

2026 Microbiology and Immunology Departmental Retreat

"There are no bad data, only bad assays"

Friday, August 14, 2026 - 8:30 am – 6:30 pm

Hyatt Regency Coralville Hotel - 300 E. 9th Street, Coralville, IA

Oakdale Ballroom

Schedule of Events

Registration & Continental Breakfast

8:30 am – 9:00 am

Welcome & Opening Remarks

9:00 am – 9:15 am

Li Wu, PhD, Chair and DEO

Filiz Korkmaz, PhD - Retreat co-chair

Aimee Potter, PhD - Retreat co-chair

Trainee Talks (10-min. talk w/3 min Q&A)

Moderator: Sheila Gonzalez

9:15 am – 10:00 am

- Cole Andersen Potter Lab
- Pearl Chan, PhD Perlman Lab
- Mikaela Daum Gebhardt Lab

Coffee Break

10:00 am – 10:30 am

Faculty Talks (10-min. talk w/3 min Q&A)

Moderator: Filiz Korkmaz, PhD

10:30 am – 11:00 am

- Mary Wilson, MD, PhD
- Mary Weber, PhD

Poster Session I (even numbers)

Moderator: Aimee Potter, PhD

11:00 am – 12:00 pm

Lunch Break

12:00 pm – 1:00 pm

Trainee Talks (10-min. talk w/3 min Q&A)

Moderator: Geneva Bell

1:00 pm – 2:00 pm

- Angela Liu Sinn Lab
- Elizabeth Wagstaff Tan Lab
- Madison Bunch Johnson Lab
- Hinson Cheung, PhD Wu Lab

Coffee Break

2:00 pm – 2:30 pm

Poster Session II (odd numbers)

Moderator: Filiz Korkmaz, PhD

2:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Faculty Flash Talks (3-4 mins each)

Moderator: Aimee Potter, PhD

3:30 pm – 4:00 pm

- Mike Gebhardt, PhD
- Alex Kleinpeter, PhD
- Thomas Kehl-Fie, PhD
- Balaji Manicassamy, PhD
- Jessica Tucker, PhD
- Li Wu, PhD

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Maria Hadjifrangiskou (Dr. H),
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine

Moderator: Rosa Sava

4:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Talk: *Barriers and Gateways for uropathogen expansion in the host*

Reception and Poster Awards-South Terrace

Moderator: Filiz Korkmaz, PhD

5:00 pm – 6:30 pm

Keynote Speaker Biography

Maria Hadjifrangiskou, Ph.D.

Senior Assistant Dean
Professor, Pathology, Microbiology & Immunology
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine



Dr. Maria Hadjifrangiskou (Dr. H), is a native of the island of Cyprus in the Mediterranean. She has obtained her B.Sc. in Molecular Biology & Biotechnology from Penn State - Clarion, her PhD. in Microbiology & Molecular Genetics from the University of TX – Health Science Center & MD Anderson Cancer Center, Houston and has performed her post-doctoral training at Washington University School of Medicine in Saint Louis. She currently is Professor Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology and Professor of Urology at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. She additionally serves as Senior Assistant Dean for Biomedical Research Education and Training at the School of Medicine Basic Sciences at Vanderbilt.

Dr. H's research focuses on understanding how uropathogenic E. coli (UPEC), the leading cause of urinary tract infections (UTIs), senses and adapts to its environment and forms biofilms that promote infection and recurrence. By identifying key pathways involved in bacterial survival and persistence, we aim to develop new non-antibiotic strategies to prevent and treat UTIs. Dr. Hadjifrangiskou is one of the ASM distinguished lecturers for 2025-2027 and has won several mentoring awards from within and outside Vanderbilt.

Retreat 2026 Poster Presentations

1. Investigating the mechanisms regulating the stability of Capicua during severe respiratory viral infections

Swetha Ashokkumar, Graduate Student

Balaji Manicassamy, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

2. Efficient colonic colonization by *Campylobacter jejuni* requires the heme receptor ChuA

Binita Baral, Research Scientist

Jeremiah G. Johnson, MS, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

3. Glutamate metabolism as a critical governor of the anti-malarial immune response

Jonathon Bernardi, Graduate Student

Noah Butler, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

4. Identifying an Essential Interacting Partner of the Cell Division Protein Pbp1 in *Clostridioides difficile* Using an *In Silico* AlphaFold Pulldown Screen

Kevin Bollinger, Postdoctoral Scholar

Craig Ellermeier, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

5. SARS-CoV-2 ORF6 alters the temporal dynamics of the host antiviral response

Pearl Chan, Postdoctoral Scholar

Stanley Perlman, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

6. Regulation of HIV-1 transcription by the conserved cellular transcription repressor Capicua

Boyang Cheng, Graduate Student

Balaji Manicassamy, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

7. SAMHD1 Deficiency Attenuates SARS-CoV-2 Pathogenesis via Viral Clearance and Cell Death Regulation

Pak Hin Hinson Cheung, Research Scientist

Li Wu, PhD, Professor, Endowed Chair and Department Executive Officer, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

