

Justin Engel, awarded 2025 Nominata Award

Communication from Graduate School:

Please join me in congratulating Justin Engel, who was selected by the Graduate School Awards Committee to receive the 2025 Nominata Award for outstanding dissertation



research. A fourth-year PhD student in the Cancer Biology Graduate Program, Justin is mentored by [Peter Ly, PhD](#), Assistant Professor of Pathology. Justin is currently interrogating the mechanisms contributing to genomic rearrangements using unbiased genetic approaches. He discovered a paradoxical role of the Fanconi anemia DNA repair pathway in cancer genome evolution via chromothripsis, an extreme form of genome instability identified in 30-50% of cancers ([Engel JL et al. 2024. Cell 187:6055](#)).

Justin was also selected independently by the Awards Committee to receive the 2024 William F. and Grace H. Kirkpatrick Award, which provides \$30,000 to kick-start research proposed for an NRSA or equivalent extramural predoctoral fellowship, irrespective of the funding agency's decision. In Justin's case, the NCI reviewers agreed that the proposed research as well as the training plan merited support and awarded him NRSA fellowship 1F31CA295091.



The Awards Committee also recognized Devon Jeltema, a senior PhD student in the Immunology Graduate Program who is studying interferon signaling in the lab of Nan Yan, PhD, Professor of Immunology. As Nominata runner-up, Devon will receive a Dean's Discretionary Award. She also received the 2023 Kirkpatrick Award.

Please join me at the Nominata ULS lecture on May 7 at 4 PM in NG3.112 to congratulate our two outstanding graduate students and hear Justin present his research.

Best,
Andrew Zinn, MD, PhD
Dean, Graduate School