



President's Message

Dear AACT Members,

As my term as 2025–2026 President of the American Association of Chinese in Toxicology (AACT) comes to a close, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the trust, engagement, and support from our members throughout the year. Serving this community has been both a privilege and a deeply rewarding experience.



Over the past year, AACT has continued to grow and thrive by advancing initiatives guided by the foundational themes of Excellence, Visibility, and Connection, established by previous leadership. We expanded opportunities for our members to engage, contribute, and be recognized throughout a range of activities, including supporting nomination of toxicologists of Chinese origin for SOT awards, organizing the AACT Career Workshop, publishing the AACT newsletters and launching our first AACT Member Highlight, and fostering communication and networking through the social media platform WeChat and LinkedIn.

Recognizing excellence at all career stages remains a core mission of AACT. This year, we continued to honor outstanding contributions to the field of toxicology through several awards, including the Joinn Biomere Outstanding Young Toxicologist Award, Best Abstract Award, Best Publication Award, and the Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award. Together, these efforts strengthened professional engagement and highlighted the accomplishments of our members across academia, industry, and government.

I am especially grateful to the AACT Board and leadership team for their dedication and outstanding service. Dr. Shuo Xiao, Immediate Past President, provided leadership on officer nominations and supported fundraising and proposal endorsement efforts. Dr. Xiang Xue, President-Elect, led major SOT award nominations and chaired the AACT Award Committee. Dr. Si Chen, Secretary, played a key role in coordinating AACT activities and the Annual Reception. Dr. Xiaoling Zhang, Treasurer, oversaw award reviews, supported membership and fundraising initiatives, and contributed extensively to the Annual Reception planning. Drs. Chao Ji and Feng Gao, Councilors, led the Career Workshop and supported Reception preparation. Dr. Qiran Chen, Postdoctoral Representative, and Zimu Wei, Student Representative, led the AACT newsletter, member highlights, and trainee engagement activities.

In reflection, 2025–2026 has been a productive and collaborative year for AACT. Our continued success depends on the active participation, engagement, and generosity of our members, and I am truly thankful for your commitment and continued support.

I look forward to reconnecting with many of you at the SOT Annual Meeting and the AACT Annual Business Meeting and Reception in San Diego, California. This year, our Business Meeting will be held at the Marriott Marquis Marina, followed by our Reception at a nearby venue, the Fairweather Rooftop Bar. I hope you will enjoy the great food, beautiful California weather, and, most importantly, the opportunity to reconnect and build new professional relationships.

Warm regards,

Xuefei Cao, PhD
2025-2026 President
American Association of Chinese in Toxicology (AACT)



Give Now to Support the Future of Toxicology

AACT currently has one Endowment Fund, the Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award Fund, which supports scholarship awards for graduate students. The Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award Fund was established through an initial generous gift from Dr. Frank C. Lu in memory of his wife, Jean Lu. Since its inception, the Endowment has provided scholarships each year to at least one toxicology student of Chinese ethnic origin. To date, approximately 20 students have been recognized and supported through the Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award Fund.



In Memory of Jean Lu and Dr. Frank Lu

We encourage our members to contribute directly to the Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award Fund. Your support will help continue investing in the next generation of toxicologists. Contributing is easy and can be done online at: <http://www.toxicology.org/endowment/contribute/donate.asp>.

Currently, several AACT awards do not have support from permanent endowment funds. To establish a permanent endowment fund, a minimum contribution of \$50,000 must be provided by one or more donors within three years. For more details, please refer to the SOT endowment webpage: <https://www.toxicology.org/endowment/Eabout/fund.asp>.

If you are interested in creating new Endowment Funds to support AACT trainees and scholars, please feel free to reach out to AACT officers.

2026 AACT-SIG Career Development Workshop

Join us for an engaging career workshop at the 2026 SOT Annual Meeting! AACT is hosting an interactive roundtable discussion designed to empower toxicologists at every career stage—from graduate students and postdoctoral fellows to early- and mid-career professionals.

What you'll gain:

- Expert guidance on leadership development and career advancement strategies
- Global career insights across government, industry, and academia
- Opportunities to build meaningful connections with experienced mentors
- Expanded perspectives on diverse career paths and opportunities

This workshop echoes the AACT's mission to support and empower the next generation of toxicologists. Whether you are exploring your career options, planning a transition, or seeking to expand your professional network, this is your opportunity to learn, connect, and grow.

