

AWIS San Diego Newsletter

Spring 2022 Volume 30 Issue 1



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear AWIS-SD Friends,

Happy New Year!

The year 2022 was the third in the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Fortunately, this year brings glad tidings. The average reported cases of coronavirus are showing a decreasing trend, indoor mask mandates have been lifted and people can return to enjoying normal social and physical activities. Here at AWIS-SD, we are gearing up to hold more events in person after two years of virtual-only activities. I am looking forward to meeting all my friends and colleagues face to face.

AWIS-SD provides a support group for women in science with various committees inspiring our younger generation in schools and colleges. AWIS-SD also supports career advancement through scholarships, and sharing resources for career development. We have organized several events this quarter. The recently passed AWIS-SD annual New Year's event merits a special mention. Organized by AWIS-San Diego Events Committee on February 3, the annual gala began with networking, followed by women in STEM trivia and an annual awards ceremony where outstanding volunteers were recognized.

For the last couple of years, AWIS-SD has been challenged by dwindling membership and lack of participation from members. Increasing job openings in biotech, lack of in-person events and reduced opportunities to network could be some of the contributing factors. As volunteers and board members, our goal for the year 2022 is to work towards spreading awareness about all the wonderful programs AWIS-SD supports and runs. We also plan to increase our presence on social networking sites to recruit more members and increase the participation of current members.

Lastly, I want to use this opportunity to thank all current and past AWIS members who introduced me to AWIS. I thank them sincerely for showing me the ropes and supporting me in all my endeavors. I am looking forward to returning the favor. Please feel free to reach out if you any need any help. I am here for all of you.

Best wishes,

Sameera

Sameera Bilgrami, PhD

Interim President, AWIS-SD

a2i@awissd.org

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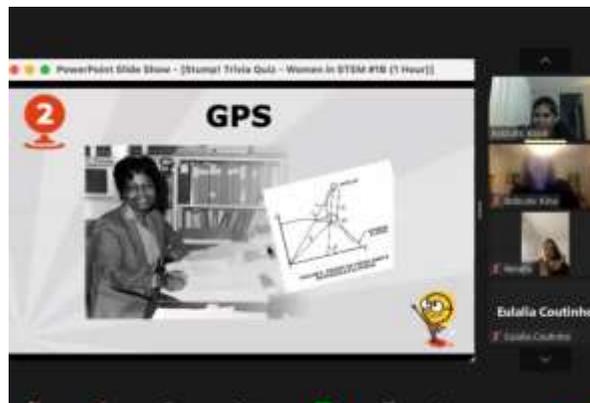
AWIS-SD 2022 Virtual New Year's Party

By Michelle Muldong



AWIS-SD held their annual New Year's event virtually this year on February 3rd and everyone had a really fun time! Before the event, Breakaway Events LLC shipped out customized New Year's goodie bags which included yummy snacks and a sparkling drink.

The event began with trivia hosted by an awesome host named Melissa from Sporcle Inc. The questions centered on famous women scientists like Kimberly Bryant (founded the non-profit Black Girls CODE) and Gladys West (developed GPS). The Bobcats came away with the win and everyone enjoyed laughs and bonded over brainstorming for the correct answers and learning new facts about women pioneers in STEM and medicine.



Following trivia, past president Kina Thackray recognized and awarded this year's outstanding AWIS-SD volunteers:

Achievement in Innovation: Anamaria Ancheta

Rookies of the Year: Reneta Hermiz & Leila Chihab

Achievement in Outreach or Community Service: Jamillah Murtadha & Monica Gonzalez Ramirez

Outstanding Volunteers: Sameera Bilgrami & Shanna Lavallo

Leadership Service: Kayal Madhivanan

Board Special Award: Varykina Thackray

President's Award: Michelle Muldong

It was a successful event overall! AWIS-SD is looking forward to next year's festivities.

AWIS Outreach hosts "Mystery Liquids" Workshop at Expanding Your Horizons Conference

By Jennifer Waters

This March, the AWIS Outreach Committee attended the "Expanding Your Horizons" (EYH) Conference for girls from the 6th-10th grades. This annual event seeks to support girls along their path towards a career in STEM, and for the last two years it has been hosted virtually. EYH seeks to connect students who are interested in STEM with mentors. This is important because data shows that students are about 15% more likely to pursue a STEM career if they have a role model.

More than 200 girls participated in workshops related to their interests, with the topics spanning biology, chemistry, computer science, engineering, ecology and other fields. Students were able to choose two hands-on workshops that they found exciting. As a plus, they were mailed materials to conduct experiments at home, with virtual guidance from workshop leaders.

