

AWIS San Diego Newsletter

Summer 2021 Volume 29 Issue 2



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear AWIS-SD Members, Partners, Sponsors, and Allies,

As our country begins to reopen this summer, I wish to acknowledge all of the sacrifices and hard work from many in our community, especially essential workers, that helped us all during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the pandemic is not yet over, California's outlook has greatly improved due to vaccination efforts as well as mitigation measures including masking and social distancing.

AWIS-SD is one of the largest chapters in the AWIS family. Through the hard work of our volunteer members, we provide an exceptional array of committees and events to foster career development, networking and community engagement focused on improving access, equity and inclusion for women in STEM. Our chapter has risen to the challenge and organized many outstanding virtual events in the past few months that you can read about in the accompanying newsletter including the highly successful Women in Science and Technology Conference (WIST2021) that was held virtually for the first time this spring.

We are looking for new motivated members to enhance and further our mission! We need help in many aspects of our organization including the corporate sponsorship, public relations, events, website, and newsletter committees. If you are interested in learning more about or joining one of our committees, please check them out on our website at awissd.org.

In my second year as President of AWIS-SD, I would like to thank all of the chapter members who have graciously volunteered many hours of their time to make this organization what it is today. I would like to particularly acknowledge the efforts of the WIST2021 committee members who organized a fantastic, virtual event focused on *Celebrating Diversity and Overcoming Adversity*. I would also like to thank our sponsors who have made it possible for us to offer so much to our members and our community.

Warmest wishes,

Kina

Varykina Thackray, Ph.D.
President, AWIS-SD
president@awissd.org

16th Biennial Women in Science & Technology Conference ***Celebrating Diversity & Overcoming Adversity***

by the Newsletter Committee

This year, 90 people registered for the Women in Science and Technology (WIST) conference which was held on Saturday, May 15th using the Gathertown Virtual Platform. This flagship event hosts panels for career advancement and professional development and provides opportunities for networking. WIST also celebrates our 2021 scholarship award winners. The agenda included a keynote talk, a scholarship celebration, two session offerings and six career roundtable discussions that delivered relevant strategies for early, mid, and senior career stages.

We were honored to have Dr. JoAnn Trejo PhD, MBA as the keynote speaker. Dr. Trejo is the Assistant Vice Chancellor of UCSD Health Sciences Faculty Affairs and Professor in the Department of Pharmacology, UCSD. Her talk was entitled “Science, Mentorship and Leadership: Breaking One Barrier at a Time”.

There were two subsequent panels on “Increasing Diversity in Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science” and “Challenges in Academic and Industry Career Transitions”. These were followed by two sets of Career Round Table Discussions. Attendants could choose between Biopharmaceuticals and Drug Discovery, Energy and Environmental Science, or Bioinformatics and IT/Data Science in the first session. The second session offered Cell and Molecular Biology, Chemistry and Materials Science, or Scientific Writing and Policy/Advocacy.

In order to participate in the conference, participants chose an avatar from a number of cute alternatives and navigated the avatar to the ‘room’ where the talk or panel was being held using arrow keys. Once in the room, participants joined via Zoom. There was an assistant to help everyone get set up if needed.

Many thanks to the WIST 2021 Conference Committee members, Anamaria Ancheta, Angela Macia, Cynthia Kuan, Dina Dehaini, Jenny Waters, (Kina) Varykina Thackray, Michelle Muldong, Rachel E Mcmillan, Robyn Wygal, Sameera Bilgrami, Shirley Ahn, (Stacy) Anastacia Kurnikova, and Svasti Haricharan, for organizing a successful conference in challenging times.



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AWIS WIST Panel 1A: Increasing Diversity in Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science on May15, 2021

by Rachel McMillan

The AWIS San Diego chapter hosted a session (Session I Panel A) on “Increasing Diversity in Physics, Engineering, and Computer Science” at the biannual Women in Science and Technology (WIST) conference. This panel aimed to uncover strategies used by renowned scientists and advocates to (1) engage young scientists who are from communities that are historically underrepresented in STEM, and (2) to make the fields of physics, engineering, and computer science more inclusive for students of all backgrounds. We were joined by panelists Dr. Elizabeth Orwin, Chair and Professor in the Department of Engineering, Harvey Mudd College; Dr. Olivia Graeve, Professor in the Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, UC San Diego; Dr. Nikki Washington, Professor of the Practice of Computer Science, Duke University; and twenty five participants.

