

Letter from the President

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

It has been a tumultuous time since I wished everyone a Happy New Year in February 2020! Little did I realize that we would be facing the ongoing challenge of racism in our country along with the new challenge of a global coronavirus pandemic.

I applaud those who have stepped up to help with these two daunting challenges! We, at AWIS-SD, stand in solidarity with protesters, activists and community organizers to emphatically state that Black Lives Matter. We will continue to advocate for increased diversity as well as equal opportunities for women of color in STEM. In addition, we, at AWIS-SD, thank all essential workers for their dedication, hard work and sacrifice to develop novel diagnostics and treatments for COVID-19. We also thank them for providing and supporting healthcare services and all of the other essential services we have depended on for these past months and will depend on for months to come.

During the stay-at-home order, AWIS-SD has become a virtual organization. The board, committees and members have all worked very hard to provide virtual events for our members and the community to attend. We have also highlighted the accomplishments of our Scholarship and San Diego Science Fair awardees. Please read our newsletter and visit our website at awissd.org to learn about our organization, as well as our recent and upcoming events.

I would like to close by personally thanking all of the AWIS-SD members who have generously volunteered many hours of their time to make this organization what it is today. I would also like to thank the sponsors of AWIS-SD 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



We Stand Together Against Systemic Racism

For many years, the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) has focused on breaking down the systemic barriers that limit the advancement, equity and participation of women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). Today, as we confront repeated acts of racial violence throughout our nation, AWIS doesn't see our work as separate from this struggle. We acknowledge and stand against systemic racism, and we encourage those who share our commitment to join us in working against it.

In a recent statement, former President Barack Obama observed that, "It's natural to wish for life 'to just get back to normal' as a pandemic and economic crisis upend everything around us. But we have to remember that for millions of Americans, being treated differently on account of race is tragically, painfully, maddeningly 'normal' – whether it's while dealing with the health care system, or interacting with the criminal justice system, or jogging down the street, or just watching birds in a park."

We recognize that women of color in STEM, and Black women in particular, carry the burden of racism in everyday life as well as within workplaces and educational settings. It is critical that we as a STEM organization recognize their experiences and do not let them stand alone. By being silent, or proceeding as if it's 'business as usual,' we are only perpetuating the harm of systemic racism.

"The Daily Show" host Trevor Noah explained that we all sign a "social contract" in order to maintain order in a society that would otherwise be chaotic. "Society is a contract that we sign as human beings with each other," he said. "Whether spoken or unspoken, we agree in this group to common rules, common ideals, and common practices that are going to define us as a group... And the contract is only as strong as the people who abide by it."

STATEMENT

Similarly, there is much work to be done in professional communities, in addition to societal ones.

At AWIS, we reaffirm our commitment to fostering an equitable and inclusive scientific enterprise, which includes confronting racism. We encourage those in the scientific community, wherever they are, to take a stand against racism however they can. Be an active bystander. Foster change within the workplace by applying your professional influence to diverse and inclusive hiring practices. Participate in making space for new approaches and ideas. There are myriad ways to take on this work, but it is all of our responsibility to do so.

In the weeks ahead, we will continue to share ideas and resources for your active participation in our shared future.

Yours in Science, and Social Justice,



Susan R. Windham-Bannister, PhD
President & Chair of the Board
Association for Women in Science



Sandra W. Robert, CAE
Chief Executive Officer
Association for Women in Science

AWIS-SD participates at the 2020 San Diego Science and Engineering Festival Expo Day

By Yessica Diaz Roman

On Saturday, March 7, a group of dedicated volunteers led by Bridget Kohlnhofer and Yessica Diaz Roman met at Petco Park to participate in Expo Day 2020. Expo Day, a science festival with more than 130 local businesses, corporations, and organizations, provides interactive, hands-on science, technology, engineering, and math exhibits and activities for children K-12. Ready for a fun-filled day, we headed toward our booth with cornstarch and supplies and began to prepare our OOBLECK station. We welcomed our volunteers and proudly wore our STEM superhero t-shirts and AWIS-SD buttons. Our booth placement near the main stage gave us the perfect panoramic view of other exhibitors as well as participants as they entered the stadium area and began to gather near the main stage.

Expo Day 2020 had the same excitement and enthusiasm as previous years, but with more precautions and public health safety measures because of the current global pandemic. Thanks to the Expo Day organizers, we had two hand-washing stations and two large hand sanitizers at each entrance gate into Petco Park, a large hand sanitizer at each information booth, and a large hand sanitizer station at the Merchandise tent.

