



Texas  **Branch**

AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR MICROBIOLOGY

Program
2026 Spring Meeting

March 26 – 28, 2026
Mt. Lebanon Camps
Cedar Hill, TX



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Opening Keynote Speaker

Erica Sanchez, PhD

Dr. Erica L Sanchez is originally from Northern California. She completed her bachelor's degree in Molecular Biology at The University of California Davis, where she joined her first lab at the UC Davis genome center in her sophomore year. Dr. Sanchez moved to Washington DC to participate in the NIH postbacc program (NIH IRTA) for 1 year while she applied to graduate school. She attended the University of Washington, in Seattle, for her PhD in Molecular and Cellular Biology. As a graduate student, Dr. Sanchez was trained in the Lagunoff lab, where she explored alterations in host cell metabolism during infection with Kaposi's Sarcoma Herpesvirus, an oncogenic virus. Upon completing her PhD, Dr. Sanchez moved back to California, but this time to San Francisco, to conduct postdoctoral research as an NIH IRACDA fellow. During her postdoctoral fellowship, Dr. Sanchez took on the opportunity to co-teach Cell Biology at nearby San Francisco State. That same year, SFSU announced they were conducting a faculty search for a Virologist. Dr. Sanchez jumped at the opportunity and excitedly was offered the position to start her own independent laboratory and teach virology and microbiology. Starting her lab in January 2020, Dr. Sanchez built a team of talented masters and undergraduate researchers, weathered the pandemic shutdown together, and ultimately supported 6 MS students complete their degree in her first three years.



Due to personal and professional reasons, Dr. Sanchez took the opportunity to relocate the lab to the University of Texas at Dallas in Jan 2023. The lab team has expanded and now includes 6 PhD students and 3 undergraduate researchers. The lab is currently studying alterations in host cell biology during lytic replication of KSHV, exploring metabolism, innate immune response, and protein-protein interactions. In Dallas, Dr. Sanchez lives with her husband, Dr. Michael Burton, a PI in the Neuroscience department at UTDallas, their son Tre, and their cat Tess.

Eugene and Millicent Goldschmidt Lecturer Monica Cartelle Gestal, PhD



Dr. Monica Cartelle Gestal earned her PhD in Microbiology from the University of A Coruña in Spain, followed by a prestigious Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Nottingham. She later led research and diagnostic programs in Ecuador before relocating to the United States to focus on host–pathogen interactions in murine models, aiming to develop host-targeted therapies for mucosal bacterial infections.

Currently, her lab at LSU Health Shreveport investigates how *Bordetella spp.* manipulate the immune system to promote chronic infection and tissue pathology. Her group was the first to demonstrate that *Bordetella* targets eosinophils, traditionally associated with parasitic responses, to suppress inflammation through the sigma factor BtrS and the Type 3 Secretion System effector BteA. This work redefines eosinophils as central players in bacterial persistence and post-infectious pathologies. Dr. Gestal has authored over 60 peer-reviewed publications, with recent articles in *Cell Reports*, *Communications Biology*, *Infection & Immunity*, and *STAR Protocols*. Her work was awarded the 2024 Best Translational Research Prize by the Galician Academy of Medicine. She holds 3 patents including one for a novel live attenuated *Bordetella* vaccine, and another for anti-IL-1Ra therapies targeting bacterial infections, including those caused by multidrug-resistant pathogens. Her lab has developed and published innovative tools to assess eosinophil effector functions *in vitro* and *in vivo* that combined with machine learning allow for integrative understanding of eosinophil effector functions during bacterial infection.

Dr. Gestal has served as an officer of the SCB since 2022, contributing actively to strengthening the local scientific community through service and outreach. She also serves on the editorial boards of *Infection & Immunity* and *mSphere*, and she regularly reviews manuscripts for *Nature* journals, *Science*, *PLOS*, and *ASM* publications. Beyond the lab, she founded the International *Bordetella* Lab Meeting, a monthly global seminar series, and established and secured funding for successful international exchange programs for undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students from Spain. Currently, Dr. Gestal is expanding these programs to other countries, such as Argentina. These initiatives have expanded global collaboration and significantly boosted research productivity, including higher publication rates and grant success.

2025 Peggy Cotter Awardee

Nicholas Dillion, PhD



Dr. Dillion's research focuses on expanding our capabilities to eliminate drug resistant bacterial infections through 1) Identifying how bacteria evolve antibiotic resistance; 2) Developing novel treatment strategies to eliminate antibiotic resistant bacteria; 3) Creating future anti-resistance approaches to prevent resistance from evolving. Dr. Dillon blends his biochemistry foundation with an expertise in microbiology that incorporates aspects of immunology, and pharmacology from his graduate training at the University of Minnesota with Dr. Gary Dunny (receiving a M.S.) and Dr. Anthony Baughn (receiving a Ph.D) and postdoctoral training at the University of California- San Diego with Dr. Victor

Nizet to integrate aspects of the drug, pathogen and host into his studies.

