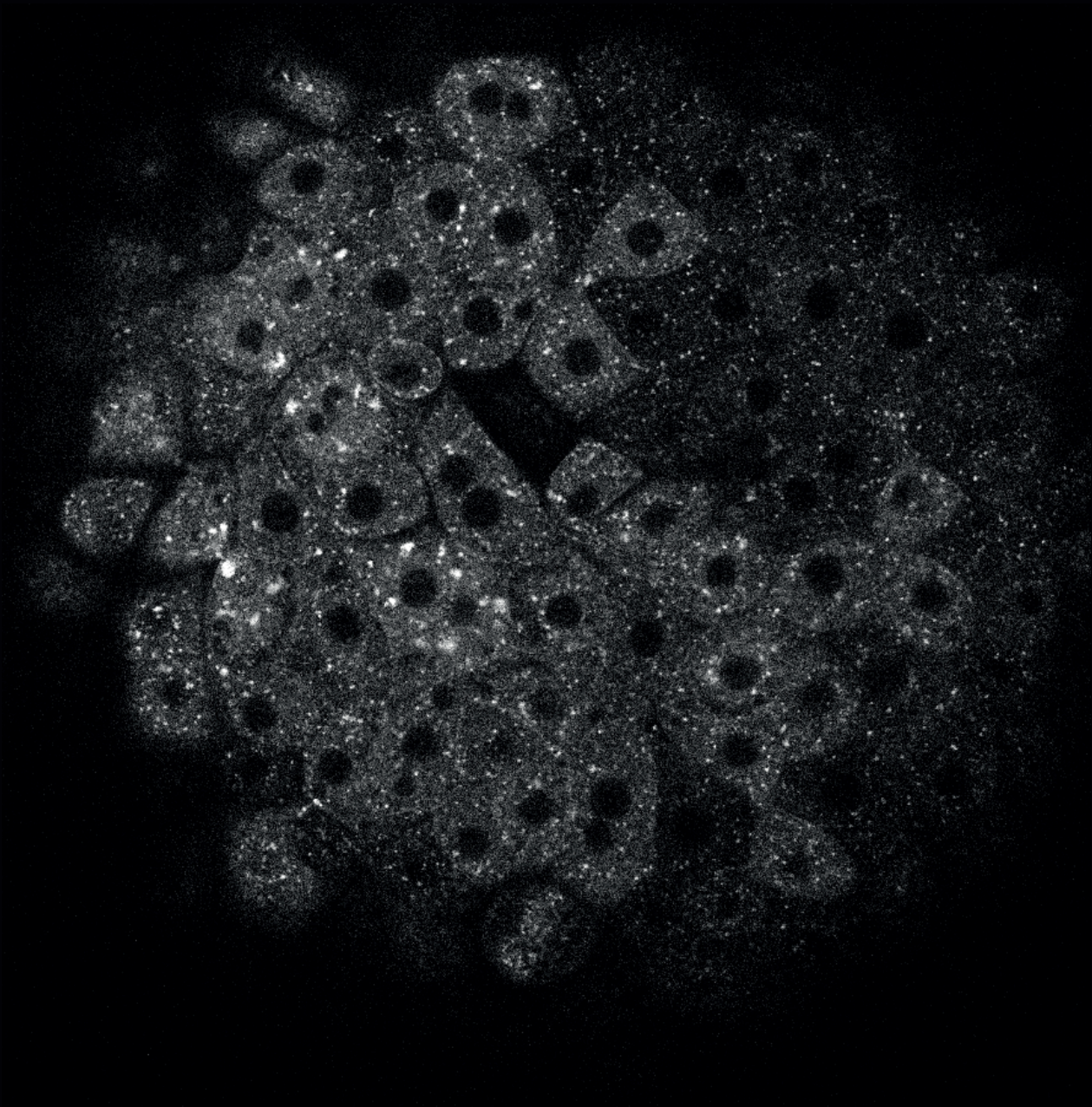


StuCom

Cancer, Stem Cells & Developmental Biology

Edition of October 2020



Goodbye of StuCom '19-'20

Online activities

Introduction week of new CSDB students

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INTRODUCTION

Dear new, in-between, graduated and alumni CSDB-students,

Let's be honest: what kind of year is 2020??? Bushfires, devastating floods, a pandemic called COVID-19, volcano eruptions, earthquakes, a lock-down period, sleepy Zoom meetings, a failed Western Blot, a coughing colleague in the hood next to you, forgotten samples on the bench, grabbing the last aliquot of all chemicals you need in one day... But besides all these disasters, we are still here and we are proud of you! Even in these conditions you are holding up and you are doing great.

