YOUR PATH REPORT

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November 2026

The Culture and Belonging Committee welcomes your ideas! Please use this QR code, or link, to submit anonymous suggestions, comments or concerns.

ACL: eTAT Newsletters

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SCAN ME

THE LAUGH LAB

How do you fix a broken pumpkin?

With a pumpkin patch!

Why did the football coach shake the vending machine?

He wanted a quarter back!

Chair's Message:
As we enjoy the beauty of fall across our campus and community, I am reminded that what makes autumn so special is that it is not a season of becoming, but *a season of changing*. The trees do not fight the transition. They embrace it, letting go of what served them in one season to prepare for what comes next. The brilliant reds, oranges, and golds each bring their own beauty, but together they create something extraordinary. In many ways, that reflects our department. Each of us brings unique experiences, strengths, and perspectives, and together we create an impact far greater than any one of us could achieve alone.

While I know that change can be difficult, especially when it seems never ending, but when I look ahead, I am energized by what we are trying to build together. From advancing digital pathology and precision medicine to strengthening our educational mission and growing our research programs, our department continues to demonstrate what is possible when we embrace the unknown, lift one another up, and think boldly together. As always, I encourage each of us to take a moment to celebrate our accomplishments, appreciate our colleagues, and reconnect with the meaningful impact of our work. The future is bright, and I am grateful to be on this journey with all of you.

- Diana Cardona MD, MBA, FCAP

FOR YOUR AWARENESS

- Get prepped for Fall PTO Cash Out starting Nov. 4
- Prepare for Workday downtime Nov. 7: Plan for extended downtime and changes to Workday links
- Encompass in NC & GA becomes Epic: If you use Encompass today, look for the Epic name and icon beginning Nov. 2. The system and how you log in will stay the same. Also see other Epic and Encompass updates.
- Move H: drive files to OneDrive before Nov. 16
- Stay well this flu season, and get vaccinated by Dec. 1
- Transition to New PTO Plan
- People Path: Your center for HR content launches Monday, Nov. 2
- **Path Forward our department leadership development series:**
  Session #4: November 4 - Strategies to Increase Efficiency and Impact with AI - Jaspal Singh, MD

NEW LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

- **Congratulations to Mark G. Baxter, PhD our new Vice Chair for Research Affairs and Section Head of Comparative Medicine**. Mark joined us in October 2022 as Professor of Comparative Medicine. His connection to Wake Forest goes back much further: in 1995 he was a research assistant in what was then the Department of Comparative Medicine at Bowman Gray School of Medicine. This role brings him full circle.

He is an internationally recognized neuroscientist. His work on the neurobiology of memory, cognitive aging, and translational nonhuman primate models have shaped the field. Before Wake Forest, he was Professor of Neuroscience and Director of the Lipschultz Center for Cognitive Neuroscience at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. Earlier he held faculty positions at Oxford University, as Reader in Behavioral Neuroscience and Welcome Trust Senior Research Fellow, and at Harvard University.

WELCOME NEW TEAMMATES

- The Section for Molecular Pathology is pleased to welcome **Tajbir "TJ" Raihan, PhD**, to the role of Senior Clinical Bioinformatician supporting our expanding clinical operations. Dr. Raihan joins us from the University of Virginia's Cardiovascular Research Center, where he was the bioinformatics core lead. Welcome TJ!
- We would also like to welcome to two additional members to our AP laboratories (please be sure to say when you see them!):
  - Aishah O'Connell to the OR Path Lab team as a Processing Tech (accessioner).
  - Marcia Hernandez started in AP support team in the file room.





INTERESTING OPPORTUNITIES

- Nov. 4: Grand Rounds – Dr. Leon Bernal-Mizrachi, MD, presents *"From circulating Tumor DNA to therapeutics."*
- Nov. 11: Grand Rounds – Dr. William Harrison, MD, presents *"Baboons and Alzheimer's Disease: Evaluating a Novel Nonhuman Primate Model of Age-Related Neurodegeneration."*
- Nov. 18: Grand Rounds – Dr. Dongwei Zhang, MD.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Nov. 5: Headspace live meditation: Gratitude & Letting Go
- Nov. 12: Headspace webinar – Grief & Gratitude: Holding Space for Healing
- Nov. 7: WFU football Gold Rush for Childhood Cancer game
- Nov. 12: Faculty Retreat

FACULTY AND LABORATORY ACHIEVEMENTS



- 2026 Compass Group Meeting! Shoutout to the following faculty for their participation:

  Dr. Ebony Boulware, Dr. Mark Cline, Dr. Susan Appt, Dr. Matthew Jorgensen, Dr. George Schaaf, Dr. Cecilia Schaaf, Dr. David Caudell, Dr. Tiffany O'Neill, Dr. Diana Cardona, Dr. Metin Gurcan Wendy Klecker, Lauren Elmore, Gary Catarella, Shauna Matthew, Heather Barrie, Julie Cooper, Dan Mumm, Dr. Oliver Kim, Dr. Janet Durham, Dr. Darly Knoedle.

