



## *Letter from the President*

Most of you have watched me “grow up” first as a student in American Chinese Toxicology Society (ACTS) in 1999, to becoming a working group member for the formation of American Association of Chinese in Toxicology (AACT) with the merger between ACTS and American Chinese Society of Toxicology (ACSOT) in 2005, and now President for the 2011-2013 term. It is with great honor that I am able to serve AACT in this capacity and I look forward to an eventful year as we enter our 6<sup>th</sup> year as a Special Interest Group (SIG) of the Society of Toxicology.

The AACT has been quite active this year. We are in the process of putting on the final touches on the upcoming by-law revisions that should be put forward to you for vote in the near term. Once approved, AACT members do not necessarily need to be SOT members, although becoming an SOT member is highly encouraged to assure that you can receive one of our awards or become an AACT board member. The other changes reflect SOT preferred verbiage and harmonization of some of our processes with the other SIG as set forth by the SIG-Collaboration Group, which Tao Wang and I are the representatives for AACT.

This is the first year that AACT will be a sponsor/endorser of the SOT Scientific Program. Many thanks to our members, Jiaqin [Jack] Yao and Haitian Lu, who each pitched an Informational Session. We highly encourage you to start thinking of sessions for the 2013 annual meeting and use the AACT ToXchange site to collaborate and work on proposals together.

One of my personal goals for AACT is to try and get more member involvement in AACT. If you have any suggestions or ideas to improve or expand our organization, please let me know. Also, please consider becoming an active committee member by contacting one of the chairs listed on page 3.

Save the Date for our 2012 AACT Business Meeting, which will be held on Monday, March 12 in San Francisco, CA. The Distinguished Chinese Toxicologist Lecture will be held at approximately 5 pm followed by the AACT Business Meeting. Stay tuned for location!

Lastly, I want to also thank the outgoing Board members, Xueyan (Peter) Mu, John Zhuang, Yu (Janet) Zang, and Li (Susan) Xu, in addition to Jia-Sheng Wang (now the Immediate Past President) for their dedication to service for the past 2 years. With their active participation, a strong foundation has been laid for us to build upon.

Diana J. Auyeung-Kim  
AACT President

**AACT Website**  
<http://www.toxicology.org/isot/sig/aact/index.asp>

## AACT 2011-2012 Board Members

President: Diana Auyeung-Kim      President-Elect: Edward Chow      Past President: Jiasheng Wang      Councilors: Lu Cai, Tim Lam, Tao Wang  
Secretary: Yi Yang      Treasurer: Jiaqin (Jack) Yao      Postdoc Representative: Xun Zhang      Student Representative: Weimin Chen



From left to right: Lu Cai, Tim Lam, Jiaqin (Jack) Yao, Jiasheng Wang, Diana Auyeung-Kim, Tao Wang, Yi Yang, Xun Zhang, Weimin Chen, Edward Chow

## Congratulations to 2011 SOT Meeting Award Recipients



Distinguished Chinese Toxicology Lectureship Award Winner

**Xianglin Shi, PhD**  
Professor and William A. Marquard Chair  
in Cancer Research  
University of Kentucky



Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award Winner

**Alexandria Lau**  
Pharmacology and Toxicology  
University of Arizona



1st Place: **Li Zhan**, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow  
Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology  
University of Louisville



2nd Place: **Lei Li**, Graduate Student  
Department of Environmental Health  
Sciences  
State University of New York at Albany

### AACT - Charles River Best Abstract Award Winners

3rd Place: **Jun Xu**, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow (no photo)  
School of Health Sciences, Purdue University



## 2012 SOT Meeting Awards Application

Three different types of awards are available from AACT for 2012 SOT meeting. Please submit your applications or nominations to Dr. Edward Chow (Chow\_Edward@allergan.com) before the relevant deadline if you are interested. Award guidelines and further information about each type of awards are available at the AACT website link below:

<http://www.toxicology.org/isot/sig/aact/criteria.asp>

### Awards and deadlines for application / nomination

- AACT SIG Distinguished Chinese Toxicologist Lectureship Award: Oct 15, 2011
- AACT SIG and Charles River Best Abstract Awards (3 awards): Dec 15, 2011
- AACT SIG Jean Lu Student Scholarship Award: Dec 15, 2011

## Election Announcement

Board officer positions (2 councilors) will be open for 2012-2013. If you are interested in working for AACT, please contact the Nominating/Election Committee.

