

WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER



Volume 32, Issue 3

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hello Wonderful Science Community,

I would like to start this letter off by acknowledging how scary the world is right now. I know, personally, it is a real struggle to hear about people impacted by the ongoing global conflicts, violent acts in the U.S., natural disasters, and hunger/homelessness in our communities. My anxiety has been running wild. I bring this up to let you know, if you are feeling the same way, you are not alone.

To combat our feeling of helplessness, my husband and I have decided to start helping in the community. We recently volunteered with a local mutual aid group called We All We Got. We spent the morning packaging and delivering food and other supplies to those in need throughout the community. It felt good to give back and was a great way to meet like-minded people. Community is something we all need right now. There are so many uncertainties about the future, but one thing for sure is that we at AWIS are here for you and support you. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you are in need.

With all that said, I am very excited for our chapter to start getting more active after our summer break. Our first major event back was our Open House, held at SOVA with drinks provided by New English Brewing and food from Craft Taco. As always, Agnes, our fabulous Events Chair, and the Events Committee did a wonderful job of planning everything. This event is something I always look forward to and this year was exceptional. We had nearly 100 attendees, several of whom were walk-ins. I was fortunate to chat with several new members and discuss everything our chapter has to offer. One attendee said she has been to several networking events recently and this was the best of them. I was so pleased to get this feedback. It just goes to show how welcoming our AWIS-SD group is. I am proud to count myself as a member of this community and feel so privileged to be able to lead this group.

If you are looking to get more involved, we have several committees that are looking for members to step up into leadership roles or to join as committee members. Our Outreach and Career Advancement

Committees are all specifically looking for members who would be interested in becoming co-chairs. These leadership roles vary based on the committee, but all guarantee the opportunity to gain experience in leadership that will help in any career path.

You can find in-depth descriptions of all our committees [here](#). All are actively recruiting new members and the chapter, overall, would love to get more people involved. Meetings and upcoming events can be found on our website calendar.

Best,

Rose

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

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AWIS-SD Academia-to-Industry Coffee Chat

by Kiki Spaulding

On November 21st, AWIS-SD hosted its first **Academia-to-Industry Coffee Chat** of the new academic year, bringing together scientists and attendees eager to explore biotech careers. Meena Narayanan, PhD, led the event, which featured two inspiring speakers: Dr. Jianfang Hu and Dr. Lauren Hatfield. They shared candid insights into their scientific background and transitions from academia to industry providing practical advice for those considering similar paths.

Meet the Speakers

Dr. Jianfang Hu

Dr. Hu's academic path began with a B.S. and M.S. in Virology from Wuhan University, followed by a Ph.D. in Immunology from Penn State University, where she explored T cell development and signaling in infectious diseases. After postdoctoral work at Scripps Research and the La Jolla Institute for Immunology, she transitioned to the biotech industry. With over 8 years of experience in CAR-T immunotherapy, she now leads early process development at Poseida Therapeutics, enhancing therapies to meet evolving clinical needs.

Dr. Lauren Hatfield

Dr. Hatfield earned her B.S. in Biochemistry and Cell Biology from UC San Diego and a Ph.D. in Immunology from the University of Washington, where her research uncovered mechanisms of immune defense and inflammation. At Poseida since 2019, she drives process development and technology transfer efforts as a CMC lead, combining her academic expertise with hands-on problem-solving in industry.

Highlights from the Chat

Why Industry?

Both speakers shared candid reflections on their motivation to move into industry. Dr. Hu spoke about her desire to see tangible impacts from her work, explaining how biotech offered a chance to improve patient outcomes. Dr. Hatfield echoed this sentiment, emphasizing the fast pace and collaborative nature of industry projects compared to academic research.

Practical Advice for Transitioning

Adaptability is key: Dr. Hu highlighted the importance of clear communication when collaborating across disciplines, noting how industry often demands simplified explanations of complex ideas.

The poster is for an event titled "The Science and Scope of CAR T-cell Therapy" organized by the "A2I COFFEE CLUB". It is scheduled for November 21st from 6:30pm to 7:30pm on Zoom. The event features three speakers: Meena Narayanan, PhD (Process Analytical Scientist, Cell & Gene, Moderator), Jianfang Hu, PhD (Associate Director, PD), and Lauren Hatfield, PhD (CMC Lead, Senior PD Scientist). A QR code is provided for registration at <https://tinyurl.com/vr9kmsxm>.