So, after this motivational speech, we will cheer you up even more by presenting you the last newsletter made by StuCom '19'20. This newsletter consists of multiple throwbacks to for example the online escape room (FUN), the end-of-semester BBQ (FUNFUN) and the introduction week with all the new CSDB students (FUN-FUNFUN). You can read an alumnus tale, experience abroad and our new column in which in-between CSDB students will share their experiences and hopefully give you some good advice. When you have a 10 minute waiting step, you can read the wall of fame and shame (try not to make the same mistakes) or make one of the quizzes.

We loved being the StuCom and getting to know each other better, and of course all students that joined our seminars, social activities and (virtual) retreat. We also want to thank Joost for helping us and collaborating with us. Joost is our true hero! We hope you enjoyed this year as much as we did, except for some "minor" pandemic related problems.

This October edition Newsletter is the last gift from StuCom '19'20 to you. We wish the next StuCom good luck, we will see you soon online or in real-life and for now: enjoy reading!

All the best,

StuCom '19'20

P.S. In case you were wondering:
yes, we will even miss Jip's 12 cloves of garlic.

2020 every second

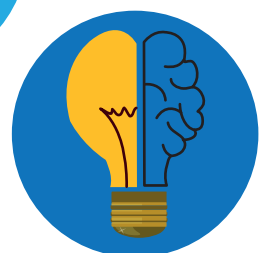
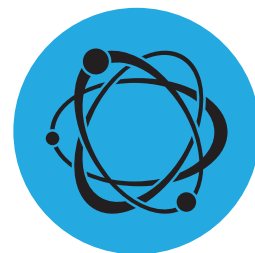


Virtual scientific retreat

Due to Covid-19, the annual Cancer, Stem cells & Developmental biology was not able to take place. This means the new StuCom is able to start where we left off and use our preparations. However, we thought being up to date with the research of our co-students would still be possible. That is why we organised the first-ever online retreat on July 15th, which resembled the live retreat quite well. Both first- and second-year students had prepared a graphical abstract of their internship or writing assignment. This means, they were challenged to reach their best Monet, Rembrandt or Picasso version of themselves and create a masterpiece. They were asked to prepare a short summary about this graphical abstract, to give a concise insight for the online audience. All attendants were split up into three groups, where everyone was able to explain their abstract and tell what they have been working on.

That is where for instance Sabina Jasarevic talked about her 9-month internship, where she focussed on inter- and intralinear senescence heterogeneity and Lucca Derks explained on breakage-fusion-bridge cycles in the genomic landscape of cancer from her second internship. After approximately 5 minutes of taking the stage, or screen, the audience was able to ask the presenter questions and a short discussion was possible.

Even though it wasn't the same as a live retreat, all in all it was a good alternative to become aware of all the ongoing research and the projects our co-students have worked on!





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Escape room

Word riddles, formulas, maths and chances: all of this and more was part of the online Escape Room that was organized on the 25th of June.

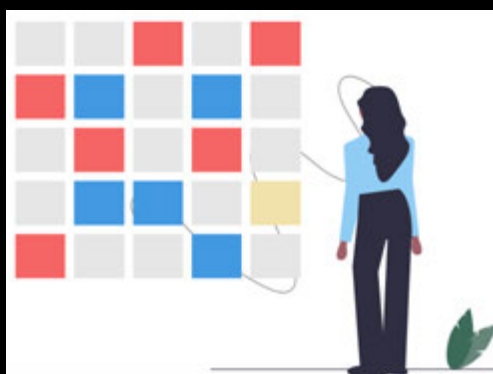
All the participants were split up into two teams and they were challenged to escape from the pandemic. A virus had broken out and the sets of researchers took on the competition to find a vaccin. Ten rooms with assignments had to lead to this, the next even more difficult than the previous one. Some teams were already thinking in the correct manner, while others had a little more trouble with this. One of the teams was able to find the vaccin within the given two hours, made up of Marloes, Ewan and Severina. In

contrast to this winning team, the others (who will remain unknown) needed a little more time. However, everyone got to know their strengths and flaws and even learned a thing or two. And of course, we all had a very nice evening and it was good to 'see' each other again.