## Welcome to Participate in AACT Activities

If you are interested in being a volunteer or joining any of the committees and working for AACT, please contact the chairs:

Award Committee: Edward Chow (Chow\_Edward@allergan.com)  
Finance Committee: Lu Cai (l0cai001@louisville.edu)  
Membership Committee: Tim Lam (tim.lam@covance.com)  
Program Committee: Tao Wang (tao.wang@novartis.com)  
Nominating/Election Committee: Jiasheng Wang (jswang@uga.edu)  
Strategic Planning Committee: Jiasheng Wang (jswang@uga.edu)

## Thanks to Our 2011 AACT Sponsors



# Career Center

*Prepare yourself for a successful career, starting now!!*

--By Tao Wang, MD, PhD, DABT, Novartis Pharmaceuticals

While you are studying in undergraduate or graduate schools, what can you do to prepare yourself for a successful career? Personally, I think that it is the best time you can prepare yourself. The earlier, the better. I want to tell you some of my experiences to illustrate this point.

I graduated with a PhD from University of Louisiana in Monroe. I had a wonderful mentor when I was in the PhD program. His name is Dr. Harihara Mehendale. He always pushed us to try and achieve a higher standard. He always wanted us to get top marks in our classes, but at the same time he encouraged us to work hard in the lab in order to generate more new data -- to become excellent scientists. I still remember in my first couple of months in the graduate school, Hari asked me whether I was getting "all As" in my classes. Just the day before a fellow student told me that "Bs are a pretty good grade." So, without thinking much, I said "Bs are good, right?" Hari replied: "But As are always better". That was Hari, always encouraging us to be better.



It is critical to have good writing skills, especially if you are in a PhD program, because with your career development, you probably will not do much bench work if you can believe that! Instead, you will likely be involved in strategic decisions, and will need to write quite a bit in order to get those decisions across to your colleagues, not to mention writing manuscripts. I had an extensive training in writing during graduate school. Nobody can graduate from Hari's lab without publishing at least three papers in peer-reviewed journals. As you can imagine, it was very hard to write my first manuscript. I remember the reluctance I had to even sit down and write, because I did not know where to start. When I eventually put "something" together, the first draft came back to me from Hari with red marks covering every page -- so much so that I could hardly see any black letters!! Hari did not write for me, instead, he raised a lot of questions to make me think and write more. Even after my graduation, I wrote a review paper with Hari on diabetes and liver injury. I started writing it with a good journal in mind. But after several revisions, we actually upgraded to a different journal with higher impact -- meaning more hard work on writing and refining, and eventually got the paper published in the journal *Critical Review of Toxicology*.

Those years in graduate school, when we attended scientific meetings, students practiced presentations diligently. I remember my first SOT meeting was in Seattle in 1998 (my first year in graduate school). While the students from other labs seemed to spend quite a bit of time simply being excited to visit Seattle, our lab we went through presentation preparations for hours and days. For each of poster, Hari asked us to prepare a 5-minute, and 2-minute presentations. The 5-minute presentation was the regular poster presentation for audiences interested in learning about our research. So why the 2-minute presentation? At each meeting, Hari always found time to stand by his student's posters, and pull the "big shots" over to listen to our research. Of course those "big shots" were very busy people (or had short attention spans perhaps), and did not in general have time for a long presentation. That is what the 2-min presentation was for.

Each of the students practiced the 5-min and 2-min presentations in front the whole lab. When one student was practicing, all of the other students had a notepad in their hands, and wrote down what they felt were weaknesses in the presentation. After each individual's practice, a Q&A time would follow. Every student got to ask questions, and the presenter would answer. In the second round, each student pointed out any errors to the presenter. Even after all of this, we would go back and practice more on our own, and then practice it again in front of whole lab. In this way, we were extremely well prepared and even more importantly, made a good impression on future employers (whether post-doc or industry positions).

Another thing Hari asked us to do was apply for every award we qualified for. Again, this early activity served us well in terms of our careers. On average, we attended about 5 scientific meetings a year. So imagine five meetings a year, each with new results in every presentation -- we worked very hard in the graduate school, often until midnight. Attending these scientific meeting benefited us, not only because of the advancement of our research with the new data, but also it gave us tremendous opportunities to interact and network with professionals in the field while learning how to behave ourselves professionally. Besides the science, Hari also asked us to volunteer at meetings for the SOT, AACT, ISSX, etc., another way to prepare for a career. I remember at my first SOT meeting, Hari asked me and other students to head over to the registration desk, introduce ourselves and ask whether there was anything we could do to help. Homesick and shy (my first year in the U.S), I hesitated to do it. But as a mandate from the Big Boss, my lab mates and I had to do it. We ended up helping with the Continuing Education Course. We stood at the door to check the tickets and distribute the course materials. While doing so, I felt that I belonged, and got comfortable speaking with my future colleagues. It was also a feeling of ownership of the Society, rather than just being a guest to the meeting. All of these things help prepare us for a successful job after the school. Many students from Hari's lab are not only excelling in their careers, but they also actively contribute their time and expertise to training students in the toxicological sciences. While you might not have a professor who trains you as Hari trained us, do not worry -- you can do it yourself. In order to have a successful career, you need to start the preparation early.

