

Mechanisms Specialty Section Fall 2026 Newsletter

Greetings and Welcome to the SOT Mechanisms Specialty Section!



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

It is with great honor and enthusiasm that I begin my term as President of the Mechanisms Specialty Section. I have had the privilege of serving alongside a dedicated Executive Committee over the past couple of years, and I am excited about the opportunity to build on the momentum our Section has established as a home for rigorous, mechanism-driven toxicological science within SOT.

We meet at a pivotal moment for our field. As the toxicology community continues its rapid shift toward New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) – human-relevant *in vitro* systems, organ-on-chip platforms, high-throughput transcriptomics, and computational modeling – there is a real risk that the mechanistic questions at the heart of our discipline get treated as a legacy pursuit rather than the foundation these new tools depend on. I don't see it that way, and I don't think our members do either. NAMs are only as good as the biology they are built to represent, and understanding mechanism – how a chemical perturbs a pathway, how an organ responds and adapts, how injury tips into disease – is what makes any new method interpretable and predictive rather than a black box. One of my goals this year is to raise the visibility of mechanistic toxicology in this NAMs era: to make sure our Section's science is recognized not as an alternative to the new approach methods movement, but as the mechanistic backbone that gives it scientific credibility. I want our members' work on mechanisms to be front and center in the conversations shaping the future of toxicology testing and risk assessment. The way to do this is to keep the discussion alive through webinars and symposia. I know that the 2028 Annual Meeting seems far away in the distance, but it is never too late to start the conversation on putting together a scientific session proposal rooted in mechanistic toxicology. So, keep thinking.

Closely related to this is my second priority: strengthening the bridge between academia and industry. Some of the most productive mechanistic toxicology happens at exactly this interface, where academic labs generate deep mechanistic insight and industry partners bring the translational, regulatory, and real-world exposure context needed to apply it. I want the Mechanisms Specialty Section to be a place where those collaborations are actively cultivated – through our programming, our mentorship opportunities, and the connections we help make at the Annual Meeting – rather than left to happen by chance. If you are in industry and looking for academic collaborators, or in academia and looking for industry partners who can help translate your mechanistic findings toward application, I encourage you to reach out to the Executive Committee. Helping make those connections will be a priority for us this year.

None of this work happens without the people who came before. I want to extend my sincere and heartfelt thanks to the 2025-2026 officers, whose leadership and service made this past year such a success: Juliane Beier (Past President), Alicia Timme-Laragy (Vice President-Elect), Kayla Frost (Secretary/Treasurer), Laura Armstrong (Senior Councilor), Banrida Wahlang (Junior Councilor), Becky Kendall (Postdoctoral Representative), and Hamida Hamida (Student Representative). I also want to offer a special note of thanks to Archit Rastogi, whose

OFFICERS 2026-2027

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Candace Longoria
Postdoctoral Representative

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Past President

steady guidance as Past President over these past two years has been invaluable to me and to the entire Executive Committee.

As we look ahead, I encourage every member – trainee, academic, government, and industry colleague alike – to get involved: submit a proposal for the Scientific Program, nominate a colleague for an award, volunteer to judge, or simply reach out and introduce yourself. Our strength has always come from an engaged and connected membership, and I look forward to working with all of you this year to keep mechanistic toxicology at the forefront of our field.

Warm regards,
Udayan Apte
President, Mechanisms Specialty Section

Seeking Supporters of Mechanisms Specialty Section!

As we continue to navigate the fiscal impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Mechanisms Specialty Section faces additional challenges in the current environment of funding uncertainties and transitions in government support. We are particularly concerned about potential impacts on our valued government colleagues, whose participation and membership may be affected by changing institutional priorities and travel restrictions. These circumstances make your individual support more critical than ever to maintaining the strength and diversity of our scientific community.

We ask our membership to consider individual or corporate/company/institutional donations to help the Specialty Section not only maintain but strengthen our support for trainees and our member reception at the annual meeting. Your contributions help us ensure that we can continue to welcome and support all members of our toxicology community, regardless of their institutional affiliation or current circumstances.

Donations to the general fund help the Mechanisms Specialty Section to:

1. Recognize trainee accomplishments by way of awards, supporting travel to the meeting
2. Host online and in-person events, such as trainings, scientific webinars, and mentoring
3. Hold and/or support the member's reception at the annual meeting

Interested parties please reach out to Secretary/Treasurer Bert Watson at bert.watson@louisville.edu. Any donation is greatly appreciated and will be appropriately recognized!

Status of Endowment Funds

The Mechanisms Specialty Section is fortunate to have robust endowment funds that recognize and support the meeting attendance of outstanding SOT trainees. Thank you to our past donors who continue to support this vital mission. As mentioned above, the future of our named awards depends on the ongoing support from our members. All members are encouraged to contribute and are reminded to inquire whether your employer supports matched donations.

Carl C. Smith Graduate Student Award	Gabriel L. Plaa Education Award	Renal Toxicology Fellowship Award	Robert J. Rubin Student Travel Award Fund	Ronald G. Thurman Student Travel Award	Sheldon D. Murphy Memorial Fund
\$166,303	\$135,677	\$115,708	\$63,730	\$75,391	\$114,202

~4% of endowment funds are available for award distribution each year.

All student & postdoc awards are made possible by Endowment Fund contributions!

Visit <https://www.toxicology.org/endowment/> to learn how YOU can make an impact.

2026 Mechanisms Business Meeting and Reception in San Diego, CA

CONGRATULATIONS AWARD WINNERS!!!

