

**Graduate Program in Life Sciences
and
Office of Postdoctoral Scholars
2026 Annual Awards Ceremony**

**Monday, October 26, 2026
3 p.m.
HSF II Auditorium**

**PhD Scholar Award
PhD Thesis Award
Elaine Miye Otani Memorial Award
MS Scholar Award
Alumnus Award
Teacher of the Year Award
Dr. Mark E. Shirtliff PhD Student Mentor Award
Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence in Research Award
Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence in Mentorship Award
Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence in Service Award
Faculty Excellence in Postdoctoral Mentorship Award
Dedicated Service Award**

2026 GPILS/OPS Awards

Opening Remarks by

Jessica A. Mong, PhD, *Assistant Dean for Graduate and Postdoctoral Scholars, University of Maryland School of Medicine*

Kenneth H. Wong, PhD, *Dean, University of Maryland School of Graduate Studies*

PhD Scholar Award

Katie Ko

Program in Molecular Medicine

Presented by David Serre, Dr. rer. nat., Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

This award recognizes a student who exhibits outstanding academic performance and great potential as a scientist early in their training period.

PhD Thesis Project Award

Meghann Hoos, MS

Program in Neuroscience

Presented by Christine C. Cloak, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Diagnostic Radiology and Nuclear Medicine

This award recognizes a student whose thesis work is highly significant within their field of study.

Elaine Miye Otani Memorial Award

Jillian M. Baker, MS, PhD

Program in Molecular Microbiology and Immunology

Presented by Tim C. Luetkens, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

This award recognizes a student of outstanding character who demonstrates superior academic performance and exceptional potential to become a competitive and resourceful independent investigator.

2026 GPILS/OPS Awards

MS Scholar Award

Cassidy Beck

Program in Cellular and Molecular Biomedical Science

Presented by Sarah B. Sunshine, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences

This award recognizes a student in a master's program who has demonstrated an outstanding record of academic performance and shown great potential as a scientist.

Alumnus Award

Ekemini A.U. Riley, PhD

Program in Molecular Medicine

Presented by Toni M. Antalis, PhD, Professor, Department of Pharmacology and Physiology

This award recognizes the exceptional achievements of an alum of the Graduate Program in Life Sciences or a program that predated the creation of the Graduate Program in Life Sciences.

Teacher of the Year

Thomas A. Blanpied, PhD

Department of Pharmacology and Physiology

Presented by Christie Dionisos and Alexander Wiltse, students in the Program of Neuroscience

This award recognizes a Graduate Program in Life Sciences faculty member who is an outstanding and committed educator.

Dr. Mark E. Shirtliff PhD Student Mentor Award

David A. Rasko, PhD

Department of Microbial Pathogenesis

University of Maryland School of Dentistry

Presented by Robert K. Ernst, Professor and Chair, Department of Microbial Pathogenesis, University of Maryland School of

This award was created in honor of Mark E. Shirtliff, PhD, former Professor in the School of Dentistry, Department of Microbial Pathogenesis, and School of Medicine, Department of Microbiology and Immunology. The award recognizes faculty members who have a record of supportive graduate student mentorship.

2026 GPILS/OPS Awards

Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence in Research Award

Alagie Jassey, PhD

Department of Microbiology and Immunology

Presented by William T. Jackson, PhD, Professor, Department of Microbiology and Immunology

This award recognizes a postdoctoral fellow who has an outstanding record of research performance, professional development, and other accomplishments.

Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence in Mentorship Award

Anke Hua, PhD

Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science

Presented by Shabnam Lateef, MS, student in the Program of Physical Rehabilitation Science

This award recognizes a postdoctoral fellow who has an outstanding record of mentorship of graduate students or other research-related trainees.

Postdoctoral Fellow Excellence in Service Award

Laura E. Carreto-Binaghi, MD, PhD

Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health

Presented by Marcelo B. Sztein, MD, Department of Pediatrics

This award recognizes a postdoctoral fellow of outstanding character who shows evidence of a consistent record of service as well as a good working relationship with peers and faculty and has earned the respect of others.

Faculty Excellence in Postdoctoral Mentorship Award

Zubair M. Ahmed, PhD

Department of Otorhinolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery

Presented by Jin-Young Koh, PhD and Sakina Rehman, PhD, postdoctoral fellows in the Department of Otorhinolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery

This award recognizes an outstanding faculty member who has a record of supportive mentorship of postdoctoral fellows in their lab.

Closing Remarks by

Mark T. Gladwin, MD, Dean, University of Maryland School of Medicine

Special Thanks to Our 2026 GPILS/OPS Awards Committee

Committee Co-chairs

T. Chase Francis, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychiatry

Melissa Kroeger, MA, Senior Program Specialist, Graduate Program in Life Sciences

Committee Members

Emily A. Aery Jones, PhD

Alfred Boakye, MA, MPhil

Andrew J. Bower, PhD

Laura E. Carreto-Binaghi, MD, PhD

Jonathan F. Fay, PhD

Ryan B. Felix, PhD

Katie S. Hummel, PhD

Sunday I. Idoko, PhD, MBA, MSc

Katherine Koestler

Shashanka Murthy

Yaminisree Nagidi, MS

Abigail Postle, MS

Alan Rathbun, PhD, MPH

Alexandria A. Ratzki-Leewing, PhD, MSc

Gretchen Tucker, MA, PhD

Daiana Vieira, PhD