Dr. Elizabeth Orwin has spearheaded efforts to increase gender and racial diversity in the Department of Engineering at Harvey Mudd. She shared how her efforts to develop an inclusive space for engineering students at Harvey Mudd have engaged both students and faculty members. Importantly, Dr. Orwin discussed challenges that she faced in her attempts to increase diversity in engineering and how she persisted. Dr. Olivia Graeve spoke about her summer programs that engage young Latinx students from the United States and Mexico in STEM; she shared that her ultimate goal through her advocacy work is to break down barriers



for Latinx students, and to encourage students from different backgrounds to establish long-lasting friendships, which she hopes will help dissipate preconceptions among students of different socioeconomic status.

From Dr. Nikki Washington, we learned about her Cultural Competence in Computing (3C) Fellows Program, which engages faculty, post-doctoral researchers, and graduate students worldwide in learning the implementation strategies to support students of color in their studies of computer science. Dr. Washington hopes

that through understanding systematic racism and the importance of identity and intersectionality, course participants will be able to better design courses at their home institutions that will include students from all backgrounds and identities. To begin the process of dismantling white supremacy and racism in higher education, Dr. Washington calls on faculty to ask students from minority backgrounds how their institution has failed them. Overall, participants learned about how each of the panelists has paved the way for a new generation of physicists, engineers, and computer scientists that come from all backgrounds. Attendees also learned about the importance of understanding how the intersection of our identities shapes how students experience education.

Special thanks to panelists: Dr. Elizabeth Orwin, Dr. Olivia Graeve, and Dr. Nikki Washington, and WIST Committee members, Dr. Sameera Bilgrami, Dr. Varykina Thackray, Anamaria Ancheta.

Session 1 Panel B: Challenges in Academia and Industry Career Transitions

by Sameera Bilgrami

Our Session 1 Panel B discussion was centered around differences in Academia and Industry as well as challenges in making career transitions from Academia to Industry and vice-versa. Moderated by Dr. Sameera Bilgrami, the discussion was held in the Tourmaline conference room in the virtual, interactive platform called Gathertown with 35 attendees. The panel speakers were Dr. Malika Grayson, PhD, Application Portfolio Manager at Northrup Grumman; Dr. Emily Troemel, PhD, Professor, Biological Sciences, UCSD, and Dr. Lisette Acevedo, PhD, Senior Director of Clinical Development, Equillium, Inc.

The discussion began with each of the speakers describing their journey through STEM, and what inspired them to continue in the field or to make career transitions. Dr. Grayson was interested in discovering how things work, so she earned her degree in physics from Delta University. She experienced her first research project as a summer trainee, which inspired her

to pursue her PhD in wind energy. After her PhD, Dr. Grayson transitioned to Northrup Grumman via a rotational program, and she has worked there ever since. Dr. Emily Troemel enjoyed research and had female role models in undergraduate and PhD programs. She transitioned to industry because she was unsure if she wanted to run a lab. Still, due to multiple project changes and no strong female leaders, Dr. Grayson decided she liked studying one subject at length and progressing in that area. For those reasons, she transitioned back to academia where she now runs a lab of her own.



Dr. Lisette Acevedo volunteered at a hospital and performed research as an undergraduate student. She chose research because she liked to solve problems. She completed her PhD in pharmacology at Yale University. After her postdoc, Dr. Acevedo realized that she was not interested in studying one subject at length. For that reason,

after completing her MBA, Dr. Acevedo secured a position at a small biotech company. Her diverse duties in clinical development convinced Dr. Acevedo that she preferred industry to academia. We then discussed the differences in Academia and Industry work culture. Surprisingly, everyone agreed that there are more similarities than differences. Both fields require rigorous work, collaborations, attention to detail, and soft skills. However, several differences were discussed such as the kind and scope of research. In academia, research is limited to a very narrow field and can get arcane so it is challenging to motivate oneself and students. In Industry, the goals are clear, so it is easy to maintain focus. In Academia it is easier to speak freely whereas in Industry, data needs to be protected. In an Industry career, professionals are expected to assimilate and adapt to different environments. In addition, there is little scope for freewheeling, researchers do not own their work, and must take responsibility for failures for the entire team. Academia is more flexible in terms of working hours, but time management is more challenging as compared to industry.

