Current Fellows

The Fellows are distributed among five of UT Dallas’s eight schools, in fields ranging from chemistry to neuroscience and management. Eleven current Fellows hold federally-funded research fellowships, including the National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship (NSF GRF), the National Institutes of Health’s National Research Service Award (NIH NRSA) and Blueprint D-SPAN Award, and the Department of Energy’s Office of Science Graduate Student Research (SCGSR) award. Collectively the Fellows have achieved to date more than 100 academic publications, numerous patents, and several spin-out companies. Their research collaborations span the globe, and they have mentored dozens of research trainees.

Diana L. Alatalo
Faculty Host: Fatemeh Hassanipour, Ph.D.

Diana Alatalo earned a B.S. in electrical engineering (2015) and M.S. in mechanical engineering (2016) from UT Dallas and is now at work on a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering. A 2017 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awardee, Diana studies biotransport phenomena in human lactation to improve both short- and long-term health outcomes for mothers and infants.

Alexandra Arteaga
Faculty Host: Danieli B. C. Rodrigues, Ph.D.

Alexandra Arteaga graduated cum laude with a B.S. in biology and a minor in math from UT El Paso in 2010. She earned an M.S. in molecular biology in 2013. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering. As an awardee of the 2019 NIH National Research Service Award Fellowship (F31), her research focuses on making orthopedic implants more successful for diabetic patients.

Matthew Bergschneider
Faculty Host: Kyeongjae Cho, Ph.D.

Matthew Bergschneider earned a B.S. in engineering physics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2016. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in materials science at UT Dallas, researching solid state battery materials with ab initio material design and experimental validation.

Federico Bernardoni
Faculty Host: Stefano Leonardi, Ph.D.

Federico Bernardoni earned his B.S. (2014) and M.Sc. (2018) in Aerospace Engineering at the University of Pisa, Italy, with a minor in aerodynamics. In 2018 he presented his Master thesis results on the flow over rough surfaces at iTi Conference on Turbulence VIII held in Bertinoro, Italy, at the 71st Annual Meeting of the APS Division of fluid dynamics held in Atlanta, USA, and in 2019 at DLES12 held in Madrid, Spain. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering. His work is focused on the aerodynamic interactions of wind turbines for large wind-farms control.
Melanie H. Bowler  
Faculty Host: Jason D. Slinker, Ph.D.

Melanie Bowler earned a B.S. in physics at UT Dallas in 2017. A 2018 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship winner, Melanie is pursuing a Ph.D. in physics. She works with light-emitting electrochemical cells to improve their performance as high efficiency emitters.

Sara Benham  
Faculty Host: Lisa Goffman, Ph.D.

Sara Benham graduated from Southwestern University in 2006 with a B.A. in Spanish and M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology from Purdue University in 2016. She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in Communication Sciences and Disorders. She was awarded an NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellowship F31 (NIDCD) for her research in the lexical, phonological and speech motor contributions to word and sound learning in early typical and atypical language development.

Wesley Brigner  
Faculty Host: Joseph Friedman, Ph.D.

Wesley Brigner graduated with a B.S. in Electrical Engineering from the University of Texas at Dallas in the Spring of 2020. He has been working for three years at Dr. Joseph Friedman’s NeuroSpinCompute Laboratory to develop next-generation hardware for machine learning systems and is a full member of the Sigma Xi research honors society. Wesley will continue his work as a Ph.D. student and 2020 NSF Graduate Fellowship recipient.

Avamarie S. Brueggeman  
Faculty Host: John H. L. Hansen, Ph.D.

Ava Brueggeman graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville in 2018 with a B.S. in electrical engineering and a minor in computer science. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in electrical engineering. A 2018 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awardee, Ava studies digital signal processing for improving speech recognition in cochlear implant users.

E. Ammon Butcher  
Faculty Host: Gil Sadka, Ph.D.

Ammon Butcher earned a B.S. in accounting at Brigham Young University, Idaho, in 2013 and an M.A. in accounting at the Ohio State University in 2015. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in management science, with a concentration in accounting. Ammon is currently interested in analytical research, specifically research that pertains to agency theory, incentives, innovation and disclosure.

Nathan Churcher  
Faculty Host: Shalini Prasad, Ph.D.

Nathan Churcher graduated Magna Cum Laude with a B.S in Biomedical Engineering in 2019. As a LSAMP Bridge to Doctorate awardee, he is pursuing a Ph.D in Biomedical Engineering at UT Dallas investigating the use of electrochemistry and biosensors in the detection of neuropeptides to detect and monitor chronic stress.
Haokun Du
Faculty Host: Elena Katok, Ph.D.

