Hello from our laboratory in the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology at the University of Missouri (MU). Since the end of the summer, we have had many changes in the lab. Postdoctoral Fellows, Miriam Jacome-Sosa and Qiong Hu completed their research projects in the lab and have gone on to the next (exciting) steps of their careers! Qiong took a job as a Senior Scientist at Cargill, located just west of Minneapolis, MN. Miriam has gone to a second fellowship position at the Washington University in St. Louis. She is working in the laboratory of Nada Abumrad, a world-renown expert in lipids. Our summer party occurred again at Les Bourgeois Vineyards in Rocheport, MO (photo below). This is a beautiful venue overlooking the bluffs on the Missouri River. If you come visit our lab, we will take you there!

We also had a pre-medical student join us for the summer. Vish Bysani (standing far left in the photo below) in his summer work, was introduced to the science of fructose in human nutrition. He is now a senior at Tulane University. In addition, Gastroenterology Fellow, Ryan Health, MD, completed his research rotation in September. He came to learn about clinical research and helped us prepare for a study starting in the months ahead. That project will test a new drug, which may help patients in the early stages of liver disease. On the next pages, you can see from the student profiles that we are lucky to have the addition of many new lab members. This summer, under Nathan Le’s leadership, the undergraduates have helped us conduct a weight loss study. We removed sugars from the diets of 20 research subjects. Over 8 weeks, the subjects lost, on average, 12 lbs, 2 inches off their waist, and improved their blood pressure and blood lipids!

For Dr. Parks, this fall has been filled with the submission of many grant applications to the NIH, teaching first year medical students, and helping a number of graduate students and early-career faculty in their research.

We wish you all a fall with brilliant colors and warm days. Go Mizzou!
Ryan Heath, MD (Gastroenterology Fellow)
Dr. Heath received his medical degree from the University of Arkansas. As a first year gastroenterology fellow, his work keeps him in the clinic many hours per week. To complete his one month research rotation, Ryan chose the Parks Laboratory where he has contributed significantly to writing the regulatory documents needed for a future clinical trial on liver disease.

Kimberlee Bingham, BS, Research assistant
Kimberlee graduated from MU in spring of 2016 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Nutritional Sciences with an emphasis in Nutrition and Fitness and a minor in Sociology. She is currently working as a Senior Research Technologist in the Parks Lab. This year, she is focusing on expanding her clinical trial management skills and spend time thinking about her future goals.

Majid Syed, MS, Doctoral Student
Majid completed his Master’s Degree in Nutrition and Exercise Science at Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, MO. As a PhD student here at MU, he is completing many projects. Among them, he is working with participants in the extension fitness program entitled, “Stay Strong, Stay Healthy.” Early results are demonstrating, surprisingly, a significant improvement in memory as a result of increased physical activity in these participants over the age of 60 years.

Nhan (Nathan) Le, BS, Laboratory Manager - Nathan graduated from MU in spring of 2016 with a Bachelor’s Degree in Health Sciences. Nathan’s work is integral to our lab as he assists in the planning and conduct of the in-patient research studies at the Clinical Research Center and the MU Nutritional Center for Health. He performs clinical procedures, trains all of our undergraduates, organizes and orders supplies, and keeps us all on schedule and feeling supported.

Undergraduate Assistants

Brad Oxler - Senior, Biology and Nutritional Sciences - Brad started in the Parks Lab during the summer of 2016. He has dedicated many hours to working in the MU Nutritional Center for Health (our research kitchen). He is also the President of the MU Student Wellness Advocates and the Vice President of the MU Public Health Club. He hopes to attend medical school upon graduation.

Erica Braham - Junior, Health Sciences - Erica began working in the Parks Lab the fall of 2016. She is an IMSD EXPRESS Fellow, and will work over the summer on a research project. Currently, she is also a Student Staff Member in MU Residential Life, and a Peer Mentor for the IMSD EXPRESS research program. Her future goals include earning a Master’s Degree in Public Health.

Manal Salim - Junior, Nutritional Sciences - Manal joined the Parks Lab as a part of the Discovery Fellows Program her freshman year. As a junior, she has now embarked on the Nutrition and Exercise Physiology Research Internship and will begin her own study looking at the effect of the psychology behind eating related behaviors. In the future, she is looking forward to pursuing a career in the medical field and applying her research background to effectively provide quality care to her patients.

Ramiro Arreola - Junior, Nutritional Sciences - Ramiro transferred to MU from East Los Angeles College and started working in the Parks Lab during the summer of 2016. He has proven himself to be a data-entry powerhouse, and spends many hours diligently working in the lab and helping with the preparation of the research meals (notice required hairnet!). He attributes his successful transition to MU to helpful faculty members of the Department of Nutrition and Exercise Physiology. In the future, he hopes to graduate from MU with a Master’s Degree in Dietetics.

Jillian Otto - Freshman, Nutritional Sciences - Jillian started working in the Parks Lab in the fall of 2016 and is currently participating in the Discovery Fellows Program. She is most excited to see how research works in the real world. She also dedicates her time to various campus activities such as being a member of the Nutrition and Wellness Association, the Dean’s Advisory Board, the Pre-Med society, and Spoon-U. She hopes to one day go to medical school.

Helen Keithahn - High School Senior - Helen (pictured to the left of Jillian) is a Rock Bridge High School student, and is currently working to earn credits for a course that introduces her to the research experience.