

SUMMER 2024 Newsletter



Volume 32, Issue 2

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Summer is coming to an end, which means that our AWIS-SD Chapter will be getting back into gear! Due to the summer break, this will be a short and sweet welcome back to our current members and a warm hello to all of our new members.

I would like to spend this letter highlighting the many ways to get more involved with AWIS. I personally have found that if you want to get the most out of being a member of this organization, it would behoove you to join one of our many committees! You will gain skills that you can highlight on future resumes and meet like-minded individuals, allowing you to grow your network.

The process has begun for forming the Women in Science and Technology (WIST) Conference planning committee. This event typically takes place biannually, but with the chapter still recovering from the Covid-era, it last took place online in 2021. Our hope is to bring back this event in the Spring or Fall of 2025. If you would like to be involved with planning, please reach out to me at president@awissd.org.

Here are some other ways you can get involved: Join one or more AWIS-SD committees either as a member or as co-chair if you are looking for more responsibility. You should see posts from our PR Committee highlighting the various committees that are looking for new members. This information appears on all of our social media platforms, along with information on whom to contact.

Lastly, I would love to welcome **Elena Rubio de la Torre** for assuming the position of Secretary, **Federica Klaus** and **Eulalia Coutinho** as Chairs of the New Members at Large Committee, and **Shanna Lavelle** for transitioning from the New Member-at-Large Committee Chair to Treasurer. I am excited to work with all of you to move our chapter forward.

You can find all of our upcoming committee meetings and events on our [website](#).

Best,

Rose

Rose Presby, Ph.D.
President, AWIS-SD
president@awissd.org



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Q&A with the AWIS San Diego President, Rose Presby, Ph.D.

By Elaine Guo

Rose has been an incredibly active member of AWIS San Diego for the last two and a half years, and she has served as President of our chapter for almost two years. For this edition of the newsletter, the team wanted to celebrate her contributions and learn a bit more about her path as a scientist as well. Thank you Rose!

How did you get involved with AWIS and later gravitate towards this leadership role?

I had moved to San Diego from New England for my postdoc three years ago. Outside the lab, I've always been passionate about outreach and so did a quick search for organizations in town and found AWIS.

I attended my first event, an Academia to Industry (A2I) talk, and was asked to write up the event for the newsletter. From there, I sort of jumped into the deep end. I became fully involved and joined several committees: A2I, corporate sponsorship, outreach, and scholarship. Six months in, I had become involved with so many aspects of our chapter that people reached out to ask me to take on the role of the President.

I started with “This committee sounds interesting. I'll go to a meeting,” or “Oh, this is a fun event,” and that’s how I ended up here. For those who are new to AWIS, it’s easy to see what we have going on and just jump in!

What aspects of AWIS have been the most rewarding for you?

I really love our scholarship program. This award is open to community college, undergraduate, and graduate students, and five \$1000 awards are granted each year for the recipients to use towards anything that supports their scientific careers.

I’ve been on this committee for two and a half years, and my favorite part is meeting the recipients at the awards ceremony and seeing the excitement on their faces. As someone from a low-income background, I deeply appreciate the opportunity that these scholarships create.

What have you learned about yourself since AWIS, and how have you grown as a leader in this role?

I really wanted to challenge myself to get as involved in AWIS as I could, and this process has shown me that I can accomplish what I set out to do. For me, someone who has struggled with confidence and imposter syndrome, this role has been a huge confidence boost.

My first big event as President, for example, was to organize and run the Board and Co-Chair annual retreat, where we meet in person to map out the coming year. How I felt hosting this event last year versus this year is just night and day. I am so much more comfortable now in my ability to lead a discussion and suggest ideas for people to comment on.

Switching gears, I’m curious what are the questions you're interested in answering through your research?

I work as a postdoc at the Scintillon Institute, studying how the brain regulates food intake. I've always been interested in eating behavior. During graduate school, I developed a preclinical animal model to study binge eating and was interested in modulating binge eating pharmacologically.

My current project expands on that work to ask how does the cerebellum, specifically, control food intake. The cerebellum is the part of the brain that coordinates muscular activity or movement, and the idea that it’s also responsible for eating behavior is very novel and what drew me to this postdoc. It’s super exciting to be one of the first to ask these questions.

