Greetings WIT Members!

First of all, election season is just around the corner! If you are interested in running for an Executive Committee position within WIT, now is the time to nominate yourself.

Let me take this opportunity to share my journey of getting involved in SOT at different levels. As a young graduate student in 2002, my PhD mentor, Dr. Mehendale impressed upon me the value of volunteering, networking, and contributing to SOT. Initially, I was a bit doubtful and was unsure how I could be of help. However, I started volunteering for Continuing Education (CE) courses, which not only gave me a sense of engagement and made me feel like I belonged in SOT, but also helped me gain valuable knowledge. Later I was selected to be the student representative for South Central Regional Chapter, followed by postdoctoral representative for WIT, and continued to volunteer and serve on several WIT committees prior to being elected as the Vice President for WIT in 2014. I have seen WIT grow over the past 12 years and I am very excited and honored to be part of this journey both as a volunteer and as an Executive Committee member.

Another Specialty Section (SS) that interests me is the Medical Device and Combination Products SS, founded in 2009, since it relates closely to my current job at Halyard Health. I volunteered for two years to assist with the newsletter. This gave me an opportunity to work closely with key toxicologists in my field.

I also had a great opportunity to serve on the SOT Nominating Committee (2015-2017), which gave me an understanding of the requirements and expectations when serving as SOT leadership and on committees. Volunteering on committees has helped me with networking and developing my leadership skills.

I remember Dr. Mehendale quoting Charles Buxton’s words “You will never find time for anything. If you want time you must make it.” We all get busy but I would encourage all of you to try to get involved in at least one activity within SOT.

I would like to thank Drs. Laurie Haws and Betina Lew (Chair and Co-Chair) and all the volunteers for their hard work on the 2016 WIT Program Committee and WIT SOT Awards Nomination Committee. This is a true example of making time for volunteering with WIT!

In closing, striking a balance between work and life is difficult and it takes continuous effort to achieve that balance. WIT is hosting the second webinar of this year on work-life balance so please mark your calendars for November 15th at 1 pm EST. Thanks to the speakers, Drs. Linda Birnbaum and Elena Hernandez Ramon, and the hostesses Drs. Nadia Moore and Alison Sanders for ‘making time’ for this important and exciting webinar!

Kind Regards,

Sharmilee Sawant, PhD, DABT
President, Women In Toxicology SIG
WIT Webinar: Achieving Work-Life Balance Across Career Stages!

By Nadia Moore

Tuesday, November 15th at 1 pm EST

All SOT and/or WIT members are invited to attend. Registration is required.

Speakers:

Elena E Hernandz-Ramon, MD, PhD
Pre-medical advisor and Scientific Program Manager Office of Intramural Training & Education, National Institute of Health

Linda S Birnbaum, PhD, DABT, ATS
Director, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and National Toxicology Program

Description:

Individuals in every stage of their careers, from first-year graduate student to senior level toxicologist, strive to achieve a balance between work and non-work activities. Although many have heard the phrase “work-life balance” (WLB), there are no universal attainment criteria (i.e., where is the optimal balance) or attainment metrics (i.e., how does one know if they have reached optimal balance?).

In this webinar, you will hear what WLB means to expert toxicologists and how WLB has evolved and changed over their life and career stages. They also will share situations or decisions that have helped or hindered WLB and offer suggestions for flexible compromises when trying to create WLB within our own situations. Webinar attendees will have an opportunity to ask questions following the speaker presentations.

WIT Awards Committee needs your help!

While the review of the Mentoring, Outstanding Young Investigator, and Smith & Hook Distinguished Service Awards is currently underway, trainees are preparing their nomination packets for the Graduate Student Achievement, Postdoctoral Achievement and Celebrating Women in Toxicology Awards. These packets are due on December 5th.

Being one of largest SOT component groups, WIT receives a very large number of highly competitive applications. It is only with the help and dedication of WIT Volunteers that the review process can be thorough and impartial. If you do not plan on applying for one of these awards and would like to volunteer as a reviewer, please contact Marie Fortin, Chair of WIT Awards Committee.

