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## iTHRIV Scholars Program Announces 2024 Cohort

The Integrated Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia (iTHRIV) is pleased to announce its eighth cohort for the iTHRIV Scholars Program. Four outstanding early career researchers from the University of Virginia will participate in this two-year structured research training and mentorship program.



### 2024-2026 iTHRIV Scholars Cohort

- **Virginia Gallagher, PhD**, from the University of Virginia’s Division of Memory and Aging Care in the Department of Neurology will research “Characterization of Millennial caregivers of persons with cognitive decline: Identifying intervention targets using a mixed-methods approach” and be mentored by Carol Manning, PhD.
- **Christine Nelson, PhD**, from the University of Virginia’s Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care in the Department of Medicine will research “Degree and timing of T cell co-stimulation determine protective immunity to M. tuberculosis infection” and be mentored by Imre Noth, MD.
- **Alexander Podboy, MD**, from the University of Virginia’s Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology in the Department of Medicine will research “Deciphering the Immunologic Landscape of Gastroparesis-Associated Pylorospasm: Insights from Single-Cell RNA Sequencing and Gastric Per-oral Endoscopic Myotomy” and be mentored by Emily McGowan, MD, PhD.
- **Russell Witt, MD, MAS**, from the University of Virginia’s Division of Surgical Oncology in the Department of Surgery will research “Exploring the Role of Adipokine Signaling in

Melanoma: Deciphering the Obesity Paradox” and be mentored by Craig Slingsluff Jr, MD, and Allan Tsung, MD.

**The iTHRIV Scholars Program**, launched in 2017, is a cohort-based, mentored career development award for dedicated early career clinical and translational researchers. The program emphasizes training in clinical translational research, data science, team science, and proposal development in a strong mentoring environment with support from peers and seasoned scientists and clinicians.

“All of these newly-appointed Scholars have a vision for truly impactful research that will significantly improve the lives of patients. The activities of the iTHRIV Scholars Program will help these faculty realize these visions and establish a foundation for sustained research careers in clinical translational science,” states Jason Papin, Harrison Distinguished Teaching Professor of Biomedical Engineering at the University of Virginia and Director of the iTHRIV Scholars Program.

“Each new cohort of Scholars provides an opportunity for the entire iTHRIV partnership to engage in new and different ways to work toward our ultimate goal of making significant health-related discoveries,” says Leanna Blevins, Associate Vice President for Virginia Tech Health Sciences Education Academic Affairs and Mentoring Development Lead for the iTHRIV Scholars Program.

The 2024-2026 iTHRIV Scholars are generously supported with funding provided by the UVA School of Medicine Office of the Dean, Departments of Medicine and Neurology, the UVA Brain Institute, the UVA Comprehensive Cancer Center, and the UVA Vice President for Research. They will begin their appointments in July and join our **2023-2025 iTHRIV Scholars Program cohort**. iTHRIV and the iTHRIV Scholars Program receive additional support from the University of Virginia School of Medicine and the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health, through award numbers UL1TR003015/KL2TR003016. For more information, visit [iTHRIV.org](https://iTHRIV.org).

## A New Series of iTHRIV Learning Shorts!



### **A New Series of iTHRIV Learning Shorts!**

Our iTHRIV Community and Collaboration Core has done it again! They have created a new 10-video series of Learning Shorts on the topic of Team Science with Community Partners!

The Core developed these brief educational videos to create a basis for conversation between the community and health researchers. This Learning Short series is designed to reach the general public as well as early career and established researchers. Topics include communication, collaboration, accountability, representation, defining team science within the context of partnership with community members and stakeholders, and emphasizing the importance of trust. This video series seeks to facilitate conversation between health researchers and community members who may be interested in being a part of clinical or translational research teams. As Dr. Deron Campbell says in one video, “Teamwork makes the dream work!”