On June 12th the StuCom organized its last online activity: the game night! We started with the game called "Crazy eights". With this game every player has a certain amount of cards and you really have to remember one thing --> **All eights are wild** <-- this means that eights can be played on any card during a player's turn. When a player discards an eight, he chooses which suit is now in play. The next player must play either a card of that suit or another eight. The first player to discard all of his cards wins. Yaay!



The next game we played was "Codenames". Within this game the group was divided in the red and the blue team each consisting of agents and one spymaster. The gameboard has twenty five cards containing one word. Each turn the spymaster needs to say one word and the agents of that team have to guess which words are connected to that word. The team that first guesses all of their own words wins! However, watch out for the black card... once you get that one... you lost.



The final game of this night was online pictionary! During this game everybody takes turn in drawing one word and all other players have to guess the word. All in all, we enjoyed our last online activity!

StuCom Seminar

29th of July, 2020

Interconnection between cell cycle and metabolic factors by Dr. Maria Rodríguez-Colman

The Vondelzaal made it possible to finally have a seminar in real-life again. Twenty lucky students (that were the fastest in signing up) were able to join in person in a corona-proof manner, whereas the other students could join via Zoom. Maria explained her career to us, the projects she worked on, her current group and gave us life lessons.

We were happy to have Dr. Maria Rodriguez-Colman as our guest speaker in both real-life and online. After she received her Bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences at the University Nacional de Mar del Plata (Argentina), Maria started her PhD at the University de Lleida (Spain) in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. During her PhD, Maria focused on metabolism related to cell signaling, oxidative stress and ROS signaling in yeast. Yeast research is part of a very specific research field. Maria noticed that she wanted to get a better understanding of the link of metabolism with stem cells and cancer, and not per se in yeast. That is why, she applied for a PostDoc function in the lab of Boudewijn Burgering. Maria learned to work independently and specialized herself in the use of organoid technology, without any prior knowledge. This shows that you can do anything you want, as long as you have intrinsic motivation.

Now Maria works as a Principal Investigator. Her research group is very interested in how cellular metabolism is related to all processes in the cell. They study this by focusing on the cross-talk between metabolism and cell signaling in the context of tissue homeostasis and in tumorigenesis. The group mainly focuses on the occurrence of metabolic fluctuations along the cell cycle and how these two events interact with each other, which is mainly studied in cell lines and organoid cultures. Furthermore, Maria's research group uses different analytic methods, such as Seahorse-based Bioenergetic analysis, omics-based analysis (metabolomics, proteomics and RNA-sequencing) and live imaging of genetic encoded metabolic sensors and cell signaling reporters.



After Maria's amazing talk, there was a small borrel with the people that were there in real life with pizza! While enjoying pizza, Maria shared her last advices: follow your heart, dare to make decisions and make choices step by step, everything will turn out fine!

BBQ

On the 4th of August the Stucom organized its first real life social activity after Corona: a BBQ! Everybody gathered together at the beautiful Cambridgevelden located on our campus. While enjoying a drink and some fresh grilled (vega) meat by the one and only grill girl Carlijn, the students were able to finally see and talk with each other again. It was a nice evening filled with lots of joy and happiness.



Introduction week

New CSDB-students

Just imagine... you have been inside for six months. Now it is the 31st of August and it is your first day of a new Master's program. This Master's program is called Cancer, Stem Cells and Developmental Biology and fun fact: the introduction is in real-life!! That is how the new students felt. Everybody was super enthusiastic to smell fresh air, see the sun, meet new people and cycle back and forth through Utrecht. It took the StuCom and Joost some blood, sweat and tears, but we managed to build a party tent in Beatrixpark before (all) students were there.

CSDB starters September 2020





The students first got to know each other by sitting on garbage bags (classy) and playing multiple games, including a look-a-like-version of "I go on holiday and bring with me", a fun facts game and a music bingo. After this, the students hopped on their bike to start with the biking dinner. The biking dinner made it possible for the students to get to know each other better, and of course Utrecht. Halfway, there was a well-deserved couscous salad bar break in Park Lepelenburg. The students finished the biking dinner and returned to the Beatrixpark to eat the main dish: VERY HOT, but VERY DELICIOUS curry. The first introduction day ended with a borrel with also in-between/(almost) graduated CSDB students under the stars and some small lights in the partytent. We would like to thank the weather, since there was no rain and it was not that cold!





