



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 AWIS-SD PRESIDENT



Dear AWIS Members,

In the last newsletter, I mentioned the board and committee chair retreat held in January to set goals for our chapter in 2008. Many of the goals are aimed at maintaining our membership through enhanced communication and exciting events.

One of the most important forms of communication is our website, which we are committed to keeping updated; we will also ensure that all events and meetings are placed on the website calendar for your convenience. In fact, the website committee launched a new home page in early April. It was designed to make our chapter activities and news more accessible. Kudos to the website Committee for their hard work on this page. We are also working to provide professional looking e-mails in the new html format used by the newsletter.

Our PR committee has a number of new projects, one of which is to enhance our contacts with industry professionals. We would like to expand our reach and ensure that women in industry know about AWIS and what we offer. If anyone is willing to distribute event flyers or e-mails within their company, please contact the PR committee co-chairs (publicrelations@awissd.org). The Events Committee is also looking at expanding the reach of our chapter by holding new events in North County and at SDSU.

In keeping with our mission to support the advancement of women in science, the board would like to recognize the contribution of local women scientists, particularly AWIS-SD members by nominating at least two candidates for local or national awards. We have nominated Janet White for an Athena Pinnacle Award; winners will be announced on May 1. Good luck to Janet, who has done so much for our chapter. We also intend to participate in the First Lady and Governor Conference on Women again this year.

I look forward to seeing you at our events; if you have any suggestions or would like to know more about our plans for the year, please don't hesitate to contact me at president@awissd.org.

Best regards,
Jenny Chaplin

Inside this Issue	Page
Letter from the President	1
Upcoming Events	1
SPECIAL REPORTS	
Joan Heller Brown: the Path to Success	2
EVENTS	
The Allen Institute	2
Strategy Session Tackles Career Transitions	3
FEATURES/OPINIONS	
Me and My Science	3
CHAPTER INFORMATION	
AWIS SD Sponsors	4
Contacts	5

Upcoming Events Compiled by Norma Velázquez

May 1. Immigration Challenges: Quotas, Delays and Formulas for Visa Success. Jennifer L. Keating and Jacob Sapochnick, San Diego immigration attorneys who specialize in employment based immigration, will discuss the immigration process, visas, work permits, waivers, and permanent resident status. Location: Burnham Institute, Fishman Auditorium. Time: 5:30 pm. Register at: http://awis.npaci.edu/calendar/eventdetails.php?event_id=401

May 18. Science Fair Award Dinner. This year AWIS will present awards to eight young women who have presented projects showing great enthusiasm and appreciation for various disciplines of math and science. Please join the outreach committee and the families of these bright young women. Location: Martin Johnson House SIO. Time: 4:00 pm. Register at: http://awis.npaci.edu/calendar/eventdetails.php?event_id=390

June 2. Strategy Session. Market Yourself: Hone your resume writing and interviewing skills. Location: To be determined. Time: 6:00 pm. Register at: http://awis.npaci.edu/calendar/eventdetails.php?event_id=371

SPECIAL REPORTS

Joan Heller Brown: Perseverance, Passion and Serendipity on the Path to Success

By Paula C. Soto

Hanging on the wall of the main corridor of the Basic Sciences Building at the University of California San Diego (UCSD), are the photographs of all the Department Chairs at the School of Medicine. It is not surprising that only three of them are women, but it is intriguing. So when I received an e-mail announcing that Joan Heller Brown, Ph.D., Chair of the Pharmacology Department, would be giving a talk where she would discuss her career path, I decided to attend hoping it would give me insight on what it takes to become a successful academic researcher.

Heller Brown received her Ph.D. in pharmacology at Albert Einstein College of Medicine, and completed her postdoctoral studies at the University of Colorado. She has been a member of the UCSD faculty since 1975, and has served as chair of UCSD's Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program, a member of the Faculty Council, the Faculty of Basic Biomedical Sciences Council, and the dean's Space Advisory Committee. She has served on the Scientific Advisory Board for a number of biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies and on the editorial and advisory boards of numerous journals including the *Journal of Biological Chemistry*, *Cellular Signaling*, *Circulation Research*, *Molecular Interventions* and *Nature Reviews Drug Discovery*.