Call for Nominations!

Are you interested in becoming a WIT Officer?

WIT is seeking nominees for the 2017-2018 term. Elections will take place in the Dec 2016/Jan 2017 time-frame. We are seeking candidates for:

- **Vice President** – The VP will ascend through the Presidential line, ultimately serving a 4 year term.

- **Junior Councillor** – The Jr. Councillor will ascend to Sr. Councillor and thus serve a 2 year term.

For more information visit the WIT website. Self-nominations are welcome. If you are interested in being considered as a candidate for either position, please send your CV/resume by November 30, 2016 to the WIT Past President, Tao Wang, Chair of the WIT Election Committee.
An Interesting Read: The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women by Valerie Young, EdD By Sarah Burnett

Dr. Valerie Young’s The Secret Thoughts of Successful Women offers an in-depth analysis of a self-limiting phenomenon known as the Imposter Syndrome and encourages the reader to critically analyze their sense of self and overcome chronic self-doubt. The Imposter Syndrome can be defined as “explaining away or minimizing evidence of your success” out of fear that you will eventually be “unmasked as an imposter” when others find out you aren’t as intelligent and capable as you have led them to believe. The good news is you are not alone; the Imposter Syndrome is estimated to effect 70% of successful people, both men and women. However, women have been shown to score significantly higher on scales measuring imposter feelings.

There are steps you can take to redirect these imposter feelings into a productive end. Growth is naturally uncomfortable, but do not take this unease “to mean you are somehow less intelligent, capable, or worthy than others.” See yourself as a work-in-progress and utilize a growth mindset. Adjust your distorted view of competence into realistic terms; after all, you can’t expect to make a perfect score on every test or be your boss’s favorite every day. Recognize this as inevitable and valuable to your long-term success and learn new, self-affirming responses to mistakes and criticisms. Don’t continue to credit your achievements to chance, connections, or other external factors. In the example of connections, “someone may have opened the door, but once inside, you were the one who delivered the goods.” You are deserving of the praise and recognition your accomplishments yield from others, so bask in those achievements, take pride in what you have accomplished, and don’t undervalue yourself.

I urge you to go for it, whatever “it” may be – asking for that raise you know your hard work is deserving of, raising your hand and keeping it raised without self-judgment in your next meeting or class, or proposing that research idea in your head that you are afraid to say out loud – go for it. Imagine your success if you broke down all the barriers and allowed yourself to achieve to the highest of your potential. I challenge you to “understand and unlearn the kind of self-limiting patterns of behavior that drive your imposter feelings” and overcome the “glass ceiling” that only you have imposed on yourself. Stop wondering what you can do, and start doing. Seeds can easily take root in your own mind – don’t let the seed you plant be that of imposter feelings, but rather the overwhelming fact that you are as good as everyone thinks you are.

Advocating for Science – An Absolute Necessity By Lauren Walker

What is science advocacy?
Science advocacy focuses on directly addressing policymakers, who have significant influence over how research is funded and regulated. Often, the amount of political attention given to an issue is dependent upon how much stakeholder comment reaches the offices of policymakers.

Why is science advocacy important?
Stakeholders include everyone affected by a particular topic or issue, including but not limited to: the public, citizens’ advisory boards, scientists, interest groups, and government agencies. Often, Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
(STEM) topics are obliged to compete for legislators’ attention against other hot-button issues and require additional advocacy to be prioritized. As such, efforts of the scientific community to engage all stakeholders are crucial to the future of toxicology and other STEM fields.

**How can I become involved in science advocacy?**

Direct science advocacy can be approached in many ways, such as inviting local congressional delegates to tour the campus or laboratories, starting a letter-writing campaign to demonstrate wide support for a particular issue, etc. Moreover, university advocacy networks or self-established grassroots advocacy groups allow for scientists to act as advocates to support the research community. Many advocacy resources also are available online such as the [Advocacy Tool Kit](#) hosted by the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology.

