

SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

# PHYSIOLOGY and PHARMACOLOGY

## Message from the Chair

And just like that, another teaching year on the books!

I would like to thank all members of the Department for their hard work and dedication to our teaching mission this year. Marked by significant undertakings including undergraduate and graduate IQAP reviews, the delivery of over 30 undergraduate courses, and supervision of 66 Honors Specialization Students, this was indeed an eventful academic year.

As we wind down for the summer term, I encourage you all to take some time to celebrate these accomplishments and catch your breath before turning our attention to planning for the 2026/27 academic year. To that end, please mark your calendars for the Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry Convocation ceremonies that will take place on June 9, 2026 10:00am (Grad) and 3:00pm (Undergrad) at Canada Life Place. The Department of Physiology and Pharmacology will again be hosting a reception for our undergraduate class that day, details to follow.

Lastly, I would like to share my deepest condolences with those of you who had the pleasure of working with Rob Gros over his career at Western. A graduate of the Department of Pharmacology at Western, Rob was a passionate researcher and academic. I will personally miss our regular conversations and Rob's astute insights and efforts to improve our research environment.

*Cheryle*

## This issue:

Welcome  
Farewell  
Congratulations  
In Memoriam

### Committee Updates:

Graduate  
Undergraduate  
Research  
EDID  
Social  
Graduate Student Council

### Upcoming Events:

Schulich Awards of  
Excellence ceremony  
Wed, May 13

Department meeting  
Mon, May 25

Undergraduate and  
Graduate studies  
Convocation  
Tues, June 9

### Upcoming Seminars:

Mon, May 11  
Mon, May 25



## WELCOME

**LYNN HUONG** – Research Technician with Dr. Tom Appleton

**MEHRDAD KASHEFI** – Post Doctoral Associate with Dr. Andrew Pruszynski

## FAREWELL

Farewell to Dr. Faraj Haddad, who will be leaving us at the end of this term. All the best to your future endeavours, we will miss you, Faraj!

## CONGRATULATIONS

**To graduate students for the completion of their degrees:**

PETRA SAMARDZIJA – PhD (Christopher Pin/Peter Stathopoulos)

AJAYA SHARMA – MSc (David Hess)

JENNIFER CARLETON – PhD (Tom Drysdale)

**Welcome to new graduate students:**

DONG TRACH (Ben) DUONG – MSc (Wataru Inoue)

CALEB PODGERS – MSc (David Hess)

**Congrats to Schulich Award winners:**

Schulich Researcher of the Year: ANDREW PRUSZYNSKI

Schulich Excellence in Education, Distinguished Leader:

ANITA WOODS

**NSERC Discover Grants – Successful Applications**

DONGLIN BAI

BRIAN CORNEIL

QINGPING FENG

DAVID HILL

TAYLOR SCHMITZ

CHERYLE SÉGUIN

PETER STATHOPOULOS

BRAD URQUHART

**CIHR Postdoctoral Fellowship**

ANNA FERREIRA (Emily Day)

MSB CONSTRUCTION -  
JULY 1963

ALL HISTORIC PHOTOS  
ARE FROM THE WESTERN  
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND  
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS



Congratulations to Dr.  
Asfaha on being appointed as  
the inaugural Verspeeten  
Chair in Translational Cancer  
Research

“The Pulse” featured Dr. Samuel  
Asfaha’s research regarding  
“Junk DNA” holding clues to  
colorectal cancer  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)



HISTOLOGY LAB - 1965

## CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulations to Shelby Oke on the birth of her baby girl, Wyatt June McEwen, on January 19<sup>th</sup>! She was 8 lbs, 13 oz, 20.5 inches at birth and everyone is doing well and enjoying the baby snuggles.

## IN THE NEWS



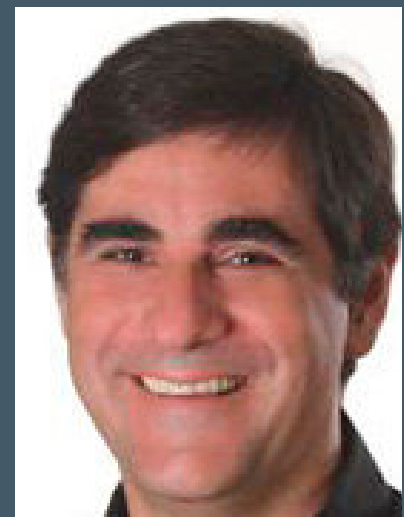
Dr. Tom Appleton was quoted in an article on Healio re: [GLP-1 medications](#)  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)

## IN MEMORIAM



It is with great sadness that we share the passing of Rob Gros, after a brief but courageous battle with cancer, on April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2026, at the age of 58.

