Message from the President

During my 2014 campaign for SOT Councilor, I promised to “promote the participation of women and minorities, not only as a member, but also as active participants in the Society…”. Serving as the Women in Toxicology (WIT) President-Elect (2014), and now President (2015) has afforded me the best opportunity to promote female toxicologists on many different levels.

After brain-storming with senior toxicologists during the 2014 SOT Annual Meeting, I initiated a WIT committee to nominate outstanding female toxicologists for the major SOT Awards, with the goal of enhancing the recognition of female toxicologists within the Society. The committee continued these efforts in 2015. In two years, WIT nominated a total of 11 candidates for various SOT national awards, including the Distinguished Tox Scholar Award, the Education Award, the Arnold Lehman Award, the Merit Award, and the Achievement Award. In addition to promoting the accomplishments of female toxicologists at the national level, the WIT Executive Committee also worked on enhancing the recognition of young and senior toxicologists within WIT. For students and postdoctoral fellows, WIT inaugurated the Celebrating Women in Toxicology Awards, adding to the long standing Achievement Award, and the Hudson-Weisburger Scholarship Fund Student Award. In addition to the Mentoring Award for professionals, we created two new awards: one recognizing investigators who have made significant contributions to the field of toxicology in the early stage of their career, and the other recognizing senior leaders for their longstanding support to the SOT and WIT.

We also focused our attention on providing leadership in career development for female toxicologists. A broad range of our membership, ranging from students to people with long career tenures responded to our survey on possible webinar topics. The most frequently identified topics were career development, science-based topics, work life balance, and mentoring. Based on the results, we have begun preparation for the first webinar, where senior leaders from academia, industry, and government will address common issues among female trainees and professionals during their career development, including negotiation of competitive salaries, and how to move up in a career ladder as a woman.

Our members meet once a year at the annual meeting, but our mission ties us to each other throughout the year. We explored additional mechanisms to enhance communication and form stronger bonds among our members, with the ultimate goal of promoting retention of women in the toxicological sciences as a profession. After much discussion and several test runs, the WIT Executive Committee has released a LinkedIn group that provides a platform for members to network and share scientific discussions. All WIT members should have received my monthly emails sharing these initiatives and news. We also worked actively to increase the visibility of women within SOT by publishing four Communique articles throughout the year on various topics.

Continued on next page
In my opinion, one of the most important things WIT can do is **to advocate and provide the opportunities that will allow members to gain leadership experience.** I started as a volunteer when I was a student. At my very first SOT meeting, my mentor asked my lab mates and I to head over to the registration desk, and check whether there was anything we could do to help. We ended up helping out with Continuing Education (CE) courses by checking tickets at the door and distributing course books. I continued my volunteer service, and learned along the way how the Society functions at different levels. This early experience was invaluable to me. Not only do volunteer efforts benefit the Society, they also provide training and learning experiences to build future leaders. With that in mind, I strongly encouraged involving volunteers on every committee or activity possible this year. We ended up working with 30-40 volunteers on various activities. The WIT Executive Committee really appreciates the tremendous help from these volunteers. I hope each of the volunteers found their service to the Society rewarding, especially our newest volunteers who have started down their own road towards more active involvement. We hope many of our volunteers become leaders in the future.

Sincerely,

Tao Wang, MD, PhD, DABT
President, WIT
WIT Endowment Funds
By Marie C. Fortin, PhD, DABT
(WIT Councilor, WIT Endowment Funds Steward)

Since 2009, the Women in Toxicology Special Interest Group has been able to recognize the outstanding accomplishments of female graduate students in the field of toxicology thanks to the Vera W. Hudson and Elizabeth K. Weisburger Scholarship Fund. This fund was created in 2007 by a generous donation from Elizabeth Weisburger, a pioneer toxicologist and member of SOT for more than 35 years, in memory of her long time friend Vera Hudson, who played a pivotal role in the development of the NLM Hazardous Substances Data Bank and other toxicological resources. In May 2014, a new Fund was established to further celebrate excellence, leadership, and dedication to service by women toxicologists. The Celebrating Women in Toxicology was inspired by the generosity of Ms. Anne Wolven Garrett, one of the first women to hold leadership roles within our Society. This newly created Fund allowed the WIT SIG to recognize more toxicologist trainees with brilliant track records. Both awards will be presented at the 2016 WIT reception on Wednesday, March 16; 4:45 PM–7:00 PM in New Orleans. These very competitive awards could not have been offered to the deserving candidates without the creation of these Funds, and we express our sincere gratitude to the generous donors. It is intrinsic to WIT SIG’s mission to recognize, support, and encourage women who are in the early stages of developing their careers in the field of toxicology, and we are dedicated to make the most out of those funds to achieve this goal. Contributions are always welcomed to help WIT pursue its mission, please visit our Endowment Page to learn how to make a donation.