There were some very helpful tips given by panel speakers about how to transition to Industry or Academia. Everyone emphasized the importance of establishing and maintaining a network as well as being persistent and never giving up. The speakers then suggested ways that industry can attract and retain key talented people at their companies. These ways include establishing collaborations with Academia such as exchanging equipment in return for recruitment opportunities, and participating in networking events such as WIST2021. Other ways include having diverse role models and special mentors in the industry specifically to guide new hires. This helps alleviate some of the frustration new employees feel the speakers believe.

For progressing to leadership positions, speakers emphasized excellent preparation before a meeting, and overcoming fear to be a participant rather than a passive spectator. Also, listening and understanding other people and their work, makes them more amenable to listen to you. Attendees were encouraged to volunteer and take leadership roles in various non-work-related

committees as much as possible to help get the confidence required to be leaders. The session also included questions about understanding a company's stance on diversity and inclusivity. For this to occur, the speakers suggested looking at examples already within the company and asking questions to assess how flexible a company will be to accommodate an employee's special needs.

We were fortunate to have such an amazing list of speakers and even more the enthusiastic attendees who made the entire panel discussion a success.

WIST Conference- Biopharmaceuticals and Drug Discovery Roundtable

by Jennifer Waters

The roundtable for careers in biopharmaceutical and drug discovery space explored the career paths of two accomplished women in science: Dr. Chadia Robertson from Takeda and Dr. Minh-Ha Do from Lumos Pharma. Both panelists discovered their interest in science at an early age and shared a genuine passion for translational research over the development of their careers.



When asked about the tasks and general feel of a day in her position as the Director of Pre-Clinical Development at Lumos, Minh-Ha emphasized the importance of skills in data analysis, project management and experimental design. Her work is largely remote due to the business model of Lumos, which operates as a “virtual” drug development company to contract experiments out to experts in their field. In her role, she organizes the collection and analysis of those results. Chadia found that her experience was similar to Minh-Ha’s, except that her role takes place earlier in the drug development process and involves evaluating new drug candidates or targets that are being considered for entry into Takeda’s pipeline.

The discussion then moved towards the benefits of “virtual” drug discovery, which gained additional relevance given the events of 2020. Both panelists felt that virtual work was more achievable for them because they had long since transitioned from the bench into managerial roles. They described the drug discovery space as a “team sport” and emphasized the importance of collaboration, both with other scientists in industry and with academic groups.

When asked about the most challenging aspects of their roles, the panelists spoke about the importance of rigor and reproducibility and how being able to trust your colleagues is crucial but becomes challenging when constantly making decisions based on other people's data. They advised that the best way of mitigating this discomfort is by building a team of trustworthy and ethical scientists whose most basic interest is in the advancement of patient health. For Minh-Ha, this can be challenging because her role involves collecting data from other groups that she does not personally know. By critically reviewing all aspects of the reports provided by their collaborating organizations, she is able to do her due diligence.

Lastly, the panelists were asked what makes a data package or compound particularly attractive for further drug development. They emphasized the importance of trustworthiness and data integrity, and whether there is a patient need for that therapeutic agent. Overall, this discussion provided valuable insight into a career track in leading scientific drug discovery and development in an industrial setting.

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WIST Session III Chemistry Career Roundtable by Shirley Ahn



Caption of image: (Top to Bottom) Moderator Shirley Ahn, Speaker Prof. Laura Sanchez, Speaker Dr. Sharon Gao, Co-Moderator Suzanne Kongkeo