AWIS-SD volunteers worked with elementary, middle and high-school students and parents to explore the Newtonian Fluid with plastic dinosaurs while answering their questions. Everyone made sure that all washed and sanitized their hands at nearby sanitizing stations. Highlights of the day included meeting new AWIS-SD outreach members, speaking with other scientists and most importantly, witnessing the curious minds of children of all ages enjoy OOBLECK at our station.

EVENTS

Thank you so much to our dedicated volunteers: Kate Prosser, Kyla Omilusik, Leilani Cruz, Monica Romelczyk, Diane Retallek, Mikella Nuzen, Romy Vu, Daniela Dengler, Raffaella, Michelle Muldong, Duc Tran and Jessica Gardiner. It was a great day for all!!

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Upcoming Events

AWIS-SD JULY Summer Happy Hour Event
Zoom Date: 29 July 2020, 06:00 PM
We invite AWIS Members to catch up and network at our Virtual Summer Happy Hour July 29th 6-7p

<https://www.awissd.org/index.php/all-events/events-calendar/441-awissd-summer-happy-hour-event-2?date=2020-07-29-18-00>

A2I August Coffee Chat

Zoom Date: 06 August 2020, 05:00 PM
Guest speaker: Carrie Sawyer

<https://www.awissd.org/index.php/all-events/events-calendar/440-a2i-august-coffee-chat?date=2020-08-06-17-00>

ALN Meeting & Happy Hour
Zoom Date: 19 August 2020, 06:00 PM
AWIS-SD Leadership Network (ALN) members only. For more information about ALN, go to

<http://www.awissd.org/index.php/all-events/member-events/leadership-network>
<https://www.awissd.org/index.php/all-events/events-calendar/428-aln-virtual-yoga>

Member News

Varykina (Kina) Thackray was promoted to full professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Reproductive Sciences at UC San Diego. Kina has been a member of this department for 18 years now: 6 years as a post-doctoral fellow, 6 years as an assistant professor and 6 years as an associate professor. There must be something magical about the number 6!

Juliati Rahajeng has a new position as Manager for Medical Writing with Kite Pharmaceuticals. She plans to move to Los Angeles by the end of August and she will resign from her position as the AWIS-SD secretary at the end of July. We will miss her!

If you have news that you would like to share with the AWIS community, please sent it to newsletter@awissd.org

NOTICES

Call for Volunteers

All committees are looking for new members. In particular, the Newsletter (newsletter@awissd.org) and Corporate Sponsorship (corporatesponsorship@awissd.org) committees are looking for new co-chairs.

Apply now for ComSciCon San Diego

Graduate students and postdocs are invited to apply now for the first ever virtual Communicating Science (ComSciCon SD) workshop in September 2020. The ComSciCon workshop series is designed to empower trainees to communicate the complex and technical concepts that arise in research in science, engineering and other technical fields to broad and diverse audiences.

More information and an application can be found on our web page, <https://comscicon.com/comscicon-sandiego-2020>.

Attendees will interact with fellow graduate student leaders in science communication, learn from expert writers and communicators, and will produce original writing for publication.

The ComSciCon-SD event will be held over 2 full days on September 25-26. The application for the workshop is open now and will close on August 17. There will be no cost or fee to attendees, but only a limited number of spots are available. Attendees will be selected through a competitive application process. Interested students can apply here: <https://forms.gle/Djp2NptnWF3g1UND6>.

This workshop will be held in collaboration with the Kavli Institute for Brain and Mind. The conference is being organized by UCSD graduate students and post-docs.

For more information, please contact ComSciCon SD directly at sandiego@comscicon.org.

UCSD is seeking lactating women who have or have been exposed to COVID-19

The UC San Diego Human Milk Research Biorepository, located at the Center for Better Beginnings at UC San Diego and led by Dr. Christina Chambers, is collaborating with investigators at the Larsson-Rosenquist Foundation Mother-Milk-Infant Center of Research Excellence (MOMI CORE), also at UC San Diego and led by Dr. Lars Bode. The research team has launched an international study to collect breast milk samples from women who have tested positive for COVID-19, have been symptomatic but not tested, or have had a high risk exposure to the virus. The study will examine the evidence for transmission of the virus through breast milk as well as determine the extent to which breast milk may contain protective antibodies or other anti-viral compounds. Women who reside in the U.S. or Canada are eligible to enroll in the study. Women who are interested can contact Kerri Bertrand at milkstudy@ucsd.edu, by calling 858-246-1713 or through the study website (<https://mommysmilkresearch.org>). Financial contributions to help support the study can be made through the MOMI CORE website.

Career Advancement Committee

By Courtney Benson

We started the Career Advancement (Early to Mid-Career) Committee to provide tools to members to aid in advancing their careers. We would like to engage members to have discussions with guest speakers on challenges that we face in the early to mid-career. Topics for discussions include managing up/down, transitioning from academia to industry, conflict resolution and many more. Our first in person event was held in March 2020. Our guest speaker for this event was Kerstin Kirchsteiger, a former AWIS-SD Board member and topic discussed was emotional intelligence. We had our second spring event on Zoom, where our co-chairs, Courtney Benson and Manisha Kanodia, discussed their backgrounds and hurdles they had to overcome in their careers, which initiated great conversation with the attendees. We had a session where attendees openly discussed obstacles that are faced and all their questions and concerns were answered.

NOTICES

Career Advancement, cont.

We will have two upcoming events in September and November 2020. If you have any suggestions on content or speakers, feel free to reach out to us at careeradvancement@awissd.org.

The Leadership Network

By Christina Niemeyer

The Leadership Network (ALN) is a sub-group of approximately 30 AWIS-SD members in senior leadership roles in academia or industry. Currently, Lori Yang and Christina Niemeyer co-chair the group. The group meets monthly to focus on career and personal advancement.

They started 2020 by meeting on Saturday January 11th to support Kristina Henthorn, one of the members. She had a beautiful display at a Japanese flower arrangement exhibition at the Balboa Park Japanese Friendship Garden.

In February, ALN had a Meet and Greet and Program Planning Session at the San Diego Science Center. It was a time to re-acquaint with each other and plan the programs for 2020. In March, April, and May, the Leadership Network met via Zoom to discuss among other things how to cope during the pandemic and how to survive all the Zoom meetings. In June, a virtual gentle yoga class and guided meditation was held to keep the members grounded, peaceful and relaxed.

The Leadership Network always welcome new members to expand their network and share leadership experiences and perspectives. For membership, Position/Title should be at least Associate Director or Associate Professor, or equivalent. If between positions, applicant's most recent title should fit the aforementioned levels. Because participation is by application only, please feel free to send queries to leadnet@awissd.org.

Virtual Coffee Chat with Nena Chavira, Ph.D.

By Nora Shafee



On Thursday, May 28, 2020, the AWIS-SD Academia 2 Industry (A2i) Coffee Club was honored to host Dr. Nena Chavira as our guest speaker. Nena spoke about her roles as a science writer and editor; her experience as a woman in

science; and the challenges she encountered when applying for industry positions, especially transitioning from academia to industry. To observe the recommendations from the California Department of Public Health on gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic, we arranged to have the coffee chat on a virtual meeting platform.

Nena received her undergraduate degree from Yale University and later her Ph.D. in Microbiology, Immunology and Molecular Genetics from The University of California-Los Angeles. Nena currently is a science writer and editor who enjoys helping customers navigate the fast-changing landscape of scientific applications. She has extensive experience in creating assets that describe the features and benefits of research tools from enzyme kits to large-scale next-generation sequencing systems.

Nena is passionate about scientific communication and enjoys organizing data, researching publications, crafting engaging narratives, and creating documents with rich content. With over 7 years of writing experience in the biotechnology sector, she has covered a broad range of topics including forensics, reproductive health, agrigenomics, complex disease, metagenomics, oncology, microbial genomics, and more.

EVENTS

Nena advised us about the importance of recognizing that most career paths are not linear. So, we have to prepare ourselves to adapt to twists and turns in maneuvering them. To do this, we need to build a career "compass" to direct us through the journey towards our goals. Personality types, skills, and interests are parameters that serve as navigation guides. Once we have our career path planned out, Nena encouraged us to use networking as a tool to further our goals.

Networking allows us to gain insider information on companies and industries. It also gives us the opportunity to advocate for ourselves and find industry professional mentors who can provide expert guidance. Networking activities can be in the form of social events or professional gatherings. In addition, we can also request for informational interviews with industry leaders. This is an effective way to learn about the real-life experience of someone who works in the field that we are interested in. Often, informational interviews can lead us to other opportunities that bring us closer to getting a foot in the door.

At the conclusion of the virtual coffee chat, Nena reminded us that we don't have to see the end of the path to start walking. We can just use the opportunities available around us to get us to where we are heading. We are very grateful for her thoughtful suggestions and insights about transitioning from academia to industry. AWIS-A2i would like to thank Dr. Nena Chavira for her generosity in sharing her experience with us.

2020 Greater San Diego Science & Engineering Fair Judging

By Kathleen Prosser

The 65th annual Greater San Diego Science & Engineering Fair (GSDSEF) was held on March 11th, 2020 at the Balboa Park Activity Center, but the evolving CORVID-19 outbreak prevented the 24 volunteers from participating in person. To continue to support AWIS-SDs initiatives in encouraging young women in STEM, the team, led by Kristen DeMeester and Kate Prosser, evaluated the abstracts of the registered young women. Each team of two volunteers was given ~20 abstracts to deliberate on, and in a very short turnaround time delivered thorough and thoughtful evaluations to the participating students.

Thanks to the diligence of the volunteers, 14 winning projects (2 senior and 10 junior) were selected from more 270 unique entrants.

EVENTS

We thank the students for their innovation and dedication and the volunteers who gave their time, energy, and expertise to judge the large number of projects. Congratulations to all the 2020 GSDSEF AWIS-SD winners!

We hope to have even more volunteers to judge science fair projects next year, and that the fair and the judging will be able to return to an in-person format safely. The more judges that participate, the more attention we can give to each student. Please help us spread the word about this opportunity to meet, mentor, and recognize the next generation of San Diego women in STEM!



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Adapting to COVID-19: A Women in STEM Perspective

by Corine Lau

On May 18, 2020, AWIS-SD hosted a virtual meeting on “Adapting to COVID-19: A Women in STEM Perspective.” Close to 30 AWIS-SD members and non-members attended. Kina Thackray, AWIS-SD President, and Angela Macia, AWIS-SD Board member and Chair of the Corporate Sponsorship Committee, led the lively discussion with five panelists:

- 1) Amy Duncan, BS/MBA, Founder, Goldfish Consulting, Inc.
- 2) Carrie Sawyer, BS/MS, Founder, Diversity by Design
- 3) Kristina Schimmelpfeng Henthorn, PhD, Associate Director, Product Technical Support, GenMark Diagnostics
- 4) Manisha Kanodia, BS, IT Service Offering Manager, UC San Diego
- 5) Sara Landeras Bueno, PhD, Post-doctoral Fellow, La Jolla Institute for Immunology

EVENTS

The panelists and hosts spanned a wide spectrum in terms of their work and life experiences: Kanodia, Bueno, Thackray and Macia are in an academic setting, while Henthorn, Duncan, and Sawyer are in an industry setting or independent consulting. Some panelists have already worked at home before COVID-19, some are adapting to the new way of working from home, while some are busier than ever still going into the lab and office doing COVID-19 related work.

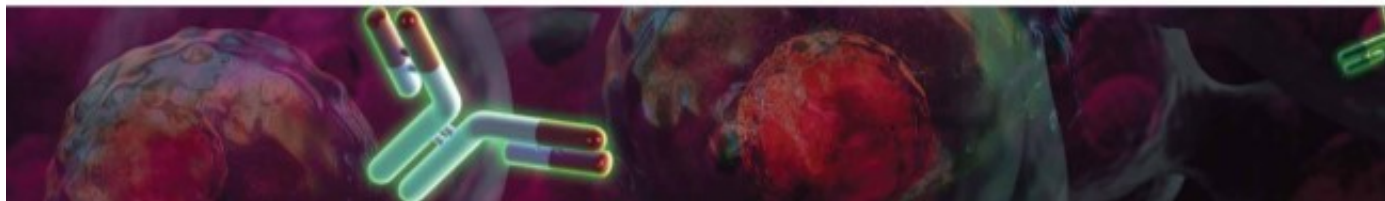
The first question to the panelists was “How has your life changed since COVID-19?”

Sawyer said she works from home normally for her consulting business, but not being able to leave home makes managing self-care more important than ever. Meditation and running help her to be more productive when she gets back to work.



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Adapting to COVID-19, cont.

Similar to Sawyer’s self-owned business, Duncan added that she has to rethink how to build and maintain her relationship with clients virtually. Kanodia and Henthorn also found it is imperative to make an effort to connect with co-workers and family. Bueno’s workload in the lab has increased significantly in trying to screen for potent SARS-CoV-2 antibodies.

The second question was for those who are currently doing research or developing products for SARS-CoV-2. Bueno is using her experience screening for Ebola antibodies and applying similar approaches to SARS-CoV-2. Macia is studying how COVID-19 affects brain functions using brain organoids. We do not know if brain functions are affected in COVID-19 patients or in babies born to mothers with COVID-19. Henthorn is involved in managing her company’s main production line: an FDA-approved Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) SARS-CoV-2 test.

Attendees asked about how the panelists find uninterrupted time at home to focus on work. Sawyer’s suggestion is to plan out the work week instead of individual work days to give more flexibility to complete tasks over a longer range of time. Duncan recommended blocking out a time of the day on your calendar when you are most productive, although some people cannot control meeting times set by other team members. Thackray and Kanodia mentioned the increase of virtual meetings can cause “Zoom fatigue”, and it is wise to think whether tasks can be accomplished using email or phone communications instead.