The Outreach Committee led about a dozen girls through an exercise designed to enhance their appreciation and understanding of scientific methods. Each girl who had chosen our "Mystery Liquids" workshop was mailed three mystery liquids in labelled containers as well as a separate container of baking soda. The students then collaborated to design experiments uncovering what liquids A, B and C were, out of the options of water, dish soap and vinegar. They learned how to isolate single variables and select appropriate scientific controls. Using observation-based methods, each group of girls correctly identified their mystery liquids!

EYH is excited to announce that this is the last year that their conference was held in a virtual format, and the Outreach Committee is looking forward to returning for an in-person event in 2023.

Member Spotlight:

Sameera Bilgrami, PhD



Sameera Bilgrami was recently appointed to be member at large on the AWIS-SD board, and currently serves as the interim President.

She is a senior scientist at Aethlon Medical, Inc. and a Principal Investigator on an NCI grant. She completed her PhD in Cell Biology from The Tata Institute in India, where her major focus of study was protein-lipid interactions in cell membranes using biophysical techniques. Her postdoctoral training was obtained from UCSD where she studied the oncogene PEAK1 and its role in cancer cell metastasis and angiogenesis in zebrafish.

She is currently exploring the role of extracellular vesicles in cancer Immunology. Sameera is passionate about making meaningful collaborations to further research to benefit people's lives.

Sameera has been involved in AWIS-SD since September 2019. She had been chairing the Back-to-Work Committee and after its dissolution, she became co-chair of A2I committee. Outside of the lab, Sameera likes to spend time with her kids, cook, and hang out with friends.

The advertisement features a circular inset image of a woman sitting at a desk in a home office. The background is dark brown with large, stylized blue and white wave-like graphics. The text includes:

- HERA HUB**
Workspace for Women
- Sorrento Valley . Mission Valley . Carlsbad
- Professional work, meeting & event space for female entrepreneurs
- Productive & prosperous place to connect and collaborate
- Herahub.com
- WORK FROM HOME?**
- PROFESSIONAL . PRODCUTIVE . PROSPEROUS**

The A2I February Coffee Club Meeting with Dr. Sabrina Treadwell

By Rose Presby

This month's A2I Coffee Club, held on February 22, 2022, featured Dr. Sabrina Treadwell who discussed her transition from benchtop academic research to industry-based project management (PM). Dr. Treadwell received her PhD in 2013 from the University of East Anglia where she focused on probiotic microbial adhesion in the gut. She continued her scientific career as a postdoc at the UC San Diego. It was here she decided to make the transition from academia to industry. She landed a short-term position as a project manager (PM) at UCSD Health that allowed her to transition to a full time PM position with Dexcom managing clinical projects. We had a total of 16 participants attend The Coffee Club, resulting in a very lively discussion.

Dr. Treadwell discussed which particular skills to highlight when applying for positions. She also informed attendees about necessary certifications and various resources one can access before and after landing a PM position. She emphasized the importance of showing one's understanding of the PM role by focusing on how one may have managed undergraduate or PhD students in the past. Dr. Treadwell also recommended that applicants showcase relevant projects in any former research positions and framing this experience by using the language



that is most familiar to PMs. She described an online introductory course called "Project Management Principles and Practices" offered through UC Irvine and hosted by the online learning platform Coursera (<https://www.coursera.org/specializations/project-management>). This is where Dr. Treadwell learned much of the vocabulary necessary to be successful in the PM profession. She stated this course could apply to the required hours for earning an important PM certificate (Project Management Professional) that is offered through the Project Management Institute (PMI). AWIS members who are interested in learning more are in luck because PMI has a San Diego chapter (<https://pmi-sd.org/index.php>).

Regarding her day-to-day duties, Dr. Treadwell gave attendees sage advice that she once received about lengthy business meetings. "If you do not like meetings, then project management is not for you. It is necessary for a PM to be comfortable with spinning a lot of plates and to be flexible with one's schedule," she added. "PMs have to deal with a number of different departments depending on the needs of the project." Dr. Treadwell added that at times "It can feel like herding cats." Some commonly used PM software tools include MS-Project (a Microsoft Office-based software), Smartsheet, and Kanban (workflow-based management system) that help with organizing everything in a project. These software programs also allow clear, open communication among everyone on the team.