The Career Roundtable Sessions was on Chemistry and we had one speaker from academia, Professor Laura Sanchez from UC Santa Cruz, and one speaker from industry, Dr. Sharaon Gao from Synthorx. The session was held at the Windansea Room in the WIST 2021 Gathertown virtual platform and was moderated by Dr. Shirley Ahn from UC San Diego and Suzanne Kongkeo from Thermo Fisher. During the session, a variety of topics were discussed from what a typical day is like in the job to messages for aspiring women in chemistry. Both speakers mentioned that it is imperative for teachers to encourage and support women and underrepresented individuals to join the field of Chemistry starting as early as kindergarten. One of the participants asked about how to re-enter the Chemistry workforce after an extended absence and Prof. Sanchez suggested applying for the NIH supplement for biomedical chemistry fields in academia, which one can only apply for before getting hired from the department. Dr. Gao said that even though industries also look at gaps between jobs, the gaps would not be held against the applicant as long as they are justifiable due to family reasons, etc. As for advice to aspiring women in the field of Chemistry, Prof. Sanchez told us to not be afraid of failing at any stage of our career and take a risk when needed, as she had done while moving her lab from the University of Illinois Chicago to UC Santa Cruz. Dr. Gao agreed with Prof. Sanchez regarding taking a risk since it requires one to challenge one's self and keep pushing forward.

2021 AWIS Scholarships Awarded at the WIST Conference

The AWIS-SD Scholarship Committee, chaired by Shirley Ahn, Ph.D. and Monica Gonzalez Ramirez, Ph.D., announced the winners of seven \$1000 AWIS-SD scholarships and one \$1000 UCSD Extension scholarship at the WIST conference. The members of the scholarship committee include Joe Powers, Karen Mei, Michelle Muldong, Shija Liu and Andrea Chbeir. The eight winning recipients were chosen from a field of 35 applicants. The funds are intended to help support research projects or cover educational expenses. Congratulations to the following scholarship winners:

Scholarship Winners (Ph.D.)



Kelly Flanders studied ocean organisms and environments and obtained a BS in Biology from Pacific Lutheran University (Tacoma, Washington). She then went on to specialize in marine predator ecology via her master's degree at the University of New England (Biddeford, Maine). Her research focused on the feeding ecology of grey seals off Cape Cod, with consideration of the societal conflict between seals and the fishing industry. Currently, Kelly is working on her Ph.D. at the University of California, San Diego with her advisor Dr. Carolyn Kurle. She is studying the past and present ecological role of killer whales in the North Pacific through biogeochemical analyses of teeth and bones. Throughout her educational career, Kelly has also enjoyed teaching and mentoring students of all backgrounds to empower them through research and academic opportunities.



Analine Aguayo earned her B.S. in Cell and Molecular Biology at the California State University, Northridge (CSUN) and is currently a second-year Ph.D. student within the Division of Biological Sciences at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD). Her thesis work in Dr. Sonya Neal's lab focuses on further understanding the role of endoplasmic reticulum (ER) membrane proteins in sphingolipid biosynthesis. As a first-generation Mexican-American student, Analine strives to use her experiences in academia and the sciences to mentor underrepresented minority (URM) students through participation in organizations like the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) and the Biology Undergraduate and Master's Mentoring Program (BUMMP) at UCSD. She aspires to continue these efforts once she graduates by becoming a community college professor.

Scholarship Honorable Mentions (Ph.D.)

Alyssa Choi is a second year doctoral student in the San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego Joint Doctoral Program in Clinical Psychology.

Michaela Lynott is a second-year Ph.D. student at Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute advised by Dr. Alexandre Colas.

Scholarship Winners (BS/MS)



Gabrielle Martinez is a junior at CSUSM studying Biochemistry and is currently an undergraduate student researcher in Dr. Kristan's physiological ecology lab. After her undergraduate studies, she plans to complete a MD/PhD with aims of becoming a physician scientist researching neurodegenerative diseases. Her research will be focused on Alzheimer's and dementia seeking to research the complex pathophysiology behind this disease and find treatments that address the underlying physiology rather than targeting symptoms. Outside of academics, Gabrielle volunteers at REINS, a therapeutic riding program for disabled children, works as a caregiver for those with Alzheimer's and dementia at Brookdale.



Miriam Garcia is currently attending San Diego State University with a major in Biology and a double major in Spanish. Miriam is a first-generation, low-income student. She grew up in Mexico, and moved to San Diego in seventh grade, knowing no English. Since she was six years old she has loved the medical field as she was diagnosed with partial deafness due to her parents not having the insights to have an ear treatment. She has been passionate about giving back to her community and providing free medical assistance to her community in Mexico. Also, because she believes that she can bring diversity to the medical field. Miriam is working towards receiving a license as a Medical Assistant, and she has been involved in STEM clubs and programs, as Pre-Marc, SACNAS, HCOP, and Pathways of SDSU.