For these studies, I’m developing a technique, miniscope, as a way to see how neurons work in the brain in real time. With this method, I can image and measure the activity of neurons at a single-cell level as they fire.

In the context of disordered eating behaviors, I also want to understand if there are differences between the sexes. The common conception is that anorexia and binge eating are seen more frequently in female populations. Is there a biological explanation for this?

Much of the preclinical knowledge to date, however, has been based on male mice. These observations are then generalized and extrapolated to the female population. For my studies, I am including both male and female mice to ask if different levels of sex hormones, testosterone and estrogen, change cerebellar activity and binge eating behavior.

What's something you are excited about in the near future?

I'm excited about the AWIS Women in Science and Technology Conference in 2025. This is a one-day event focused on career advancement and will feature a keynote speaker and breakout sessions. It's a great chance to connect with other AWIS members.

Planning this event is a huge group effort, and along with other AWIS committees and programs, I want to invite all members to follow your interest, look for opportunities, and take on any as you can!



Outside of work, Rose enjoys cross stitch. Here, she is at the 2024 San Diego Fair with her award-winning submission.

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The advertisement features a photograph of three female scientists in white lab coats and purple gloves working in a laboratory. One scientist in the foreground is holding a test tube up to the light. The background shows lab equipment, including a whiteboard with diagrams and a rack of multi-well plates.

Barrio Logan Science and Art Expo

By Rose Presby

The Barrio Logan Science and Art Expo is an event that I have wanted to participate in since joining AWIS-SD. Unfortunately, I have always missed the deadline for signing up, but not this year! This family-oriented experience took place at Mercado del Barrio on Saturday, April 13. In the words of the organizers, this event is “an inclusive and annual art, science, and culture fair that welcomes families from around southern San Diego. Join the Barrio Logan Association, UC San Diego, and various community partners as we highlight science, art, and culture in the world around us!” The expo had many interesting activities, and it was wonderful in every way! In one particularly fun activity, volunteers aided the community in making silly putty and explaining the process behind it. This was a messy, colorful learning experience for all of us, and I look forward to taking part again next year!

Academia to Industry Transition Panel

By Kiki Spaulding



The graphic features a dark background with light blue circuit-like lines. At the top, the text "A2I Transition Panelists" is written in a large, white, sans-serif font. Below this, five individual portraits of women are arranged in two rows. Each portrait is accompanied by the person's name and their current professional title and organization.

Name	Title	Organization
Sorina Chiorean	Business Development Manager	WuXi TIDES
Kayal Madhivanan	Senior Scientist	Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals
Carolyn McGrail	Life Science Specialist (Incoming)	L.E.K. Consulting
Daniela Requena	Senior Associate Scientist	iXCells Biotechnologies
Fereshte (Fresh) Ghorbani	Medicinal Chemist	Neurocrine Biosciences

On May 30, AWIS hosted the "Academia to Industry Transition Panel," followed by a happy hour and networking session. The event featured five women panelists who have successfully transitioned from academia to industry, sharing their insights with the attendees.

Panelist Introductions:

Sorina Chiorean

Sorina is a Business Development Manager for WuXi TIDES. She earned her Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Alberta and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Scripps Research. Sorina is actively involved in organizing scientific conferences and initiatives.

Kayal Madhivanan

Kayal is a Senior Scientist at Arrowhead Pharmaceuticals with expertise in neurodegenerative diseases and therapeutic strategies. She completed her Ph.D. at Purdue University and postdoctoral research at Scripps Research. Kayal has been a member of AWIS for five years.

Carolyn McGrail

Carolyn is a Ph.D. candidate in the Biomedical Sciences Program at UCSD, researching type 1 diabetes. She will join L.E.K. as a life science specialist post-graduation. Carolyn holds degrees from Baruch College and Boston University.

Fereshte (Fresh) Ghorbani

Fresh is a medicinal chemist at Neurocrine Biosciences. She earned her Ph.D. in Chemistry from Johns Hopkins University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Scripps Research.

Daniela Requena

Daniela is a Senior Associate Scientist at iXCells Biotechnology, specializing in generating iPSC-derived cells. She has more than 16 years of experience in various scientific fields and has been an active AWIS member since 2022.

