



# NEWSLETTER

**Mission Statement:** The Association for Women in Science, Inc. (AWIS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the achievement of equity and full participation of women in all areas of science and technology.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Dear Reader,

On behalf of the Board of AWIS-San Diego I would like to wish all of you

“A Happy, Healthy and Successful 2007”

Looking back at 2006, AWIS-San Diego Chapter has accomplished many things it set out to do at the beginning of the year.

We have introduced new events to the Chapter, such as the first AWIS-SD Happy Hour in April, and we revived the AWIS-SD Family Picnic in July. The Gala in 2006 was a great success and we were honored to award scholarships to exceptional young women scientists.

We also continued to provide our volunteers with opportunities to learn new skills by providing workshops on newsletter writing and the secrets to public relations in addition to our bimonthly Strategy Sessions. We launched our new chapter email addresses, which have helped tremendously in our day-to-day operations.

Our Open House in October was well attended and we were pleased to present our most active volunteers with well-deserved recognition awards. In 2006, we also had to say good-bye to many of our volunteers who left San Diego for new career opportunities. At the same time, I am delighted to say others have taken on new leadership positions.

For 2007, we are planning the biennial Women In bioScience Conference on Saturday May 19. Please mark your calendars; registration will open soon!

To create the chapter goals and to develop a strategic plan how to reach them in the New Year, AWIS-SD Board Members and Committee Chairs will meet at the AWIS-SD retreat in January. We will communicate the plan for 2007 in the next newsletter.

If you have any suggestions or ideas that we should consider during this meeting please send me an email at [president@awissd.org](mailto:president@awissd.org). I look forward to hearing from you.

With warmest regards,

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### Upcoming Events

Compiled by Janice Payne

Free Lectures held at the San Diego Natural History Museum

- **January 9:** "How We Know the Climate is Changing," Speaker: Mark Thiemens of UCSD, 6:30-8:00 pm.
- **January 16: Grey Matters: From Molecules to Mind.** "New Drug Treatments and the Future of Stem Cells for the Aging Brain." Speaker: Stuart Lipton, The Burnham Institute for Medical Research Registration 5:30pm, lecture 6pm.

**January 28 (Saturday):** Birch Aquarium. Bring your family and learn about the underwater creatures housed at the aquarium. More details TBA.

**February 3:** Science Writing Workshop. Beckman Center--San Diego Wild Animal Park. The San Diego Science Writers Association will host a meeting with sessions on a variety of topics, from opportunities for aspiring science writers to tips for seasoned professionals. Registration required, details TBA. For more information contact Amber Dance: [adance@ucsd.edu](mailto:adance@ucsd.edu).

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## AWIS-SD Members on the Move

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In this and the next issue, we will be highlighting women who were positively influenced by WIB. If you have a story, let us hear from you. Send your stories to [newsletter@awissd.org](mailto:newsletter@awissd.org)

### Barbara Preston: Impact of AWIS and WIB on Her Career Transition

By Sama Tamrakar

“In the beginning, I used to approach them all the time, but now they contact me most of the time,” says AWIS member Barbara Preston about her business relationship with biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies.

Preston, a senior executive recruiter and founder of PharmaScouts, a scientific recruiting firm in San Diego, started her career in academic research. After receiving her B.S. and M.S. degrees in microbiology from the University of Maryland, she worked at the National Institute of Health for a year, and then took a research and lab management position at Cornell University. There, she enrolled for her doctorate under an employee degree program. While performing her employment duties, she also carried out her independent research project and received her Ph.D. in Pharmacology. Although it took her somewhat longer to complete, she did not have to depend on a graduate student stipend but was paid as staff.



However, by the end of her postdoctoral research she wanted to leave the bench and move onto something different, but she didn't know what. Preston remembers that in San Diego, the “biotech boom” had begun, but was difficult for a newcomer to break into. “Like a lot of postdocs, I was searching for what else I could do with my scientific background besides the bench work,” says Preston. With a very limited network, she started to explore what was out there. During AWIS-SD events and Women in bioScience Conferences (WIB) in 1997 and 99, she discovered the possibilities and ideas for transition.