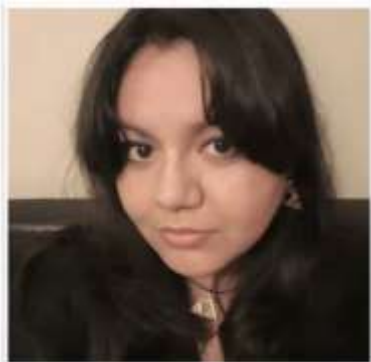
Scholarship Honorable Mention (BS/MS)

Amy Parampil, third-year undergraduate studying molecular and cell biology at UC San Diego

Bindhu Hosuru, 4th year Molecular and Cell Biology Major at UCSD

Anamaria Ancheta, senior Biochemistry and Cell Biology undergraduate at the University of California, San Diego.

Scholarship Winners (Community College)



Rosey Gutierrez Meza is a first-generation formerly undocumented undergraduate student at MiraCosta College pursuing a degree in Computer & Data Science. She is the lead Teaching Assistant for the Giving Ownership of Active Learning to Students in Computer Science (GOALS in CS) grant project within the CS Department which aims to bring topics of cultural relevance to the CS curriculum in order to bring a focus towards diversity, inclusivity and sustainability. Rosey is also the Outreach Chair for the Empowering Chicanx and Latinx to Explore (EChALE) STEM club and an active member of Women in Computer Science club, MiraCosta Honors Scholar Program & Phi Theta Kappa Honors Society. As a member of these

programs & organizations, she is committed to increasing women and BIPOC representation in tech, and has presented research on algorithmic bias to organizations like Umoja in order to showcase the importance of diversity in the CS field. Rosey has recently accepted a summer internship as a Lamat research fellow at UC Santa Cruz and is thrilled to be able to develop her skills in Data Science, and hopes to use that knowledge in the future to inspire more women of color to get involved in tech.



Anisa Ibnat is an aspiring Computer Science student at MiraCosta College with extensive experience in mentoring students as a Supplemental Instruction leader, teaching assistant and president of Women in CS (WiCS) club. She is passionate about creating a community of support and excellence for women and other underrepresented communities entering science.

ThermoFisher Scholarship Winner (BS/MS)



Laura Cilingiri Molin is a senior at the University of San Diego (USD) studying Mathematics. She is balancing her studies while working full-time in the Undergraduate Admissions Office at USD, part-time in a restaurant, being a mother to a two and a half year old girl, a wife, a daughter, a sister and a valuable member of the community. Laura is passionate about exploring the connection of Mathematics and social justice causes. Her Albanian roots have a strong tie to her personality, the way that she fights for injustice, and of course, her love for Mathematics.



Local Chapter Events

Virtual Science at Home: AWIS San Diego Outreach Collaboration with San Diego Public Libraries' and UCSD's The Science Initiative

by Michelle Muldong

On April 20th and May 28th, the Science at Home Virtual series continued with several experiments including “Floating Egg”, “Genetics and Heredity”, “Biology Bonanza”, and “Balloon Rocket”. In addition 2 demos were performed: “Elephant Toothpaste” and “Lava in a Cup”. Take-home science kits for the event

PROCEDURE

- 1. Stand on both feet in the middle of the room
 - 2. Try to balance for 30 seconds
 - 3. Close both eyes and try to balance for 30 seconds
- Passes! Which task was harder? Eyes open or eyes closed?
- 4. Stand on one leg and balance for 15 seconds. Do not touch anything for support
 - 5. Close your eyes, stand on one leg, and try to balance for 15 seconds
- Passes! Which task was harder? Eyes open or eyes closed?



were made by the AWIS San Diego Outreach committee, and advertising and networking for the event was provided by the San Diego Public Libraries. The experiments were led and performed by the UC San Diego's student organization, The Science Initiative. Over 50 students had a wonderful time participating and learning different scientific concepts through the virtual platform Zoom.



