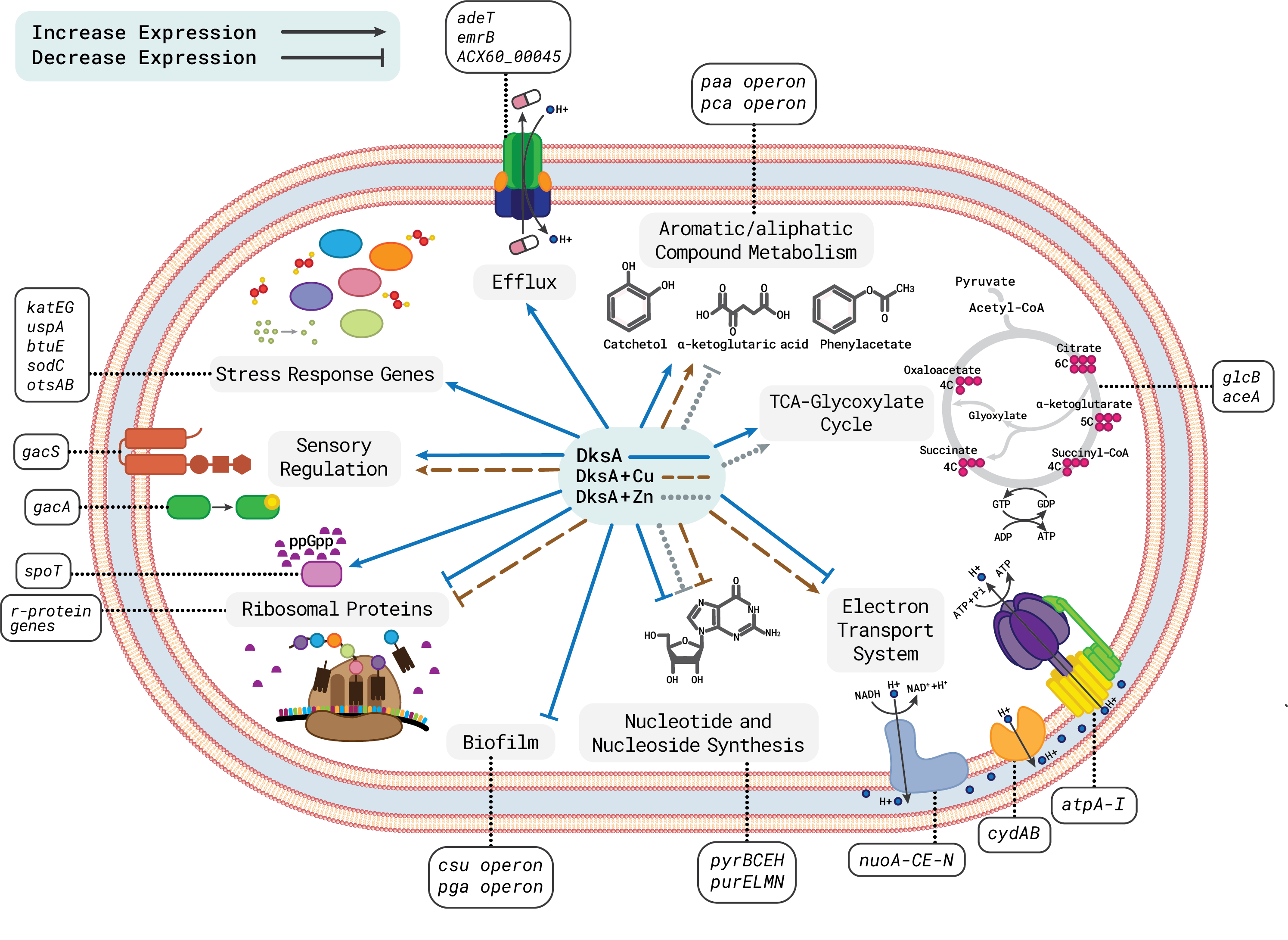
**Graphical Abstract for**

**DksA is a conserved master regulator of stress response in *Acinetobacter baumannii***

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* Bacterial pathogens lacking RpoS such as *A. baumannii* employs DksA as a master regulator for general stress and metabolism.
* DksA has pleiotropic effects on stress protection and is critical for infection of two animal models in a niche specific colonization manner.
* Activation of DksA is required via a conformational change, but not all stresses activate it.
* DksA is highly conserved than RpoS (over 90% bacteria belonging to Gamma-proteobacteria harbours DksA whereas only 55% harbours RpoS), signifying a broader role of DksA across proteobacteria.