On the 1st of September, there was one final, more serious, introduction activity organized by the StuCom. In the blue lecture hall, we started with seminars by two amazing alumni. Lara has recently been graduated and shared her experiences with the CSDB students. She did cool internships (including one at the Zoo!) and learned us to follow your heart. My Anh talked about her CSDB period, internships in the Netherlands and San Fransisco, her current PhD and gave some planning advice to the new students. After this, we did some self-promotion in order to keep the StuCom going next year, which led to a new highly motivated StuCom '20'21. Joost ended the evening with an explanation about the CSDB master program and also shared his story as a researcher (yes, we saw a picture of young Joost in the lab). Finally, we ended the introduction with of course lots of pizzas. There was some discussion about the pizzas, since one third of the pizzas were pizza Hawaii and the question remains whether this is a "real pizza".



We want to wish all the new students good luck and we are looking forward to meet all of you at StuCom organized activities (so join).

In-between CSDB students advice

Hi, my name is Elena, I started this master last year and I really wouldn't have been able to guess how much I would learn in such a short amount of time.



The first lesson I'd like to share is that whichever topic you study it is vital that you are in an environment you feel comfortable in. So, while choosing your lab, think about the people too. You will spend every day of your internship surrounded by your lab mates, make sure you like them. You can also check whether they have an active social group and they go out together often. This can also be an indicator of the scientific environment: do people help each other when doing experiments? Is the lab collaborating with others? If the environment is unfavorable you are also not going to be able to learn. To decide where to go for my internships first I selected a few groups based on their topic/technique, then I made my final selection mainly based on the people (not only the PI). I definitely got very good results using this method.

When I finally started the major research project it was very exciting. I was having a lot of fun with my lab mates, and my project was becoming more and more promising. Until in December, we started thinking that maybe I was introducing a bias in the results through my analysis. I reanalyzed all my datasets blind, it took me 3 weeks, and each week I got more and more depressed as my results showed that indeed I had biased the results.

I was very lucky as my lab mates kept cheering me up, and my PI did not think I intentionally inserted a bias that would produce, if I may paraphrase, cool and sexy results. For a few weeks I felt very strange, I realized that I was fallible, I unconsciously had inserted a bias. That was my first hard proof that my mind is not a perfect computer (this goes for you too, dear reader). From this I learnt that I should be more careful about introducing bias; and more generally I learnt that I was allowed to make mistakes. We are very lucky, right now we are doing temporary internships where we can try and fail and there are no hard consequences. That is exactly why we are here, to learn. If everything went perfect then great, but if you manage to make some mistakes along the way it's even better.

During your time in the lab you might start to increase the number of hours you are there every day, maybe even work on the weekend. I want to tell you, you don't have to, your mental health is more important than your project. If that doesn't convince you then I've got another argument, if you really care about your project and you want to give it your best, you need to make sure your mind is at its best too. Don't overlook your social life, make sure you are physically active, and that you get enough rest. Also, if you are not used to the Dutch winter, make sure you get enough vitamin D; sounds silly, but some people can be very sensitive to the lack of sunlight in these dark months.

Not working during the weekend also gives you the added benefit of starting fresh on Monday, giving you a clear overview of how your project is proceeding. I tried to never schedule anything on weekends, and so if I need to just finish an incubation or replace medium I generally manage to find someone who would be in the lab anyway to do this 5-10 min job for me (of course make sure you are there for your lab mates too if they need help).

Make sure you talk to your lab mates. Whether you need to do some rubberducking for an experiment or you need to ask advice to find another lab for the second internship or writing assignment. Feel free to talk to them about anything that might have bothered you: perhaps your PI asked questions about your project in a way you thought was rude, or you got asked personal questions you might not have wanted to hear. Your lab mates are with you in the lab and generally have a good understanding on how to read a situation as they know the people involved. So, make sure to clarify any situation that made you feel uncomfortable. If their answer doesn't help you of course there are other people that can help you (master peers, master coordinator, study advisors...).