Biology Bonanza consisted of simple yet fun activities that involved comparing one's heart rate at rest and after performing exercise. Also, kids were able to explore the concept by standing on one foot with or without their eyes open. The Balloon Rocket experiment allowed students to explore Newton's

Third Law of Motion by propelling a balloon along fishing wire. Finally, the program ended with a lava in a cup demo that explained the properties of density.

The floating egg experiment demonstrated buoyancy by showing kids how an egg will float in salt water but not in fresh water. The Genetics and Heredity workshop gave the students a simple introduction into dominant and recessive traits by having them draw their very own bug with the traits decided by a coin flip. The Elephant toothpaste was a fun chemistry demo that highlighted what happens when hydrogen peroxide comes into contact with the yeast and breaks down into water and oxygen.

It was a fantastic series that couldn't have been done without UCSD's amazing student organization The Science Initiative and the knowledgeable and helpful librarians of the San Diego Public Libraries, especially Marika Jefferies, Karen Reilly, Kathryn Johnson and Adrienne Peterson. Thank you all!



A2I Industry Postdoc Panel, March 30th, 2021

by Shanna Newton Lavalle and Sameera Bilgrami

The Academia to Industry (A2I) committee began 2021 with an Industry Postdoc Panel, which featured Dr. Emily Meadows, Dr. Donya Ohadi, and Dr. Margot Zevon as speakers.

Dr. Emily Meadows is a Scientist II at Novartis Gene Therapies. She received her PhD from UC San Diego and completed her first postdoctoral fellowship at The Scripps Research Institute before transitioning to industry with a postdoctoral position in neuroscience discovery at Janssen Pharmaceuticals. **Dr. Donya Ohadi** is a Scientist at Janssen Pharmaceuticals. She received her PhD from the University of South Carolina and completed an academic postdoctoral fellowship at UC San Diego before transitioning to an industry postdoc at Janssen Pharmaceuticals. **Dr. Margot Zevon** is a Senior Scientist at Abcam. She obtained her PhD from Rutgers University and directly transitioned into an industry postdoctoral position at Merck.

Eleven people attended this important event. Emily and Donya shared how their academic postdoc positions paved the way for their industry postdoc, and Margot provided insight into long-term trajectories of individuals who have completed industry postdocs at Merck. Each speaker spoke about ways they found their industry postdoc positions and made use of these positions as a steppingstone to obtain their current positions. We discussed differences and similarities between postdocs in industry and academia and if there are any time constraints associated with finishing an industry postdoc. The conclusion reached is that every company is different in the way it conducts its postdoctoral program, and a lot depends on the program manager and program funding. The session was very informative for all young postdocs, and some even exchanged their information during the panel discussion. In general, this was an active discussion with great questions from the attendees!

AWIS Outreach: Meet a Scientist Series with Dr. Joyonna Gamble-George on 5/5/2021

by Rachel McMillan

As a part of the AWIS Outreach Meet a Scientist Series, Dr. Joyonna Gamble-George joined the Outreach Committee in sharing her journey through STEM to young scientists. Participants learned about Dr. Gamble-George's early career in the healthcare field and how her experience as a healthcare administrator at the Central Alabama Veterans Healthcare System motivated her to pursue a career in academic research of drug addiction, Alzheimer's, and other topics within the field of neuroscience. While pursuing her Ph.D. at Vanderbilt School of Medicine, she studied the behavioral and synaptic changes in response to enhancement of endocannabinoid signaling in mice.

During her graduate work, Dr. Gamble-George co-founded SciX LLC, a biotech company focused on developing personal devices to monitor health and track potential risk factors for the purpose of predicting life altering events such as cardiac arrest. Dr. Gamble-George completed her post-doctoral training at the McKnight Brain Institute at the University of Florida; there, she

studied the cellular mechanisms of Parkinson's disease, drug addiction, and HIV-1 infection. Now, as an AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow at the National Institutes of Health, she provides feedback to researchers and doctors who treat and develop therapies for patients from medically underserved communities with chronic heart and lung disease and mental health disorders.