Video 1 - [Introduction: What is Team Science?](#)

Video 2 - [Funding Opportunities](#)

Video 3 - Featured Project with Dr. Diane Pappas and Michaela Lieberman-Martin

Video 4 - Community Perspectives in Team Science

Video 5 - Characteristics of Effective Community-Team Member Engagement

Video 6 - Featured Project with Dr. Jamie Zoellner and Meghan Arthur

Video 7 - Conversations Part 1: [Engagement and Trust](#)

Video 8 - Conversations Part 2: [Communication and Collaboration](#)

Video 9 - Conversations Part 3: [Accountability and the Translational Spectrum](#)

Video 10 - Conversations Part 4: [Representation](#)

Amanda Hensley, PhD Candidate

Amanda Hensley, a graduate research assistant in iTHRIV's Community and Collaboration Core, facilitated the production of the videos, scouted locations, met with the Core working group to draft the scripts, invited and interviewed the presenters on these topics, and worked with an editor in the Technology-Enhanced Learning and Online Strategies department of Virginia Tech to complete the Shorts. Amanda is currently a PhD Candidate in the Translational Biology, Medicine, and Health program at Virginia Tech, and has been an integral part of the Core for four years. The Core working group included Dr. Kathy Hosig and Dr. Sarah Parker from Virginia Tech, Dr. Amanda Nguyen from UVA, and Dr. Deron Campbell from Inova Health.



At the time of writing, videos 1, 2, and 7-10 are available to watch on the [iTHRIV YouTube Channel](#). Videos 3-6 will be available by July 1, 2024.



Figure 1- Dr. Wenzel



Figure 2- Dr. Campbell and Ms. Miller



Figure 3- Dr. Zoellner and Ms. Arthur



Figure 4- Dr. Poppas and Ms. Lieberman-Martin

## iTHRIV Under the Microscope

### **What is your current role?**

I recently joined the Fralin Biomedical Research Center at Virginia Tech in Roanoke, VA as the Coordinator of Experiential Learning. In this role, I work with both our Principal Investigators at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and undergraduate students at Virginia Tech to coordinate lab placements and assist with relevant student programming. Within iTHRIV, I am part of the iTHRIV Scholars Program leadership team, helping to plan weekly programming and support participating early career faculty. I am also the coordinator for the Internal Advisory Committee which includes institutional leaders from all iTHRIV partner and collaborator sites who help shape the direction for iTHRIV to support clinical and translational research across our different institutions.



**Dustin Eshelman**

### **What led you to your current position in iTHRIV?**

Though my background is rooted in education and leadership, I have arrived in my current role with Virginia Tech via a circuitous route. As a child who grew up building forts and managing its members, it makes sense that I would later go on to found and operate my own small business – a local coffee shop that is now in its 10th year of operation and boasts the largest daily volume in Roanoke. While things are running smoothly and I should probably rest and weed the garden, I found myself growing restless and searched for the next thing to sink my teeth into. So when the world stopped and went into hibernation during the pandemic, I took on the role of Operations Director for a large outdoor adventure camp and conference center as it struggled to survive and reinvent itself. In time and via another serendipitous transition, it is with great pleasure that I now find myself working with both the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at Virginia Tech and the incredibly inspiring faculty, investigators, and scholars involved in iTHRIV. Needless to say, I love a good vision, building structure and flow, and curating relationships with the special people I work and interact with.

### **What is something people may not know about you?**

I love to problem solve and create with purpose and beauty! My mom is an artist so she is definitely my inspiration. However, I'm not as drawn to creating visual art as I am to creating structural or functional pieces like laying a beautiful brick walkway, refinishing a wall or screen porch, or wiring outdoor lighting, etc. This may sound like contract work, but to me, it feels more like art and problem solving combined.

### **What do you like to do outside of work?**

Outside of work, I am often socializing and adventuring together with my family and our amazing group of life-long friends. We camp together, beach together, make meals together, raise our families together, and lift each other up when things turn rough. In between being social and work, I enjoy diving into a good book – usually non-fiction – and taking long walks in the woods with my dogs.

## Meet a Mentor: Kathy Hosig, PhD, MPH, RD

**Kathy Hosig, PhD, MPH, RD**

**Associate Professor & Public Health Extension Specialist  
Director, Center for Public Health Practice and Research  
Department of Population Health Sciences  
Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, Virginia  
Tech**



**Co-lead, Community & Collaboration Core, integrated  
Translational Health Research Institute of Virginia**

"Dr. Kathy Hosig is committed to community focused research with authentic and equitable partnerships. She honors community partners and collaborates with colleagues across diverse disciplines. She has been a strong supporter and fierce advocate for my development as a junior faculty member. I am grateful to have her professional insight and example. Most of all, I appreciate her patience and genuine desire for my success."

Mary M. Wesley, DrPH, MPH  
Health Systems and Implementation Science  
Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine