

# AWIS San Diego Newsletter

Spring 2021 Volume 29 Issue 1



## Letter from the President

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

I would like to wish everyone a happy and fruitful new year in 2021! Although we are still struggling with the devastating effects of the global SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, there is light at the end of the tunnel due to vaccination efforts around the world, as well as continued mitigation measures including masking and social distancing. I have greatly appreciated the support and good cheer from all of the members that I interacted with virtually over the past year. This past year was incredibly challenging for many of us in our personal and professional lives. If you have any questions, concerns or just want to talk, please do not hesitate to contact me at [president@awissd.org](mailto:president@awissd.org).



AWIS-SD is one of the largest chapters in the AWIS family. Through the hard work of our volunteer members, we provide an exceptional array of committees and events to foster career development, networking and community engagement focused on improving access and inclusion for women in STEM. Our chapter has risen to the challenge and organized many outstanding virtual events in the past few months that you can read about in the accompanying newsletter.

A special shout out goes to the members of our Outreach Committee for developing several new events for our San Diego community. Our career development/networking groups are also going strong and I applaud the members of the Academia to Industry (A2I), Career Advancement (Early to Mid Career), and Leadership Network (Senior Career) for their organizing efforts. If you are interested in learning more about or joining one of these groups, please check them out at [awissd.org](http://awissd.org). In addition, we are looking for new committee members to join some of our committees including Events, Public Relations, Corporate Sponsorship and more. If you are interested in learning more about our committees and what we do at AWIS-SD, please visit [awissd.org](http://awissd.org).

In the beginning of my second year as President of AWIS-SD, I would like to thank all of the chapter members who have graciously volunteered many hours of their time to make this organization what it is today. I would also like to thank our sponsors who have made it possible for us to offer so much to our members and our community.

The biennial Women in Science and Technology (WIST) Conference will be hosted by AWIS-SD on Saturday, May 15th, 2021. I am looking forward to an interactive and engaging conference and encourage you to join me in "Celebrating Diversity & Overcoming Adversity". This event will be held virtually on a Gathertown video game- style platform with a keynote speaker, panels, interactive career discussion sessions, interdisciplinary networking & an award reception. For more info and to register, please go to [www.WIST2021.org](http://www.WIST2021.org).

Warmest wishes,

*Kina*

Varykina Thackray, Ph.D.  
President, AWIS-SD  
[president@awissd.org](mailto:president@awissd.org)

## AWIS-SD Board Updates

By Michelle Muldong and Cynthia Kuan

The new year brings some new faces to AWIS-SD's executive board! We've added Cynthia Kuan and Michelle Muldong to the group. From business leadership to oncology research, Cynthia and Michelle both have a passion for advancing women in science and science-related fields.

### Secretary: Cynthia Kuan



Cynthia Kuan, who is the new secretary to the AWIS-SD board, is Program Director at the ARM Foundation for Cell & Gene Medicine. She is passionate about the development of regenerative medicine therapies and advancing patient access solutions in a

coherent and credible manner. She has over 13 years of experience in building/managing innovative programs and is seasoned in alliance management, strategic planning, program development, and financial oversight. From 2014 - 2021, she was the founding business operations manager of the Sanford Stem Cell Clinical Center at UC San Diego and helped secure over \$70 million funding for stem cell research. Prior to her work at UCSD, she helped build a Chinese immersion charter school in Washington DC and a social service program in Los Angeles. Outside of work, she enjoys her role as a "crazy cat lady." (She has three adorable feline troublemakers!) She also volunteers through ElderHelp San Diego, providing seniors with access to fresh produce and groceries to mitigate the impact of social confinement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

# NEWS

### Member at Large: Michelle Muldong



Michelle Muldong was recently appointed to be a member at large on the AWIS-SD board. She is a Research Associate at the UC San Diego Moores Cancer Center. She works in Dr. Christina Jamieson's lab studying bone-metastatic prostate cancer by

performing in vivo and in vitro experiments utilizing patient derived samples. She obtained her B.S. from UC 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, she enjoys yoga, hiking, snowboarding & hanging out with her French bulldog/Boston Terrier mix pup- Stitch!

The 2020 - 2021 AWIS-SD executive board consists of eight members.

Varykina Thackray, PhD, President  
 Cynthia Kuan, Secretary  
 Kat Chang, PhD, Treasurer  
 Angela Macia, PhD, Member at Large  
 Robyn Wygal, PhD, Member at Large  
 Sigrid Katz, PhD, Member at Large  
 Michelle Muldong, Member at Large  
 Kamala Janiyani, Member at Large

## AWIS Local Chapter News

Save the date! The Women in Science and Technology (WIST) Conference will be held on Saturday, May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The theme for this year's event is "Celebrating Diversity & Overcoming Adversity". This event will be held virtually on a Gathertown video game-style platform with a keynote speaker, panels, interactive career discussion sessions, interdisciplinary networking & an award reception. For more info and to register, please go to [www.WIST2021.org](http://www.WIST2021.org).

All committees are seeking new members. Join us. Learn new skills. Make new friends. Current committees are Academia 2 Industry, Events, Public Relations, Newsletter, Scholarship, Career Advancement, Outreach, Website and Corporate Sponsorship.



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# NEWS

## AWIS San Diego Member News



**Suzanne Till** became the first woman to be elected to become a director of the Padre Dam Municipal Water District Board. She is currently employed as a Coordinator and College Instructor at Mater Dei Catholic High School in Chula Vista, CA. She advises that water resources offers great STEM field opportunities for employment as many older workers are retiring.



Congratulations to **Anamaria Ancheta** for winning a Carmen Reyes MCAT scholarship from the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA) in February of 2021. In December of 2020, she also received a \$1000 scholarship as part of the Triton Research and Experimental Scholars (TRELS) program at UC San Diego to conduct a food insecurity research project under the guidance of urban planning professor, Dr. Leslie Lewis. She is a graduating senior at UC San Diego studying Biochemistry and Cell Biology and a member of the WIST, Outreach, and Public Relations Committees.

## Annual AWIS-SD Retreat

By Cynthia Kuan

The 2021 Annual AWIS-SD retreat was held on January 23, 2021 with fifteen members from the Board and Committee leadership in attendance. Kina Thackray, our current president, presided at the meeting. Committees celebrated accomplishments from the past year and discussed future initiatives. A key accomplishment from the past year was the organization's ability to pivot to virtual events/meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Outreach Committee successfully organized a virtual science lab for elementary students and multiple well-attended virtual STEM career panels. The Events Committee hosted summer happy hours and a speed mentoring program virtually, providing much-needed networking opportunities for members during the pandemic. The A2I Committee brought its career advancement panels online, with a strong focus on the development of emotional intelligence. The AWIS Leadership Network (ALN) met online to stay connected and support each other during uncertain times.

The Scholarship Committee had a productive year, awarding five \$1,000 scholarships, seven honorable mentions, and two UCSD Extension scholarships to women in the San Diego STEM community. The Corporate Sponsorship Committee raised \$12,000 during the first half of the 2020-2021 fiscal year and is well-positioned to meet its annual target of \$20,000. Current corporate sponsors include: Bristol-Myers Squibb, Beckman Coulter Foundation, Blue Nalu, BioLegend, and General Atomics Sciences Education Foundation. AWIS Fellow Lynn Friedmann, who has been our long-time supporter, formalized a charitable bequest to AWIS-SD. Her act of generosity leaves a lasting legacy at AWIS-SD.

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At the retreat, the Newsletter Committee announced that newsletter publication schedule will shift from quarterly to triannual due to the pandemic. The Board and Committee chairs also discussed a key initiative for 2021 - the biennial Women in Science and Technology (WIST) conference. The 2021 WIST conference will be held virtually on May 15, 2021. An organizing committee of thirteen chapter member volunteers will plan the event. The theme of this year's WIST conference will be "Celebrating Diversity, Overcoming Adversity". The keynote speaker will be JoAnn Trejo, PhD, MBA, Assistant Vice Chancellor, UC San Diego Health Sciences Faculty Affairs and Professor of Pharmacology, discussing "Science, Mentorship, and Leadership: Breaking One Barrier at a Time".

One issue of concern raised at the meeting is the increased stress experienced by women during the COVID-19 related shutdown. As the pandemic persists, we continue to shoulder a disproportionate share of its burden due to women's societal roles as caregivers. The Board and Committee leadership would remain realistic about AWIS-SD members' balance between work and life demands and continue creative events/programs to foster a connective and supportive network among women in STEM.





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## AWIS Outreach Virtual Event

### Meet a Scientist: January

By Jamillah Murtadha

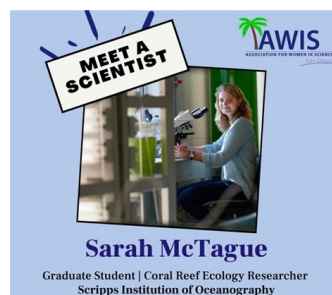
This past January, the San Diego AWIS Outreach Committee hosted a virtual event, "Meet a Scientist," for San Diego high school and college students interested in pursuing STEM careers. We were joined by 24 registrants who signed up to learn about the guest speakers and their interests and career paths in coral reef ecology and reproductive sciences. The guest speakers included Sarah McTague (oceanographer at Scripps Institution of Oceanography) and Dr. Francesca Boscolo Sesillo (Postdoctoral Fellow for Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences at UC San Diego School of Medicine).

Students learned about how each of the speakers navigated their STEM journey through engaging presentations and discussions that were followed by a Q&A session. The speakers contributed helpful resources and career advice to high school and undergraduate students. The adversities that both speakers overcame as women in STEM were interesting. The first speaker was Sarah McTague, followed by Dr. Boscolo Sesillo. Sarah McTague spoke about her career as a graduate student at Scripps Institution of Oceanography studying coral reef ecology. Sarah's love for the ocean has led her to conduct fantastic research on the Great Barrier Reef and jellyfish while sailing across the North Atlantic Ocean. Dr. Boscolo Sesillo holds Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Biotechnology from the Universita' di Bologna in Italy as well as a second Master's in Biotechnology and Bioinformatics. Dr. Sesillo spoke about how she completed her Ph.D. at the Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Research Institute in San Diego. She is currently interested in discovering the role of

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stem cells during pelvic floor muscle regeneration in women after vaginal delivery. Overall, students learned about the fascinating career options that STEM careers could offer them.

Special thanks to panelists: Sarah McTague, Dr. Francesca Boscolo Sesillo, and Outreach Committee members Rachel McMillan and Anamaria Ancheta for moderating the Q & A's, as well as Outreach Committee Co-Chair Michelle Muldong for organizing this event with me. Thank you to all participants for your thought-provoking questions and engagement!



### Meet a Scientist: February

By Jamillah Murtadha

On February 2, 2021, the San Diego AWIS Outreach Committee hosted a virtual event, "Meet a Scientist," for San Diego high school and college students interested in pursuing STEM careers. We were joined by registrants who signed up to learn about an amazing guest speaker, Dr. Olivia Graeve, and her interests and career path in mechanical and aerospace engineering. Dr. Graeve received her Ph.D in Materials Science and Engineering in 2001 from the University of California, Davis.

## Meet a Scientist: February (cont).

Students learned about how the Graeve navigated her STEM journey through an engaging presentation and discussions that was followed by a Q&A session. The speaker contributed helpful resources and career advice to high school and undergraduate students.

For example, Dr. Graeve mentioned she is the Director of CaliBaja Webinars, a research webinar series where college students in the US collaborate with college students in Mexico. Dr. Graeve was passionate about the importance of connecting students across the border to provide learning enrichment for all students. She also spoke of some of the kinetics and development of the Xtreme Materials Laboratory and how materials will one day be utilized in space. During the Q&A session, we were able to ask various questions that ranged from her Presidential Award for Excellence in Science, Mathematics and Engineering Mentoring from the White house, to her favorite stress relieving hobby of baking.

Special thanks to the guest speaker Dr. Olivia Graeve, and Outreach Committee members Jamillah and Michelle for moderating the Q & A's, as well as Outreach Committee Co-Chair Michelle Muldong for organizing this event with me. Thank you to all participants for your thought-provoking questions and engagement!



# EVENTS

## Meet a Scientist: March

By Michelle Muldong

AWIS San Diego Outreach Committee's March Meet a Scientist event featured Dr. Lindsey Burnett, MD, PhD. Dr. Burnett provided an insightful and engaging presentation on her path to becoming physician scientist. She discussed her determination, work ethic, and focus through her high school and undergraduate years that led her to obtain her PhD and complete a postdoc. She realized she enjoyed working with people immensely, which led her to exploring clinical work and ultimately going back to medical school. Dr. Burnett also emphasized her balance of family and work life and showed participants that it is possible to have both.

Participants of the event were very enthusiastic and engaged, asking questions constantly in the Zoom Q&A chat box. Dr. Burnett was very approachable and down to earth, which led to a very dynamic and informative open question session. Another highlight of Dr. Burnett's advice was discussing the importance of not being afraid of failure. Through failure we learn what did or didn't work and how we can improve. In addition, Dr. Burnett discussed time management and the importance of being able to time box and focus on the task at hand whether it be time in the lab, clinical rounds or time at home with family.

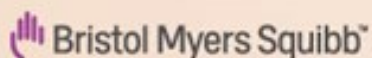
Thank you Dr. Burnett for taking time out of your busy schedule to inspire, motivate and guide the next generation in STEM! AWIS San Diego appreciates your expertise and advice. Special thanks to the AWIS San Diego Outreach Committee for putting together this fantastic event.





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## AWIS San Diego Outreach Event: Expanding Your Horizons


By Michelle Muldong

On Saturday morning March 13<sup>th</sup>, AWIS San Diego Outreach Committee members Bridget Kohlnhofer, Yessica Diaz Roman and Rachel McMillan led a virtual genetics and heredity workshop which included a Punnett square lesson and traits bingo. The target audience was 6-7<sup>th</sup> graders, and a total of around 30 students registered. The workshop was an hour long and was taught twice for ~15 students in each session.

Students were taught about a trait and allele through fun and entertaining Punnett squares, which included themes of determining yellow or green beans, chances of a Morton's toe, and different colored eyes. The Punnett square lesson concluded with students creating their own alien trait Punnett square. Participants were able to be creative and decide which trait on the alien was recessive or dominant and assign the alleles accordingly.

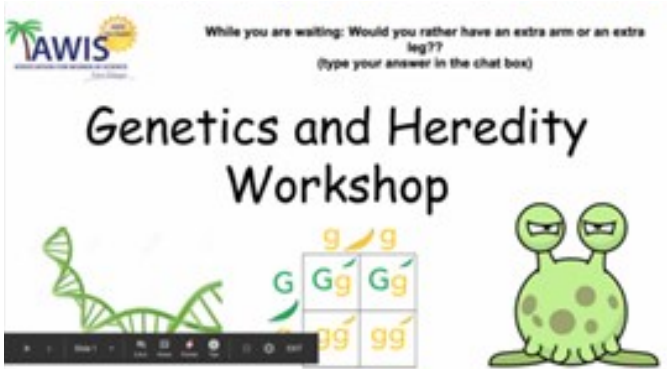
# EVENTS

In addition, the event also included an interactive game of traits bingo that consisted of traits such as “can roll tongue”, “widow’s peak” and “detached earlobes”. Students had fun displaying their unique traits on the Zoom camera and finding out who else in the room they shared their traits with. Overall, both activities proved to be engaging, dynamic and fun way to learn genetics virtually.