- Celebrating Mick Runnoe's Retirement: After a remarkable career dedicated to service and leadership, **Mick Runnoe** will retire on December 12, 2026. From nearly 21 years of service in the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps to more than two decades of laboratory leadership with Aurora/ACL, Mick has made a lasting impact on our teams and organization. His contributions have included advancing laboratory growth and standardization, supporting successful CAP accreditations, helping lead the laboratory response to COVID-19, and championing the adoption of digital pathology. We are grateful for Mick's leadership, mentorship, humor, and dedication over the years. Congratulations, Mick, and thank you for making a difference!
- **Damodara Rao Mendu, PhD, DABCC** has two publications: *Clinical Amyloid Subtyping from FFPE Biopsies Using a Rapid Preparation Workflow and High-Flow LC-Q Exactive MS* in the Journal of Chromatography B (currently in proof), and *Pre-vaccine Sentinel Antibodies Predict Blunted Vaccine Responses* in Cell Press Blue.

- **Amanda Goldsmith** and **Shauna Matthew** attended the CAP 2026 Fellowship Fair Las Vegas, NV.



- **Haodong Xu, MD** – We would like to recognize and thank **Dr. Jingmei Lin**, our senior pathologist and Vice Chair for Education, for her excellent leadership of the Breast Pathology Service since January 2025. She has done a wonderful job building and strengthening the service, and we greatly appreciate her dedication and contributions.

  We are pleased to announce that **Dr. Nabil Rahoui**, who has been an assistant professor for more than a year and has made valuable contributions to our department and breast pathology service, will be taking over as leader of the Breast Pathology Service. We look forward to his leadership and to the continued growth and success of the service.

  Please join us in thanking Dr. Lin for her outstanding contributions and congratulating Dr. Rahoui on his new leadership role.





- Congratulations to **Jackie Baird, Torie McHone, Crystal Shoaf, Erica Van Dyke, Joe Procita and Alex Mattis** who successfully completed and graduated from the Leadership Development Program on October 28, 2026. The program lasted over 8 months and taught many valuable skills that will aid in day-to-day leadership as well as opportunities in the future.

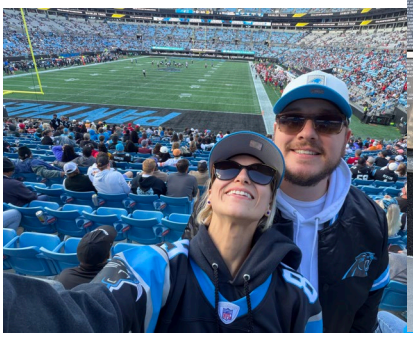


- **Valerie Jordan-Banks –** We attended the Davidson-Davie Community College Health Careers Fair and represented Davie Medical Center. We spoke with students about healthcare and laboratory career opportunities and provided informational materials about our organization. The event gave us an opportunity to connect with students and promote careers in the laboratory and nursing field.
- **Diana Cardona, MD, MBA, FCAP** - CAP Leadership Spotlight: Dr. Diana Cardona, Chair of the Department of Pathology at Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Chief Clinical Officer for Advocate Clinical Laboratories, and President of the North Carolina Society of Pathologists, was recently featured on the CAP News podcast following her re-election to a second term on the College of American Pathologists (CAP) Board of Governors. During the interview, Dr. Cardona discussed the opportunities and challenges facing pathology, highlighting the impact of workforce shortages, reimbursement pressures, and regulatory complexity, while emphasizing the transformative potential of digital pathology, artificial intelligence, genomics, and precision medicine. She also reflected on nearly 20 years of service with CAP and the importance of advocacy, leadership, and collaboration in advancing the profession.



