Axiom Healthcare Strategies, a boutique biopharma life sciences strategy consulting firm. Dr. Agostini received his PhD in Genetics, Genomics, and Cancer Biology from Thomas Jefferson University. His research experiences were focused on DNA damage repair mechanisms, synthetic lethality, replication stress, and developing synergistic drug combinations in gastrointestinal tumor models (e.g., colon, pancreatic, gastric, etc.) He has publications in several AACR journals, including Cancer Research and Molecular Cancer Research.

Scientist – Biotech

Myettia Peck, MS

Research Scientist

WuXi Advanced Therapies

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Myettia Katherine Peck is a research scientist from Philadelphia, specializing in cell and gene therapies. With experience in biopharmaceutical process engineering, analytical development, and GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) manufacturing for commercial applications, she is driving advancements in healthcare. Myettia is also passionate about community outreach, public speaking, and sharing scientific knowledge with the public.

She collaborates with organizations such as the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL) and the University City Science Center, where she mentors emerging professionals and works to inspire the next generation of scientists to push the boundaries of biopharmaceutical research.

Scientist – Pharma

Ravi Iyer, PhD

Chief Scientific Officer

Script Biosciences

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Dr. Ravi R. Iyer, PhD, serves as Chief Scientific Officer of Script Biosciences, a Philadelphia-based genetic medicines company focused on developing treatments for neurological disorders. His career spans academia, large pharma, non-profit, and the biotech sectors. After earning his PhD in Biochemistry with Bob Wells at the Institute of Biosciences & Technology in Houston, Ravi trained with 2015 Nobel Laureate Paul Modrich at Duke University working on the mechanisms of DNA repair. Over the last 25 years, Ravi has not only made contributions to the fundamental biology of human disease, but has also built and led therapeutic programs in neurodegenerative disease and oncology. At Script, Ravi leads efforts to deploy a novel brain-targeted lipid nanoparticle technology to deliver RNA therapeutics to the central nervous system.

Medical Affairs

Rohan Keshwara, PhD

Senior Manager of Publications – Oncology, Medical Affairs

AbbVie

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Dr. Rohan Keshwara, PhD, is a Certified Medical Publications Professional with over 5 years of experience in medical communications. Prior to AbbVie, Rohan was a Senior Manager in Publications at Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS) where he led publication activities for Breyanzi, a CD19-targeted CAR-T cell therapy approved for the treatment of B-cell lymphomas. During his 2-year tenure at BMS, Rohan was responsible for developing publications supporting the launch of Breyanzi in relapsed/refractory follicular lymphoma. Prior to BMS, Rohan held positions as a medical writer at inScience Communications (Springer Nature) and Fishawack (now Avalere

Health) where he worked in clinical publications in metastatic breast cancer and kidney disease, as well as in Global Medical Affairs, developing scientific platforms, MSL training modules, and advisory board materials for an antibody-drug conjugate for multiple myeloma. Rohan earned his PhD in Immunology and Microbiology from Thomas Jefferson University in Philadelphia. His doctoral work included development of rabies virus-vectored vaccines against hemorrhagic fever viruses, including Ebola and Marburg viruses, and characterization of antibody-mediated mechanisms of protection. Prior to grad school, Rohan worked in R&D at a biotech company specializing in antibody epitope mapping of viral envelope proteins. He earned a B.S. in Biology from Brown University in 2009.

Clinical Research

Rohinton Tarapore, PhD

Senior Director, Clinical Development

Chimerix

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Dr. Rohinton Tarapore received his PhD in Molecular Toxicology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, followed by postdoctoral training at the University of Pennsylvania. While at Penn, he served as Co-Chair of the Biomedical Postdoctoral Council and Project Manager for the Penn Biotech Group, blending scientific expertise with strategic leadership early in his career.

In 2014, he joined Oncoceutics—a promising oncology-focused biotech startup—at its formative stage. Following the company’s acquisition by Chimerix in 2021, he now serves as Senior Director of Clinical Development. In this role, he acts as the Global Medical Lead for a multi-country Phase 3 glioma study (currently active in 15+ countries) and provide medical oversight for the U.S. Expanded Access Program for Dordaviprone.

He considers it a privilege to have been part of the lifecycle of a novel, potential oncology therapy—from IND filing to NDA submission—a journey that continues to inspire his commitment to advancing meaningful treatments for patients.