Having opened his lab four years ago, Dr. Dillon has expanded his research to focus on how bacteria select and utilize different evolutionary strategies to adapt and resist strong selective pressures like antibiotics. His lab has identified both abiotic and biological conditions that impact how bacteria evolve antibiotic resistance, uncovered antibiotic combinations and adjuvants that can improve treatments, and discovered new mechanisms of antibiotic resistance.

Eugene and Millicent Goldschmidt Faculty Teaching Awardee

Lisa Bono, PhD

Eugene and Millicent Goldschmidt Faculty Teaching Awardee

Tammy Adair, PhD

Tammy Adair is a Senior Lecturer of Biology and the Director of Undergraduate Research for the Office of Engaged Learning at Baylor University. She is dedicated to transforming undergraduate biology education through inquiry driven, research rich learning experiences. She began her career in clinical lab science before discovering her passion for teaching and returning to graduate school. Her teaching now centers on helping students learn science by doing science—connecting biological concepts to realworld relevance, encouraging curiosity, and cultivating students' confidence in their ability to engage in authentic scientific discovery.

Adair designs and leads a variety of Coursebased Undergraduate Research Experiences (CUREs) and inquiry-based teaching labs, including the SEAPHAGES, SEA-GENES, BU-TREES, and BIO-HEROES. Her work emphasizes depth of understanding, conceptual connections, and the value of stepping beyond one's comfort zone in the learning process. She is also deeply committed to training and mentoring future educators through her leadership of large laboratory instructional teams, including graduate teaching assistants and undergraduate learning assistants.

Beyond biology education, Adair has developed a community-based research course that helps students examine global challenges such as food insecurity, sustainable agriculture, and environmental health. BIO 4331 Science Leadership: Community-based Research, integrates biological concepts with civic engagement, guiding students to recognize how scientific knowledge can contribute to the common good and to see themselves as citizens capable of making meaningful impact. Her broader work in Baylor's Office of Engaged Learning connects students with research opportunities across campus and supports their growth as both scientists and communityminded leaders. When she is not teaching, she enjoys time with her growing family (11 wonderful grandchildren!) being in nature, gardening, refinishing old treasures, embracing the joy of learning new things, and giving thanks to God for His gifts of grace and love.



Eugene and Millicent Goldschmidt Graduate Student Awardee Raquel Luna



Raquel Luna was born in El Paso, Texas and grew up in San Antonio where she went to Harmony Science Academy High School. After attending Alamo College for an associate's degree in biology, she transferred to University of Texas, San Antonio (UTSA) to earn her bachelor's degree in molecular microbiology and immunology. In Summer 2023, she started her research career as a trainee in the Microbiology Summer Undergraduate Research Program (MicroSURP) at UTHealth Houston. While there, she worked on an *Escherichia coli* stress response project in Dr. Anna Konovalova's lab. After the program ended, she joined Dr. Jose Lopez-Ribot's lab at UTSA where she screened small molecule compounds against *Candida albicans* and *C. auris* biofilms for antimicrobial activity until her graduation in 2024. Raquel is now back at UTHealth Houston as a master's student in Dr. Heidi Kaplan's lab in the Microbiology and Infectious Disease (MID) Program at the Graduate School of Biomedical Science (GSBS) and is planning to pursue a PhD next year. She also has a pet ferret named Pancha.

Thank you to our meeting Sponsors!



Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Special Acknowledgements

Abstract Review and Judging: Heidi Kaplan, UTHealth McGovern Medical School
Jennifer Huddleston, Abilene Christian University

Meeting Organizers: Archna Bashin, Wharton County Junior College
William Cody, University of Dallas
Jennifer Hennigan, Abilene Christian University

Wifi Network Information:

Texas Hall

Password: trustinhim

Motel

No password required

Patton Chapel

Password: praisethelord

Lodges

No wifi available



Campus Map

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 Cedar Hill, TX 75104
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 mtlebanoncamp.com



FACILITIES

- CO** Camp Office
- DBU** DBU Hospitality House
- DGL** Dean Grande Lodge
- DH** Dining Hall
- DP** Dining Pavilion
- G** Gift Shop
- HC** Health Center (summer)
- LSR** Lone Star Room
- M** Motel
- PC** Patton Chapel
- RP** Rec Pavilion
- TXH** Texas Hall
- WC** Worship Center
- SMT** The Summit
- W** Warehouse

LODGES

- C** Cedar - L3
- CB** Chinaberry - L11
- CW** Cottonwood - L14
- E** Evergreen - L9
- GM** Gladys Moore - L4
- HB** Hackberry - L1
- H** Hickory - L12
- L** Live Oak - L8
- M** Maple - L7
- MK** Millie Kohn - L5
- O** Oakwood - L15
- P** Pecan - L2
- R** Redwood - L13
- S** Sycamore - L10
- W** Walnut - L6
- RB** Red Bud

