



Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation
255 Clifton Blvd., Ste. 203
Westminster, Maryland 21157
(410) 857-4890 Fax (410) 871-9031
contact@melanomaresource.org
www.melanomaresource.org

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 21, 2014

**Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Fdn. Awards \$50,000 in Research Scholarships
*Record Level of 45 Graduate Student Applicants***

Westminster, MD – The [Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation](http://www.melanomaresource.org) (JMNMF) awarded five \$10,000, nationally competitive, “Research Scholar Awards” (RSA) to exceptional graduate student researchers at leading cancer centers across the U.S. The JMNMF grants significantly enhance the potential for advancements in the melanoma cancer field and encourage a larger number of young scientists to choose melanoma research as their professional career. As first in the U.S. to fund graduate student melanoma researchers, since 2006, the JMNMF research scholarship program has attracted 198 applications from 56 prominent cancer centers and universities.

The 2014 RSA applicant pool included a record level of 45 of the country’s most promising research candidates, and 27 prominent cancer centers, nine as new institutional participants. The JMNMF program is pleased to have been able to celebrate the program’s eighth anniversary. The Research Scholar Award program was initially piloted with the Johns Hopkins Sidney Kimmel Cancer Center in 2006, and expanded nationally to benefit the broader academic, scientific, clinical and patient communities. The RSA program likewise distinguishes renowned mentoring lab directors, their universities and cancer research centers, predominantly NCI designee institutions.

According to Regina Shannon Bodnar, JMNMF Chair, “Our Foundation’s Research Scholar Awards have been one of our ‘signature’ programs in our decade of legacy accomplishments. At the grassroots graduate student level, we’ve significantly grown interest in melanoma research at leading cancer centers nationwide. If we can attract the brightest young minds, already within the nation’s cancer research pipelines, we’re that much closer to better understanding the disease, identifying the means for effective treatments and, most importantly, finding a cure for this deadly and prevalent disease.”

In 2014, the JMNMF is very pleased to award the following students and their institutions:

- Scott Callahan, Gerstner Sloan-Kettering Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences – Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center
- Inna Fedorenko, University of South Florida – H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center
- Hengyu Lu, Baylor College of Medicine – Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center
- Goran Micevic, Yale University School of Medicine – Yale Comprehensive Cancer Center
- Kipp Weiskopf, Stanford University School of Medicine - Stanford Institute

The Foundation continues to experience tremendous growth in this valuable student research program in both depth and breadth of funding, and in the diversity of candidates and institutions participating.

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The following academic/cancer research centers were represented by 2014 RSA applications:

- Baylor College of Medicine - Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center
- Boston University School of Medicine - Boston Medical Center
- Dartmouth College - Norris Cotton Cancer Center
- Duke University - Duke University Medical Center
- Emory University - Winship Cancer Institute
- Gerstner Sloan-Kettering Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences - Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Ctr.
- Loyola University Chicago - Cardinal Bernardin Cancer Center
- Mayo Clinic College of Medicine - Mayo Clinic
- Medical University of South Carolina - Hollings Cancer Center
- Northwestern University - Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center
- New York University - NYU Cancer Institute
- Penn State University College of Medicine - Hershey Cancer Institute
- Rutgers University - The Cancer Institute of New Jersey
- Stanford University - Stanford Institute
- The Ohio State University - OSU Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Alabama - UAB Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Iowa - Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Minnesota - Masonic Cancer Center
- Univ. of New Mexico - UNM Cancer Research & Treatment Ctr
- University of Pennsylvania - Abramson Cancer Center
- University of Pennsylvania - The Wistar Institute
- University of South Florida - H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center
- University of Texas - MD Anderson Cancer Center
- University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio Cancer Therapy & Research Center
- University of Vermont College of Medicine - Vermont Cancer Center
- Vanderbilt University - Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center
- Yale University School of Medicine - Yale Comprehensive Cancer Center

The JMNMF applauds all and outstanding recognition is well-deserved by each of these institutions for encouragement of their participating RSA graduate candidates. And, equally important beyond research funding, nothing more greatly impacts the research communities' collective efforts, than the existence of a broad national base of independent and collaborative melanoma research programs, firmly evident in the JMNMF 2014 "Research Scholar Award" program pool.

The JMNMF also proudly recognizes the RSA Professional Advisory Board that unselfishly review student researcher applications thoroughly, and provide extensive expertise and professionalism in objectively evaluating candidate applications.

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In 2014, the JMNMF is very pleased to have worked with the following Advisory Board members:

Rhoda M. Alani, M.D.
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Department of Microbiology and Immunology
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Gavin P. Robertson, Ph.D.
Professor, Pharmacology, Pathology, Dermatology
and Surgery
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Director, Penn State Melanoma Center
Director, Penn State Melanoma Therapeutics Program
Director, Foreman Fdn. Melanoma Research Laboratory
Penn State University
Hershey, PA

Yardena Samuels, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Dept. of Molecular Cell Biology
The Weizmann Institute of Science
Rehovot, Israel

All 45 RSA candidates were objectively evaluated in two stages utilizing a quantifiable rating utilizing a quantifiable rating spreadsheet tool: First, independently by the RSA Professional Advisory Board members; and, secondly, on an independent basis by the Foundation's RSA Committee comprised of Board of Director members. Independent results for both groups were then separately compiled and utilized by the RSA Committee for final awards discussion and selection. Though difficult, the final evaluations and awards are the result of a broad collective analysis.

All RSA recipients, and the entire pool of applicants, represent the forefront of compelling research to further the understanding of melanoma biology, develop effective treatments and, to definitively find a cure.

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JOANNA M. NICOLAY MELANOMA FOUNDATION

The [Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation](http://www.melanomaresource.org) is a non-profit public charity founded in January, 2004 to foster melanoma education, advocacy and research. In just ten years, the Foundation has become an influential voice in the melanoma community and has been established as a national “voice for melanoma prevention, detection, care and cure.”

The Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation is proud of numerous achievements to date that include:

- Underwriting melanoma research at numerous prestigious cancer centers across the U.S., through the Foundation’s Research Scholarship Awards (RSA) earned by the best and brightest young graduate student scientists, to advance discovery of effective treatments and, ultimately, a cure for melanoma;
- Successfully launching and expanding a comprehensive High School health curriculum, “Teen Skin Cancer & Melanoma Awareness,” for the key demographic of students (and their families), to learn the deadly risks of melanoma skin cancer and “UV-safe” preventative and detection practices;
- Ongoing targeted initiatives, and multi-channel outreach, to ensure broader national awareness of melanoma prevention and detection by the general public; and,
- Providing a broad spectrum of essential advocacy and care resources for patients and the entire melanoma community.

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JMNMF CONTACT:

Gregory Safko
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gsafko@melanomaresource.org
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