Regarding the panelist’s perspectives on career advancement as a woman in STEM during this unprecedented time of uncertainty, all agreed to be flexible and take control of what you want to accomplish. Duncan and Kanodia said to take advantage of all the virtual conferences and seminars that normally may not be accessible without a subscription. They urged the audience to explore new topics and interests like leadership, entrepreneurship, and technology that we did not have time for in the past. Take a chance to try something new.

EVENTS

Bueno and Henthorn emphasized to continue to maintain a balanced time for work, family, and self. Bueno’s viewed this crisis as providing new opportunities, and suggested using the time to evaluate your passions and motivations to learn and grow.

In closing, Kanodia summarized with an acronym FAE, which stands for Futuristic (what you want to be in five years), Adaptable (to learn new skills), and Empathetic. Sawyer offered this advice: Give ourselves and others grace, be gentle with each other, and carry this mindset beyond the pandemic.

Yes, we are all in this together.

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A2i Virtual Coffee Chat with Katelyn Archer

By Nora Shafee

Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way we live our lives. Many nations have declared restrictive measures to control the spread of this disease. These measures include varying degrees of lockdown, stay-at-home orders and shelter in place. Like other organizations, Academy-to-Industry (A2i) had to either postpone our activities or adapt them to comply with these new restrictions. We also had to shelve a number of company tours and networking events that involved person-to-person contacts. Activities that could be held virtually were conducted through online platforms.



One such activity is our monthly coffee meetings. For April 2020, A2i organized a virtual meeting on Thursday April 2nd. This was approximately 2 weeks after the announcement of a stay home order for the state of California. To conform to the

order, our April guest speaker, Katelyn Archer, kindly agreed to hold the meeting virtually on a Zoom platform. We are very grateful for her willingness to accommodate the last minute change of plans.

EVENTS

Katelyn Archer is a Life Science Recruiter located in San Diego. She specializes in finding candidates a home within biotechnology, pharmaceutical, and medical device companies, not only around San Diego, but also across the country. Katelyn completed her Bachelor's Degree in Communication from the University of California-San Diego. Upon graduation she started working as a Scientific Recruiter at Yoh Life Sciences, A Day & Zimmermann Company. It is a specialty staffing firm headquartered in Philadelphia, PA. Katelyn found joy in helping others find their next fit, no matter their background or experience. She continues to help others daily as the company continues to grow.

As a guest speaker for A2i, Katelyn spoke about her roles as a recruiter, her experience as a woman in science and the challenges she encountered when transitioning from academia to industry. Katelyn gave a very informative insight as seen from a recruiter's perspective. In her talk, Katelyn explained the differences in the goals and motivations between academia and industry. She highlighted the importance of self-awareness and having specific goals in regard to one's professional career. When a person identifies their interests, they can then list the skills and expertise that will be attractive to hiring managers. Katelyn stressed the importance of presenting this list in a very impactful way in a resume—a resume that stands out in job applications.

A2i and meeting participants are very grateful to Katelyn for her willingness to share her experience with us. We thank her for the wonderful advice and thoughtful suggestions on the necessary steps to transition from academia to industry.

Meet the 2020 AWIS-SD Scholars

The AWIS-San Diego Scholarship Program, now in its 20th year, strives to encourage and reward outstanding women pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields at San Diego colleges and universities. On April 11, 2020, the Scholarship Committee members and volunteers from AWIS-San Diego met for several hours to select the 2020 Scholars. Out of 71 outstanding applications, the committee selected five for the \$1000 award, and seven for Honorable Mentions, which include a one-year San Diego chapter membership. Congratulations to these remarkable students!

2020 Awardees

Karregnton Fountain, Grossmont/Cuyamaca College

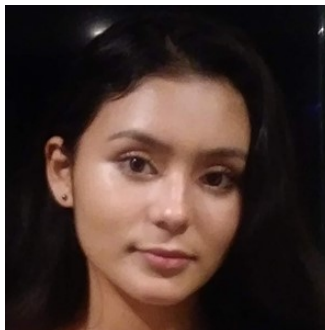


Karregnton Fountain is an Environmental Engineering major. She will transfer to UC Riverside this fall where she will

obtain a Bachelor's degree. From there, she will work towards her Master's degree and become a Licensed Professional Engineer. She desires to work in the water industry, preferably water/wastewater treatment. Karregnton also wants to use her career to inspire females to become more engaged in STEM-based careers. Outside of academics, she likes to volunteer and spend time with loved ones.