**Alien Punnett Square** 

1. Choose an Alien Trait  
Color: Green or Purple
2. Assign a dominant allele and recessive allele  
G = Green dominant  
g = purple recessive
3. Write alleles for parent A on top of square and alleles for parent B and left side of square
4. Complete Punnett square

	G	g
g	Gg	gg
g	Gg	gg



A big thank you goes out to AWIS Outreach Committee members Bridget Kohlnhofer and Yessica Diaz Roman for executing, designing, and preparing the wonderful lesson; and to Outreach Committee member Rachel McMillan for providing technical support, keeping the lesson on track in terms of timing, assisting with question and answers from the participants, and capturing fantastic photos of this memorable event!

# EVENTS

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

By Michelle Muldong

On February 28, the Science at Home Virtual series kicked off with two experiments, "DIY Popsicle Catapults" and "The Wonders of Friction Book Experiment," and a density column demo. Take home science kits for the event were made by the AWIS San Diego Outreach committee, and advertising and networking for the event was provided by the San Diego Public Libraries. The experiments were led and performed by UC San Diego's student organization The Science Initiative. Over 50 students participated in the event and had a wonderful time learning different scientific concepts through the virtual platform Zoom.

5-6) Rubber band the stack of popsicle sticks to the upper popsicle stick

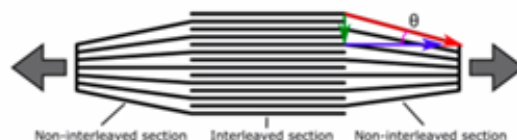


DIY Popsicle catapults provided lessons on engineering and the concepts of force and projectile motion. Students enjoyed catapulting the mini poof balls that came along with their kits in addition to adding an artistic touch to their catapults with colored markers.

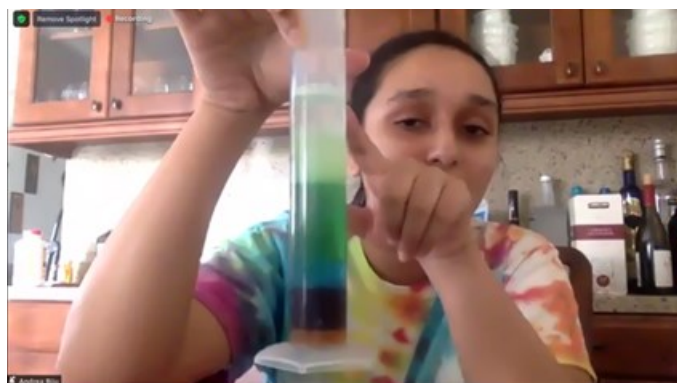
The Wonders of Friction Book Experiment focused on the concept of friction. Two books were provided in the take home kit to use for this, which students were able to keep.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Overlap the pages from both books. Include at least 50 pages from each book:



The density column demo highlighted that the same volume of two different liquids will have different weights because they have different masses. The liquids that weigh more (have a higher density) will sink below the liquids that weigh less (have a lower density).



## Virtual Science at Home (cont.)

Overall, the science lessons went very well and the students were engaged and asked very interesting and thoughtful questions. One young student with a big smile was interested in seeing what would happen if all the materials in the density column were shaken up and leaned in close to the screen to see the result. Many were not shy and were willing to say their thoughts and ideas in front of the large group of students.

This was the first event out of a series of four. If students complete all four science at home events, they will be eligible for an award at a virtual award ceremony. We look forward to honoring and recognizing these eager and inquisitive young minds!