Thanks to Charles River Labs for Sponsoring the Mentoring Award

CHECK IT OUT:
Women in Toxicology: Then and Now
Written by: Nicole S. Olgun PhD (NIOSH) and Lisa Prince MS (URMC)
Additional Contributors: Michelle Hooth, PhD DABT, Virginia Moser, PhD DABT, Kristina Chadwick, PhD DABT, Tao Wang, MD PhD DABT, and Jessica Sapiro, MS

WIT members have compiled a history of WIT. Please visit the WIT website to check it out!
WIT Events of Interest at the 2016 SOT Annual Meeting

<table>
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<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student/Postdoc Mixer (ticket required)</td>
<td>7:30-9:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>SOT Mentoring Breakfast (registration required)</td>
<td>6:15-7:45am</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>In vitro</em> toxicology lecture and luncheon (ticket required)</td>
<td>11:30-1:00pm</td>
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<td>Trichloroethylene exposure and development of fetal cardiac malformations: what do the data tell us about inhalation exposures resulting from vapor intrusion and potential risks to pregnant women? (WIT sponsored workshop)</td>
<td>12:30-1:20pm</td>
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<td>The role of the epigenome in exposure effects, susceptibility, and public health (WIT sponsored workshop)</td>
<td>2:00-4:45pm</td>
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<th>TUESDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Postdoctoral Assembly Luncheon (ticket required)</td>
<td>12:00-1:15pm</td>
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<td>Leading Edge in Basic Science Award Lecture</td>
<td>12:30-1:20pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOT Annual Business Meeting</td>
<td>4:45-6:15pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tox ShowDown</td>
<td>7:30-9:00pm</td>
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<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>The evolution of the postdoc: transitioning from trainee to professional in the modern era</td>
<td>12:30-1:50pm</td>
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<td>“Talksicology”: effective oral presentation techniques</td>
<td>5:00-6:20pm</td>
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<tr>
<td>WIT reception</td>
<td>4:45-7:00pm</td>
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<th>THURSDAY</th>
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<tr>
<td>Which human cell lines should I use? Choosing the appropriate biological systems for high-throughput toxicity testing (WIT sponsored workshop)</td>
<td>9:30-12:15pm</td>
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Annual Meeting Announcements

**Child Care**

A child care reminder: Although many of us will be bringing children along for the experience as we travel to the SOT Annual Meeting, please note that it is a safety policy of SOT not to admit children under 15 years of age in the exhibit halls or scientific sessions (unless the session chair has provided consent).

**Note:** Child care services will not be provided during the Annual Meeting, but arrangements can be made by contacting the concierge desk at your hotel.

**Lactation Room**

There is a lactation area located in the First Aid room which is located in Lobby B across from Hall B. A technician is on duty:

- Saturday 12:00 Noon–7:00 PM
- Sunday 6:00 AM–8:00 PM
- Monday 7:00 AM–6:00 PM
- Tuesday 7:00 AM–6:00 PM
- Wednesday 7:00 AM–6:00 PM
- Thursday 7:00 AM–12:00 Noon
Deciding on a career path following graduate training is no easy ordeal. A doctoral degree opens many doors yet which individual path one should take requires thought and several interactions with a variety of professionals. Below are insights from WIT members who have taken different paths and are established in their careers.

Contributors:

Angela Slitt, PhD. Academic post doc, academic career. Current: Associate Professor at the University of Rhode Island. PhD from the University of Connecticut and post doc at the University of Kansas Medical Center.

Betina Lew, PhD DABT. Academic post doc, industry career. Current: Senior Research Toxicologist at Church & Dwight. Previously, Toxicologist at Procter & Gamble. PhD from a Joint Program at Sao Paulo State (Brazil) and Michigan State Universities and post doc at the University of Rochester Medical Center.

Jennifer Cohen, PhD DABT. Industry post doc, industry career. Current: Senior Scientist in Drug Safety Research and Evaluation at Takeda Pharmaceuticals. PhD from the University of Arizona and post doc in Early Investigative Safety at Hoffmann La-Roche Inc.