Rob dedicated his career to cardiovascular research and service to the academic community, most notably in his role as Executive Director of Animal Care and Veterinary Services. We will miss Rob's heartfelt dedication to his family, to his research community, and to Western.



Dr. Marco Prado shared brain images in LinkedIn that were captured using the new MIND Platform  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)



MEDICAL SCHOOL -  
SOUTH ST PHARM LAB  
WITH DR. GOWDEY

## Graduate Studies Update

As the summer term approaches, please remember the importance of graduate student time away to support personal and/or family wellness.

### Senate Policy

Full-time graduate students in research-based programs are expected to be active in their program for all three terms of the university year, as specified in Section 2. While engaging in their program, we recognize that personal time (i.e., time away from studies) is beneficial for student health, well-being and academic achievement. It is acceptable and expected that Supervisors, Supervisory Committee Members and Graduate Chairs will discuss expectations around students' study and research schedules; they will mentor students and support their need for time off and their pursuit of work/life balance. Time away from studies must take into account the impact on timely progression and the impact on research and other responsibilities.

It is expected that students devote a reasonable number of hours each weekday to study and to research. It is acceptable for students to take days off. In making these time management decisions, it is expected that students will learn to discern when time away from studies supports academic productivity, and when it undermines timely progression.

Graduate Chairs are encouraged to ensure that both student and supervisor needs and expectations are met. See SGPS Regulation regarding supervisor expectations.

In addition to the above, students are entitled to be away from their studies and research responsibilities during:

- the closing of the University from late December until early January
- statutory holidays when the University is closed
- religious holidays in accordance with University policy

Graduate students are also entitled to at least two weeks of vacation time from their studies per year.



Dr. Adrian Owen was featured in a New York Times magazine article on vegetative patients  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)



"The Pulse" featured Dr. Dan Hardy's work on cannabis exposure and schizophrenia risk  
[LINK TO ARTICLE](#)

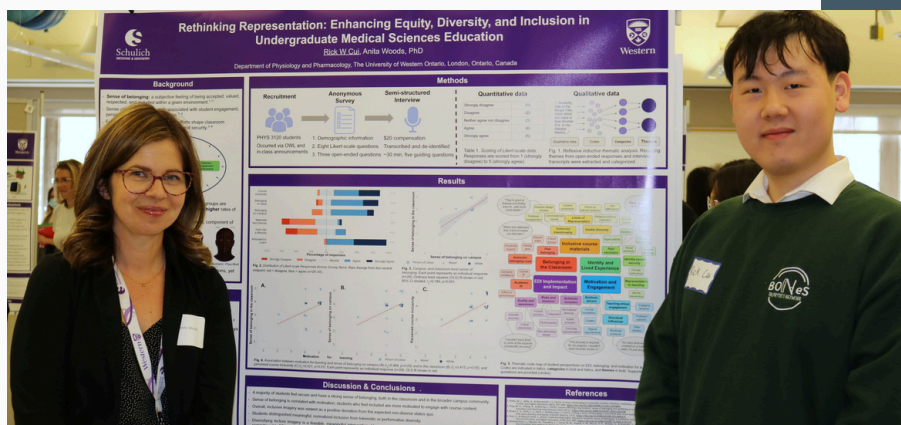
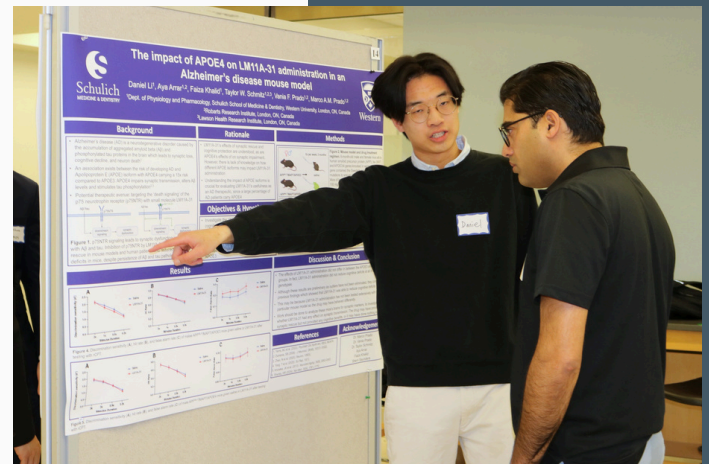
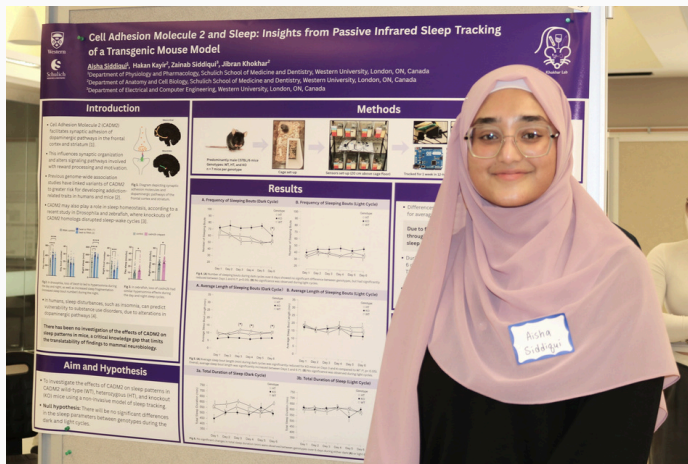
# Undergraduate Studies Update