SCHOLARSHIP

Pamela Gallardo, Grossmont/Cuyamaca College



Pamela Gallardo is a Computer Engineering student who has been a student at Cuyamaca College since 2018. She hopes to transfer to SDSU or UCSD in the near future. Pamela is a first-generation college student and the proud daughter of two immigrant parents. Her interest in coding began in 2015, and her current focus is on adapting more intricate code in projects. Pamela is determined to work in the STEM field while serving as a role model for young Latina girls interested in math and science. Pamela is a founding member (recently named President) of an organization called PiCStem, where she and other STEM students in college serve as role models and mentors to students from her former middle school. In the future, Pamela Gallardo plans to work in the development and production of computer chips.

Pamela is determined to work in the STEM field while serving as a role model for young Latina girls interested in math and science. Pamela is a founding member (recently named President) of an organization called PiCStem, where she and other STEM students in college serve as role models and mentors to students from her former middle school. In the future, Pamela Gallardo plans to work in the development and production of computer chips.

Cayla Mason, SDSU



Cayla Mason is a first-year graduate student of bioinformatics at San Diego State University. She is studying microbial diversity in restored prairie soils in the laboratory of Dr. Scott Kelley. She is passionate about climate change mitigation and is excited to use her skills to make a better world for her children. She enjoys spending her free time on nature walks with her family and challenging her culinary abilities.

Cayla Mason is a first-year graduate student of bioinformatics at San Diego State University. She is studying microbial diversity in restored prairie soils in the laboratory of Dr. Scott Kelley. She is passionate about climate change mitigation and is excited to use her skills to make a better world for her children. She enjoys spending her free time on nature walks with her family and challenging her culinary abilities.

2020 Awardees, cont.

Katherine (Kate) Nesbit, UCSD



Katherine (Kate) Nesbit is a Ph.D. candidate at Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO), Uni-

versity of California San Diego. Kate was born and raised outside of Chicago and was always interested in studying marine biology. She completed her B.S. with High Honors at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa in 2014. While completing her undergraduate studies, Kate began working in marine biological research on circadian rhythms in copepods (zooplankton). Kate pursued her graduate studies at the University of North Carolina Wilmington and completed her M.S. in Marine Biology in 2016.

SCHOLARSHIP

Kate has been a member of the Hamdoun Lab at Scripps since 2016 and is using the sea urchin embryo as a model animal to address questions relevant to developmental biology, toxicology, immunology, and molecular biology. Kate is examining how exposure to environmental chemicals may impair the activity of developing immune cells in the embryo through the ABC transporter pathway as a potential underlying mechanism of immunotoxicity. In addition to her scholarly pursuits, Kate is a coordinator for the Scripps Community Outreach for Public Education (SCOPE) program, participates in the UCSD School of Medicine's Oncofertility Academy summer program, and guides undergraduate volunteers in the lab.

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2020 Awardees, cont.

Sonya Timko, UCSD



Sonya Timko is finishing up her Master's degree at Scripps Institution of Oceanography and is looking forward to pursuing her Ph.D. Her research currently involves thermal ecology in crustaceans, and she is looking to expand it to include effects of ocean acidification on the structural properties of exoskeletons and how that may relate back to their thermal ecology. Sonya also teaches through UCSD

Extension with programs such as Academic Connections and the JROTC STEM camps. In addition, she works diligently to encourage diversity in STEM fields--especially the inclusion and mentorship of women and non-binary scholars.

Honorable Mentions

Caroline Lowcher, UCSD



Caroline Lowcher has grown up both on and in the ocean, and this lifestyle inspired her to pursue a Ph.D. in oceanography. She enjoys researching the coastal ocean environment and how this intersects with coastal communities. Her focus is on physical oceanography; specifically, studying the coastal circulation and upwelling system off of southern California. Outside of her research, her hobbies include surfing, boating, diving, fishing, and hiking.

SCHOLARSHIP

Olcay Soyalan, UCSD



Olcay Soyalan earned her B.S. in Molecular Biology and Genetics at Koc University, Istanbul. She moved to San Diego in 2017 to start the Biological Sciences Ph.D. program at UCSD. She is currently working as a graduate student

researcher in the Cook-Andersen Lab and exploring the mechanisms of epigenetic reprogramming during the oocyte-to-embryo transition.

Karen Gutierrez, UCSD



Karen Gutierrez is a graduate student working on her Master of Science degree at UC San Diego after completing a Bachelor of Science in Earth Sciences there. She is focusing her research on paleoclimate and geochemistry. As a first-generation, low-income student from Los Angeles, diving into academia hasn't always been easy. But it was her love and interest in science, the outdoors, and environmental justice that led Karen to pursue this path. She enjoys learning and research work, so she hopes to continue on to a PhD program in the future.