## *Landing the first "Real" job out of grad school*

*--By Miyun Tsai-Turton, PhD, MS, FDA*

If there was an underlying theme to my career building thus far, I would urge students not to dismiss experiences and opportunities outside their normal academic curriculum. It's safe to say that anyone with a PhD in their field of study can be counted on to do the job. We wouldn't have the degree otherwise, right?

Recruiters look for more. Ask yourself what sets you above all those other PhDs whose resumes are stacked on the recruiter's desks? What makes you not only a qualified person, but someone who would make a good employee? Be sure to give your CV some spit and polish by making sure you show qualities like leadership, initiative, and self-improvement. Here are some specifics from my own experience.

Supplement Your Education – Journal clubs, seminars, and similar activities helps educate you on different topics. A general knowledge in other areas can often be an asset.

**Teamwork and Project Management** – Most jobs these days do not have the luxury of letting you “go off and do your thing.” You're often part of a larger group working on a project. Knowing how to work and communicate effectively in a group to meet deadlines is a must.

**Think Ahead** – Don't wait till two months before graduation before discovering what you really enjoy, what you hate, and what you can tolerate. Constantly evaluate yourself right now. If you *hate* repetitious tasks, that's a sign that a position doing the same lab procedures over and over again may not be a good idea. Such self-evaluation helps focus your goals too.

**Keep An Open Mind** – You may have already decided that you want to be a professor in academia. That's great. Nothing wrong with having a goal, but don't completely ignore industry or government without doing some homework about each. You may discover that research, grant-writing, and working for tenure isn't as glamorous as you thought. Find out the pros and cons about all of them.

**Learn to Communicate** – Learn to be a good speaker and writer especially to specific audiences. You may have brilliant ideas and thoughts, but most of them will stay rattling around in your head if you can't communicate them well. I was lucky enough to have a husband who was a good proofreader and trainer, so that was like having a personal coach. Those junior college or extension classes in writing and public speaking might be a good investment if you feel this might be a weak point.

**Network, Network, NETWORK!** – Join professional organizations (if you are reading this AACT newsletter, you are already in good shape!). Go to conferences. Yes, they cost money, but so does college. This is as important as buying those books for your classes. When you network (like attending AACT reception), you meet people already working in the fields you might be interested in. You get an inside perspective what their work is like and what it takes. More importantly, they'd have met *you* before a job interview. Many members of AACT who are in a position to hire or make recommendations will be the same ones deciding if they should hire you. If they already know you, it goes a long way. Keep your membership current and continue to participate after you graduate too for the same reasons.

**Get Involved** – Getting involved is what gets you *noticed*. Once you've joined those professional organizations I mentioned, *volunteer*. Many have student positions, such as AACT student or postdoctoral representative. Taking those, or anything you can, demonstrates and develops leadership skills and initiative. It's much easier to convince a potential employer that you're a leader and a self-starter when you can give actual examples. Plus, this sort of thing becomes a valuable commodity when you need those letters of recommendation.

**Be Prepared** – Sounds cliché, but the Boy Scouts knew what they're talking about. Keep your CV current and have a concise presentation of your graduate work available. I cannot tell you how many times I was in a conversation talking about my work when I got asked for that.

**Challenge Yourself** – My husband has told me many times, “Don't go and do something half [done].” In your course work, internships, post-doctoral work and all those things I just mentioned, strive to go above and beyond what's asked or required of you. One example is grant writing (especially for post doctorates), posters, and publications. These train you to go behind just your daily bench lab work. In the long run, that also

gets noticed and is another asset when you ask for those letters of recommendation.

Finally, once you do get that first job out of graduate school, I have a couple more thoughts to share too:

- *Science is really applied science*: Think outside of the box with all you have learned.
- *Welcome to the work force*. College and post-doc life largely gives you the freedom of working your own hours. This will no longer be true in a real job. You will be expected to show up every day and on time. Your boss will not be as understanding as your PI was when you have tickets to that concert and you got to leave early on Friday. Oh, and your vacation time initially will be much shorter than the usual spring break.

In the end, job hunting is not easy. It often takes time and a little luck, but most of all, raising yourself above all the other PhDs looking for jobs too. That is accomplished by showing how you went beyond what your course and lab work taught you. Whatever you learn and do *now* is already helping you get a foothold on that career ladder and increasing your chances of landing on your dream job.

*FDA disclaimer: This does not represent an official FDA policy.*

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