Technology Transfer/Venture Capital

Sharon Ross, MBA

Manager, Office of Technology Transfer, & Associate Director

Nemours Children's Health System & Angel Venture Fair

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Sharon Ross' career has focused on helping new innovations get to the marketplace through commercialization. Currently, Sharon is the Manager of Tech Transfer at Nemours Biomedical Research in Wilmington, DE. In this role, she assists researchers in patenting new inventions and licensing the rights to those inventions to commercial companies. Sharon was formerly with the University City Science Center (UCSC) in Philadelphia, where she provided researchers with promising innovations from Life Science institutions with regulatory, legal, and business support.

Prior to joining UCSC, Sharon was a Licensing Officer in the Tech Transfer Office of Columbia University, New York, where she managed a portfolio of over 35 marketable inventions from the School of Engineering and Applied Science. Sharon holds a BA from The Pennsylvania State University, and an MBA from Temple University.

Medical Affairs

Sudarshan Phani, PhD

Director, Global Oncology Marketing

Daiichi Sankyo

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Dr. Sudarshan Phani, PhD, has diverse experiences and passion for oncology. He currently serves as the Director of Global Oncology Marketing at Daiichi Sankyo, where he is preparing for the launch of the first indication of a drug being studied in small cell lung cancer, and also partners with R&D on building the clinical development program for the same drug. In his previous roles at Daiichi Sankyo, Sudarshan led the US medical affairs team for a drug being developed in non-small cell lung cancer and breast cancer. Prior to that, he was on the global medical team, and developed global medical strategies for NSCLC.

Before his tenure at Daiichi Sankyo, Sudarshan held senior positions at Chameleon Communications and Medical Knowledge Group, where he developed medical education campaigns and formulated messaging strategies for various oncology and immunology indications. He also has a solid foundation in scientific communication and strategy from his time at Flywheel Partners.

Sudarshan holds a PhD in Neuroscience from Thomas Jefferson University, a Post-Doctoral Fellowship from Columbia University Medical Center, and a B.S. in Neural Science from New York University.

Outside of work, Sudarshan is an avid cyclist who enjoys participating in long-distance cycling events and triathlons.

Scientist – Biotech

Will Stump, MS

Immunizations Research Associate II

Integral Molecular



Will Stump graduated from Gettysburg College with a B.S. in Biology in 2020 with three years of lab experience working in a lab that studied bacteriophage evolution. In 2022, he completed his M.S. in Microbiology and Immunology at Drexel University with a focus on malaria vaccine research. His time at Drexel culminated in a publication on testing a novel malaria vaccine formulation in mice. After graduate school, he took a job as a Research Assistant II in the Abraham Lab at Thomas Jefferson University offered to him following his thesis defense. During his time at Jefferson, he studied vaccines against filarial worms using a mouse model. In 2023, he jumped into industry and began working as a Research Associate II at Integral Molecular in University City. At Integral, he is a member of the Antibody Discovery team that is tasked with finding and developing antibodies to clinically relevant but difficult to work with membrane proteins.

Jefferson Center for Career Success

<https://www.jefferson.edu/life-at-jefferson/student-resources-services/academics-career-success/career-success-center.html>

Chris Miciek from the Center for Career Success is at the Speed Networking event to help you practice your informational interviewing techniques and check your CV/resume on the spot!

Chris Miciek, MA

Director, Jefferson Center for Career Success

Thomas Jefferson University

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In 2002 Chris began building the first 100% online career center in the US, pioneering online technology and social media to deliver career development advising and instruction. Since then he's held roles at three Philadelphia universities providing leadership in co-operative education, admissions for graduate STEM programs, and now leading Jefferson University's Center City based Center for Career Success serving students and alumni for all Jefferson health profession programs through faculty partnerships and career development content embedded in curricula.

Since that start in 2002 he's presented at state and regional Associations of Colleges & Employers as well as NACE on online career services and emerging technology, including creating a keynote panel at MWACE 2007 and leading a NACE President's Tech Summit at the 2009 annual conference. More recently he's co-authored a contribution to the NACE Case Study Guide on navigating mergers, authored another case study on creating online career centers, created and delivered numerous blogs, podcasts, and webinars on AI and Work for NACE and EACE. In 2022 he presented two iterations of Why Work at NACE22 and EACE22 as explorations of how we think and talk about work, and what that means for our conversations around automation and the future of work. Chris continues to stare at the horizon.