I want to congratulate everyone on a successful 2025-2026. A huge thank you to our course managers, instructors, our amazing teaching assistants, and our incredible department office team for another great academic year. We have a few more exams ahead of us and a mountain of marking for some courses yet, but we made it!

The last couple of months have held some exciting undergraduate-related activities. For example, our Physiology and Pharmacology Undergraduate Society (PUGS) hosted an exceptional case competition on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Great work, PUGS! With the help of PUGS, our department also hosted an Intent to Register (ITR) event on March 24<sup>th</sup>.

A special thank you to Jen Chambers in the BMSUE office and our teaching-intensive faculty for participating in this session. Our Honours Specialization students did an exceptional job presenting their posters at our department's poster day on March 30<sup>th</sup>. A huge congratulations to all our HSP students for showcasing your hard work, wrapping up your projects, and completing your thesis papers. And lastly, our undergraduate IQAP review was held on April 9 and 10. We had incredible discussions with our reviewers, and I appreciate everyone who met with them and shared feedback on our program.

Thinking ahead to the next academic year, we will be sending out requests in May for Phys/Pharm 4985 thesis projects for the 2026-2027 academic year. Please watch for those emails so we can start planning.





## GROSS ANATOMY LAB

# Research Committee Update

### Research Day/Stevenson Lectureship

We are excited to announce that our Research Day will be held on November 2nd, 2026. Dr. Lotte Bjerre Knudsen will deliver the 2026 Stevenson lecture. Dr. Knudsen was the lead on development of several transformative GLP-1 drugs like Liraglutide and Semaglutide (Ozempic). She has received various prominent awards including the 2024 Lasker-DeBakey Clinical Medicine Research Award and the 2025 Breakthrough Prize in life sciences. You can read more about Dr. Knudsen's contributions here: <https://doi.org/10.1038/d41573-024-00177-2>.

### Physiology and Pharmacology Shared Research Infrastructure Facility

The Physiology and Pharmacology Shared Research Infrastructure Facility is now operational. You can see a list of current equipment and booking calendars for each instrument at this link.

[https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm//research/physiology\\_and\\_pharmacology\\_core\\_facility.html](https://www.schulich.uwo.ca/physpharm//research/physiology_and_pharmacology_core_facility.html).

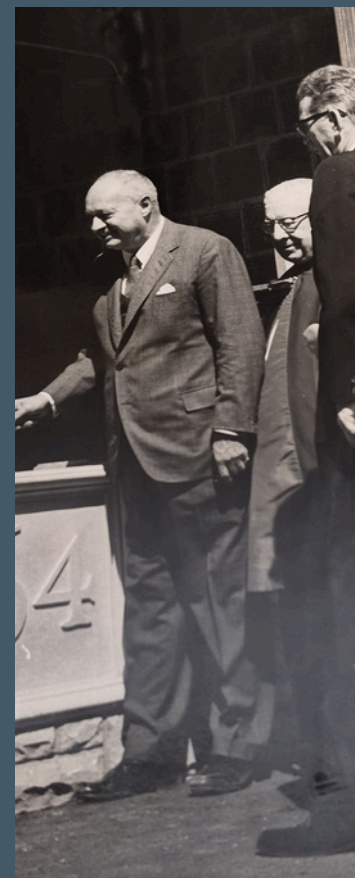
Please contact Christie (cgodin2@uwo.ca) if your research group would like to have access to the facility. We are looking to add more equipment to the facility so please send us suggestions for future NSERC-RTI or Schulich Infrastructure Support (SIS) funding applications. If you have existing equipment that you would like to share with the department, please also contact us to discuss.