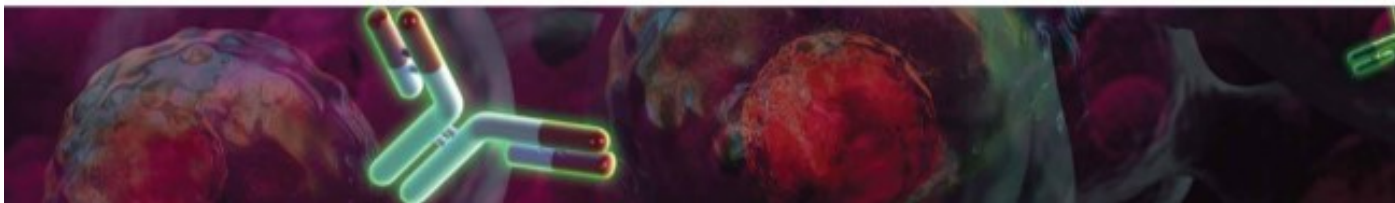
# EVENTS

Special thanks to the San Diego Public Library community, especially Mission Valley Youth Librarian Marika Jeffery, Branch Manager of Mission Valley Library Karen Reilly, Branch Manager of Rancho Peñasquitos Library Adrienne Peterson, and branch manager of Logan Heights Library Kathryn Johnson. Thank you to UCSD San Diego Science Initiative members, including Shibangi Pal, Ben Boyarko, Andrea Biju, Madelene Wang, Jessica Jiang, Malcolm Hsiu and Becca Samuels. Also, a big thank you to AWIS San Diego Outreach Member Anamaria Ancheta for initiating this collaboration and creating this fantastic new outreach series. This successful event was the result of a fantastic collaboration!



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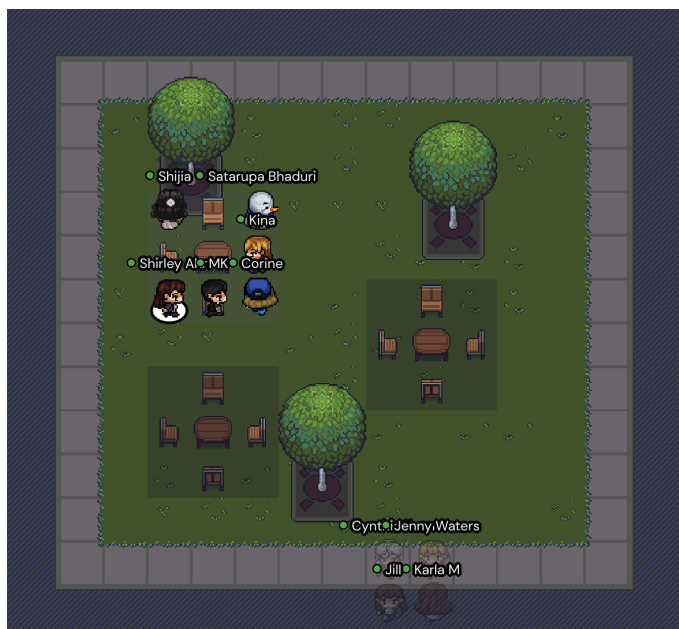




## AWIS-SD Happy Hour Exploring Gather Town

By Shirley Ahn

The AWIS-SD Happy Hour Exploring Gather Town was held in a virtual format this year on Thursday, March 4, 2021, from 5 to 6 pm. The purpose of the event was to explore the virtual platform Gather, which will be used for our Women in Science and Technology (WIST) Conference this year in May. WIST is one of our chapter's signature events that we host every two years. Almost 20 AWIS-SD members registered for the event, which was greatly enjoyed by all. The attendees found Gather to be refreshing as it was a different platform from Zoom and was the closest virtual platform mimicking an in-person interaction. In the middle of our Happy Hour, the attendees were entered into a drawing for a \$50 gift card from a local San Diego cheese shop called Venissimo Cheese. Shijia Liu, one of the Scholarship Committee members, was the lucky winner. We anticipate that we will use Gather for our future virtual events.



## EVENTS

### Career Advancement with Dr. Christina Neimeyer

By Jill Slaboda

On March 22, the AWIS-SD Career Advancement Committee held its first meeting of the year. We enjoyed a discussion with Dr. Christina Neimeyer, who spoke about her career journey and how she navigated changing roles in her career. Christina started her career in academics, transitioned to corporate scientist then took a role as the Laboratory Director at Sanford Burnham Presby Medical Discovery Institute and finally became an owner of i2 Grants Associates. In her current role, she specializes in identifying and securing grants for emerging companies and nonprofit organizations in the life sciences. During our conversation, Christina emphasized the keys to her success have been volunteering to take on writing roles within her organization or company, speaking with and learning from people in different departments of the organization and utilizing connections for career advancement. AWIS-SD members were able to gain career advice in how to transition into a writing role and how to promote your skill set when seeking new opportunities. We all enjoyed the evening discussion and lost track of time—staying on a Zoom call an additional 20 minutes! Our next speaker series will be on June 14 at 6pm with Michaele Antoine who will discuss how to navigate conflict. We hope you can join us!