“WIB was extremely helpful. People from different areas and with a variety of experience convened. Concrete suggestions were given on how to make a change,” says Preston. She recalls particularly being influenced by Lynne Friedmann. Friedmann spoke at a career development forum and her suggestions on steps to take were instrumental in Preston's transition. For example, Friedmann advised those wanting to become a writer for a scientific publication to start building a good portfolio by writing for trade journals, association magazines or by attending and writing about a seminar different from what you normally would. Preston says, “Most of the advice and ideas provided were something you could do while you still had your job.”

WIB's career development forum was not the only forum that touched Preston. She was very impressed by the variety of workshops and scientific sessions. “The workshops and sessions open your eyes and mind to other things you have never thought

about before,” she says. Discussions on topics such as personal development, leadership, communication, and negotiations, all left her awestruck. “Even the final reception was so classy.”

Preston took steps, including working with a friend in a more traditional business, and learned about marketing. She realized that she is more of a “people person.” She wanted to do something that would allow her to integrate her scientific background. When she found a job opening in scientific recruitment, she knew immediately that it was meant for her. She joined MSI International, a recruiting firm, in 1999. Her scientific background and her ability to build relationships complemented each other.

The switch was not all a bed of roses for Preston. The first year she found it very challenging and was extremely stressed almost every day. But she knew her long-term goal was to start her own business, and that she needed to learn the tricks of the trade in order to be successful. By the end of the year, she was very comfortable with what she was doing. “It's like climbing a dirt hill,” she says. “And, just before they reach the top of the hill most people quit, because they get so exhausted, frustrated, and don't see money coming fast enough.” Preston believes that when embarking on something new, one has to commit 12 – 18 months because it takes that long before it becomes automatic or enjoyable.

Preston also believes that her determination, support from her mentor, people and friends in AWIS, all helped her through the tough transition time. A person of a strong spiritual faith, she adds, “I give God credit for my success—He has given me the opportunities and courage to attempt what sometimes seemed impossible, and AWIS gave me some of the skills and friendships to make it possible”. After four years at MSI International, Preston opened her own firm, PharmaScouts.

Following the 1999 WIB, then AWIS-SD President Elaine Weidenhammer encouraged Preston to become more involved in the organization and recruited her to the board in 2001. Preston served as vice president during 2002 -2004. She also helped organize subsequent WIB speaker committees in 2001 and 2003. Currently Preston is part of the Events Committee. She advises those who just joined AWIS to get involved in a committee and make a commitment.

The skills Preston learned by being a member of the AWIS board helped her structure other organizations in the community. She brought in the know how of running a non-profit organization to United Warrior Survivor's Foundation where she was an executive director until 2005 and now is a spouse liaison. She reaches out to women from military families who have faced dramatic changes in their lives. Preston has been part of this all-volunteer organization almost since its start in 2002.

Next, Preston plans to expand her business. After her recent honeymoon trip to Hawaii, Preston toys with the idea of relocating there. The nature of her work is such that she is not restricted to location. “With a phone, an internet connection, and discipline,” beams Preston, “I can even do this from a boat in the Caribbean.”

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NEWS

**Biogen IDEC hosts annual AWIS Open House**

By Janice Payne

AWIS members and prospective members enjoyed networking and a panel discussion at the annual Open House held at Biogen IDEC. Panelists Karen Arden, Jodi Connelly, Janet White and Karin Lucas discussed their involvement with AWIS and the benefits of membership.



Congratulations to the following award members:

- **Milka Kostic:** Rookie of the Year
- **Susy McKay, Alicia Bicknell:** Achievement in Outreach
- **Cindy Atwell, Julie Kinyoun:** Outstanding Volunteer
- **Robin Rosenfeld:** Leadership Service
- **Barbara Armstrong:** President's Award



Also acknowledged this year were 13 members with 15+ years of service to AWIS. Congratulations to all our award winners and many thanks to our panelists and the membership and events committee for putting on this event.

*Photos courtesy of Miguel Guzman.*

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**Low-Cost Training for Scientists**

The Southern California Biotechnology Center is a state-funded initiative committed to low-cost training for scientists transitioning into biotechnology. Upcoming offerings include:

1. **Training in 'business savvy' and regulatory understanding Inside the Pharmaceutical Industry** (Chem 255). Offered at San Diego Mesa College beginning Feb 2007. Contact Rob Fremland 619-388-2422

**Business and Regulatory Practices in Biotech.** An online class offered through Mira Costa College beginning Feb 2007. Contact Mike Fino at 760-757-2121 x 6499.