### Lunch and Learn

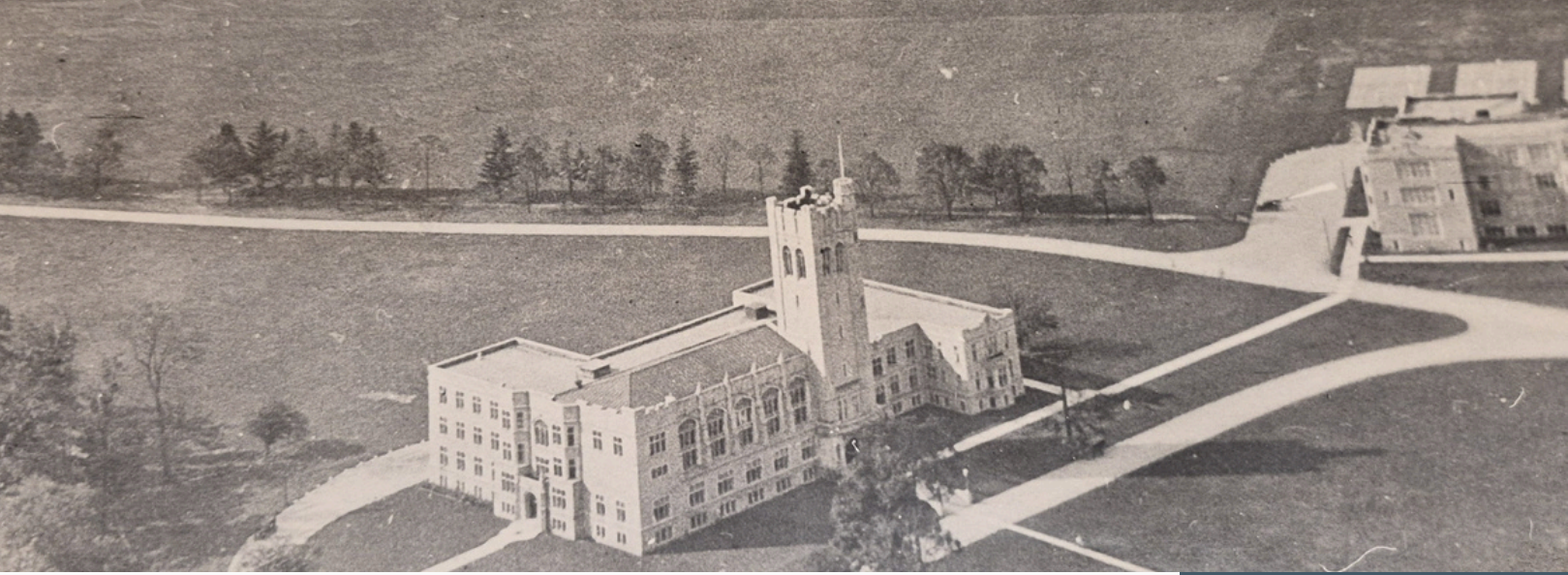
We are planning our next set of Lunch and Learn sessions and would like to invite suggestions for topics to cover. Please send ideas or recommendations by email to Rithwik (rramach@uwo.ca) or Alycia (amorga7@uwo.ca).

### Faculty Biographies

We don't have a work-study student over the summer. If you need to update your biographies or web pages, please contact Christie (cgodin2@uwo.ca).