## AWIS-SD A2I Virtual Coffee Clubs

By Shanna Newton

AWIS-San Diego's Academia to Industry (A2I) committee ended 2020 with a series of virtual Coffee Clubs featuring Dr. Sameera Bilgrami, Dr. Bridget Kohlnhofer, and Dr. Erica Schoeller. They shared their experience landing jobs as scientists in the San Diego biotechnology industry.

**Dr. Sameera Bilgrami** is a scientist at Aethlon Medical, a medical device company that specializes in designing cancer diagnostic devices. She spoke to us about her experience being in the job market, the importance of networking, and her experience as a scientist in a small company. An added bonus to the event was her offer to review the CV's of attendees who would soon be looking for work.

**Dr. Bridget Kohlnhofer** shared her experiences as an academic postdoc, an industry postdoc at Janssen, and as a Scientist II at Takeda, where she works to develop cell therapies for gastrointestinal disorders. She talked about the benefits of each position and how her responsibilities helped her progress through each phase of her career.

# EVENTS

**Dr. Erica Schoeller** is a Research Scientist at Ferring Pharmaceuticals, where she works to identify novel drug targets in the reproductive medicine and maternal health field. She shared tips on the entire process of landing a job including: using the "buddy system" for networking, tailoring your resume to the job ad, practice interviews and salary negotiations.

The A2I Committee has begun its 2021 events with an **Industry Postdoc Panel**. This session will cover the differences between academic and industry postdoc positions. It will also include the interview process for landing an industry postdoc position. These events will be great opportunities to network and learn from amazing women who held industry postdoc positions at Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc. and Merck & Co., Inc.



## AWIS-SD Virtual New Year's Party

By The Newsletter Team

We had a blast at our AWIS-SD Virtual New Year's Party on January 29<sup>th</sup>. Who knew one could have so much fun over a Zoom meeting! Before the meeting, the participants received a box of snacks, chocolates and sparkling pear cider to enjoy during the event.



Helen Keen, a popular science writer and award winning producer kicked off the event with an entertaining and informative presentation of the history of NASA and women's role in it. She highlighted how far women have come and to never stop dreaming big. Helen was so kind to join us from England - (2am her time!) She definitely set the tone for a relaxing and wonderful comedy segment of the event.

Shayla Rivera, a former rocket scientist with NASA started the program by telling us how a mistake at NASA led to her career as a stand-up comedienne. She also targeted her Puerto Rican upbringing by telling us her real name which is about 20 syllables longer than Shayla. She continued to amuse us by participating in the rest of the meeting including trivia contest.

# EVENTS

Following Rivera's talk, Kina honored this year's AWIS-SD outstanding volunteers:

**Achievement in Innovation:** Courtney Benson & Manisha Kanodia

**Rookie of the Year:** Anamaria Ancheta & Shanna Lavalle

**Achievement in Outreach or Community Service:** Shirley Ahn, Ivy Fernandes & Yessica Diaz Roman

**Outstanding Volunteer:** Michelle Muldong & Jean Spence

**Leadership Service:** Robyn Wygal & Barbara Armstrong

**Board Special Award:** Angela Macia

**President's Award:** Christina Niemeyer

For the final event, we divided up into teams for the trivia contest hosted by Sporcle Inc. The questions centered on famous women scientists and writers like Marie Curie (she was born in Poland) and Elizabeth Blackwell (first woman to receive a medical degree). The Green Flash won the contest and all of us learned new things. Kudos to Michelle Muldong for organizing such a great event and getting an all-star lineup!