**How can I engage with the public to explain the importance of science advocacy for the future of Toxicology and other STEM fields?**

Toxicologists at all levels can engage with the public by volunteering at local STEM fairs and science museums, inviting the public to participate in citizen science projects, and exploring their creative side by creating innovative and stimulating online content like the Crash Course Biology series on YouTube.

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**WIT Members Take Toxicology to the Public**

*By Katelyn Lavrich*

Listening to scientific seminars about the latest research is nothing new to the average toxicologist. But, what about the public? The purpose of our work as toxicologists is to protect public health, but how do you open the discussion between toxicologists and the public? Women in Toxicology members Shaun McCullough (also VP-Elect of the Molecular and Systems Biology Specialty Section and member of the Career Resources And Development committee) and Emma Bowers (also Graduate Student Representative of MSBS) found the answer with support from the UNC Chapel Hill’s Curriculum in Toxicology and the North Carolina SOT regional chapter (via Graduate Student Representative Phillip Clapp). They designed an event series called, “Tarheel Tox Talks” (“T3” for short) that is part seminar and part happy hour where attendees can listen to a community-centered presentation on a current topic in toxicology with a burger in one hand and a beer in the other.

The inaugural talk was held on Tuesday, October 4th with a presentation from Dr. Rebecca Fry entitled, “What’s in your water? Toxic metal exposure and human health in North Carolina.” Dr. Fry is an Associate Professor at the UNC Chapel Hill Gillings School of Public Health, Director of the UNC Superfund Research Program, and Vice President of the Metals SOT Specialty Section. Dr. Fry captivated the audience with a discussion on past research with arsenic-exposed populations in Thailand and Mexico and her laboratory’s recent work on toxic metal contamination in North Carolina. She explained why certain populations are more at risk than others, the long-term impacts of these exposures on public health, and what could be done to limit exposure effects. The presentation sparked a lively discussion about local water issues. The event drew more than sixty people from a range of backgrounds and interests. In addition to community members, there were attendees from three local
universities, the US EPA, NIEHS, local government, and local pharmaceutical research companies.

When asked about the motivation for organizing T3, Ms. Bowers replied, “We have a particularly high concentration of toxicology and environmental health experts living and working in the Triangle area. Why not use this resource to help our local communities understand current environmental health issues?” Public outreach events are essential to help the public understand current toxicology issues from a more scientific perspective and reduce fearmongering often portrayed by the media. WiT members should seek opportunities to present their research either at community science talks already in place or by starting a new event, such as T3. Only by engaging the public in our science will we reach a society better informed on important toxicologic issues.

The next T3 is scheduled for the end of November and will focus on the health effects of E-cigarette use, presented by Dr. Ilona Jaspers, Professor of Pediatrics at UNC, Director of the UNC Curriculum in Toxicology, and Deputy Director of the Center for Environmental Medicine, Asthma, and Lung Biology. Stay up-to-date on Tarheel Tox Talks events with their Facebook page and/or by following them on Twitter (@tarheeltoxtalks).

Annual Regional Chapter Meetings Offer Outstanding Opportunities for Junior Toxicologists By Elissa Wong

Are you a graduate student or postdoc who would like to know more about what SOT regional chapter (RC) meetings specifically have to offer? Having attended three RC meetings and served as a graduate student representative for the Northeast RC, I would like to share some of the benefits of attending. While I cannot generalize my experience to every RC meeting, I hope to provide some helpful details.

The cost to attend is low. Almost all RCs hold annual meetings, which are located somewhere within their represented region and are usually 1-2 days in length. Because RC meetings are more likely to be within driving distance, they are an inexpensive option if your laboratory has budget constraints. The online registration fee is generally low for graduate students (e.g. $20). RCs may offer travel awards to student members attending the meeting or have poster/oral presentation award competitions during the meeting to help offset your PI’s cost for you to attend. Some RCs also might allow undergraduate and high school students to participate in the poster session by waiving meeting registration cost. If any of the meeting details are not clear on the RC’s website, I recommend reaching out to the RC’s EC.