8. Measles virus cell-to-cell spread in airway epithelia requires intercellular nectin-4 homodimerization within adherens junctions

Stephanie Clark, Graduate Student

Patrick Sinn, PhD, Professor, Department of Pediatrics

9. Understanding EBOV GP tropism in the peritoneum: the unique role of large peritoneal macrophages

Paige Donovan, Postdoctoral Scholar

Wendy Maury, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

10. *zlnA* Blocks *Clostridioides difficile* Cell Division and is Induced by DNA Damage and Sporulation

Leonard Duncan, Research Scientist

David Weiss, PhD & Craig Ellermeier, PhD; Professors; Department of Microbiology & Immunology

11. The RNA kinase, Clp1, supports murine gammaherpesvirus infection

Sheila Gonzalez, Graduate Student

Jessica Tucker, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

12. Elucidating the Role of Transcriptional Repressor Capicua during JCPyV Infection

Ian Holtz-Hazeltine, Graduate Student

Sabrina Tan, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Internal Medicine

13. ISGylation during infection restricts Chlamydia trachomatis growth

Steven Huang, Graduate Student

Mary Weber, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

14. HSV-1 Induces Stable Associations Between the Golgi and Endosomes Within the Cytoplasmic Viral Assembly Compartment of Neuronal Cells

Dah Hyun Jung, Graduate Student

Richard Roller, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

15. Phosphate source utilization is dependent on PhoBR in *Acinetobacter baumannii*

Alex Kolas, Graduate Student

Michael Gebhardt, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

16. Utilization of Alternative Host Pathways for Sialic Acid Independent Entry by Influenza Virus

Maya Mason, Graduate Student

Balaji Manicassamy, PhD, Professor, Microbiology and Immunology

17. Investigating the role of the HIV-1 capsid C-terminus in particle infectivity and viral replication

Kaho Matsumoto, Postdoctoral Scholar

Alex Kleinpeter, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

18. Identifying Orientia tsutsugamushi type one secretion system effectors and their functions

Paige McCaslin, Graduate Student

Mary Weber, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

19. Investigating the role of RelA as a potential suppressor of Hfq essentiality in multidrug-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii*

Jasmine McKeel, Graduate Student

Michael Gebhardt, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

20. Elucidating the role of the C-terminus of the HIV-1 capsid protein on capsid-like particle assembly.

John-Mark Miller, Postdoctoral Scholar

Alex Kleinpeter, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

21. Effects of oxLDL/LOX-1 interaction on lung macrophage phenotype and response to pneumonia

Fernando William Moreira Santana, Graduate Student

Filiz Korkmaz, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

22. Brf1 dependent RNA polymerase III activity limits MHV68 replication by altering viral spread

Kyle Rapchak, Graduate Student

Jessica Tucker, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

23. The canonical elongasome complex is essential for cell morphogenesis in *Clostridioides difficile*

Juan Rivera-Rosado, Graduate Student

Craig Ellermeier, PhD and David Weiss, PhD; Professors, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

24. HIV-1 infection upregulates m6A reader protein YTHDC1 expression in CD4+ T cells

Daniel Sands, Graduate Student

Li Wu, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

25. Mapping CsrA-RNA interactome in *Acinetobacter baumannii* reveals regulation of amino acid utilization

Rosa Sava, Graduate Student

Mike Gebhardt, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

26. The mitochondrial citrate carrier CIC regulates Th1 differentiation and downstream humoral immune responses during *Plasmodium yoelii* infection

Nathan Schwartz, Graduate Student

Noah Butler, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

27. A Novel Regulatory Role for HSV-1 ICP22 in Nuclear Membrane Remodeling

Marla Shaffer, Graduate Student

Rich Roller, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

28. Characterization of an Enzymatic Pathway Required for Lipoteichoic Acid Synthesis in *Clostridioides difficile*.

Callie Stempa, Graduate Student

Craig Ellermeier, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

29. HIV-1 Hijacks HGF/c-MET Signaling to Promote Viral Entry and Replication in Primary CD4⁺ T Cells

Shraddha Tripathi, Postdoctoral Scholar

Li Wu, PhD, Chair and Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

30. Multiple clades of regulators contribute to bacterial phosphate homeostasis and *Staphylococcus aureus* pathogenesis

Caroline Vermilya, Graduate Student

Thomas Kehl-Fie, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology

31. First JC Polyomavirus Rhesus Macaque Model to Study Early Infection and Neurovirulence

Elizabeth Wagstaff, Graduate Student

Chen (Sabrina) Tan, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Internal Medicine

32. Four models of the CFTR R553X mutation corrected by an adenine base editor delivered with HDAd

Yuchu Wang, Graduate Student

Patrick Sinn, PhD, Professor, Professor of Pediatrics - Pulmonary Medicine

33. In vitro evolution of lenacapavir-resistant HIV-1 yields novel changes in the C-terminal domain and drug binding pocket of the capsid protein

Sydney Winecke, Graduate Student

Alex Kleinpeter, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Microbiology & Immunology