PROCLIVITAS

25-26 Year in Review

The University of Texas at Austin
Waggoner Center for
Alcohol & Addiction Research

2025-2026 Quick Facts

- 12.6 Million in active NIH and NSF grants
- 101 publications in peer-reviewed journals
- 3 PhDs conferred

Degrees Conferred

Congratulations to Waggoner Lab students that have earned their PhDs!

Alexa Wheeler (Orsini Lab)
Thesis Title: "Understanding the behavioral and neurobiological substrates of risky decision making and their implications for opioid use disorder"

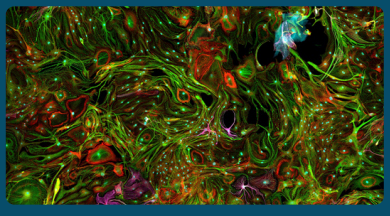
Erika Carlson (Nixon Lab)
Thesis Title: "Mind your microglia: Effects of alcohol across adulthood and aging"

Claire Zagorski (Reveles Lab)

Accolades, Awards and News

Jesse Plotkin (Messing Lab) won the UT Austin Visualizing Science Competition

Every year, the College of Natural Sciences invites faculty, staff and students to send in the most striking and fascinating images from their research for the college-wide Visualizing Science competition. Jesse Plotkin's entrance of an image of cultured astrocytes was awarded the Top Prize.



Accolades, Awards and News

Kat Motovilov wins Empower Your Pitch Competition

Empower Your Pitch" is a skill-development series and research communication contest designed to equip participants with strategies to effectively communicate complex ideas in just three minutes. Kat, a graduate student in the Melamed lab, won with her pitch entitled "Should You Trust Your Gut: The Decision to Drink."

Dr. Reuben Gonzales receives the 2026 RSA Lifetime Achievement Award

The Research Society on Alcoholism Lifetime Achievement Award recognizes a person who has had a long, balanced career including contributions to alcohol research, training, service and advocacy that have had a lasting impact on the alcohol research field.

Dr. Katie McCormick receives K01 award from the National Institute on Drug Abuse

K01 awards provide support and protected time and career development in the biomedical, behavioral, or clinical sciences leading to research independence. Dr. McCormick, postdoc in the Claborn lab and Cowden Fellow, was awarded the K01 to support her research project entitled "Adapting and Pilot Testing Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention for Substance Use Peer Workers"

Dr. Lauren Dobbs receives CNS Teaching Excellence Award

The UT College of Natural Science Teaching Excellence Award recognizes excellence in teaching and mentoring. Only 11 faculty across all of CNS were given this award so it is quite an honor and indication of Lauren's dedication and skill in connecting with and teaching our students.

Dr. Nihal Salem receives K99 award from NIAAA

K99 Awards are intended to provide support for 1- 2 additional years of postdoctoral training before moving into a tenure-track position. Dr. Salem, a postdoc in the Mayfield lab, received the award for her project that will investigate if genetic rescuing of gene networks that are known to be dysregulated in alcohol-dependent mice will reverse escalated alcohol use.

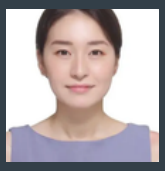
Kat Motovilov awarded NIH NRSA Predoctoral Fellowship

Kat Motovilov, a graduate student in the Melamed lab, was awarded a Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) to support her dissertation research investigating the role of the gut microbiome in alcohol use disorder using a rodent model of alcohol drinking. NRSA fellowships are competitive, peer-reviewed NIH funding awarded to promising predoctoral students to enhance their research training.

Dr. Debby Jacobvitz receives Bowlby-Ainsworth Award

The Bowlby-Ainsworth Award is given by Center for Mental Health Promotion and the New York Attachment Consortium in recognition of exemplary research on attachment theory and other areas of family relationship. Dr. Jacobvitz earned the award for "groundbreaking research on disorganized attachment, frightening parental behavior, and family relationships..."

2026-2027 Billi Terresa Cowden Postdoctoral Fellows



Yeonha Ju (Fenno Lab)

2026-2027 Homer Lindsey Bruce & Fred Murphy Jones Fellows

Payton Kahanek (Orsini Lab): ILS/ Microbiology Graduate Program

Hanna Bow (Orsini Lab): INP Gradaute Student

Lisa Wang (Pierce Lab): ILS/Microbiology Graduate Program

Bea McClaine (Jacobvitz Lab): Graduate Student in Human Development and Family Sciences

Lauren Singleton (Nixon Lab): Graduate Student in Pharm/Tox

Adriana Souto Pereira Nuncio (Melamed Lab): ILS/ Microbiology Graduate Program

2026-2027 Homer Lindsey Bruce & Fred Murphy Jones Fellows

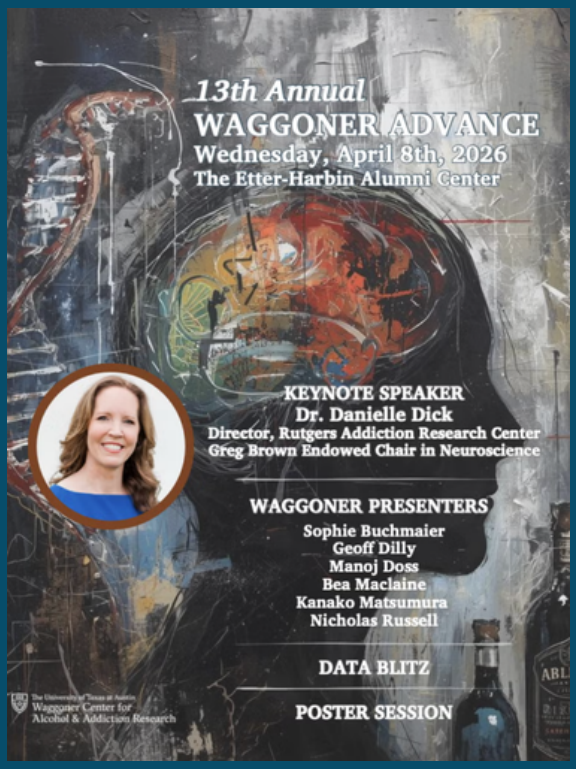
Yungting Ouyang (Jacobvitz Lab): Graduate Student in Human Development and Family Sciences

The Waggoner Advance

The 13 Annual Waggoner Advance
April 8, 2026

An annual retreat showcasing research advances by the Center's principal investigators, postdoctoral fellows and students.

Featuring Keynote Speaker:
Dr. Danielle Dick

Greg Brown Endowed Chair in Neuroscience
Director, Rutgers Addiction Research Center

"Using New Advances in Genetics to Prevent and Treat Substance Use Disorders"