From her experience in academia, Dr. Gamble-George advises young researchers to set goals early on in their graduate programs and to become familiar with research fellowship programs that they are eligible for. She also discussed the importance of informational interviews; she recommends that young students meet with individuals in positions that they are potentially interested in to learn about different career paths and positions. Notably, Dr. Gamble-George shared her goal of trailblazing for future generations of scientists, and in particular for scientists who are women of color. Lastly, participants were particularly interested to hear about her future goals of directing a lab that focuses on the interactions between environmental, social, and hereditary factors and the biological mechanisms of neurological disease in communities that have been historically medically underserved. Overall, participants were inspired by Dr. Gamble-George's journey as a scientist, public policy advocate, entrepreneur, and a role model for young scientists.

Special thanks to Dr. Joyonna Gamble-George and Outreach Committee co-chairs, Michelle Muldong and Jamillah Murtadha for organizing this event. Thank you to all participants for your thought-provoking questions.



Celebrating Women in Science

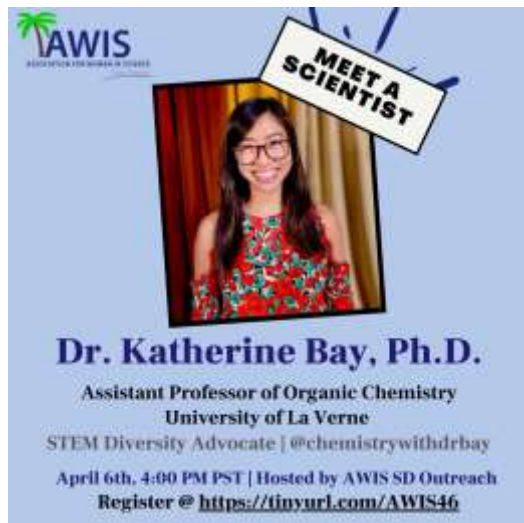
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AWIS Outreach: April Meet a Scientist

by Michelle Muldong



Dr. Katherine Bay from the University of La Verne was featured as AWIS Outreach's Meet a Scientist for the month of April. In addition to being a talented and stellar researcher in the field of organic chemistry, she is a STEM diversity advocate who inspires the next generation of aspiring scientists! Dr. Bay spoke to participants over Zoom about her education path and provided invaluable advice on how to accomplish goals while maintaining balance in all aspects of life. Students who participated in this event were very excited to learn about a career in organic chemistry and continuously asked Dr. Bay questions about her Ph.D. experience.

Dr. Bay also has an Etsy shop where she sells science themed pins featuring her very cute pug! For attending, one of the participants received this pin as a giveaway prize. Thank you Dr. Bay for your time and enthusiasm in science outreach! Your work is so important and we appreciate all that you do.

Member and Local News

1) Anamaria Ancheta graduated with her degree in Biochemistry and Cell Biology from UC San Diego. She is involved in the WIST 2021, Outreach and Public Relations committees.



2) Congratulations to our sponsor, BlueNalu, for making the semifinals in the \$15 million Feed the Next Billion XPRIZE Competition. BlueNalu is one of the 28 out of 270 contestants who made the semifinals. BlueNalu is developing methods for making sustainable fish fillets by growing fish cells obtained directly from live fish in the lab for human consumption.

3) Are you interested in networking with STEM Industries, Academia, Government & Non-Profits? Are you interested in bringing people & ideas together? Are you looking for an opportunity to add additional leadership skills to your career toolbox? Join AWIS-SD leadership team and build supportive communities! [Contact our leadership team!](#)

4) All AWIS-SD committees are seeking new members. Current committees are Academia 2 Industry (A2I), Events, Public Relations, Newsletter, Scholarship, Career Advancement, Outreach, Website and Corporate Sponsorship. [Check us out!](#)



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Upcoming Events:

AWIS-SD Outreach is holding a Meet a Scientist event

Date: Tuesday, September 07, 2021 04:00 PM - 05:00 PM

Guest Speaker: Dr. Varykina Thackray, PhD

Professor of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at UC San Diego

Kina studies genetic and environmental influences in the development of polycystic ovary syndrome, one of the most common endocrine disorders in women.

Check our [events calendar](#) for most up-to-date information.