Haokun Du graduated from Sun Yat-sen University in 2019 with Honors (Excellent Dissertation Award and Excellent Graduate Award). His bachelor’s degree is Economics (finance concentration). He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in management science with a concentration in operations management, and has research interests in various topics, both traditional areas of OM and interdisciplinary subjects. Currently, his main focus is supply chain management, but he’s always open to possible collaborations.

Alex Garcia Topete
Faculty Host: Roger F. Malina, Ph.D.

Alex Garcia Topete earned a B.A. in arts and performance in 2011 and a M.A. in arts & technology in 2017, both from UT Dallas. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in arts, technology, and emerging communication focusing on multidisciplinary collaboration methods that foster innovation and creativity, spanning media studios, design firms, business incubators, and research labs.

Tuhin Harit
Faculty Host: Vikram Nanda, Ph.D.

Tuhin Harit has earned a B.Tech in Production Engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee in 2009 and an MBA from Indian School of Business in 2016. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Finance, and has research interests in asset pricing and agency problems, largely using empirical methods. Tuhin also has nine years of work experience with firms such as J.P. Morgan, and KPMG and has worked in geographies such as Australia, Africa and Middle East.

Jianyao “Janelle” He
Faculty Host: Vikram Nanda, Ph.D.

Jianyao graduated first class honors with a BSc in quantitative finance from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in 2019. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in management science, with a concentration in finance. Jianyao is currently interested in asset pricing and behavioral finance.

David M. Heidtman
Faculty Host: Michael J. Rebello, Ph.D.

David Heidtman earned a B.S. in molecular biology and chemistry at UT Dallas in 2010, and an MBA in finance at the University of Michigan-Flint in 2016. Pursuing a Ph.D. in finance, he researches fraud and corruption, contract design, and game theory.

Dominique James
Faculty Host: Kenneth Hoyt, Ph.D.

Dominique James earned a B.S. in biomedical engineering from the University of Rochester in 2019. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering. Her research will focus on using phase-change contrast agents and ultrasound strategies to estimate pressure noninvasively. Applications of this topic may apply to tumor interstitial pressure and/or portal vein hypertension pressure estimation.
Taek Kang
Faculty Host: Leonidas Bleris, Ph.D.

Taek Kang earned a B.S. in chemical and biomolecular engineering from the Johns Hopkins University in 2009. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering. Taek’s research focuses on building and studying biological circuits in mammalian cells to decipher the underlying principles that guide their function.

Jinhyun Kim
Faculty Host: Jiyoung Kim, Ph.D.

Jinhyun Kim earned his B.S. (2017) and M.E. (2019) in Material Science and Engineering from Inha University, Korea. He is pursuing his Ph.D. in Material Science and Engineering at UT Dallas, with a focus on atomic layer deposition techniques and in-situ and ex-situ material characterization methods.

Zheng Liu
Faculty Host: Vikram Nanda, Ph.D.


Yingdong Mao
Faculty Host: Feng Zhao, Ph.D.

Mao earned a B.S. in applied mathematics and economics from Yunnan University of Finance and Economics in 2015, and an M.S. in mathematical finance from Bentley University in 2017. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in management science, with a concentration in finance. He focuses on asset pricing and risk management.

Ryan Margolis
Faculty Host: Kenneth Hoyt, Ph.D.

Ryan Margolis earned his B.S. in Physics and Industrial Mathematics from West Chester in 2013. He graduated with his M.S. in Biomedical Engineering in 2018 from Drexel University. He is pursuing his Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering with a focus on image-guided focused ultrasound for improved cancer treatment.

Alexander Menke
Faculty Host: Eric Welin, Ph.D.

Alexander Menke graduated cum laude from Texas Christian University (2020) with a B.S. in Chemistry. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in Chemistry. Alexander will focus on the total synthesis of organic molecules with an emphasis on molecules with anti-cancer properties.

Shelby Mohr-Allen
Faculty Host: Victor Varner, Ph.D.

Shelby graduated from Oklahoma State University in 2019 with a B.S in chemical engineering and a minor in biochemistry. She is pursuing a Ph.D. in biomedical engineering. Shelby is currently studying lung development, specifically how pressure and other mechanical factors effect lung branching morphogenesis.
Austin Mordahl  
Faculty Host: Shiyi Wei, Ph.D.

Austin Mordahl graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in Software Engineering from UT Dallas in 2018. As a 2020 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awardee, his research concerns the automatic detection of bugs and privacy leaks in both desktop and mobile software.