Honorable Mentions, cont.

Norah Al-Azzam, UCSD



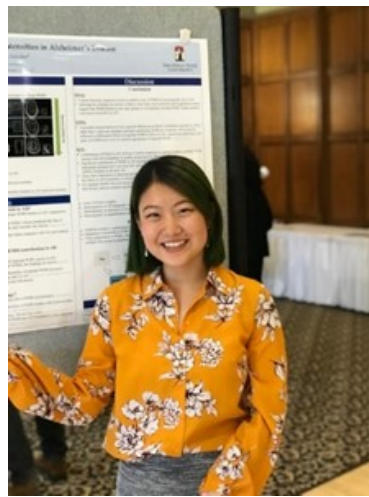
Norah Al-Azzam is currently a Master's candidate at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) in Dr. Gulcin Pekkurnaz lab. As a current Master's student, she is focusing on a post-translational modification (O-GlcNAcylation), which is directly intertwined with glucose

metabolism and regulates numerous molecular functions within the neurons. She will be an incoming graduate student in the neuroscience Ph.D. program at UCSD starting in the fall. She also furthers science communication on campus by serving as the Editor-in-Chief of the Challenger: A McNair Scholars Paper Series and a member of NeuWrite and the Science Fleet. She also recently received the BrightSpinnaker Fellowship, a science communication fellowship, for Spring 2020.

Norah is also currently working to write a grant for a science education Master's program that will continue this important work of improving the science communication curriculum on her campus. Her involvement in SACNAS, the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science, is helping her recognize the problems underrepresented minority students face when pursuing careers in STEM. This work is also inspiring Norah to change the culture in STEM to make room for more students like her. She served as Vice President of the UC San Diego chapter of SACNAS, mentoring chapter members and helping them secure lab opportunities and undergraduate research funding. In the future, Norah plans to pursue an academic path as a professor who actively communicates her research through AAAS and to the lay audience.

SCHOLARSHIP

Da Yeoun (Hanna) Moon, SDSU



Da Yeoun (Hanna) Moon is an undergraduate student at San Diego State University majoring in psychology, with minors in statistics and honors in interdisciplinary studies. She is currently working under Dr. Lisa Eyler in the Biopsychological Research on Aging, Inflammation, and

Neuropsychiatry (BRAIN) lab. Previously, Hanna conducted research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln as a part of the REU Minority Health Disparities Initiative (MHDII) Summer Research Program (SRP), where she examined the relationship between health perception and hepatitis C infection in rural Puerto Rico's injection network using social network analysis. Additionally, Hanna took part in the Summer Research Opportunity Program (SROP) at the University of Michigan—Ann Arbor, and completed a literature review on the contribution of white matter hyperintensities in Alzheimer's disease. In the coming fall, Hanna will be pursuing a Ph.D. in Cognitive Neuroscience at University of Texas-Dallas. While there, she will be conducting research on neurostructural correlates of cognitive aging under Dr. Kristen Kennedy and Dr. Karen Rodrigue.

Honorable Mentions, cont.

Danielle Hunt, SDSU



Danielle Hunt earned her BS degree in Geological Engineering from Colorado School of Mines and is currently pursuing her MS degree in Civil Engineering with a specialty in Water Resources at San Diego State University. She is currently working for SDSU's Disturbance

Hydrology Lab and conducting research to improve predictions of hydrologic recovery in post-fire watersheds. She hopes to pursue a meaningful career in Water Resources Engineering after completing her MS program. Outside of work and school, Danielle enjoys fitness, reading, outdoor activities of any kind, and playing with her dogs. She is excited to be a new member of AWIS-SD.

Aleksandra Kruszka, Grossmont/Cuyamaca College

Aleksandra Kruszka is a first-year student at Cuyamaca College in San Diego, California. Her academic goal is to transfer to the University of California San Diego (UCSD), where she wants to earn a Bachelor's degree in Cognitive Science with specialization in Design and Interaction. This area of specialization is intended for majors in human-computer interaction, web design, visualization, and applications of cognitive science in design and engineering. Her career inspiration is to study the processes underlying cognitive phenomena. Aleksandra would like to study cognitive activity of individuals and their interaction with each other and their sociocultural environment, then use the capacity of mathematical and computer systems to apply the scientific knowledge and tackle extraordinary challenges in health, economy, education, and environment.