- **Nawroz Barwari, MBChB** and **Giovanni Insuasti, MD** recently attended the International Clinical Cytometry Society (ICCS) 2026 Annual Meeting, where they had the opportunity to engage with colleagues, learn about the latest advances in clinical cytometry and hematopathology, and represent the hematopathology training program.
- **Agshin Taghiyev, PhD** presented a poster entitled *"Simultaneous detection of chromosomal abnormalities in CD138-positive plasma cells using FISH and anti-CD138 antibodies"* describing his clinical research project in the FISH lab.
- **Lynne Rosenblum, PhD** and three of the Cytogenetics lab technologists, **Bilinda Dawson, Christy Prongay, Tori Strapp,** published an invited manuscript in Genes entitled *"Evaluation of an Artificial*

Intelligence-Assisted Metaphase Finder for Clinical Cytogenetic Application" detailing their findings as the beta test site for a new AI-based algorithm for use in chromosome analysis (Genes 2026, 17(10), 1295).





- **Elizabeth Ruggiero** and her fiancée, along with **Dr. Megan Lee** and her sister, enjoyed the Panthers vs. Buccaneers game on October 25! A special thank you to Dr. Cardona and the members of our Pathology team who hosted and participated in the 8 Acts of Kindness Challenge, making these fun experiences possible.
- **Xianyong (Sean) Gui, MD** and **David Caudell, DVM, PhD**, co-authored the new medRxiv preprint,*"Layer-Resolved Spatial Transcriptomic Profiling Reveals Distinct Fibrotic and Muscularizing Submucosal Niches in Fibrostenotic Crohn's Disease."*







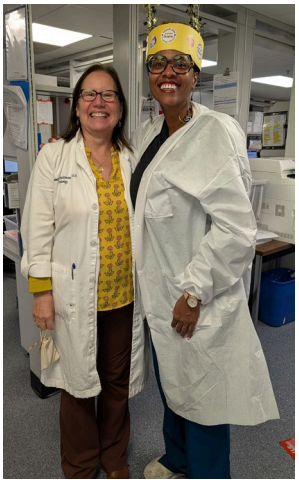


- **Susan Appt, DVM** – Clarkson Campus Field Day and Chili Cook off! We had a fantastic turnout for the Oct 21 festivities, including about 20 spectators who joined in the fun and enjoyed chili and ice cream sandwiches! A big thank you to **Cailyn Kirkaldy, Christina Stevenson, Cecelia Schaaf, Hannah Ruetten, Kitty Everidge, Jese Shannon, Rachel Williams, Beth Uberseder**, and the other subcommittee members who helped bring this event to life. 😊

  Results:
  - Golden Pipette Champions – "It's Sarah" (mixed lab team – Shively, Cline, VRC)
  - PPE Race winners – "The Girlscouts" (mixed lab team – Schaaf, Register, Campus Admin)
  - Marble Race winners – "Not Fast, Just Furious!" (PTS & WFPRC)
  - Team Spirit Award – " The Vege-Mightes" (Kavanagh, WFIRM +1)
  - Chili Cook Off Winner – Cailyn Kirkaldy

TEAMMATE SPOTLIGHT

- Congratulations to LaMichea Lash, MT Unregistered in Microbiology, for being recognized by Dr. Palavecino for going above and beyond!

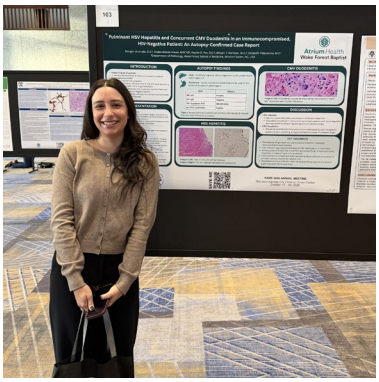




WHAT OUR RESIDENTS AND FELLOWS ARE UP TO

- Our residents welcomed **Sifu Eric Marks of Blue Ridge Kung Fu Arnie Academy** in Winston-Salem for an October 13 Wellness Lunch focused on Tai Chi. Residents learned about the practice and had the opportunity to try techniques during a hands-on demonstration. Thank you to Sifu Marks for a great session!
- **Morgan Andrade, DO** represents the Wake Forest Department of Pathology at the 2026 NAME Annual Meeting in Kansas City, MO.





HAPPY HALLOWEEN!

- **Jese Shannon's** spooky surprise from Boney Tony (Drs. Mark Giffen and Heath Blankenship)!



- To celebrate Halloween in the **Rheumatology course at Charlotte campus**, students dressed as different diseases, pathology findings and more.





- **Annual Halloween Costume Contest!**









Congratulations to our Annual Halloween Costume Contest winners Tiffany Addison as Pedro and Caroline O'Connell as Napoleon Dynamite! Way to represent Cytology!

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