Minerva Mercado, PhD DABT. Government post doc, government career. Current: Toxicologist in the Health Effects Division/Risk Assessment Branch, Office of Pesticides, at the US EPA. PhD from Indiana University and post doc at the NIEHS.

Bethany Hannas, PhD. Government post doc, industry career. Current: Toxicologist at The Dow Chemical Company. PhD from North Carolina State University and post doc at the US EPA.

Brittany Baisch, PhD. No post doc, industry career. Current: Senior Product Toxicologist at Sun Products Corporation. Previously, Senior Toxicologist at Kraft Heinz Company. PhD from the University of Rochester Medical Center.

What were your considerations in deciding on your next step after graduate school?

Angela- My consideration was to find a program in which there was a toxicology focus and strong mentoring. At the time, I thought that an academic environment would afford the ability to publish and write grants. I was concerned about the scientific focus of the laboratory, but put the most weight to my decision on the track record of the mentor. Visits helped narrow down the decision about where to take a postdoctoral fellowship, with laboratory dynamics and location being a consideration. I also asked the students and mentors about publishing and opportunities to write for fellowships. My decision was largely based on finding an environment that was nurturing, and stimulating. Location that was conducive to both my career and my husband’s was also important. We were fortunate to find respective jobs that were mutually good for both of us. I did not always know that I wanted an academic career leaving graduate school. I actually thought I would probably take an industry job. My decision to pursue an academic career was solidified during my academic post doc. It was based on what I knew at the time about an academic career and the landscape at the time for industry positions.

Betina- Deciding on the next step may be difficult and sometimes even confusing. Questions such as: -Where to go? Who to choose as a supervisor? Stay in the same research area or change? I don’t think that there is a magic formula or “one size fits all”. In my specific case I wanted (and needed) to go for an academic postdoctoral training for two main reasons: (a) I was not ready to leave academia (and not sure I wanted to) and pursue a career in industry. In my opinion, when this is the case, the best choice is to go for an academic post doc (even if a short one) and then, if you decide to do so, move on to an industry position, and (b) both my Masters and PhD degree focused on Animal Physiology and I felt like the focus on Toxicology required formal postdoctoral training. If you are changing fields, it may be a good idea to pursue academic postdoctoral training.

Jennifer - My main considerations were determining what sector I wanted to work in, what types of roles existed, the level of work-life balance in a given career path, and opportunities for
advancement. I was interested in pursuing a career as a toxicologist in drug development, so I connected with scientists in the pharmaceutical industry to learn about their career paths and the types of opportunities available. I made these connections over a number of years by participating in SOT specialty sections and serving as a graduate student representative on committees. But even though I knew that I wanted to end up in the pharmaceutical industry, I still needed to determine whether to apply for post doc fellowships and/or entry level jobs. I sought advice from a variety of people and was convinced that doing a post doc would provide me more opportunities for advancement in the future. And even though I was most interested in an industry post doc, I kept my options open and applied for fellowships in all sectors (academic, NIH, industry). This allowed me to cross-compare pros and cons for each position relative to my personal aspirations. In the end, I decided to accept the post doc fellowship in the pharmaceutical industry, which gave me the opportunity to work with novel technologies, collaborate across departments and sites, publish in peer reviewed journals (this possibility should be discussed beforehand), improve my presentation and communication skills, and learn firsthand about the different roles for toxicologists in the drug development process. My post doc was extremely beneficial in helping me determine what type of role in industry I wanted to pursue, and helped me lay the groundwork to get there.

Minerva- At the time, I was still interested in a career in academia. Also, I was very much uninformed about careers outside academia and was discouraged to even look at non-academic careers by most senior scientists I knew at the time, which were all in academia.

Bethany- I considered my strengths, my top motivators, and my interests. I knew coming out of graduate school that I was passionate about Developmental and Reproductive Toxicology (DART), I had a strong basic research skill set to build upon, and I was interested in human health. Therefore, the transition from an aquatic, environmental toxicology lab to a mammalian human health-focused lab was relatively smooth because I had acquired the basic skills necessary for practicing science. Through my post doc in mammalian DART at US EPA, I developed a strong interest in regulatory-driven toxicology, which led me to my current position.