2. **Low cost science workshops.**  
**Tissue Culture Training for Incumbent Workers.** January 2007.  
**Bioquest Bioinformatics Training for Faculty.** January 2007.

3. **Soft Skills training.** For mid-level managers. Will be offered through the Professional Development Institute/ Workplace Learning Center at Biocom. Coming Spring 2007.

For more information contact:

Sandra Slivka Ph.D., Director  
 Southern California Biotechnology Center at Miramar College  
 619-388-7490. sslivka@sdccd.edu.

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FEATURES/OPINIONS

**The Pros and Cons of Community College Teaching  
 AWIS Event, Miramar College**

By Siobhan Malany

What do a high school graduate deciding on a career path, a military spouse interested in learning new skills, and a mid-career person looking to enter or change direction in the workforce all have in common? They may be sitting side by side in a community college course. Community college instructors face the challenge of designing syllabi to communicate with and lead diverse student populations. In addition, they help each student achieve his/her goal, whether it be to earn a two-year associate degree, continue life-long education or to receive a workforce development program certificate.

AWIS-SD hosted a panel discussion on November 9 at San Diego Miramar College on the "Pros and Cons of Community College Teaching." Rosemary Cesario of the Events Committee introduced a panel that included four professors in the Biology department at Miramar College. Each shared their experiences and insight into community college teaching.

**Sandra Slivka, Ph.D.**, has been an AWIS-SD member for 20 years. In addition to being an associate professor of Biology, Slivka directs the Southern California Biotechnology Center (SCBC). Slivka has over 15 years experience in the biotech industry. She began her teaching career as an industry advisor and adjunct instructor in the biotechnology program at Miramar College and eventually transitioned into a tenured faculty position. As director

of SCBC, Slivka oversees a four-year state-funded grant initiative to develop and offer training services to the workforce to meet the needs of the local biotech industry. "We do maintain an active advisory board made up of representatives from industry and regional faculty. Our goal is to be sure our curriculum is current and relevant. We also want to be sure that we are responding to changing trends," said Slivka.



**Buran Haidar, Ph.D.** is also an AWIS-SD member and currently teaches cellular and molecular biology and microbiology at Miramar College. Almost two decades into her academic career as a molecular geneticist and biochemist, Haidar found herself working alone at the bench one weekend day. "I remember thinking, what will they write on my tombstone, that I worked very hard?" She made a conscious decision to leave research. She quit her position at the University of Washington, moved to San Diego and knocked on the doors of department chairs in search of an adjunct position. After several temporary teaching stints, she accepted a tenure-track faculty position. Haidar feels that she makes a difference in helping students to learn.

**Crista Wagner, M.S.** is an adjunct professor teaching at Cal State San Marcos and Miramar Colleges. Wagner got her foot in the door to community college teaching by seeking a San Diego and Imperial Counties Community College Association's (SDICCA) faculty summer internship. She sought out a faculty member to be her mentor. The program taught Wagner how to develop syllabi and apply teaching technologies to reach diverse populations and adult learners. The program also served as "a way to get in with the department head," she said. As a mom, Wagner desired a flexible work schedule and she finds an adjunct position ideal. But in order to get in the number of hours she desires, she commutes between the two colleges because each district has a maximum number of hours an adjunct professor may work.

**Laura Murphy, Ph.D.** is an assistant professor in the biology department at Miramar College and teaches microbiology. She began teaching part-time at UCSD and USD while completing her postdoctoral work at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography. Murphy knew she wanted to focus on teaching and considered a full-time position at USD. "At USD, the climate was changing," said Murphy referring to the University investing more into research programs and even hiring postdocs. She then considered community college teaching. Despite her research and teaching experience at four-year colleges, Murphy taught classes at Miramar College on a temporary basis before being awarded a full-time faculty position. "Number one importance is to get community college teaching experience," she said.

Each of the panelists finds teaching at a community college a rewarding experience. They do, however, spend many hours outside the classroom preparing and enhancing their skills. To keep up with changing workforce needs and student demographics, the panelists participate in workshops addressing new and more effective teaching methods and technologies and sit in on other faculty member's classes to brush up on subject matter they may need to teach in the future. Haidar and Murphy, both of whom are up for tenure, undergo classroom evaluations not just by their students but also by the dean, the department chair and peer faculty members, all of whom will sit in on their classes from time to time.

