



# UROBIOME RESEARCH INTEREST GROUP

*Connecting urobiome-interested investigators  
and trainees to advance urobiome science*



## CAIRIBU Urobiome RIG KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE – DISCUSSION: 3/20/2026

**PARTICIPANTS:** Lisa Karstens, PhD (Oregon Health and Science University), Nicole De Nisco, PhD (UT Dallas), Michael Neugent, PhD (UT Dallas), Lenny Ackerman, MD, PhD (UC Los Angeles), Vanessa Hale, PhD, DVM (Ohio State University), Audra Crouch, PhD (Ohio State University), Keisha Harrison, PhD (Oregon Health and Science University), Tanya Sysoeva, PhD (University of Alabama at Huntsville), Henry Schreiber, PhD (Washington University), Emily Coffey, DVM (University of Minnesota), Kris Penniston, PhD (UW-Madison, CAIRIBU Interactions Core), Andrew McGlynn, DVM (Ohio State University), Ujjaini Basu, MS (UT Dallas), Ceejay Saenz, MS (UT Dallas) and CAIRIBU Interactions Core staff

### UPDATE ON MONTHLY KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGES

The 2026-2027 CAIRIBU Urobiome RIG Knowledge Exchanges will be planned in the coming months. In the meantime, a report from the committee planning summer Urobiome RIG events was presented.

The CAIRIBU Urobiome RIG Knowledge Exchange planning committee comprised of **Michael Neugent, PhD** (postdoc; PI, **Nicole De Nisco** – soon-to-be faculty at University of Rochester), **Keisha Harrison, PhD** (postdoc; PI, **Lisa Karstens, PhD**), and **Audra Crouch, PhD** (postdoc; PI, **Vanessa Hale, PhD, DVM**) reviewed the plans for the upcoming Urobiome RIG Summer Camp

**Summer camps.** June, July, and August will feature a “summer camp” professional development series, aimed at attracting trainees (grad students, undergrads, and postdocs) interested in urobiome research. **The Urobiome RIG Summer Camp schedule is below.**

- Jun 26 – **Urobiome Summer Camp I:** 5-min elevator talks + communicating results in figures (selecting, designing, and creating figures)
- Jul 17 – **Urobiome Summer Camp II:** 5-min elevator talks + formulating a scientific question + communicating your science
- Aug 21 – **Urobiome Summer Camp III:** Career panel + discussion and Q&A

### Further description of the summer camps included the following:

- **Elevator talks.** Several trainees who sign-up in advance will present posters or abstracts and receive feedback from an established investigator and an audience of peers
- **Figure design.** An “office hours” style session where trainees describe their needs and facilitator (Dr. Crouch) reviews how to tell a story through strong and effective data visuals and to adapt figures throughout the manuscript process, depending on one’s audience and context. Trainees may come with a figure for feedback during open discussion on the end.
- **How to ask a scientific question.** An “office hours” style session where Dr. Hale reviews what makes a strong scientific question and how a question leads to a hypothesis and approach; this applies to qualifying exams or fellowship applications
- **Communicating your science:** A breakout room on navigating reviewer comments and explain your science in a way that your audience will understand
- **Career panel:** 12-minute presentations from government representatives from the Air Force Research Laboratory, an industry representative from MilliporeSigma, and academia; open discussion will follow

### Comments from PIs:

- Postdoc-specific content seemed sparse; due to grad students being a larger portion of the RIG
- No need to reinvent the wheel; note that other CAIRIBU trainee-focused event series and resources exist (live CAIRIBU ARCTICS Community Forums and recordings of forums on CAIRIBU YouTube channel)

- So far 10 responses to summer camp interest form – only new suggestion is from an emerging independent investigator/PI (current K12 Scholar) on how to plan projects for trainees. Additional responses needed: [Summer Camp Interest Form is NOW ACCEPTING trainee responses.](#)

## JANUARY UROBIOME RIG STRATEGIC DISCUSSION - PROGRESS

### • Collaborative grant applications

Several investigators previously offered to drive or support small working groups to identify the research questions/topics in which they are interested. A primary goal is that these efforts are then

#### Investigators willing to support, advise, consult:

- Alan Wolfe. Lisa Karstens. Lenny Ackerman. Katie Forster, Bob Moreland, Tanya Sysoeva

#### Investigators willing to lead or be part of a collaborative grant application:

- Zohreh Izadifar – Interested in developing organ-on-a-chip platforms for studying the urobiome  
 - Tanya Sysoeva – Interested in host interactions with microbes and model development  
 - Vanessa Hale – Interested in the exposome and the “One Health Microbiome” approach  
 - Mike Neugent – Topics TBD; starts faculty position at University of Rochester in a few months

channeled into specific aims, interdisciplinary research approaches, and grant applications to be strategically submitted to specific funding announcements. **Today, investigators clarified that by May 22 (the next Urobiome RIG Strategic Discussion) leaders and their working groups should be prepared with a pitch for their grants.** Investigators are encouraged to work across institutions and develop multi-PI projects.

## OTHER UROBIOME RIG WORKING GROUPS

### 1. Conference Organizing

- Application/lobbying for special sessions at larger conferences to increase visibility of Urobiome field
- Creating a Urobiome-specific Conference

### 2. Engaging with the clinical community

- Preparing a urobiome informational flyer that can be sent to clinicians (ID, urology, urogyn, etc) – **see next section for list of clinical microbiologists**

### 3. Trainee writing group

- Monthly accountability group where trainees can have dedicated time to write (ie using the Pomodoro technique for productivity)
- Peer feedback on scientific writing projects (ie via email or time at the start or end to review writing progress and provide critiques)
- Shared resources for fellowship applications

### 4. Research Barriers Writing Groups

- Individuals interested in writing reviews on identified research barriers; **survey for signing up for Urobiome RIG working groups forthcoming**

## REVIEW: EXPANDING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS IN UROBIOME RESEARCH

Previous Urobiome RIG discussions resulted in a plan to identify and invite **clinical microbiologists** to participate in knowledge exchanges and discussions. **Alan** previously provided names of several (1) **Evann Hilt, PhD**, University of Minnesota, a former student of his; (2) **Travis Price, PhD, UCLA**, also a former student; (3) **David Pride, MD, PhD, UCSD**, a former student; and (4) **Amanda Harrington, PhD**, director of Loyola’s Clinical Microbiology Lab. Also during prior URIG discussions, suggestions to invite infectious disease specialists were made. Today, attendees place names of additional outreach considerations into the chat: (1) **Dubrasca Diaz-Campos, DVM, PhD**, leads the veterinary clinic micro diagnostic lab at Ohio State; (2) **Fritzie Albarillo, MD**, infectious disease specialist doing urobiome research at Loyola; (3) **Mehreen Arshad, MBBS**, pediatric infectious disease specialist; (4) **Scott Weese, DVM**, University of Guelph (Canada). Additionally, Bob suggested to check with the Infectious Disease Society of America.

## NEXT STEPS

### CAIRIBU Interactions Core staff will:

1. Launch calendar invites for Summer Camp series
2. Change May Urobiome RIG meeting from May 15 to May 22
3. Assist the leaders in developing a survey to assess working group interest
4. Continue supporting CAIRIBU Urobiome Research Interest Group to deepen and expand collaborations and increase the number of grant applications submitted