Time

5:00-6:00 PM, March 23, 2026

Location

Marriott Marquis Grand Ballroom 5

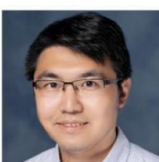
Roundtable Representatives



Yunqi An
Toxicologist
Victoria's Secret



Xinrong Chen
Toxicologist
ABC Toxicology



Wei-Chun Chou
Assistant Professor
UC, Riverside



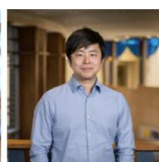
Xiaoling Dai
Senior Principal Toxicologist
Abbott Lab



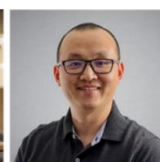
Xiaojia He
Senior Research Scientist
UL Research Institutes



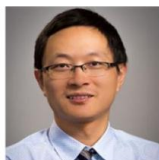
Yitong Liu
Senior Research Pharmacologist
FDA



Hao Wang
Assistant Professor
University of Michigan



Kai Wang
Assistant Professor
Indiana University Bloomington



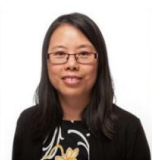
Xiang Xue
Associate Professor
University of New Mexico



Li Yang
Toxicologist
California EPA



Yongbin (Robert) Zhang
Vice President and Global
Head of Toxicology
WuXi Apptec Co., Ltd



Xiaoling Zhang
Senior Toxicologist
P&G



Qiang Zhang
Associate Professor
Emory University



Hao Zhu
Professor
Tulane University



Yanhong Wei
Professor
Sun Yat-sen University



Menghang Xia
Group Leader of Systems Toxicology
NIH

Please use the following link to register.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RNX96Y5>

Scan the QR code to see the biosktech of each panelist.



AACT Member Highlight Series

AACT Member Highlight Series aims to recognize our members and strengthen community engagement by showcasing their research, contribution to the field of toxicology, as well as sharing their valuable insights or career suggestions with fellow members. This series provides a platform for members to share their experience, inspire others, and connect more deeply with the AACT community. In this inaugural issue, we are pleased to highlight two of our members: Dr. Lu Cai from the University of Louisville and Hangyu (Isabella) Wu from the University of Connecticut.

Lu Cai, MD, PhD, earned his doctorates in Medicine and Radiation Medicine from the former Norman Bethune University of Medical Sciences in Changchun, China. Following postdoctoral training at the University of Western Ontario and McGill University, he joined the University of Louisville School of Medicine in 2002. He currently serves as a tenured Professor and Director of the Pediatric Research Institute and holds the Children's Hospital Foundation Chair for Pediatric Research.



Dr. Cai is a globally recognized authority in metabolic syndrome (MetS) and diabetes-related cardiovascular complications. With more than 380 peer-reviewed publications in leading journals—

including *Nature Reviews Cardiology*, *Circulation*, and the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*—his work has fundamentally shaped the understanding of diabetic cardiomyopathy. His standing as a top-tier expert is further reflected by his #1 contributor ranking in diabetic cardiomyopathy on ScholarGPS (2025) and by recent bibliometric analyses (*Front. Cardiovasc. Med.* 2022, PMID: 360931652022). Dr. Cai has been honored with multiple awards from leading professional societies, including the 2008 Outstanding Career Achievement Awards from the International Dose-Response Society, the 2020 SOT Metals Specialty Section Career Achievement Award, the 2020 SOT AACT Distinguished Chinese Toxicologist Award, the Cardiovascular Toxicology Specialty Section Impact Award in 2020 and 2023, and most recently the 2025 SOT Translational Impact Award.

Thoughts for Growth

What Qualities Do You Believe Are Most Essential for Trainees to Succeed in Their Career?

I believe that toxicology is evolving rapidly and becoming increasingly complex. Successful trainees are those who constantly ask why and how. Curiosity always drives deeper understanding, and critical thinking allows trainees to rigorously evaluate data rather than accept results at face value. Flexibility is also essential, as the field of toxicology is increasingly shaped by computational methods, high throughput screening, and advanced analytics. Equally important is the ability to communicate clearly, both in writing and verbally. Toxicologists often translate complex science for regulators, clinicians, industry partners, and the public. Therefore, effective communication is critical for creating an impact.

AACT Member Highlight Series

Additionally, maintaining ethical and data integrity are fundamental, as toxicologists directly influence public health and regulatory decisions. Finally, modern toxicology intersects with genomics, chemistry, epidemiology, data science, and risk assessment, I encourage trainees to explore interdisciplinary approaches whenever possible.

What Emerging Opportunities or Challenges Do You Foresee Shaping the Future of Toxicology?