The title of her talk: "Perseverance, passion and serendipity on the path to success" was already informative. As a young scientist, starting my career with the goal of becoming an academic researcher, it was reassuring to know that perseverance and passion, two factors I have practiced, are important in achieving a successful career. I was curious to find out how much serendipity plays a role.

Heller Brown discussed a number of different factors that helped her achieve success, supporting each of those with anecdotes from her own life. One of these factors was "making things pretty". Heller Brown learned from her parents the value of aesthetics in presentation. Be it a graph for a science class, or data from a groundbreaking experiment, people are more likely to give you credit if it is presented nicely.

Heller Brown also had a number of anecdotes describing how having contacts and meeting people are important aspects of achieving success, and this is where serendipity may have played a role. As a young researcher, she had the opportunity to meet and interact with prominent scientists, some of whom later received the Nobel Prize for their work. One of them had approached her at a scientific meeting, after her talk. He asked her to meet with him to discuss her work, and according to Heller Brown, "grilled her with tough questions". The next day, the senior scientist was giving his talk, which discussed research that was very similar to what she had presented, but he never mentioned her work. She was disappointed, but felt vindicated when, many years later, that scientist contacted her to offer congratulations on her recent accomplishments.

On a more personal note, Heller Brown discussed how having a family and being successful in academic research are not mutually exclusive. But it does take a lot of work, and a lot of support. She credited her success in balancing family and career to having a very supportive husband and being very lucky when finding reliable childcare. She also mentioned that some women might be discouraged from entering the academic science field because of the long hours and high level of commitment it requires.

Joan Heller Brown is a living proof that women in science can achieve success when balancing family and career. She is a role model for young scientists like me, who hope that serendipity will step up when perseverance and passion seem not to be enough.

EVENTS

The Allen Institute - Exploring the Final Frontier

By Rachel Schwartz

On March 19, 2008, Elaine Jones, Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of the Allen Institute, spoke about her organization's efforts to map the "final frontier"—the brain. This AWIS- hosted event introduced San Diego to the Allen Institute, its publicly available resources, and future neuroscience research projects. Following the talk at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography, guests attended a cocktail reception complete with ocean view.

"I quite enjoyed learning about the new and exciting work being undertaken by the Allen Institute," said Irene Choi, a post-doctoral fellow at the Salk Institute. "It was a great opportunity to learn and network with fellow scientists in a relaxed setting."

Jones first provided a brief history of the Allen Institute, a non-profit organization in Seattle, WA dedicated to providing free resources for researchers. While the Institute does not focus on specific brain disorders, Jones said the data they obtain is "multidisciplinary in reach" and impacts basic and disease-oriented neurobiology research.

The Institute's first project, the Allen Brain Atlas-Mouse Brain, began in 2003. Data was released to the public in real time as it was obtained. Thanks to "high-throughput histology," a 3-D mouse brain map was constructed, depicting the locations and relative expression levels of 20,000 genes. Completed under budget in 2006, Jones attributes the success of this project to conducting academic research under the umbrella of a business model.

"As a neurobiologist, I am already using the Allen Brain Atlas, but it was great to learn about its origin and future directions," said Lawrence Furgeaud, a post-doctoral fellow at UCSD.

Jones also mentioned other accomplishments since completing the Allen Brain Atlas, including gene expression datasets from a sleep study and from the human cortex. Over the next four years, the Institute will undertake three major projects that map gene expression in the human spinal cord, the developing mouse brain, and the human brain. Originally, the Institute had no plans to tackle the spinal cord. However, Jones remarked that the demand from individual organizations and the development of a novel funding consortium provided the impetus for this project.

Although there is demand for protein-based expression data and inclusion of other species in the Allen Institute research efforts, scientists will have to wait for technology to catch up. Right now, the brain mapping efforts of the Allen Institute are making the “final frontier” seem less like uncharted territory for researchers.