Based on her dynamic presentation, it is clear that Dr. Treadwell thoroughly loves being a PM and encourages anyone who enjoys the managerial aspects of research to consider such a role as viable career move. As a plus, a PM position offers room to grow and a salary equivalent to that of a research scientist. She is open to sharing her LinkedIn information and willing to discuss more about project management with interested AWIS members. Connect with her at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/sabrina-treadwell/>



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AWIS LA/VC, Riverside, and San Diego Virtual Holiday Party

By Corine Lau (AWIS-SD)

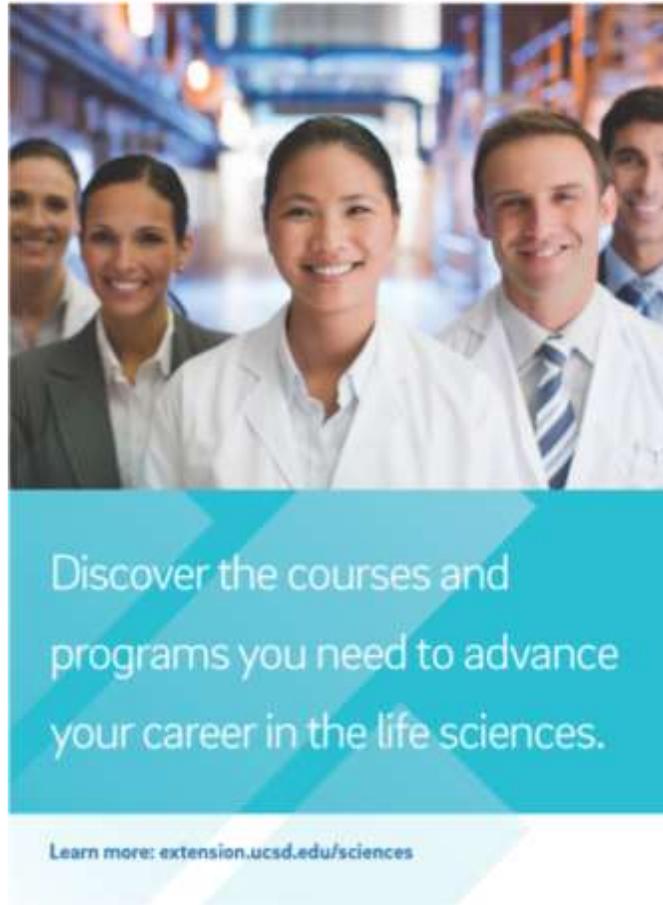
On Saturday, December 4, 2021, 13 members from AWIS chapters of Los Angeles/Ventura County (LA/VC), U of California Riverside (UCR), and San Diego (SD), socialized via Zoom to celebrate the holidays. These three chapters encompass the AWIS southern California region.

The president/co-president of each chapter was among those who attended, as well as board members and committee co-chairs. Varykina (Kina) Thackray represented the SD chapter, while Alison Mills and Karineh Petrossian represented the UCR and LA/VC chapters, respectively. The majority of the attendees are affiliated with the SD chapter, reflecting the larger size of active members of our chapter.



After a round of introduction, we separated into breakout rooms of 3-4 people to continue sharing our personal STEM experiences. We also discussed changes we implemented for our chapters during the pandemic, and brainstormed about various program ideas going forward.

All of us shared a common goal of supporting women in STEM at all career levels in our local communities. With the synergy we built during this event, we hope to bring expertise and resources together to enhance our STEM programming of the AWIS-LA/VC, AWIS-UCR, and AWIS-SD chapters.



The Writer's Panel Organized by A2I Committee, at AWIS-SD

By Sameera Bilgrami

As graduate students, scientists, and career professionals were winding down their work to prepare for the holidays, we organized one last coffee club for the year 2021 on Thursday, December 2nd at 5PM. It was very well attended with a total of 19 attendees making this the most popular coffee club of the year. Our invited speakers were three writers from different areas of scientific writing: Jennifer Yang, PhD, senior medical writer and Miriam Cohen, PhD, director of scientific communications, both from the Vanium Group; and Monica May, communications officer at the department of neurological surgery at UCSD.