Looking ahead, I see many exciting opportunities shaping the future of toxicology. New alternative methodologies, including *in vitro* systems, organ-on-chip models, and computational toxicology, are transforming hazard evaluation by reducing reliance on animal testing and enabling faster, more mechanistic insights. Advances in machine learning, predictive modeling, and large toxicogenomic datasets are opening doors to improved risk prediction and early hazard identification. As we better understand genetic variability, exposure patterns, and susceptibility, toxicology is also moving toward individualized risk assessment. Last, but not least, there is growing recognition of the need to address disparities in exposure and health outcomes, creating opportunities for community-engaged research and policy influence.

At the same time, significant challenges remain. Regulatory acceptance of new methodologies often lags behind scientific advances. Understanding the effects of complex chemical mixtures and real-world exposures remains a major, difficult scientific frontier. Climate change and emerging contaminants are shifting exposure patterns and introducing new hazards, such as microplastics and PFAS alternatives. Finally, as datasets grow larger and more complex, ensuring quality, transparency, and reproducibility has become increasingly challenging.

If You Were Beginning Your Career Today, What Advice Would You Give Your Younger Self?

If I were beginning my career today, I would invest early in computational and data science skills, including statistics, coding, and machine learning, as these skills are increasingly essential in a data-driven field. I would also seek mentors from multiple sectors, such as academia, industry, government, and consulting, to better understand where my strengths fit best. Finally, I would build a professional network early and maintain it over time, as collaborations, job opportunities, and research ideas often emerge from relationships developed long before they are needed.

AACT Member Highlight Series

Hangyu (Isabella) Wu is a PhD candidate in Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Connecticut (UConn) School of Pharmacy, working under the mentorship of Dr. José E. Manautou. Her research focuses on mechanistic toxicology, with an emphasis on hepatic transporters in metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) and drug-induced liver injury (DILI). Her doctoral work integrates *in vivo* mouse models, human hepatocyte systems, and computational biology to investigate how disruption of endogenous signaling molecule efflux contributes to hepatic metabolic dysregulation and susceptibility to liver injury.



In addition to her academic training, Isabella completed an industry internship in Investigative Toxicology, where she evaluated 3D liver models for DILI assessment. Isabella has received multiple trainee awards from SOT and ACT and is actively engaged in mentoring and professional service through SOT and UConn. Her long-term interests include safety assessment and translational toxicology in industry or at the FDA.

Thoughts for Growth

What You Would Like to Share with AACT Trainees Regarding Career Advancement:

I encourage trainees to attend scientific meetings as early and as often as possible, not only to present their research but also to identify professional communities that align with their interests and long-term career goals. Organizations such as AACT can provide a strong sense of belonging and sustained support throughout one's training and career. Within these communities, engaging with senior scientists and alumni is particularly valuable, as learning from their career experiences helps trainees better understand how career decisions are made and how different paths evolve over time. At the same time, meaningful career advancement must be grounded in strong scientific fundamentals. Developing rigorous mechanistic thinking, maintaining high standards in experimental design, and approaching daily research with curiosity and diligence are essential for long-term growth in toxicology.

Which Aspects of Your Involvement with SOT and AACT Have Been Most Valuable to Your Professional Growth, and Why?

My involvement with SOT and AACT has been highly valuable to my professional growth. As an international scientific platform, SOT has allowed me to present my work to a broad audience, engage in meaningful discussions, and gain new perspectives that strengthen my research. In particular, the feedback and exchange of ideas at SOT meetings have refined my scientific thinking and encouraged a more critical and thoughtful approach to research questions.

AACT Member Highlight Series

In addition, the awards and recognition programs offered by SOT and AACT have been especially meaningful at this early stage of my career. These recognitions motivate me to continue pursuing in-depth research in toxicology and to learn from outstanding peers whose work has been impactful. During challenging periods, they also serve as important reminders of the value of rigorous toxicology research and motivate me to remain persistent and committed to this field. Equally important, my interactions with SOT and AACT members have fostered a strong sense of belonging within the toxicology community, reminding me that my research journey is supported by a broader scientific community.

What First Inspired Your Interest in Toxicology Research, and How Has That Motivation Evolved Over Time?

My initial interest in toxicology was inspired during high school by the story of Frances Oldham Kelsey, a female FDA medical officer whose scientific judgment and expertise in drug safety evaluation played a critical role in preventing the thalidomide tragedy in the United States. Her scientific rigor and professional courage, especially under intense external pressure, left a lasting impression on me and shaped my early aspiration to pursue a career dedicated to improving drug safety and patient outcomes. This motivation further evolved during my undergraduate training in traditional Chinese medicine, where I became aware that toxicity remains a major barrier to the modernization and global development of traditional medicines. I came to view toxicology not only as a tool for risk assessment, but also as a scientific bridge supporting safer drug development and facilitating communication between traditional medicine systems and modern pharmaceutical science. During my PhD training, this motivation has been further strengthened through mentorship from my principal investigator, Dr. Manautou, whose high standards for scientific rigor and active engagement in the toxicology community have strongly influenced my development as an independent researcher.

