



Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**April 16, 2013**

### **Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Fdn. Awards \$100,000 in Research Scholarships 11% Increase in Grant Funding; Record Level of Graduate Student Applicants**

Westminster, MD – The [Joanna M. Nicolay Melanoma Foundation](http://www.melanomaresource.org) (JMNMF) awarded ten \$10,000, nationally competitive, “Research Scholar Awards” (RSA) to exceptional graduate student researchers at leading cancer centers across the U.S. The JMNMF grants increased 11% in 2013 (and by nearly 30% in 2012), to significantly enhance the potential for advancements in the melanoma cancer field and to 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 attracted 146 applications from 47 prominent cancer centers and universities.

The 2013 RSA applicant pool included 44 of the country’s most promising research candidates, and 28 prominent cancer centers, eight as new institutional participants. The JMNMF program is pleased to celebrate the program’s seventh 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’ are invaluable at the grassroots level, to specifically grow interest in melanoma research, at leading cancer research centers nationwide. If we can attract the brightest young minds, that are considering or are already within the nation’s cancer research pipelines, to pursue a career in melanoma research – 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 increasingly prevalent disease.”

In 2013, the JMNMF is very pleased to award the following students and their institutions:

- Matthew Alexander, Dartmouth College – Norris Cotton Cancer Center
- David Benjamin, Massachusetts Inst. of Technology– Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research
- Giuseppina Claps, Sanford-Burnham Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences – Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute
- Katherine E. Hutchinson, Vanderbilt University – Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center
- Amanpreet Kaur, University of the Sciences in Philadelphia – The Wistar Institute
- Janani Krishnamurthy, University of Texas – MD Anderson Cancer Center
- Curtis H. Kugel, III, Thomas Jefferson University – Kimmel Cancer Center
- Andrew Sedgewick, University of Pittsburgh – University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute
- Elizabeth Shenk, Boston University – Boston Medical Center
- Andressa Sodre C. Laino, University of South Florida – H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center

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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.

The following academic/cancer research centers were represented by 2013 RSA applications:

- Baylor College of Medicine – Dan L. Duncan Cancer Center
- Boston University – Boston Medical Center
- Dartmouth College – Norris Cotton Cancer Center
- Duke University – Duke University Medical Center
- Harvard University – Dana Farber/Harvard Cancer Center
- Massachusetts Institute of Technology – Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT
- Medical College of Wisconsin – Cancer Center at the Medical
- Northwestern University – The Robert H. Lurie Comprehensive Cancer Center
- New York University – New York University Cancer Institute
- Oregon State University – Knight Cancer Institute
- Penn State University – Hershey Cancer Institute
- Sanford-Burnham Graduate Sch. of Biomedical Sciences - Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Inst.
- Thomas Jefferson University – Kimmel Cancer Center
- University at Buffalo – Roswell Park Cancer Institute
- Univ. of Connecticut – Carole & Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Iowa – Holden Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Massachusetts Medical School
- University of Miami – Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Minnesota – Masonic Cancer Center
- University of New Mexico – Univ. of New Mexico Cancer Research & Treatment Center
- University of North Carolina – Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center
- University of Pittsburgh – University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute
- University of South Florida – H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center
- University of Texas – MD Anderson Cancer Center
- University of Texas Health Science Ctr. at San Antonio - Cancer Therapy & Research Center
- University of the Sciences in Philadelphia – The Wistar Institute
- University of Virginia – University of Virginia Cancer Center
- Vanderbilt University – Vanderbilt-Ingram 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 RSA 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 which is firmly evident in the JMNMF 2013 "Research Scholar Award" program year.

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 2013 the Professional Advisory Board was expanded to accommodate the program's growth, to incl.:

Rhoda M. Alani, M.D.  
Herbert Mescon Professor and Chair  
Department of Dermatology  
Boston University School of Medicine  
Dermatologist-in-Chief  
Boston Medical Center  
Boston, MA

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Kimmel Cancer Center  
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Paul B. Chapman, M.D.  
Attending Physician, Melanoma-Sarcoma Service  
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center  
Professor of Medicine, Weill Cornell Medical College  
New York, NY

Jeffrey E. Gershenwald, M.D., FACS  
Professor of Surgery  
Professor of Cancer Biology  
Depts. of Surgical Oncology and Cancer Biology  
Medical Director, Melanoma and Skin Center  
The University of Texas M. D. Anderson Cancer Center  
Houston, TX

John M. Kirkwood, M.D.  
Usher Professor of Medicine, Dermatology and  
Translational Science  
Vice Chair for Clinical Research, Dept of Medicine  
University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine  
Director, Melanoma Program  
University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute  
Pittsburgh, PA

David W. Mullins, Ph.D.  
Ass't. Professor of Microbiology & Immunology, Geisel  
School of Medicine at Dartmouth  
Adjunct Assistant Professor of Microbiology, Immunology and  
Cancer Biology, UVA School of Medicine  
Department of Microbiology and Immunology  
Norris Cotton Cancer Center  
Lebanon, NH

Gavin P. Robertson, Ph.D.  
Professor, Pharmacology, Pathology, Dermatology  
and Surgery  
Dept. of Pharmacology and Penn State Cancer Institute  
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, Department of Molecular Cell Biology  
The Weizmann Institute of Science  
Wolfson Building for Biological Research  
Rehovot, Israel

Jedd D. Wolchock, M.D., Ph.D.  
Director, Immunotherapy Clinical Trials  
Associate Attending Physician, Melanoma-Sarcoma Svc.  
Assoc. Director, Ludwig Ctr. for Cancer Immunotherapy  
Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center  
New York, NY

All 44 RSA candidates were objectively evaluated in two stages 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.

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Five broad candidate evaluation categories included: Scope & Innovation; Feasibility; Organization; Future Collaboration & Application; and, Overall panel/committee recommendations of individual applicants that also ruled out any applicant/evaluator bias/conflicts. Each category for all applicants was scored within a range of metrics to reach a summary score. Though difficult, the final evaluations and awards are the result of a broad collective analysis.

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The Foundation continues to refine and improve the Research Scholar Award evaluative process each year. 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.

### **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 nine years, the Foundation has grown dramatically to become an influential voice in the melanoma community and is now established as a national, and international, “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:**

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