Panel Discussion

Scientific Writing

Dr. Jennifer Yang
Senior Medical Writer
at Vanium Group

Dr. Miriam Cohen
Director, Scientific Communications
at Vanium Group

Monica May
Communications Officer,
Department of Neurological
Surgery, UCSD

Thursday, December 2nd, 2021, at 5pm Virtual

The discussion started with each of the speaker giving their background and their journey into scientific writing. Yang's journey started with a PhD in endocrinology and animal biosciences followed by a postdoc in obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive sciences. She transitioned to industry in 2019 and is currently working with clients in biotech and pharmaceutical industry to publish manuscripts and scientific communications for conferences and meetings. Cohen received her PhD in molecular and cellular biology from the Weizmann Institute in Israel, and completed her postdoctoral work in the Glycobiology Research and Training Center at UCSD. She transitioned to industry in 2016 and began working on publications and promotional education. She is currently director of communications at Vanium Group where she creates training materials, analyzes complex scientific data, provides strategic insights, and writes, reviews, and edits publications. May received her bachelor's in molecular, cellular and developmental biology and her master's in education from UC Santa Cruz. After working in a lab for a few years at The La Jolla Institute of Allergy and Immunology, she transitioned to industry and worked at Canale Communications and Russo Partners where she helped clients achieve strategic goals, such as increasing enrollment in clinical trials, finding collaborative partners and increasing sales leads. She then joined Sanford-Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute where she wrote newsletters and expanded the institute's presence on social media. She is currently working as a communications officer at the department of neurological surgery where she helps promote the department's groundbreaking research and educational programs.



There were questions about deadlines that writers need to adhere to and whether they need to work alone or as part of a team. Yang said that deadlines vary from about a couple hours to months depending on the project. Cohen added that irrespective of the deadline, your time is respected in industry, and you are compensated accordingly. Team strength depends on the kind of client and project. Scientific writers must work with scientists, project managers and graphic designers to coordinate publications, newsletters, and educational programs. There are also companies that are completely remote. Vanium Group is one of those companies.

Crystal Thomas wanted to know about the goals of a technical writer. According to May, there are personal goals and professional goals. The readership and subscriptions to newsletters, the number of clicks on the social networking sites and popularity of articles or posts are some of the professional goals. Being passionate about scientific writing and communicating it to the general audiences is a personal goal that all writers work towards. Emily asked about the best writing samples to submit for assessment for a job interview. Employers check your writing skills, sometimes from samples you submit, but also from a deck or data that they provide to you. Aparna Telang, scientific writer at BioLegend, advised that employers are looking for how relatable you are to different demographics. She believed that her experience teaching young adults gave her an advantage in job interviews. Elizabeth Stewart, an attendee, wanted to know if there were certifications that writers could take to further their education. Information was exchanged about the boot camp courses for translational skills like resume writing, and organizations that foster and mentor scientific writers like Comprehensive American Medical Association (CMMP) and San Diego Scientific Writer's Association (SANDSWA). It was a very lively discussion with participation from all attendees. Since there were 19 attendees and 3 speakers to address each question, not everyone got a chance to ask their questions. Our speakers graciously shared their contact details with the attendees for further questions.



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About the Authors



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.



Rose Presby is a recent transplant to sunny San Diego from the snowy Northeast. She received her undergraduate degree from the University of Maine in Biology with a minor in Psychology. She went on to work for a few years as an animal care tech turned Lab technician at the Jackson Laboratory. In the fall of 2016, she started her graduate school career in the lab of Dr. John Salamone at the University of Connecticut where she received both her master's and PhD studying the motivational aspects and pharmacological manipulation of a rodent model of binge like eating. She, her husband and their two cats Salem (guess what color he is...) and George, moved to San Diego in August for her postdoc position at the Scintillon Institute in the lab of Dr. Albert Chen studying neural circuits of food intake. She is a member of the Outreach, Corporate Sponsorship and A2I committees, along with one of the new Co-chairs of the Scholarship committee. She is an avid sewist, hiker and chocolate lover. Feel free to reach her at rpresby@scintillon.org or on her LinkedIn profile <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rose-presby-07021088/>.



Corine Lau received her Ph.D. in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology from the University of Colorado, Boulder, and her B.S. in Biochemistry from the University of Washington, Seattle. She pursued her post-doctoral training at the University of California, San Diego. She is currently a Senior Scientist at NeoGenomics Inc. Corine joined AWIS-SD in 2006, and held various AWIS-SD leadership roles including Treasurer, Board member, and Website and Newsletter Committee co-chair. She has been serving in the Newsletter committee since 2016.



Sameera Bilgrami was recently appointed to be member at large on the AWIS-SD board, and currently serves as the interim President. Sameera 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.



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 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 July 10, 2022.

AWIS San Diego Newsletter Committee Newsletter@awissd.org

Co-chair: Jean Spence

Member: Corine Lau, Pat Rarus, and Swathi Hullugundi

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