It is a great forum for presenting your research. The abstract deadline might only be a few months prior to the meeting, so this is the perfect way to present any data you generate last minute. RC meetings might have a specific theme but acceptance of your abstract may or may not be dependent on its relationship to the meetings theme. You would need to confirm the guidelines with your RC EC. Poster sessions tend to be smaller in size, providing more opportunity for more in-depth conversations in a less rushed environment. Also, these meetings provide an ideal environment for students seeking opportunities to present their research orally to a diverse audience of toxicologists.

RC Meetings provide a local network of toxicologists. For students who may be shy about networking, I encourage you to engage actively during the coffee breaks, lunch, and cocktail hour/receptions! This is a great time for you to branch out in a smaller setting! You can find out about local career opportunities in toxicology that are in a variety of different sectors/disciplines in a more informal setting. From personal experience, I have
found the RC meetings to be a friendly environment that is welcoming to students and trainees. After the meeting, be sure to follow-up with those you met with a thank you email or note shortly after the meeting!

And last but not least, have fun attending! Detailed information on each specific RC in SOT can be found here.

The Times They are a-Changin’: Sexual Harassment in Academia

By Alison Sanders

“In your professional career, have you ever encountered unwanted sexual comments, attention, or advances by a superior or colleague (yes or no)?”

This is the question asked of 1066 (54% male) National Institutes of Health K09 and K23 awardees by scientists at the University of Michigan, the results of which were recently reported in JAMA. In this clinician-scientist population, 150 (30%) women checked ‘yes’, and women were 26% more likely to report that they experienced sexual harassment than men.

2016 has been an illuminating year for casting light on a shadowy corner of our ivory tower. For instance, there were several cases that gained national attention involving scientists at University of California-Berkeley and University of Chicago that spotlighted academia’s tolerant culture towards sexual harassment, the repeated failure to take appropriate action and intentionally overlook cases of sexual harassment, creating an environment that potentially allows known offenders to not just repeat, but thrive. In one UC-Berkeley case, a lengthy investigation resulted in the resignation of an accused dean, as well as a provost and chancellor following criticisms of the university’s responsiveness; an ongoing case involves three students with complaints filed over a year apart and an accused assistant professor. Moreover, in the instance at Chicago, the professor in question had a prior history of inappropriate behavior that had been tolerated and not reported from previous academic institutions. Similar cases also reached national attention involving scientists at the California Institute of Technology and University of Arizona. As reported in a 2016 Nature editorial, the “principal investigator who thinks ‘It cannot happen at my university,’ is wrong.” Indeed, in some departments, institutions, and professional organizations there may be individuals whose history of inappropriate behavior is an “open secret”.

Across the nation, male and female scientists alike are calling for more transparent reporting and accountability for sexual harassment in academia and encouragingly, some changes are coming to fruition. Institutions have updated their sexual harassment policies; UC-Berkeley now requires all new faculty and senior managers (e.g. deans, chancellors, chairs) to take part in sexual harassment awareness and prevention training. Additionally, Congresswoman Jackie Speier of California has proposed a bill to the US legislature that aims to expose sexual abuse and harassment in academia, specifically in federally-funded Science Technology Engineering & Mathematics research. The bill would require universities to report substantiated sexual harassment as well as report incomplete cases lasting longer than 6 months to federal agencies. Agencies would then consider the information when making future funding decisions. Whether updated individual institutional policies or laws at the national level are necessary, it is clear that next steps are required to address this longstanding problem in science, which is more increasingly publicized.

According to SOT, the Society requires that its leadership and members conduct their duties and responsibilities in accordance with high ethical standards and in compliance with the Society’s Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policies.

You may have noticed the Whistleblower Policy at the bottom of the Contact SOT webpage. This is a means to anonymously report suspected criminal activity or illegal or unethical conduct by SOT staff or leadership. More information about the Whistleblower Policy is outlined in a Communique’ Blog article.


Celebrating YOUR Success!

By Colleen McLoughlin

The "Celebrating YOUR Success!" announcements are a great way to recognize the achievements and advancements of WIT members. The accomplishments below were earned between June-October 2016. CONGRATULATIONS!