Leverage what you already do well: Dr. Hatfield encouraged attendees to apply their academic problem-solving skills and leverage technical expertise to industry challenges, which often require innovative thinking.

Networking and Job Searching

The speakers emphasized the power of networking, recommending organizations like AWIS for building meaningful connections. They also stressed the importance of tailoring job applications. As Dr. Hatfield put it, “Make sure your resume and application speak directly to the job you’re applying for.”

Key Takeaways

- Transitioning into industry is about adapting your strengths—like problem-solving and communication—to new environments.
- Build a network and learn from others’ experiences to identify roles that align with your goals.
- Don’t be afraid to position yourself strategically—tailor your resume and be clear about how your skills fit the role.
- Take advantage of networking events to make genuine connections and reach out to experts requesting for informational interviews.

The discussion ended with a lively Q&A session, offering attendees the chance to ask questions about career paths, work-life balance, and industry culture. The chat event was able to recruit attracted 20 enthusiastic participants. Events like these demonstrate AWIS’s commitment to supporting women in STEM and fostering a strong community of professionals navigating their career journeys.

Interested in future events? Visit [AWIS-SD](#) to get involved!



Find out more at thermofisher.com

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Nucleate Women Leading Life Sciences Dinner

By Janet Joy

On November 18, 2024, Nucleate San Diego hosted a Women Leading Life Sciences dinner, featuring Mallory Embree, PhD, Co-founder and CSO of Native Microbials, and Kim Kadar, PhD, Managing Partner at Medical Excellence Capital. The evening provided a unique opportunity for meaningful dialogue and mentorship for invited members from AWIS San Diego, along with ten young female leaders and trainees.

Nucleate is a student-led non-profit organization founded in 2019, representing over 500 student leaders from more than 120 institutions worldwide. It stands as the largest global community of bio-innovators, committed to strengthening the biotech community through educational programs, mentorship, and collaborative projects. Nucleate's mission is to bridge the gap between emerging biotech professionals and seasoned experts, providing resources that transform innovative ideas into practical, impactful solutions addressing critical issues in biotechnology and healthcare.



One of Nucleate's flagship initiatives is the Women Leading Life Sciences Dinner Series, developed in collaboration with Lyda Hill Philanthropies. This program aims to empower aspiring young female leaders in the life sciences by offering opportunities to engage with accomplished professionals. These dinners, held in various cities, create a platform for women to share their experiences, gain valuable insights, and build networks essential for their

development as biotech innovators and entrepreneurs. The program has made a significant impact by fostering a supportive and inspiring community, encouraging women to pursue leadership roles and drive transformative changes in the life sciences. The unwavering support from Lyda Hill Philanthropies and the contributions of all the participating women have been instrumental in expanding the program's influence and reach.

[#WomenInScience #Nucleate #LydaHillPhilanthropies](#)

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Westwood Elementary's Science Night

By Rose Presby

Zachary Deane and I had the pleasure of taking part in an outreach event held by Westwood Elementary School. This event catered to K-5th grade students and their families. The goals of the event were to spark curiosity and enthusiasm for STEM subjects through hands-on learning experiences that educated the community, showcased science in society and encouraged family engagement in STEM learning.

The event was split into categories based on the type of activity the volunteers would be demonstrated. We were placed in Science Station and focused on discussing the brain. We had participants make their own brain hats. These hats highlighted all the lobes of the brains and discussed the various things that how those areas function. We would always start by asking if the participants knew anything about the brain and build on their answer as they started making their hats. This was non-stop fun with over 200 students taking part in the event. I would like to thank Nitya Bhaskaran, new AWIS-SD member, for bringing this event to the Outreach committee's attention. We hope to take part in any other future events.



Salk Women in Science Presentation

By Jean Spence

On November 7, 2024, Salk Women in Science presented awards to outstanding graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The awardees were selected based on their innovation and vision, scientific impact of their research their interest in mentoring other women in STEM fields, and ability to obtain research funding in the future. Women received awards for travel, child support and research. Salk Women in Science has a generous endowment of \$176,000 primarily from donors. Dannielle Engle, an assistant professor in regulatory biology was the Master of Ceremonies. The keynote speaker was Agnieszka Kendrick, an assistant professor in the Molecular Neurobiology Laboratory. She spoke on her research about molecular motors which transport intracellular cargo.