Panel Discussion Highlights:

In addition to sharing their personal career journeys, the panelists provided diverse perspectives and insights on key drivers that catalyzed their transition.

Motivation:

- Kayal shared, "In grad school, I saw my PI write a million grants and get rejected—that was the point I realized I wanted to go to industry. In academia, you can work on the same project for five years, but in industry, it's really fast. You get to work on multiple things that have an impact rather than just doing basic science."
- Sorina added, "My one takeaway for you is to talk to as many people as possible and take their journeys not as the gospel truth, but as something that may apply to you later on. My current process came through the elimination of things I knew I did not want to do."

Job Search and Interview Process:

- Kayal emphasized the importance of summarizing your research: “I made a short four-slide PowerPoint with one project per slide, key words, and a few figures to highlight my strengths.”
- Using services like LinkedIn Premium to message hiring managers directly and leveraging your LinkedIn connections can be helpful.
- All panelists agreed that using common connections and showing interest in the specific job you are applying for makes you stand out.
- When asked about the negotiation process in the interview stage, Sorina said, “You need to know your market value and target higher. You can go with ranges rather than a set number.”
- Kayal shared, “Tap into and develop your network so you have a resource to ask for more info about salary ranges.”
- Fresh added, “Apply for as many jobs as possible. Even if you do not want to go to that company, practice and get that job offer to help with your negotiations at the job you do want.”



Handling Insecurity:

- Kayal advised, “Talk to people who have been through the process so that they can normalize it for you and remind you that you are not the only one.”
- Daniela said, “You aren’t going to check every box; you should just apply and see how it goes.”
- Carolyn said, “Have your questions neatly practiced. The more prepared you are, the more confident you feel. The more practice I had, the better I felt going into the interview.”
- Fresh emphasized, “Reach out to people and talk about your insecurities.”

Advice:

- Carolyn shared, “I’m finishing up my Ph.D. and grinding week after week, so how different will I feel? I’m not really sure. It feels never-ending. Some consulting projects are as short as four weeks, which will be a nice change in pace where you’re finishing projects and moving on. It sometimes feels never-ending in academia.”
- Sorina: “One of my considerations was work-life balance. In industry, everything is faster-paced, and the purpose is more inspirational. I get to see projects at different stages, and I know that the projects I work on are going to impact someone. The purpose behind what I’m doing is more valuable, so the time I’m spending is well spent.”
- Fresh: “My Ph.D. was really intense. I was the only woman to graduate from my lab after 25 years. There were other women, and they all quit. I had to work really hard to prove myself to my advisor. I brought that intensity to my postdoc and realized I needed to slow down. When I came to industry, everything changed. My boss got mad at me for working on weekends. A principal scientist told me to slow down and work fewer hours. Now, I don’t work on weekends and take vacations.”

Key Takeaways:

- Your postdoc does matter.
- Be thoughtful with how you position yourself for every opportunity. Have a master resume and tailor it for each job to make you the most competitive candidate.
- Know your strengths, values, and target opportunities that align with your goals and interests.
- Leverage your networks like AWIS, and don't be afraid to make a change!



The event concluded with a happy hour, providing a great opportunity for attendees to network, meet the panelists, and celebrate the collective accomplishments and future ahead of the AWIS community. AWIS continues to support and empower women in science through events like these, fostering a culture of shared knowledge and professional growth.

Get involved in AWIS [here!](#)



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Medical Writing with Helen Wedegaertner Resnick, Ph.D.

By Elaine Guo

On May 20, the A2I Committee hosted Dr. Helen Wedegaertner Resnick, who works as a Medical Writer at Red Nucleus. Helen graduated from the UCSD Biomedical Sciences Ph.D. Program about a year ago, and in this virtual Q&A, she offered insights on her career path and how she made this transition.

What does a Medical Writer do?

I describe my role as something in between journalism and FDA compliance writing. A medical writer can work to create educational, training, and market research materials for a wide variety of clients, including industry partners, healthcare professionals, and the public. Some examples of projects at Red Nucleus include preparing medical science liaison (MSL) training materials, presenting clinical trial results, or making posters for medical congresses.

How would you describe your day-to-day?