SCHOLARSHIP

2020 UCSD Extension Scholarship Awardees

Anna Lozar



Anna Lozar has a B.S. degree in Microbiology and an M.S. in Molecular Biology and Genetics from Northwestern University. She was part of the Northwestern University neurogenetics research team that discovered mutations in the SOD1 gene associated with Familial ALS.

She also did apoptosis research in the Department of Molecular Medicine at the University of Massachusetts. During a career gap to raise a family, Anna shared her excitement for science with the youth community by mentoring several competitive STEM teams and creating and managing a district-wide K-12 robotics program for a non-profit educational foundation. Instilling an excitement for STEM in students reignited her desire to return to science. To update her technical skills and knowledge, Anna enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Biomanufacturing program at MiraCosta College. She is graduating this May and hopes to pursue Regulatory Affairs (RA) as a profession. With the AWIS-SD UCSD Extension Scholarship, she will be taking RA courses to strengthen her knowledge base in this biotechnology field.

2020 UCSD Extension Scholarship Awardees, cont.

Sameera Bilgrami



Sameera Bilgrami, Ph.D., is a scientist at Aethlon Medical, a medical device company that specializes in designing cancer diagnostic devices. Her career as a cell biologist 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 cook, spend time with kids and volunteer at AWIS-SD.

SCHOLARSHIP

About the Authors



Courtney Benson, Ph.D. earned her B.S. and M.S. at SDSU in cell and molecular biology, and her Ph.D. in neuroscience from the University at Buffalo. Courtney is currently working at BlueNalu, Inc. as a scientist and is excited to help generate a sustain-

able food product that will be of value to humans and for our oceans. When Courtney joined AWIS San Diego in October of 2017, she immediately joined the Outreach Committee and then joined the AWIS San Diego Board as a Member at Large. She then served as the President of AWIS-SD from February 2018 through January 2020. Courtney is currently the Past President, and co-chair of the new committee, Career Advancement (Early to Mid-Career).

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About the Authors, cont.



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 clinical oncology lead at Human Longevity Inc. Corine has been involved with AWIS-SD since 2006, and held various AWIS-SD leadership roles including Treasurer, Board member, and Website Committee co-chair. She currently serves on the Newsletter and WIST Planning Committees.



Christina Niemeyer is Associate at i2 Grants Associates, a woman-owned and operated team with years of experience identifying and securing grants for emerging companies and non-profit organizations in the life sciences. Christina has

served as Laboratory Director at both Sanford-Burnham Medical Research Institute and Salmedix, where she played a critical role in developing the approved oncology drug Treanda. Christina earned her Ph.D. at Baylor College of Medicine in cell biology and her B.S. from Texas A&M University in microbiology, where she graduated magna cum laude.



Kate Prosser is a Canadian NSERC postdoctoral fellow at the University of California San Diego working in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry. She is originally from New Brunswick, Canada, where

she completed her B.Sc. in chemistry at Mount Allison University, before pursuing her PhD at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia. Kate was previously an active member of the West Coast Women in Engineering, Science and Technology, and has been leading science outreach activities since 2013. Since arriving in San Diego in 2019, she has been involved in AWIS conference planning and scientific outreach .



Norazizah Shafee is a scientist at UC San Diego and a Professor of Cell and Molecular Biology at the University Putra Malaysia. During her graduate studies at the University of Malaya, she investigated the mechanism of cellular

responses to viral infections, specifically why these cellular self-destruct responses were de-regulated in some cancer cells. She pursued this interest during her post-doctoral training at UC Irvine, where she helped develop a mouse model of breast cancer and provided initial evidence of cancer stem cells as a potential cause of chemoresistance. Combining her background in anti-viral responses and cancer cell biology, Nora is currently focused on characterizing cellular responses towards oncolytic virus infections.

Nora joined AWIS and became a co-chair of the Academia-2-Industry committee in January 2019.



Yessica Diaz Roman is actively involved in the San Diego community and has focused her efforts on promoting diversity and improving the health and well-being of those in need. She teaches at Southwestern College (SWC) in the Behavioral Sciences Department and serves on the Academic Senate for the School of Arts, Communication and Social Sciences. Her commitment to mentoring students continues as a mentor for SWC's Puente Program and as a member of the Outreach Committee for the Association of Women in Science in San Diego. As a board member for Latinas in Medicine, she supports the organization's mission to promote and contribute to the advancement of Latinas pursuing a career in medicine. Dr. Roman is a board member for Columbia University's Alumni Association of San Diego and member of Lead San Diego's Advance Class of 2020. She holds a Doctorate in Sociomedical Sciences from Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health and a joint Master's in Public Health and Social Work from the University of Michigan.

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 September 1, 2020.

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