The \$50,000 for travel was divided among 20 awardees for attending research meetings or collaborations. Six women received \$6,000 each for child care and home expenses. The Salk scientific community has recognized that child care mainly falls on women and is a key impediment to career advancement for women. Finally, four women received \$25,000 research awards for work that was deemed impactful and innovative but too early for grant support. The research awardees were:

Jessica Arzavata (Behrens lab) on the effect of viral infection in pregnancy on perinatal brain development through epigenomics.

Lara Labarta-Bajo (Allen lab) for the role of inflammation on brain aging and movement.
Deryn LeDuke (Tye lab) for examining sexual differences in the responses to exercise and food deprivation.

Ayesha Rustom Thanawall (Azim lab) for her studies on the effects of anxiety movement and coordination by affecting the cerebellum.

Some of the awardees stated that the Salk women know and support each other in order to create a positive research environment. Our local chapter of the Association of Women in Science has the same objectives and we also award scholarships though the amounts are smaller. One strategic difference is that AWIS-SD does not give awards for childcare support.

Featured - ACS San Gorgonio Section 2024 Outreach Volunteer

Dr. Sara Rahimnejad, proud AWIS-SD has been honored with the Volunteer 2024 Award by the ACS San Gorgonio District!

Please join us in congratulating the **ACS San Gorgonio Section 2024 Outreach Volunteer of the Year, Dr. Sara Rahimnejad!**



Dr. Sara Rahimnejad currently serves the section as Outreach Coordinator at ACS San Gorgonio. She was appointed to this position because of her extreme enthusiasm and willingness to help with all Section activities and events. She successfully obtained an ACS Science Café grant to organize a public outreach event at the Moreno Valley Public Library. She has also stimulated interest in the U.S. National Chemistry Olympiad Program, increasing the number of schools participating for the first time. She is currently working on an event to introduce undergraduate students to the field of Computational Chemistry.

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“I’d like to solve the puzzle!” By Shanna N. Lavalle

Well, I love solving puzzles. It’s what I love about science and it’s what I love about the Wheel of Fortune. One day when my I was solving Wheel of Fortune puzzles from my living room, my husband joked about me going on the show, and I thought, well, why not? So, when I saw a promotion about them holding auditions at the Sycuan casino, I was in!

The first audition was a 1 min intro about yourself. So basically an elevator pitch. I thought back to what I learned at a recent SACNAS at Salk Elevator Pitch Workshop and applied the same concepts to who I am. I thought about what aspects of myself I’d like to highlight and how to weave them in to an overall theme. I went with: *“Hello! My name is Shanna. I am a scientist and I study the genetics of autoimmune disorders. When I’m not in my science lab, you can find me in my “mud lab” doing pottery experiments or in my “mat lab” experimenting with jiu jitsu. I also have 2 dogs and a wonderful husband!”*

A couple months later I got an email inviting me to an **interview with the producers**. This consisted of another intro (I used the same one as before) and then I got to play a series of puzzles. I got about 50% of them correct. I think the main thing they were looking for was good energy and maintaining composure under pressure.

Some more time goes by and then I get invited to be a **standby**. This meant I got to go to a Wheel of Fortune taping and be available to step in if one of the other contestants got sick, missed a flight, or for some reason couldn’t tape. Even though I didn’t get on an episode that day, I got to spin the wheel, meet Vanna White, and watch 6 episodes of Wheel of Fortune while making a bunch of new friends!

Then I finally got the invitation to be a **contestant on Wheel of Fortune!** The episode theme was Home for the Holidays. I met Ryan Secrest, Vanna White, and I even got interviewed by Maggie Sajak! The actual taping felt like a whirlwind. There were lights, cameras, and a lot of going on! But once the games started, everything faded away and I zoned in. I won't give away any spoilers, but if you want to see what happened you can look up *Season 42, Episode 54*.

If there is something you've been interested in, whether it's Wheel of Fortune, a scientific opportunity, or something completely random, I encourage you to put yourself out there and explore! If nothing else, you'll end up with a new experience and a fun story to tell!

Shanna N. Lavallo
AWIS-San Diego Treasurer
AWIS Chapter Advisory Committee member

Scholarship Opportunity for Our AWIS-SD Members

We have two scholarships from UCSD-Extended Studies available for AWIS-SD members. We are very eager to award them to those interested in the science courses they have available!