Allen Institute accolades include making *Time Magazine's* Top 10 in Medicine List for 2006 and publication in *Nature* in 2007. The Allen Brain Atlas can be accessed at www.brain-map.org. For more information about the Allen Institute, visit www.alleninstitute.org.

The AWIS-SD events committee hosted this event.

Strategy Session Tackles Career Transitions

By Valerie Uzzell

On April 7th, AWIS members flocked in large numbers to the Strategy Session entitled "Make that Move: Successfully Implement a Career Transition," held at the Salk Institute. The Strategy Session featured a panel of six speakers holding a range of "alternative career" positions including: Janice Evans, Director of Regulatory Affairs at Biogen Idec; Jaime Choi, Patent Agent at Jones Day; Cynthia DeMent, Marketing Department at Gen-Probe; Jennifer Taylor, Program Manager at GNF; Karen Valentino, VP of Program Management at Conatus; and Bonnie Ward, President and CEO of Qualpartners (a Quality consultancy).

The session opened with a discussion of informational interviewing, which can be an excellent method of learning about careers one might want to transition into. Some of the do's and don'ts of informational interview were presented including the following:

- Request an informational interview only with someone with whom you have some connection- a mutual friend, someone in AWIS, same company, etc.
- Ask about the details of the job, how their career path led to that job, and suggestions for how to transition into such a position.
- Keep the meeting short and convenient, for example 15-20 minutes over coffee.
- Pay for the coffee.
- Don't ask for a job.

The six panelists introduced themselves, focusing on the nature of their current positions and their career paths. The majority of the panelists had started out as bench scientists in academia or industry and then transitioned over time to their current positions. All the speakers mentioned skills they learned as scientists that were crucial to their success in their current careers, such as, analytical skills, public speaking ability, technical writing, project planning, and the ability to research and understand a new scientific discipline quickly.

Another thing the speakers had in common was the circuitous path they took to their current positions. It appeared that none of them had any idea, as their careers were getting started, that they would end up where they are now. In most cases, the direction of their careers seemed to be a combination of trial and error and a series of happy accidents.

The panelists then split up into different tables to discuss their career paths in more detail with workshop participants and to answer questions. At the tables I visited, the most urgent questions were: "What exactly do you do every day and is it enjoyable?", and "How can I get a job like that?". Based on the nature of the questions, as well as the very high attendance at this Strategy Session, many AWIS members are strongly considering "Making a Move" from bench science to an alternative career.

OPINION

Me and My Science

By Wendy K. Hancock

Recently, while teaching a Biology class, I was challenged to define science. It seemed simple and straightforward. Science is a methodical and objective search for explanations about our human selves and the world around us. But I realized that, to me, science was something more than the investigation of phenomena.

Children experience the astonishment of the variety of life on our planet and their innate curiosity propels them to ask many questions. For some, this spark sputters and is quickly replaced by toys, sports, or new clothes. But in my case, the desire to touch, understand, and be amazed over and over again refused to fade.

The students in my General Biology classes are non-biology majors. They want to become graphic artists, accountants, or business executives. Biology is simply a class they need to pass. It is not a science that they feel affects their lives.

Science, to these students, is not an active process but the condensation of lifetimes of effort into a paragraph or even a single sentence that must be memorized. The students have questions that are buried under vocabulary and concepts while they struggle to learn. I can sympathize. I felt that same way about Chaucer and "Canterbury Tales".

So, what is science? Well, that depends upon your point of view.

AWIS Recruit- A- Member Campaign

From now until June 30, 2008 recruit a member and receive a chance to win great prizes and national recognition including a \$300 travel stipend to the professional meeting of your choice!

Your name will be entered into the drawing every time you recruit a new member at the regular, sustaining, patron or benefactor level. Every participant will receive national recognition in AWIS' bi-monthly e-digest, the Washington Wire.

For details, visit <http://www.awis.org/2008Recruit-A-MemberCampaign.html> or email membership@awis.org or call at 202.326.8940.

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.

May/June Newsletter staff:

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Sama Tamrakar	Norma Velázquez	

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. 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 June 6, 2008.

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).

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.

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	Rachel Soloff	rsoloff@awissd.org

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

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