## 2021 AWIS-SD Board Members

	Name	E-mail
<b>President</b>	Varykina Thackray, PhD	<a href="mailto:president@awissd.org">president@awissd.org</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Cynthia Kuan	<a href="mailto:secretary@awissd.org">secretary@awissd.org</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	Katherine (Kat) Chang, PhD	<a href="mailto:treasurer@awissd.org">treasurer@awissd.org</a>
<b>Members at Large</b>	Sigrid Katz, PhD	
	Kamala Janiyani, PhD	
	Angela Macia, PhD	
	Michelle Muldong	
	Robyn Wygal	

## AWIS San Diego Sponsors

AWIS-SD 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.

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### AWIS FELLOWS

Lynne Friedmann

## About the Authors



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

She is currently using a combination of cell culture and genetic mouse models to study the roles of several homeodomain transcription factors within kisspeptin neurons. In 2018, she completed the Rady's School of Management MicroMBA program and was accepted into the Future Leaders Advancing Research in Endocrinology (FLARE) program. She was an active member of the Endocrine Society's Trainee and Career Development Core Committee from 2018-2020 and served as Chair of the society's Summer Research Fellowship program in 2019. In 2020 she became a Co-Chair for the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) Academia to Industry committee, where she connects industry professionals to early career individuals.



**Cynthia Kuan**, who is the new secretary to the AWIS-SD board, is Program Director at the ARM Foundation for Cell & Gene Medicine. She is passionate about the development of regenerative medicine therapies and advancing patient access solutions in a coherent and credible manner. She has over 13 years of experience in building/managing innovative programs and is seasoned in alliance management, strategic planning, program development, and financial oversight. From 2014 - 2021, she was the founding business operations manager of the Sanford Stem Cell Clinical Center at UC San Diego and helped secure over \$70 million funding for stem cell research. Prior to her work at UCSD, she helped build a Chinese immersion charter school in Washington DC and a social service program in Los Angeles. Outside of work, she enjoys her role as a "crazy cat lady." (She has three adorable feline troublemakers!) She also volunteers through ElderHelp San Diego, providing seniors with access to fresh produce and groceries to mitigate the impact of social confinement caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**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!



**Shanna Newton Lavalle** is a Ph.D. candidate in the Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. program at the University of California San Diego. She joined the laboratory of Dr. Pamela Mellon in July 2015 where she is currently using a combination of cell culture and genetic mouse models to study the roles of several homeodomain transcription factors within kisspeptin neurons. In 2018, she completed the Rady's School of Management MicroMBA program and was accepted into the Future Leaders Advancing Research in Endocrinology (FLARE) program. She was an active member of the Endocrine Society's Trainee and Career Development Core Committee from 2018-2020 and served as Chair of the society's Summer Research Fellowship program in 2019. In 2020 she became a Co-Chair for the Association for Women in Science (AWIS) Academia to Industry committee, where she connects industry professionals to early career individuals.

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## About the Authors (cont.)



**Jamillah Murtadha** grew up in West Virginia, but she has lived in San Diego for seven years. She transferred to UC San Diego as an undergraduate from Southwestern College. She is the first out of ten children to go to graduate school. Currently, she is a Biological Sciences major in the BS/MS program. She enjoys being the Co-chair in the Outreach Department of the Association of Women in Science (AWIS) organization. And she is always striving to seek knowledge outside her field to become a well-rounded scientist. She believes it the duty of scientists to communicate the importance that their research has for our society.



**Christina Niemeyer** is Associate at i2 Grants Associates, a woman-owned and operated, California-based 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.



**Jill Slaboda, PhD** is a Principal Investigator on the Clinical Research team at the Gary and Mary West Health Institute. Jill works closely with health system collaborators across the country to identify and prioritize applied research studies that can demonstrate innovative ways in which healthcare can be delivered to better enable successful aging. She has academic research experience in rehabilitation engineering working on identifying differences in postural responses in patients with stroke as a postdoctoral training at Temple University and identifying differences in treatment outcomes of chronic lower back pain patients as a graduate student at University of Pittsburgh. Jill holds a Doctor of Philosophy degree in bioengineering from the University of Pittsburgh.

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## 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](mailto: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 March 15, 2021.

## AWIS-SD Newsletter Committee

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