GROUP FIRE SITES

- GFS-1** Pecan Grove
- GFS-2** Camp Chuala
- GFS-3** Inspiration Point
- GFS-4** Revelation Point

BUNKHOUSES

- Bunkhouses (1-9)

ACTIVITIES

- Recreation Fields 3-5**
- 🏐 Beach Volleyball
- 🏀 Basketball/Volleyball (1,2,3)
- 🏐 Volleyball (4,5)
- 🏊 Jump Pillow

AMENITIES

- ⚡ Zip Lines
- 🧗 Sky Trail Ropes Course
- 🏊 Pools 1 & 2
- 🚐 RV Park

MAP KEY

- 🗑️ Dumpster Locations
- 🛣️ Paved Roads
- 🛤️ Gravel Roads



No parking permit required. Most parking is near the motel (blue star).
 Check in is at the Texas Hall (orange star).

Texas Branch ASM Spring Meeting 2026 Agenda

Thursday, March 26

- 3:30 PM Texas Hall
Registration Opens (*Registration will be available between 8:30 AM-9:30 PM throughout, except during meal times and Thursday business meeting*)
- 5:00 PM - 6:00 PM Dining Hall
Dinner (must arrive between 5:00-5:30 PM)
- 6:30 PM -6:35 PM Texas Hall
Welcome and Opening Remarks
Jennifer Hennigan and William Cody
- 6:35 PM -7:45 PM
Opening Keynote - Erica Sanchez
"Oncogenic Viral Infection Drives Host Cell Metabolism: A Global and Spatial Analysis of Metabolic Alterations"
- 8:15 PM Texas Hall
Peer networking event hosted by University of Dallas ASM Chapter
- 8:15 PM - 9:15 PM Evergreen Lodge Room
Texas ASM Business Meeting

Join the meeting now

Meeting ID: 218 285 638 026 Passcode: 58GW6Qi6

Friday, March 27

- 7:30 AM - 8:20 AM Dining Hall
Breakfast (must arrive between 7:30-8:00 AM)
- 8:30 AM -10:00 AM Texas Hall
Undergraduate Student Oral Presentations
(in competition for Orville Wyss award)
- 10:00 AM - 10:15 AM BREAK
- 10:15 AM - 11:30 AM Graduate Student Oral Presentations
(in competition for Charlie Gauntt award)
- 11:30 AM- 12:30 PM Dining Hall
Lunch
- Patton Chapel
Poster set up

1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Texas Hall
Branch Advocacy 101
Nick Gentile, Assistant Director, ASM Advocacy
Engagement
Lauren Gabel, Senior Specialist, ASM Advocacy

2:00 PM- 2:30 PM

Texas Hall
Goldschmidt student awardee
Raquel Luna
"Characterization of Staphylococcus aureus Clinical
Isolates from Deep Musculoskeletal Infections for Phage
Therapy Treatment of Orthopaedic Device-Related
Infections"

2:30 PM - 3:00 PM

BREAK

3:00 PM- 5:00 PM

Patton Chapel
Student Poster Presentations and Judging

5:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Dining Hall
Dinner (must arrive between 5:00-5:30 PM)

6:30 PM - 7:45 PM

Texas Hall
Eugene and Milicent Goldschmidt Lecture
Monica Gestal
"Bordetella Hijacks Eosinophil Crosstalk with $\gamma\delta$ T Cells to
Disrupt iBALT Formation and Block Memory Responses"

7:45 PM - 8:15 PM

Awards Presentation

8:45 PM - 09:00 PM

Mimi Goldschmidt 100th birthday celebration sponsored by
UT Health Houston

09:00 PM

Branch Meeting Dance Party sponsored by
DjDeepSpinProf

Saturday, March 28

7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Dining Hall
Breakfast (must arrive between 7:30-8:00 AM)

8:30 AM - 10:30 AM

Texas Hall - Student Career Session
Stu Ravnik- (1 hr)

Mentoring Awardee - Lisa Bono (30 mins)

Peggy Cotter Awardee - Nicholas Dillon (30 mins)
"Can We Predict Antibiotic Resistance"

Mentoring Panel

MINI-CUE

8:30 AM - 11:30 AM

Patton Chapel - Microbiology and Biology Education Session

8:30 AM - 9:00 AM

Eugene and Millicent Goldschmidt Faculty Teaching Awardee:
Tammy Adair, Baylor University
"Connecting Microbiology to Community Needs: An Interactive Approach to Engaged Learning"

9:00 AM - 10:30 AM

Education Oral Presentations

10:30 AM - 10:45 AM

Break

10:45 AM - 11:30 AM

Round table Discussion Groups

11:30 AM - 12:00 PM

Texas Hall
Clean-up and check-out with ASM Organizers

See you at the 2026 Fall Meeting in Houston!