The pros and cons of community college teaching come down to this: if teaching is your passion, there are far more pros than cons.

#### Interested in teaching at a community college?

- **Step 1.** Have a resume that emphasizes your teaching experience and states that your objective is teaching. The minimum qualification is a master's degree. Whether a candidate has a M.S. or Ph.D. degree, Slivka stresses that the main hiring criteria are a demonstrated ability to teach and an understanding of the community college mission.
- **Step 2.** Contact the district human resources department as well as individual department chairs. Contact them the second or third week into the semester about the following semester and again near the end of the semester. Department chairs often make decisions on adjunct hiring and contact each other when they need an instructor. "If you are in their Rolodex, you have a good chance of getting called to teach a class," says Wagner who has been called on a Friday to teach the following Monday.
- **Step 3.** Apply for a full-time position.

#### Helpful Links

- San Diego Community College District  
<http://employment.sdccd.edu/>
- California Community College Registry  
<https://www.cccregistry.org/jobs/index.aspx>
- Chronicle of Higher Education  
<http://chronicle.com/>
- Southern California Biotechnology Center  
<http://www.miramar.sdccd.net/programs/biol/biotech/>
- SDICCA Internship program:  
<http://www.interwork.sdsu.edu/courses/cc/index.html>

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### 66<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Medical Writers Association

By Karen Josephson

The annual American Medical Writers Association (AMWA) conference was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico from October 26-28, 2006. Nearly 1,000 attendees, including health practitioners, scientists and journalists, convened for the purpose of improving their writing skills and advancing the quality of medical writing worldwide. The meeting, held at the Convention Center, began

under arid, open skies, which seemed to welcome the electric conversation. Within this generation of writers, the speed of the written word is important, whether the goal is to present the latest clinical findings or to accelerate a doctor's differential diagnosis for a sick patient via telecommunications.

The keynote speaker Dale C. Alverson, MD, Professor of Pediatrics and Regents Professor at the University of New Mexico School of Medicine (UNM), related his experiences within the burgeoning field of telemedicine. As director of the Telemedicine Program and the Center for Telehealth and Cybermedicine Research at UNM, he has seen the expansion of healthcare services via a computerized network that reaches rural areas far from the city medical centers. He noted positive results in providing better emergency care for victims of strokes and better management of diseases like TB and Hepatitis C. The benefits of the programs seemed to outweigh the challenges in coordinating a multitude of programs that have sprung up throughout the Four Corners Region. Not content to rest on his laurels, Alverson promoted and launched the idea of "floating clinics" along the Amazon River in Ecuador as a mirroring program to that in New Mexico.

In accord with Alverson's goals to disseminate quality medical information, the AMWA organization presented certificate coursework and open sessions to help writers advance their skills in diverse areas such as editing and grammar, development of multimedia presentations, and dealing with the ethical and legal issues that surround the publications process.

During the conference, AMWA awarded prizes to writers of books in 3 categories: physicians, allied health, and trade. Elizabeth M. Adler, PhD, won in the Trade category for her book [Living With Lymphoma](#), published by John Hopkins University Press. Other awards were given for books concerning emergency medicine, phlebotomy, and cancer.

Whether the attendees came as seasoned medical writers or newly minted freelancers, the conference provided an ample number of workshops to help each person advance their skills and to network with peers across the nation and the world.

The AMWA website, [www.amwa.org](http://www.amwa.org), provides detailed information about the organization and their certificate programs.

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## End to Science Funding Drought?

By Paula Campos Soto

The past few years have not been good to science. Among accusations of censorship for studies on global warming and restrictions on embryonic stem cell research, the most significant obstacle for the advancement of biomedical research has been the decreased funding available to researchers.

In 2000, the success rate for the 8,626 applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was 20.1 percent. By 2005, the number of applications increased to 10,605, but the success rate declined to 9.1 percent.

Some suggest that many researchers are finding it difficult to get funding because of the increased success of the NIH; the annual budget for the agency doubled between 1998 and 2003. Because of

this budget increase, many universities were able to expand their infrastructure and increase their workforce. Those investments resulted in a huge increase in the number of research grant applications received, jumping from 28,000 in 1998 to 46,000 applications this year.