My work combines creating outlines and summaries with storytelling, mainly using PowerPoint presentations. I sometimes write knowledge and discussion questions as well.

I spend a lot of time reading about different pharma companies and clinical trials to understand, for example, reactions to a drug product, or resources that would help patients with a particular disease. My favorite projects, however, are thought leader engagements because I get to see doctors' responses to clinical data first-hand and what's going to happen next in the field.

There's a lot of multitasking to balance different projects as well.

What is the life cycle of a project?

The team works together to complete a first draft, which is reviewed in-house before sending to the client for feedback. The process is collaborative and iterative, with the documents traveling back and forth between clients, writers, and medical or legal reviewers until final approval. While each project lasts about three months, it actually spends less than half of that time at the company.

How much research do you do?

Generally, the client is an expert in the research area of interest, and my job is to prepare documents that present this knowledge to doctors, for example, to understand their opinions. As for the type of research, my work focuses on clinical, rather than in vitro data.

Do you get the chance to interact directly with clients?

Yes, but this may be unique to Red Nucleus. At other places, project managers may act as the middleman between writers and clients, in order to save time on meetings. Also, my company is fully remote so I meet with everyone virtually.

Is a Ph.D. required for this role?

No, a Ph.D. is not required for medical writing but does allow one to come in at a higher level.

Is doing a postdoc beneficial?

Most people in this role didn't do a postdoc; they wanted to leave the bench. This additional training is not necessary unless it involves gaining specific writing or presentation skills.

What skills would make someone successful in this role?

The ability to quickly synthesize and translate complex information, such as a project's background, for different audiences is very important. My Ph.D. coursework, for example, was great preparation as I had to learn a lot of new topics very quickly and explain them to others.

It also helps if you enjoy meeting with clients.

Do you have any advice for making a transition to medical writing?

Networking has been super important for my path. I joined Red Nucleus first as an intern, working 10 hours a week during my Ph.D. I learned about this opportunity through an informational interview with someone at the company, and after completing the internship, I received an offer for a permanent position.

Alternatively, I know people who have made the transition from medical affairs. They have experience in coming up with ideas about what documents are needed and in directing strategy for writers and content creators.

Outside of these options, it's important to demonstrate that you've successfully done what the role is looking for. In addition to scientific writing or presenting at conferences, try to also show that you can write for diverse, non-science audiences- beyond grants and papers. One outlet that you can contribute to, as I have done, is the AWIS national magazine.



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April Coffee Chat with Scientific Illustrator Amy Cao

By Federica Klaus

The Academia to Industry (A2I) Coffee Club hosted **Amy Cao**, a Scientific Illustrator at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies in San Diego, on April 18. At this event, Amy shared her **personal journey**, exploring different avenues until she decided to return to her passion in art by beginning a career in medical illustration.

As an undergraduate, Amy was interested in biology and healthcare, but while studying science, she discovered the possibility of becoming a scientific illustrator. She then completed a Master of Science in Biomedical Communications from the University of Toronto, one of only four programs in North America. In this Master's program, the majority of students also had science backgrounds and spent time on art as a hobby. During her studies there, Amy had the opportunity to learn and try out different artistic approaches, such as UX/UI design, 3D modeling, and traditional arts.

After graduating in 2019, she found her **current job as an in-house illustrator at Salk**, a unique position in the academic landscape. She oversees the creation of journal figures and covers, PowerPoint presentations, magazine covers and illustrations, and the communication department's press releases.

Her solid science background and strong portfolio, which showcased her independence in the work required and previous experience working with scientists, were important elements that helped her land this position. In applying for this job, she was asked to improve a given figure, and she accomplished that by providing detailed descriptions of each step and clearly communicating her process.

Alternative positions for people with similar educational backgrounds can be found with hospitals, journals, medical education companies, the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and medical animation companies.

Amy's **day-to-day** work involves meeting with scientists to discuss projects, then creating sketches and drafts in an iterative process until the final product is completed. One challenge, she acknowledged, is staying up-to-date with scientific advances as part of her daily work. While she collaborates mostly one-on-one with scientists, Amy is part of a communications team as well.