In-between CSDB students advice

I will also end with something I learnt very recently from other people, and it is also important for those of us finishing our masters soon and having to decide what to do next: if you think your lab is very nice and you would like to do a PhD there, make sure you ask around about the experience of your lab mates. As you are just a master student, they normally wouldn't bother you with their employment issues but make sure you know if there are any in the lab you choose. A lab that might be great for a master student could reveal to be not so nice as a PhD student. The PI might not be a good employer or might become very micromanaging once you are working for him/her (I gathered these stories by different people in different countries).

We are here to learn and grow through our experiences, and we need to make sure the conditions are right for us to be able to do so. If the environment is not open and comfortable for you, it won't be easy to achieve your goals.



Hi all, my name is Laura Schwarz. I did my bachelor in Biomedical Sciences at the University of Amsterdam and am now a second year CSDB student. Currently, I am finishing up my major research project at the UMC, where I am studying the mode of action of a small molecule, which could be a potential drug in cancer therapy.



The past year has flown, as I have been enjoying my internship a lot. Not only because of the research, but also because of the pleasant research environment and friendliness of the people in the lab. This brings me to my first tip to you: if you are still seeking a place to do your internship or when you are looking for a minor research project in the course of the year; always try to find out the research environment before saying yes to an internship. Maybe you can find people who know the PI, or other people in the lab, and who can say something about working hours, how often you have meetings, how people in the lab interact with each other, et cetera (or ask specific questions during the interview). What can be really helpful is talking to a student who has done an internship in the same lab in the prior year, do not be afraid to contact him/her! If you do not know anyone, you could contact Joost or someone else from the Master or StuCom who possibly knows someone.

Also, in general, do not be afraid to ask questions! This is something I have been (and still am) struggling with a lot, but I also know that it can really help in understanding a lecture or meeting and in, for example, finding a place to do your minor research project. For instance, if you attend an interesting seminar and would like to do research on it in your next internship, you could walk up to the lecturer afterwards to ask if they would have a place for you or whether they know another group that might be interesting for you. I know that a lot of people from my year found their internships this way. Unfortunately, this might not be possible in these times, but you could always write them an email. In my experience, it can take some time before a PI will reply and sometimes you have to send a reminder, but in the end, I always got an answer.

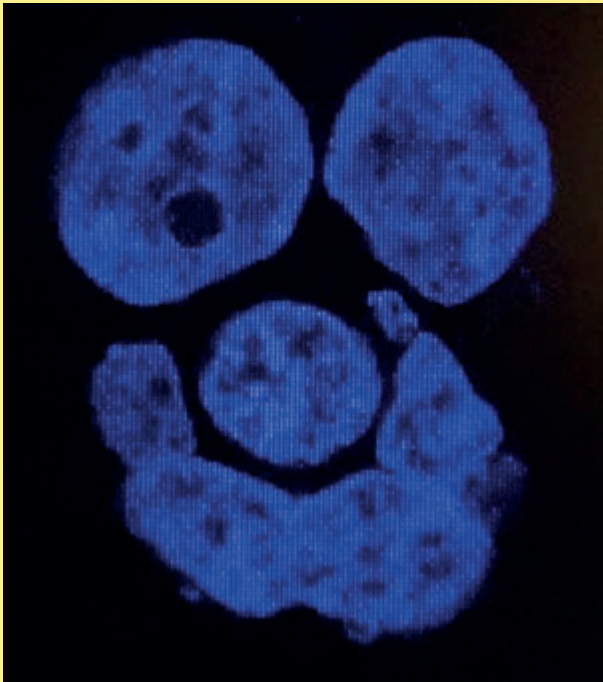
It can be really helpful to plan your Master ahead, as courses are only taught at a specific time point in the year (and communicate this well to your supervisor), but also to get the most out of your degree. The Master's gives you a lot of opportunities, especially in the second year, to specialize in what you find most valuable, also if you find out after your first internship that doing research is not really your thing.

Lastly, try to balance your work in the lab and your social life well. Although your day may have been really exhausting and all you want to do is lying in bed and binge-watching series, having dinner with friends (try not to drink too much ;)) or doing sports is also relaxing and can help you to reduce stress and get a better night's sleep. To conclude, and maybe most importantly, try not to stress too much and ENJOY, doing research is fun!