Each scholarship is worth \$1,000 and valid until the end of 2027.

List of science courses can be found in the following link:

<https://extendedstudies.ucsd.edu/courses-certificates/all-courses-and-certificates>

If interested, please send a 1/2 page (250 word) paragraph to president@awissd.org sharing how you would be applying the scholarship to your current or future career.

Please submit by January 12th, 2025.

Well wishes,
AWIS-SD

Testimonials:

"The AWIS-UCSD Extension scholarship helped to support me during a time of career exploration and growth. For me, UCSD Extension classes have always been a great resource for jumping into new topics. As I found more clarity in my path and decided to make a transition from cell biology to bioinformatics, I applied my scholarship to programming and statistics classes. I am grateful to AWIS and this award for helping me to branch out in new directions."

- Elaine Guo, PhD, BS

"The 2024 AWIS-SD UCSD Extended Studies Scholarship has made it possible for me to take 3 prerequisite courses towards the program for a Professional Certificate in Medical Writing. I have successfully completed both Medical Terminology: An Anatomy and Physiology Approach and Clinical Trials and Regulatory Writing Primer and am presently taking CT: Practical Clinical Statistics for the Non-

Statistician. In the past, I worked towards a UCSD Extended Studies Professional Certificate in In Vitro Diagnostics (IVD) over the course of several years. However, due to the AWIS-SD scholarship award my completion of these 3 courses throughout 2024 has allowed me to accelerate my planned timeline to obtain a formal professional certificate in the field. The AWIS-SD scholarship has afforded me the opportunity to enrich my career as the Manager of Medical Information & Writing at Abbott. My team and I directly interface with Medical, Scientific, and Clinical Affairs in our daily interactions and are responsible for a wide range of global collateral document types across various infectious disease states with relation to the company's diagnostic product portfolio. With my learnings from these courses, I have been able to inform on relevant topics for the synthesis of clinical and regulatory documents as well as improve the context and usage of medical terminology in collateral creation for marketing and commercial teams. While it is still early in the Statistics course, it has already improved my ability to critically review data presented in scientific publications as well as my ability to inform on considerations of the data included in on-going scientific manuscripts. I am deeply appreciative of AWIS-SD for offering these scholarships to support members in the continual pursuit of knowledge. I am sure the beneficial impact of these courses in my career growth and ability to provide high-quality medical/scientific communications has only just begun."

- Erika Wells, PhD, MPhil, BS



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 recent 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 technician and as a 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 PhD, studying the motivational aspects and pharmacological manipulation of a rodent model of binge eating. She, her husband and their two cats Salem (guess what color he is...) and George, moved to San Diego in August 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 and A2I committees, and as one of the new Co-chairs of the Scholarship committee. She is an avid seamstress, hiker and chocolate lover. Feel free to reach her at rpresby@scintillon.org or on her LinkedIn profile <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rose-presby-07021088/>.



Janet Joy is a PhD student at Scripps Research, where she works on computational drug repurposing approaches. Recently, Janet joined the AWIS A2I committee and she is also an active member of the leadership team at Nucleate San Diego, contributing to the growth and development of the biotech community



Jean Spence earned a Ph.D. from the University of Utah in microbial genetics. Subsequently, she did several postdoctoral fellowships at M.I.T., Harvard Medical School, UCSD and the University of Rochester. She pursued her interest in systems biology by developing a novel platform and publishing 3 manuscripts and a book chapter as a communicating author. She has been a reviewer for the AWIS-SD newsletter since 2014 and became a co-chair this year. She was also a co-chair of the former Back to Work group in AWIS-SD.



Shanna Lavallo is a postdoctoral fellow at the Salk Institute, where she is using genetic and genomic approaches to identify functional risk variants in autoimmune disorders and cancers. During her PhD studies, she also completed the Rady's School of Management MicroMBA program to enhance her knowledge of business strategy and management. She has since applied these concepts to her leadership roles within the Endocrine Society and the Association for Women in Science (AWIS). Shanna is a former Chair of the Endocrine Society's Summer Research Fellowship program, former Co-Chair of the AWIS-SD Academia to Industry Committee, served on the AWIS National Strategic Planning Task Force, and is currently a board member of the AWIS-SD chapter. Through her commitment to these organizations, Shanna has made a meaningful impact on the professional lives of others and continues to drive growth and development within these organizations to better serve their members.

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 **March 15, 2025**.

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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