Brittany- I knew I was interested in working in industry and doing more risk assessment type of work rather than bench work. I quickly learned that people who did post docs strongly believed that their post doc helped them in their current position but people who did not do a post doc did not feel like they had deficiencies to perform their job. Certainly some job postings may specify post doc experience, but I applied for entry level positions for new PhD's with 0-2 years of post-graduate experience, and those opportunities were plentiful at the time. Since I already knew I was interested in working in the consumer products goods industry and there were entry level positions open I did not look for a post doc at all.

How did your graduate training help you prepare for your next position and career thus far?

Angela- We were given independence, but also spent a good amount of time with our advisor going through data together. Our graduate program had several large hurdles we had to pass. Our comprehensive examination, which was a very independent exercise, was a solid exercise to prepare us for generating a hypothesis and then coming up with an approach to test it. The professors were tough and seminar was feared. But, surviving seminar and improving with each year, prepared us to be prepared, think on our feet, and not be afraid of our science being challenged.

Betina- During my Masters and PhD degree I studied the effects of environmental and nutritional effects on female reproduction and mammary development. Taking advantage of that knowledge I focused my postdoctoral training on the effects of environmental pollutants on the normal development of mammary gland and breast cancer. Although I was moving to a career more focused on human health, I was able to leverage the previously acquired knowledge in female reproduction. My current job is desk based. However, I use the technical knowledge acquired during my graduate and postdoctoral training in many occasions, such as designing safety studies, analyzing data, gathering information to assess safety of new ingredients and new products, critically analyzing data from literature. In addition to technical skill, the graduate studies and postdoctoral trainings helped me in improving and developing skills such as organization, communication, management and leadership.

Jennifer- What you receive from your graduate training is partially a consequence of what you put into it. On top of my courses and dissertation, I was very active within my university and SOT. I served on committees within my department, college, university, and SOT, and was an active member in multiple organizations. Building soft skills and personal connections is just as critical as the science. Communication and presentation skills are necessary in every industry, and giving department/lab/society presentations and competing for SOT awards helped me build those very valuable skills. Graduate school provided me the building blocks but the most beneficial training I received was in my post doc.
Minerva- My graduate training gave me a very solid basic science foundation and some practice on how to communicate science; however, it did not give me any education regarding application of toxicology to problems outside the laboratory. That part I had to learn on the job. In that sense, it was very helpful to do a post doc at the National Toxicology Program because the fellowship program involves work that expands both academic and applied toxicology.

Bethany- My experiences in graduate school and my post doc gave me a solid foundation for my career now as a DART Toxicologist at Dow. My graduate work focused on DART in an environmental model, Daphnia magna. I learned valuable skills throughout the course of my training and driving this project including developing hypotheses, designing studies, interpreting data, molecular toxicology, cell culture, in vivo culture, bioinformatics, mixtures toxicology, and writing and communicating science. Therefore, I felt prepared to build upon these skills and also change the direction of my training slightly by joining a lab focusing on mammalian DART. My feeling has always been that developing a strong basic scientific skill set in graduate school will allow you to apply it and further develop in any area of the field you are interested. In my post doc, I learned mammalian DART and was introduced to regulatory issues, which together helped prepare me for the work I do now.

Brittany- My graduate mentor and program were very supportive of students’ career aspirations, whether they were for academia, industry or government. Having the support and strong references from my department for my job applications was key. The graduate program often invited speakers and alumni to give talks or participate in events which was great networking. We also had strong funding to attend conferences and network there. The University of Rochester offered several workshops to graduate students for resume and CV preparation, how to successfully apply and interview for positions, and how to negotiate job offers. These workshops were very valuable and the skills helped me to secure both of the positions I have had since graduating.

If you went back in time and pursued a graduate degree over again, what would you do differently?

Angela - Nothing at all. I have been fortunate to have had wonderful mentors, committee members, and lab mates. The experiences I had during graduate school and as a postdoctoral scientist prepared me to be an independent scientist, were deeply rewarding, and allowed me to interact with intelligent and interesting people. Graduate school and, perhaps science as a career in general, can have its ups and downs along the way. Loving science will always help you get through the downs. Channel the satisfaction you feel when you finish what you start.

Betina- I would not change a thing. I learned as much from the obstacles and detours that I have made in the middle of the way as I did from my formal education and training. Every step of the way was worth it and taking risks, for me, is an integral part of my life.