As a Graduate Student Representative, What Did You Learn About Influencing Decision-Making and Driving Progress Without Formal Authority?

Serving as a graduate student representative taught me that leadership does not depend on formal authority, but rather on enabling others to be heard and supported in decision-making processes. I learned that effective group decisions are strengthened when diverse perspectives are actively gathered and translated into constructive discussions.

In practice, this involved reaching out to peers, particularly those who were hesitant to speak up, and mentoring them on how to clearly articulate their concerns. By synthesizing these perspectives and presenting them in a structured, solution-oriented manner, I was able to contribute to more balanced and informed discussions. Through this experience, I developed practical leadership and mentorship skills centered on building trust, amplifying peer voices, and guiding conversations toward constructive and actionable outcomes.

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President

Xuefei Cao, PhD,
Altria Client Services



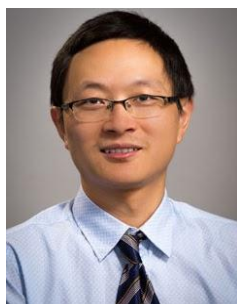
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California, Los
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Xiang Xue, PhD,
University of New
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Councilor

Chao Ji, PhD,
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Si Chen, PhD,
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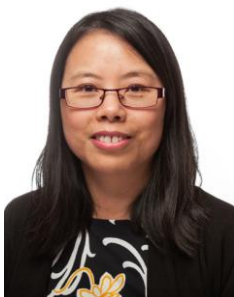
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Florida



Treasurer

Xiaoling Zhang, PhD,
P&G



Student Representative

Zimu Wei,
Michigan State
University



Immediate Past President

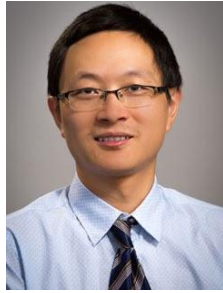
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Rutgers, The State
University of New
Jersey



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California, Los
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Councilor

Yunqi An, PhD,
Victoria's Secret



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Councilor

Yizhong Liu,
PhD, DABT,
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Johnson



Newly Elected

Postdoctoral Representative

Yunjia Lai, PhD,
Columbia
University



Newly Elected

Student Representative

Zimu Wei,
Michigan State
University



2026 AACT AWARDS

The AACT Awards Committee is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2026 AACT Awards, including Outstanding Young Toxicologist Award, Jean Lu Student Scholarship Awards, Best Publication Award, and Best Abstract Awards. All awards will be presented at the AACT Award Ceremony during the 65th SOT Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA.

JOINN Biomere Outstanding Young Toxicologist Award

The Outstanding Young Toxicologist Award recognizes an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of toxicology at an early stage of their career in academia, industry, or government.

Xiaojia He, PhD

**Senior Research Scientist,
UL Research Institutes' Chemical Insights**

Dr. Xiaojia He is Senior Research Scientist at UL Research Institutes' Chemical Insights. His work bridges exposure science, multi-omics methodologies, and mechanistic toxicology, and he applies these integrated approaches with clarity and purpose to address real-world toxicological challenges. His efforts have significantly advanced UL Research Institutes' Chemical Insights capabilities in emerging exposure domains, including those associated with electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), and have positioned the institute at the forefront of data-driven research on consumer product safety.



Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award

The Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award Fund was established through a generous initial gift from Dr. Frank C. Lu in memory of his wife, Jean Lu. The fund supports annual scholarships for Chinese students pursuing graduate training in toxicology. Selection criteria include scholastic achievement, demonstrated leadership, relevance of the student's thesis research to toxicology, and letters of recommendation. Two awards are presented each year. Each recipient will receive a commemorative plaque and a cash stipend.



Zhicheng Zhang University of Florida

Abstract Title: Multi-Task Neural-ODE Modeling of Nanoparticle Biodistribution in Tumor-Bearing Mice for Toxicological Risk Assessment



Tiffany Tsui Texas A&M University

Abstract Title: Orphan Nuclear Receptor 4A1 (NR4A1) and NR4A2 Dual Ligands Inhibit Endometriosis Progression via Gas6-TAM and Epithelial-Mesenchymal Transition Pathways

Best Publication Award

Yanhong Wei, PhD

Sun Yat-sen University



The Best Publication Award is awarded to Dr. Wei in the Department of Toxicology, School of Public Health, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China for the publication:

Zhong X., Chen J., Zhang Z., Zhu Q., Ji D., Ke W., Niu C., Wang C., Zhao N., Chen W., Jia K., Liu Q., Song M., Liu C., Wei Y.*. Development of an automated morphometric approach to assess vascular outcomes following exposure to environmental chemicals in zebrafish. *Environ. Health Perspect.* 2024, 132 (5): 57001.