Laying the MSB  
cornerstone -  
Apr 1964



WESTERN'S CAMPUS  
1924

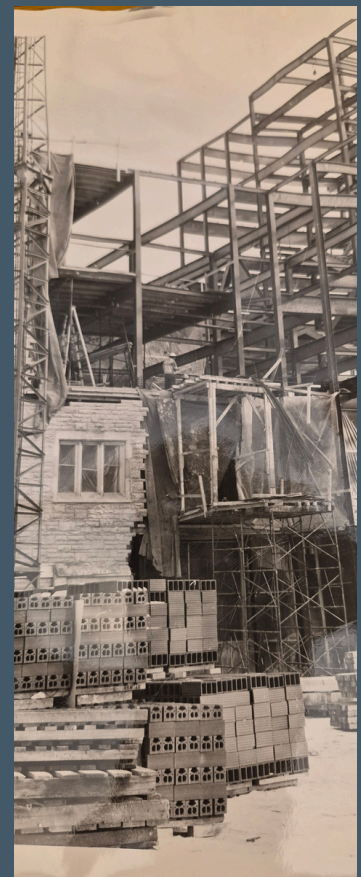
## EDID Committee Update

As part of the EDID-focused seminar topic, the Physiology and Pharmacology EDID committee hosted Dr. Heidi Swanson on April 13, 2026. The seminar, titled “Lessons from the bush: two decades of learning and un-learning with communities in the North”, touched on topics related to similarities and tensions between Reconciliation and western science in the academic research setting and encouraged us to introduce Reconciliation into research and teaching. We joined Dr. Swanson on a journey through her career, learned about how community work has defined it and has defined her as a researcher and academic. We were then introduced to the challenges of field work and working in remote locations, and marvelled at the deep connection between peoples, lands, and communities. Link to documentary [HERE](#).

If you would like to learn more about Decolonizing and Indigenizing the curriculum, we invite you to listen to the podcast “Echoes from the Margins: Voices reshaping higher education”, hosted by Preetama Badyal and Oana Birceanu, particularly to the episode titled “Indigenous and Decolonial Approaches to Curriculum: Learnings from Dr. Candace Brunette-Debassige”. You can find the podcast episodes [HERE](#).



John P. Robarts Institute



DSB construction -  
1972



DSB CONSTRUCTION -  
1972

## Social Committee Update

The last day of undergraduate classes was celebrated this year by a departmental trivia and boardgame event that also included some well-deserved pizza eating. Highlights included the challenging Kahoot Trivia organized by Swaran, some pool billiards (pro-tip: never play pool with Chris Pin for money), and several other fun boardgames. This fun event was also the last one organized by Faraj as co-chair of the social committee; we wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

As always, feel free to submit any suggestions for future activities to our committee.



PHARMACOLOGY LAB



# Graduate Student Council Update

Our volleyball intramurals were a great success. Congratulations to the team for a great season!



The PPGSC health and wellness reps hosted a board game event this semester where graduate students took a break from lab work and de-stressed with a variety of fun board games.

PPGSC hosted the Opening Doors seminar on March 16<sup>th</sup> with Alisha Moynahan and Rhett Figliuzzi. We would like to thank all those who attended and participated in the discussion to learn more about the graduate career opportunities that are available to you!

We also hosted a trivia and board game night on April 9<sup>th</sup>. Thank you to our social committee for organizing such an amazing event and we hope you all enjoyed!



BIOCHEM LAB -  
OTTAWAY AVE MEDICAL  
SCHOOL



TURNING SOD FOR DSB  
1966

# Upcoming Seminars

## The Department of Physiology and Pharmacology 2026 Winter/Spring Series

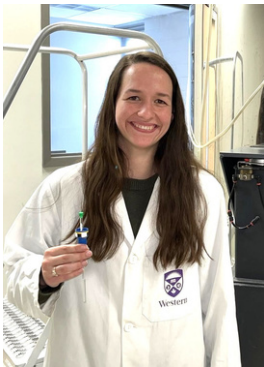
All lectures held at 3:00 p.m. in MSB 384 and on Zoom (link available upon request)



**Date: Monday, May 11**  
**Speaker: Karly Masse, PhD candidate**  
**Western University**

"Modulation of GLP-1 releasing enteroendocrine cell function and development by short-chain fatty acids"

Host: Van Lu



**Date: Monday, May 25**  
**Speaker: Danielle Colussi, PhD candidate**  
**Western University**

"Molecular Mechanisms of MCUB-mediated Mitochondrial Calcium Regulation"

Host: Peter Stathopoulos



Medical school  
classroom

We love celebrating our accomplishments, in and out of the lab. Please share your stories, pictures and newsworthy items for upcoming editions! Send emails to [jjacob62@uwo.ca](mailto:jjacob62@uwo.ca).