To have your recent accomplishments highlighted in the next edition of this newsletter, please click here and log-in. This link will remain active until February 10, 2017. We look forward to hearing your good news!

Awards (Employer)

Jennifer Freeman, PhD
Purdue University
Purdue University Teaching Academy Fellow

Awards (Non-Employer)

Linda S. Birnbaum, PhD, DABT, ATS
DHHS/NIH/NIEHS
Awarded the North Carolina Award for Science, the highest award given by the Governor of NC

Nikita Joshi, PhD
Michigan State University
SOT GSLC Graduate Student Leadership Committee Award 2016

Logeswari Ponnusamy, DVM, MVSc
The Institute of Environmental and Human Health, Texas Tech University
Phi Kappa Phi - Love of Learning award
Graduate Dissertation Completion Fellowship

Lauren Walker, BS
University of California, Riverside
James C. Bradford Memorial Student Poster Award from MARTA/sanofi-aventis at Teratology Society Meeting

Honorable Mention, Best Student Presentation Award at UCR Annual ETOX Student Symposium
NOBCChE Advancing Science Conference Travel Grant

Career Advancement/Transitions

Kelly Almond, PhD
St. John’s University
Started working at PepsiCo

Sarah Burnett, BS
Texas A&M University
Started a doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Toxicology at Texas A&M University

Kristina D. Chadwick, PhD, DABT
Bristol-Myers Squibb
Promoted to Director of Toxicology in Drug Safety Evaluation

Krista Greenwood, PhD
Integrated Nonclinical Development Solutions, Inc. (INDS)
Promoted to Toxicology Consultant

Nicole S. Olgun, PhD
NIOSH
Appointed Associated Adjunct Professor at St. John’s University to teach online

Colleen McLoughlin, PhD
SciVera, LLC
Joined SciVera, LLC as a Consultant/Toxicologist

Brinda Mahadevan
Abbott Laboratories
Director, global preclinical development, Established Products Division, Abbott Laboratories

Jaime Mirowsky, PhD
SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry
Obtained Tenure-track Assistant Faculty Position

Ashwini Phadnis-Moghe, MS, PhD
Covance Laboratories
Career advancement-Study Director, Immunotoxicology CS at Covance Laboratories, Madison, WI

Laura C. Savery, PhD
FDA
Awarded an ORISE postdoctoral fellowship at DBCMS/CDRH/FDA

Phoebe Stapleton, PhD
Rutgers University
Joined the faculty of Pharmacy and Toxicology and EOHSI as an Assistant Professor

Alicia Taylor, PhD
Exponent
Finished postdoc at UC Berkeley and joined Ecological Sciences consulting team at Exponent
Earned Degree

Kelly Almond, PhD
St. John's University
Graduated with PhD

Sarah Burnett, BS
Texas A&M University
Received Cum Laude Honors Bachelor of Science degree in Biochemistry from the University of Arkansas

Hanin Farag A Hussin, PhD
University of Louisiana at Monroe
Earned PhD with GPA 3.6

Nikita Joshi, PhD
Michigan State University
Graduated with a PhD from Michigan State University under the mentorship of Dr. James (Jim) Luyendyk

Grants/Funding

Sarah Burnett, BS
Texas A&M University
Received T-32 training grant, “Regulatory Science in Environmental Health and Toxicology” from NIH

Judit Marsillach, PhD
University of Washington
Obtained first grant (SDG) as Principal Investigator from the American Heart Association
Obtained second grant (R56) as Principal Investigator from the NHLBI

Alicia Timme-Laragy, PhD
University of Massachusetts Amherst Institution
PI on a new R01 grant funded by the NIEHS

Other

Emma Bowers
UNC Chapel Hill / US EPA
Co-founded with Dr. Shaun McCullough (also WIT member) “Tareel Tox Talks” – a community lecture series

Brinda Mahadevan
Abbott Laboratories
Proposal that were submitted to host 2 webinars (June & July 2016) on behalf of the Food Safety Specialty Section with full funding was accepted