Best Abstract Awards

First Place



Yuan-Teng Chang

University Of Georgia

Abstract: Molecular Mechanisms of Nuclear Pore Complex (NPC) Impairment in Environmental Neurotoxicity Models: Implications for Pathogenesis of Parkinson's Disease

Second Place



Tong Wang, PhD

Tulane University

Abstract: Integrating Machine Learning and *In Vitro* Assays to Evaluate Phthalate-Induced Reproductive Toxicity

Third Place



Chloe Chou

UNC-Chapel Hill

Abstract: Deriving a Mixture of Combustible Materials in American Homes and Fire-prone Biomes to Elucidate the Toxicity of Wildland-Urban Interface Fires

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JOINN / Biomere (a JOINN company) facilitates the individual needs of each of our partners across the globe in making drug development more efficient because to us, it's personal. We constitute a global, nonclinical, contract research organization (CRO) with locations on the East and West Coast, as well as multiple locations in China (JOINN). Our International Liaison Team seamlessly navigates studies placed in China creating access to model abundance, expedient study-start times, GLP laboratories and an impressive resume of scientific talent. JOINN is the largest CRO in China and offers budget-friendly resources averaging up to 30% of U.S. study costs. Globality, a personal approach and our drive to expedite research timelines, makes us ideally suited to support our clients' needs.

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IPHASE is an international biotechnology leader dedicated to driving scientific progress and expediting drug discovery by delivering premium biological reagents and cutting-edge research solutions.

By offering a broad and reliable portfolio of GMP-grade and research-grade products, IPHASE empowers the development of therapeutic modalities spanning small molecules, monoclonal antibodies, cell and gene therapies (CGT), and oligonucleotide-based treatments. IPHASE enables researchers to transform scientific ideas into meaningful progress. Our offerings range from recombinant enzymes and subcellular fractions to primary cells, organoids, and biological tissues from both human and animal sources, supporting key research areas including ADME/PK, pharmacodynamics, toxicology, bioanalysis, and pathology. Built on a strong foundation of scientific expertise, technical innovation, and robust in-house manufacturing, IPHASE delivers the quality, consistency, and scalability required to support discovery, translational research, and preclinical development worldwide.

Extending from this strong product platform, IPHASE also provides product-related CRO services for early drug discovery, including *in vitro* ADME/PK screening, LC-MS/MS bioanalysis, and pharmacology and efficacy studies.

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As a world's leading manufacturer of scientific equipment company, RWD Life Science (referred as RWD), is committed to provide high-quality and cost-effective laboratory instruments to researchers, and animal medical equipment to veterinarians worldwide.

The product solutions range from animal surgery and modeling, neuroscience research, animal behavior research, cell and molecular biology, microcirculation monitoring, pathological diagnosis, and animal healthcare. Since 2002, RWD, headquartered in China with a branch in the USA, has successfully provided products and services to over 100 countries and regions. We have served 6,000+ universities, 1,000+ research institutes, 2,300+ hospitals, and 11,000+ veterinary clinics, gaining constant trust and support from global customers.

Looking into the future, we shall adhere to the core values of quality, integrity, responsibility and contribute to the advancement and development of pre-clinic and medical clinic applications.

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The Xiao Laboratory at Rutgers University School of Pharmacy is dedicated to advancing women’s reproductive health through a range of interdisciplinary research projects. Our work focuses on understanding how exposure to environmental endocrine-disrupting chemicals and clinical drugs adversely affects female ovarian function, menstrual cyclicity, fertility, and the development of common reproductive disorders such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Using innovative 3D “mini-ovary” models, the Xiao Lab is also identifying and developing novel non-hormonal contraceptive candidates. In addition, we are engineering reproductive tissue-on-chip and organoid systems as new approach methodologies (NAMs) to better model human reproductive biology and accelerate research in women’s reproductive health.

Donate through our newly launched GiveSmart platform!



Join Us

AACT Business Meeting, Award Ceremony & Reception

Time:

Monday, March 23, 2026; 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM (Pacific Time)

Location:

Business Meeting: Marriott Marquis Grand Ballroom 5

Reception: Fairweather Rooftop Bar