Amy still draws as a hobby, doing "fun art" in her free time, which she credits as one reason for her being productive in her role. Her style in private and professional art is similar- she likes to paint landscapes and nature. When she looks back at her past work, it's satisfying to see the evolution of her work and skills.

As for looking towards the future, Amy sees the landscape of this industry changing quickly with the advent of AI and BioRender. These new tools move her tasks away from recreating or touching up towards elevating the visual language of everyone in science, which she sees as an exciting prospect.

For those at Salk who are interested in **working with Amy**, there is an internal page to apply for illustration requests. Although she is not currently freelancing, Amy is more than happy to give recommendations, chat about projects, and provide referrals for scientists outside of Salk.

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AWIS-SD LEADERSHIP NETWORK (ALN)

Members of the AWIS-SD Leadership Network (ALN) met for a lovely walk at Torrey Pines State Beach in August 2024. If you are interested in joining this group for monthly get-togethers and are an AWIS-SD member, please contact Co-Chair Kina Thackray at leadnet@awissd.org.



UPCOMING EVENTS IN SAN DIEGO

Empowered WE Rise 20th Anniversary Celebration

Date September 22, 2024, 1:00 - 4:30 PM
Location Farmer & The Seahorse, The Alexandria at Torrey Pines

Join [Women's Empowerment International](https://womenempowerment.org) (WE) for our signature event of the year, celebrating our 20th anniversary of grantmaking for economic empowerment programs. Enjoy an afternoon of delicious food and drinks, a beautiful venue, live music, inspiring speakers, auction excitement, and a maker fair featuring women entrepreneurs from local WE grant-funded programs. Proceeds will benefit WE grants distributed to our high-impact partner programs, working to break cycles of poverty for women and their families in San Diego County and five other countries.

<https://womenempowerment.org/fall-fundraiser/>

22nd San Diego Biopharma Conference

Date October 5, 2024, 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM
Location Hilton San Diego/ Del Mar, 15575 Jimmy Durante Boulevard

The mission of the San Diego BioPharma Conference is to have industry and academic experts meet to discuss the latest breakthroughs, innovations, and opportunities within the field.

<https://sabpa.org/member/event.php?id=100128>

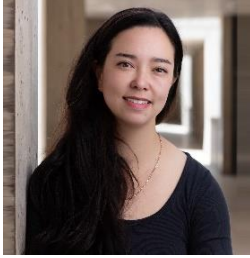
UPCOMING AWIS-SD EVENTS

Check our [website](#) for the most up-to-date information.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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



Kimberly Spaulding is a Ph.D. student in the Bioinformatics and Systems Biology Program at UC San Diego, studying genetic elements contributing to type 1 diabetes at the Salk Institute's McVicker lab. She earned her Bachelor's in Music from UCSD and her Master's in Cell and Molecular Biology from SFSU. Passionate about community engagement and science outreach, Kimberly mentors at UCSD's Graduate Women in Computing Initiative and serves on the AWIS Academia to Industry committee.



Elaine Guo earned her Ph.D. in Cancer Biology from UC San Diego. From there, she spent a few years in biotech as a scientist in oncology drug discovery, but recently, decided to make a transition to cancer biomarker discovery and will jump into a postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford University. She is also passionate about science communication and is currently a co-editor and contributing writer on the AWIS-SD Newsletter team.



Federica Klaus is an Assistant Project Scientist in the Department of Psychiatry at UC San Diego. She received her M.D. and Ph.D. from the University of Zurich in Switzerland. Her research focuses on transdiagnostic approach to biological mechanisms of serious mental illness, and how positive psychological traits can increase well-being in people with and without mental illness.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE NEWSLETTER

If you are an AWIS-SD member, we encourage you to contribute to the newsletter. Please send articles, photographs, and member news as Word attachments to newsletter@awissd.org. News articles should not exceed 250 words, event summaries should not exceed 500 words, and feature articles (special-interest stories and profiles) should not exceed 1000 words. The submission deadline for the next issue is **Nov 15, 2024**.

AWIS SAN DIEGO COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE – NEWSLETTER

Co-chairs: Elaine Guo and Swetha Ramakrishnan

Members: Corine Lau, Juliati Rahajeng, Pat Rarus, Chandani Sen, Jean Spence, and Shandha Rubini Mohanaraj

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