Jennifer- During graduate school you have the time and flexibility to figure out what industry and/or sub-specialty you would like to pursue. I would suggest attending conferences relevant to a variety of fields within toxicology (and across industries) to get a flavor of what types of jobs are out there, and also participate as a student representative on committees to interact one-one with members of different specialty groups. This will give you the opportunity to build your breadth of scientific knowledge, as well as your personal network, and some soft skills to boot. Also, for personal development, it would be helpful to request feedback from your advisor, committee members and/or lab peers to identify areas of potential growth. This will not only aid in your personal development, but also give you an edge while interviewing for jobs.

Minerva- I would have looked for a department that had a risk assessment or applied toxicology program or that allowed me take electives in public health. Looking back, that was my real career preference all along. However, there was no guidance for me on how to pursue it until a post doc.

Bethany- Nothing. When I graduated, I felt fully prepared for the next step. The skills and insights I learned in my graduate lab and from my graduate school advisor have served me in every aspect of my career.

Brittany- Honestly, I would have taken more time off. I had a great relationship with my mentor and she was always supportive of my work and we worked well together. That may be why I was so committed to my lab work and analyzing my data. I wish I took more weekends to pursue my hobbies and have some down time to recharge. Even though graduate school was a busy and stressful time, I am now working and traveling a lot and now that we expanded our family, I am realizing that my “free” time does not actually belong to me, but to my whole family. I find it difficult to find the time to pursue the hobbies I used to enjoy, but it is something I am working on.
Call for Proposals for 2017 SOT Annual Meeting

While we are making travel arrangements to attend the 55th SOT Annual Meeting, it is also time to start working on proposals for the 2017 Annual Meeting. The time to submit Scientific Session Proposals, Continuing Education Proposals, and Continuing Medical Education proposals for the 2017 Annual Meeting is from mid-February to April 30, 2016. The WIT Executive Committee encourages you to submit a proposal and to seek WIT endorsement! On the SOT website, under “Events & Meetings”, please click “Submit to the Scientific Program”, and you will find the information for submitting a proposal. WIT’s Program Committee will be happy to review your proposal prior to the formal submission and provide feedback to strengthen the proposal. You may email the draft proposal to the Chair of WIT’s Program Committee, Laurie Haws.

Undergraduate Students Encouraged to Join WIT!

Undergraduate students can join WIT for free! Why become a WIT member as an undergraduate?

- Become engaged in the Toxicological Sciences year round, mentoring and networking opportunities with established Toxicologists, graduate students/post docs, receive the WIT newsletter containing articles of interest to the WIT mission (Leadership, Education, Mentoring, Visibility), eligible to receive the new Celebrating Women in Toxicology Award! (See page 2).

To join, go to http://www.toxicology.org/groups/sig/wit/join.asp and click on the link to the Non-SOT WIT Membership Application, fill out the form, and mail it into SOT Headquarters. Please email the WIT Graduate Student Representative if you have any questions about WIT.

Celebrating YOUR Success!

WIT is pleased to continue this new feature in our newsletter that we introduced for the first time in the fall 2014 newsletter….Celebrating Your Success! This is a great way for our membership to “toot their own horns” and recognize the achievement and advancement of WIT members in the field of toxicology. The accomplishments below were earned between July 2015 and February 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 May 31, 2016. We look forward to hearing your good news!

Please help us reach out to any of your WIT colleagues who may be reluctant to share their achievements. All accomplishments entered into the survey will be published in our newsletter.

Awards (Employer)

Xi Yang, PhD
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
NCTR Director’s Award for developing in vitro high-throughput methods for culturing iPSC-derived cardiomyocytes

Awards (Non-Employer)

Elissa Wong M.S.
University of Rochester Medical Center
Best Oral Presentation Award, Northeast SOT Annual Regional Chapter Meeting

Career Advancement / Transitions

Brittany Baisch, PhD
Sun Products Corporation
Promoted to Senior Toxicologist

Sarah Campion, PhD
Pfizer
Promoted to Senior Principal Scientist

Mary Jeanne Kallman, PhD
Kallman Preclinical Consulting
Retired from Covance Laboratories and established new consulting business.

Elected / Appointed Leadership

Alison Harrill, PhD
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
Elected as co-chair for the ILSI/HESI Application of Genomics for Risk Assessment Committee

Carol Auletta, MBA, DABT
Envigo
Appointed to the SOT Finance Committee & Elected to the American College of Toxicology

Earned Degree

Zelinjo Igweze, PhD
PhD earned: University of Portharcourt, Nigeria
(ACT) Nominating Committee