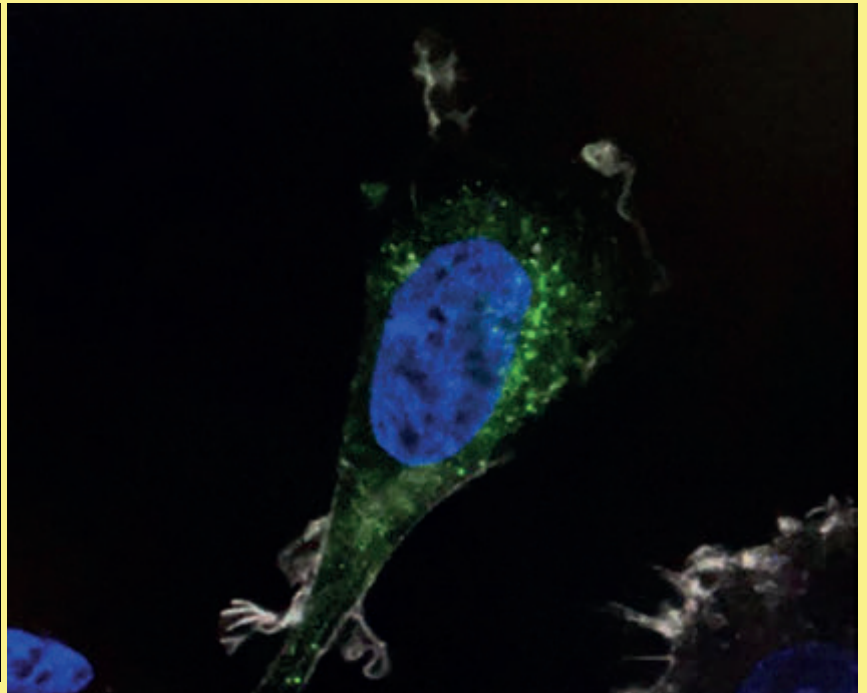
Cheers,
Laura



WALL OF FAME AND SHAME



The clown



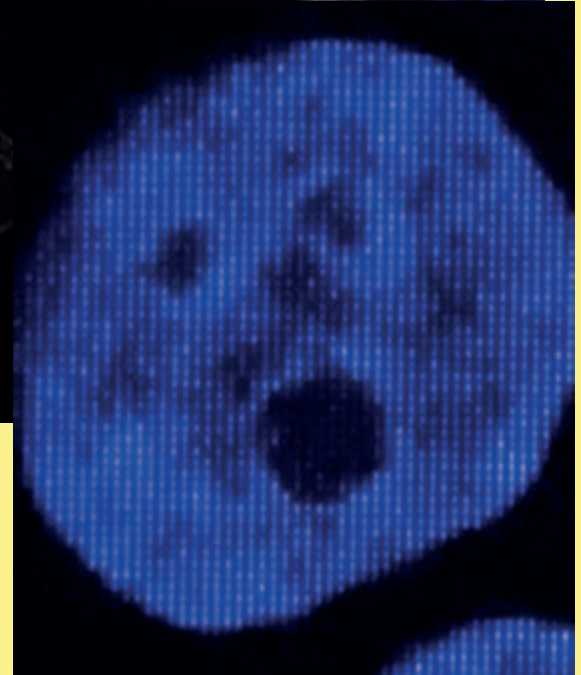
The alien

*Pictures from
Daan Iglesias van Montfort*

Highlights of our internships

1. Trying to stay awake during an online lab meeting in the morning

2. Losing your OV-chip card for the third time and the receptionist starts to recognize you: “I could not find in which group you work, but I remember your face from last time, so I knew for sure that you work here.”




Horror face

“According to your tag, you did not check in today, but I remember you coming in this morning, but then I saw that you had an additional tag number, so you probably lost your tag sometime”
Oh well...



THANK YOU


We as the Students Committee would like to thank you for the previous year. Even though it wasn't exactly the year we expected it to be, we are happy that we were able to organize multiple social activities, seminars and a virtual retreat for all of you. In addition to that, we had the pleasure making the newsletters for you, keeping you up to date of everything going on and preparing you for the post-master life.

Of course, we would like to wish all the students good luck during the following year. Also the next Students Committee is trusted in using their creativity while filling your agendas with diversity of activities.



AND GOOD LUCK



COLOPHON



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This StuCom Newsletter was written and designed by Carlijn Friedrichs, Iris Gooijers, Anneloes Keijzer and Tessa Remmers unless otherwise specied.