Benjamin R. Perez  
Faculty Host: Walter E. Voit, Ph.D.

Ben Perez graduated from Coe College in 2016 with a B.A. in physics. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in materials science and investigates novel materials for additive manufacturing for a variety of applications.

Peter D. Reyntjens  
Faculty Host: William G. Vandenberghe, Ph.D.

Peter Reyntjens earned a B.S. in electrical engineering at KU Leuven, Belgium, in 2016, and an Erasmus Mundus dual-degree M.S. in nanoscience and nanotechnology from KU Leuven, Belgium, and Chalmers Technical University, Sweden, in 2018. He is pursuing a joint Ph.D. in materials science at UT Dallas and Imec/KU Leuven. Peter’s research is in the field of spintronics, looking for new materials that can be used for memory storage.

Jonathan R. Riley  
Faculty Host: Michael P. Kilgard, Ph.D.

Jonathan Riley graduated from UT Dallas in 2008 with a B.A. in biology. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in cognition and neuroscience and investigates the mechanisms that govern cortical plasticity and their application to treatment of neurological disorders.

Mónica Rivas  
Faculty Host: Vladimir Gevorgyan, Ph.D.

Mónica Rivas was born and raised in Bogotá, Colombia. She received her B.S. in Chemistry with a Biochemistry track from the University of Central Florida. In 2017, she joined the Gevorgyan group at the University of Illinois at Chicago as a PhD student, and later at the University of Texas at Dallas. Her work has focused on the development of mild and selective C(sp^3)–H functionalization methods. In collaboration with the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, and as an F31 NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellow (NIGMS), she will be exploring ways of diversifying radiochemistry toward practical approaches for the synthesis and application of imaging agents.

Arun Kumar Rout  
Faculty Host: Ganesh Janakiraman, Ph.D.

Arun Kumar Rout earned a B.Tech. in mechanical engineering from Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur in 2007, and an MBA from Indian School of Business in 2013. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in management science with a concentration in operations management, and has research interests in the renewable energy sector with focus on policy decisions. Arun also has eight years of work experience with Schlumberger, The Boston Consulting Group, and a startup.
Danyal A. Siddiqui  
Faculty Host: Danieli B. C. Rodrigues, Ph.D.

Danyal Siddiqui graduated summa cum laude with a B.S. in biomedical engineering from UT Dallas in 2015. He earned an M.S. in 2016 and is pursuing a Ph.D., both in biomedical engineering. A 2017 NSF Graduate Research Fellowship awardee, his research focuses on how bacterial adhesion and mechanical loading influence degradation of the bioceramic zirconia in the context of dental implant systems.

Minh H. Tran  
Faculty Host: Baowei Fei, Ph.D.

Minh earned a B.S. in Electrical Engineering with a Minor in Computer Science from University of Wyoming in 2020. He is pursuing a PhD in Bioengineering, looking for new ways to diagnose diseases using biomedical imaging. Beyond science, he enjoys the visual arts of drawing and photography.

Jiadi “Kevin” Xu  
Faculty Host: Umit Gurun, Ph.D.

Kevin earned a B.S. in material chemistry and a B.Econ. in finance at Nankai University in 2013, and an M.S. in finance at Syracuse University in 2015. Pursuing a Ph.D. in management science (finance concentration), he focuses on asset pricing, investment, and portfolio management.

Hang Yang  
Faculty Host: Michael Rebello, Ph.D.

Hang Yang earned a B.S. in mathematics from Gordon College in 2011 and an M.S. in financial mathematics from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in 2014. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in management science with a concentration in finance; his research focuses on risk management and game theory.

Zehan “Allen” Zhao  
Faculty Host: Vijay S. Mookerjee, Ph.D.

Allen Zhao earned a B.S. in information management from the University of International Business and Economics in 2015, and an M.S. in management science and engineering from Tsinghua University in 2018. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in management science with a concentrating in information systems. Allen is interested in helping business utilize the power of information technology, and applying state-of-the-art technologies in business environments.

Mark Zuppichini  
Faculty Host: Bart Rypma, Ph.D.

Mark Zuppichini earned a B.S. in Neuroscience (2013) from the University of Delaware, and a M.A. in Psychology (2017) from Montclair State University. He published his master’s thesis that focused on subsections of the hippocampus and mnemonic ability in multiple sclerosis as first-author and is now working towards a Ph.D. in Cognition and Neuroscience at UT-Dallas. Mark uses neuroimaging and psychometric methods to investigate the underlying neurophysiology of cognitive impairment due to multiple sclerosis, and in 2020 he was awarded the NIH National Research Service Award (F31) in support of this research.