About the Authors



Surl-Hee (Shirley) Ahn is a postdoctoral scholar advised under Prof. J. Andrew McCammon and Prof. Rommie Amaro in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UCSD. She is a computational/theoretical chemist and focuses on developing methods for computer simulations and using them to study proteins and biomolecules. Prior to moving to UCSD, she was at Stanford working on her Ph.D. in Chemistry (Chemical Physics). Outside of work, she enjoys training for marathons, visiting national parks, and learning how to play golf and surf.



Sameera Bilgrami, Ph.D., is a senior scientist at Aethlon Medical, a company that captures pathological disease targets using medical devices as adjuncts to traditional drug therapies. Her career as a researcher started in India at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, TIFR Bangalore, where she studied protein-lipid interactions in live cell membranes. She was a postdoctoral fellow in the late Dr. Gary Bokoch's lab at Scripps Research before moving to UCSD. Her research focused on organelle movement, angiogenesis, and cancer cell movement. Sameera has a strong background in cell biology and expertise in imaging techniques, image analysis and programming. She likes to spend time with kids, hike, and volunteer at AWIS-SD.



Shanna Newton Lavalley is a Ph.D. candidate in the Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program at the University of California San Diego. She joined the laboratory of Dr. Pamela Mellon in July 2015 where she is currently using a combination of cell culture and genetic mouse models to study the roles of several homeodomain transcription factors within kisspeptin neurons. In 2018, she completed the Rady's School of Management MicroMBA program and was accepted into the Future Leaders Advancing Research in Endocrinology (FLARE) program. She was an active member of the

Endocrine Society's Trainee and Career Development Core Committee from 2018-2020 and served as Chair of the society's Summer Research Fellowship program in 2019. In 2020 she became a Co-Chair for the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) Academia to Industry committee, where she connects industry professionals to early career individuals.



Rachel McMillan is a first year Biomedical Sciences PhD student at the University of California San Diego where she is studying neurotropic and hemorrhagic flaviviruses in the Carlin lab. Her research interests include viral pathogenesis and host innate immune response, with a particular interest in flaviviruses and herpesvirus latency and reactivation. Rachel completed her Bachelor of Science degree in Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics from the University of California Los Angeles in 2019, where she developed a passion for community service, advocacy, and outreach. She is a member of the AWIS-SD Outreach Committee and was also on the Planning Committee for the 2021 AWIS-SD Women in Science and Technology Conference. In her spare time, Rachel enjoys surfing, hiking, camping, yoga, and exploring San Diego.



Michelle Muldong is a Research Associate at the University of California San Diego's Moores Cancer Center. She works in Dr. Christina Jamieson's lab studying bone-metastatic prostate cancer performing in vivo and in vitro experiments utilizing patient derived samples. Michelle obtained her B.S. from the University of California San Diego with a degree in General Biology. She has been involved in AWIS since September 2019 and is passionate about teaching the next generation about STEM. Outside of lab Michelle enjoys hot yoga, hiking, snowboarding, iced coffee & hanging out with her French bulldog/Boston Terrier mix pup- Stitch!



Jennifer Waters (Jenny) is a Ph.D. Candidate in the UCSD-SDSU Joint Doctoral Program in Cell and Molecular Biology. She currently works in Dr. Carrie House's lab at SDSU studying role of preadipocytes in the ovarian cancer tumor microenvironment, and seeks to understand the effect of preadipocyte-mediated expression of insulin-like growth factor binding proteins (IGFBPs). Prior to her return to graduate school, she completed her B.S. at SDSU in Biology, and spent several years working in biotech at Organovo as a member of the Tissue Testing Team, which focused on developing a 3D bioprinted liver tissue model for applications in drug discovery and disease modeling. She is an active member of AWIS-SD and furthers her passion for empowering women by coaching for Girls on the Run (GOTR) San Diego. Outside of the lab, she enjoys hiking with her dog, competing in triathlons and trying bean-to-bar chocolates and craft beer.

Contribute to the Newsletter

If you are an AWIS-SD member, we encourage you to contribute to the newsletter. Please send articles, photographs, and member news as MS Word attachments to newsletter@awissd.org. News articles should not exceed 250 words, event summaries should not exceed 500 words, and feature articles (special-interest stories and profiles) should not exceed 1000 words. The submission deadline for the next issue is Nov 10, 2021.

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