Even though the number of applications has been steadily increasing, the amount of money available to the NIH has gone in the opposite direction. A report by the American Association for the Advancement of Science notes that even though the federal investment in research and development for the fiscal year 2006 hit a record of \$134.8 billion, 97% of the increase in funding went to just two areas of the department of defense: weapons development and NASA next-generation exploration vehicles.

The budget for the NIH, specifically, was decreased for the first time in 36 years. And according to the report, after adjusting for inflation, the NIH has a smaller budget in 2006 than it did in 2003. It seems the only non-defense agency that escaped cuts in funding in 2006 was the Department of Veterans Affairs, which received a 2.7% increase in its research and development portfolio.

Despite all the grim statistics, the NIH director Elias Zerhouni, in an article in the journal *Nature* (Vol. 443, issue 26, Oct. 2006), still had words of hope for scientists: "We still have the largest research budget on Earth: \$28.6 billion is larger than all other countries combined. If you believe in your research, don't give up on it. Things are not great. But they are not as desperate as some people portray them to be."

And things may be getting better. After the recent elections, Democrats are replacing Republicans both in the Senate and in Congress. And in line to become chair of the House Committee on Science is Representative Bart Gordon of Tennessee, who in a recent interview in the journal *Nature* (Vol. 444, issue 16, Nov. 2006), made some encouraging comments. Gordon stated that in order to keep the country competitive in science and technology, he will push legislation on the subject, and that it is a high priority for the Democrats. Let's hope they keep their priorities straight.

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## AWIS Member News

**Lynne Friedmann**, AWIS Fellow, recently won a San Diego Press Club Journalism Award (newspapers: science/technology category) for a feature article on the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ballpoint pen. The article appeared in the *North County Times* ([http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2005/11/27/special\\_reports/science\\_technology/17\\_36\\_0611\\_26\\_05.txt](http://www.nctimes.com/articles/2005/11/27/special_reports/science_technology/17_36_0611_26_05.txt)). Friedmann is the author of a forthcoming book on the history and science of ink.

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In this section of the Newsletter, we report on the accomplishments (new jobs, promotions, awards, publications, etc.) of AWIS-SD members. If you have any news to report, send it to [newsletter@awissd.org](mailto:newsletter@awissd.org) and write "AWIS Member News" in the subject heading.

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**IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT****San Diego Chapter**

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**About the AWIS Newsletter**

The AWIS Newsletter is published six times per year and provides AWIS members and supporters with information on Chapter activities, career development, and issues related to women in science.

January/February Newsletter staff:

Alice Budai	Hima Joshi	Siobhan Malany
Janice Payne	Sama Tamrakar	Amber Dance
Paula C. Soto		

If you are an AWIS-SD member, we encourage you to contribute articles to the Newsletter. Please send articles as MS Word attachments to [newsletter@awissd.org](mailto:newsletter@awissd.org). News articles should not exceed 250 words, and event summaries should not exceed 500 words. Feature articles (special-interest stories and profiles) should not exceed 1000 words. The submission deadline for the next issue is February 2, 2007.

**Not getting AWIS-SD member e-mails?**

Update your contact information!

Go to the member services page using the following link:  
<https://www.sgmeet.com/awis/memberlogin.asp>

You will need your member ID and password. If you need assistance, please contact AWIS Member Services by phone (866-657-AWIS) or by e-mail ([membership@awis.org](mailto:membership@awis.org)).

**AWIS-San Diego Sponsors**

AWIS-San Diego thanks our corporate sponsors for their generous support. Donations from corporate sponsors help us fund scholarship awards, monthly events and Strategy Sessions, community outreach efforts, the Newsletter and the website.

For more information about how your company can support AWIS-SD, send e-mail to [fundAWISsd@gmail.com](mailto:fundAWISsd@gmail.com).

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	Elizabeth Yoder	Eyoder@awissd.org
	Susan Fitch	Sfitch@awissd.org

To contact the Board, visit the following website:

<http://awis.npaci.edu/officers/biographies.htm>

**AWIS National Councilor (San Diego Chapter)**

Sonya Summerour Clemmons

To contact Sonya, visit: <http://www.awis.org/network/board.html>

**Committee**

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