Career Achievement Award

Jim Popp, DVM, PhD, Stratoxon LLC, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, United States

Carl C. Smith Graduate Student Award

1st Place: Yasaman Etemadi Shamsabadi, University of Kansas Medical Center

2nd Place: Chloe Wray, Helmholtz-Centre for Environmental Research-UFZ

3rd Place: Oluwanifemi Esther Bolatimi, University of Louisville

Carl C. Smith Finalists

Debasree Bhadra, University of Arkansas Medical Sciences

Kaitlyn K. Venneman, University of Kansas Medical Center

Michael R. Call, Washington State University

Saamera Awali, Michigan State University

Renal Toxicology Award

1st Place: Madhura More, University of California, Irvine

2nd Place: Forkan Ahmed, University of Kansas Medical Center

3rd Place: Tingying Xie, Rutgers University

Ronald. G. Thurman Student Travel Award

Isabella (Hangyu) Wu, University of Connecticut

Rahul Kumar, North Carolina State University

Debasree Hadra, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Safreena Narukkottil, Purdue University

Caitlin Schneider, Michigan State University

Kaitlyn Venneman, University of Kansas Medical Center

Gabriel L. Plaa Education Award

1st Place: Javier Huayta, Duke University

2nd Place: Mohammed Jakaria, Purdue University

Gabriel L. Plaa Finalists:

Ankit P. Laddha, University of Connecticut

Mohammed Jakaria, Purdue University

Javier Huayta, Duke University

Brittany Rickard, NC State University

Robert J. Rubin Student Travel Award

Lilly Karchalla, Wake Forest University

Elsevier Postdoctoral Award

David Leuthold, Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research

Sheldon Murphy Student Travel Award

Graduate Student Recipients:

Diego Paine Cabrera, University of Kansas Medical Center

Tiancheng Hu, Rutgers University

Jordan Lee, Rutgers University

Kevin Schichlein, UNC-Chapel Hill

Gillian Williams, University of Pittsburgh

Postdoctoral Recipients

Javier Huayta, Duke University

Mohammed Jakaria, Purdue University

Brittany Rickard, NC State University

Ashten Stammersky, Michigan State University

2027 Awards: Call for Applications



Awards season is upon us! We have several prestigious awards offered to graduate students and postdocs by our Specialty Section. Awards are announced at the Mechanisms Business Meeting and Reception each year at the SOT Annual Meeting. We encourage students and postdocs across SOT to apply; you do not need to be a member of Mechanisms to be eligible.

Application deadlines are fast approaching, and the first round of deadlines start as early as November 13th! Awards and deadlines are listed below. For application instructions and requirements, please visit our website at <https://www.toxicology.org/groups/ss/Mechanisms/awards.asp>. Thanks to the recently established awards module, applying is simple!

The executive committee encourages all applicants to make sure their SurveyMonkey Apply Account is running smoothly prior to the award deadline. To access your account visit mechanisms website or <https://sotapply.toxicology.org/>. SOT members should use the log-in option and should not have to create a new account. Simply reset the password using the email affiliated with your SOT membership. Mechanisms awards will all begin with “Mech” within the application program. Questions related to awards can be sent to sotmechanisms@gmail.com.

Award	Deadline	Award Administrator
Sheldon D. Murphy Student Travel Award	December 1, 2026	Bert Watson
Carl C. Smith Graduate Student Award	Preliminary applications due by November 13, 2026	Aditya Joshi
Gabriel L. Plaa Education Award	January 1, 2027	Juliane Beier
Renal Toxicology Award	December 1, 2026	Joe Zagorski
Robert J. Rubin Student Travel Award	December 31, 2026	Alicia Timme-Laragy
Ronald G. Thurman Student Travel Award	December 1, 2026	Banrida Wahlang
Mechanisms Postdoctoral Award	December 1, 2026	Udayan Apte
Lehman-McKeeman Early Career Award	November 13, 2026	Joe Zagorski

Notice Regarding the Carl C. Smith Graduate Student Award Applications

The Carl C. Smith Graduate Student Award deadline coincides with the SOT Abstract submission deadline (**November 13th, 2026**).

Applications due on **November 13th** should include:

1. Cover letter
2. Copy of the abstract submitted for the 2026 SOT Annual Meeting with the graduate student as the presenting author
3. Personal statement
4. Two Letters of Recommendation

Selected finalists will be asked to **submit manuscripts by December 15, 2026**.

Please refer to the [Mechanisms Specialty Section Awards Website](#) for specific details regarding applications for the Carl C. Smith Graduate Student and all other awards.

Call for Career Achievement Award Nominations!

The Career Achievement Award is announced each year at the Annual Meeting. We would like to again congratulate past awardees, including Jim Popp, DVM, PhD, Chemical Industry Institute of Toxicology (2026) and Rick Schnellman, PhD, University of Arizona College of Pharmacy (2025). To learn more information about our awardees, visit our website!

Jim Popp
Stratoxon LLC

2026



Rick Schnellman
University of Arizona College of Pharmacy

2025



To nominate a candidate for the award:

1. Use the awards module (<https://sotapply.toxicology.org/>) to submit the current CV for the candidate by December 1, 2026.
2. Provide two letters of recommendation from members of the Mechanisms Specialty Section outlining the research accomplishments and service of the candidate.

All documents must be submitted in PDF format. Selection of the awardees will be based on the strength of the mechanistic focus of their research and letters of recommendation. The recipient will be announced at the Mechanisms Specialty Section Business Meeting and Reception in San Antonio!

Our Newest Endowed Award: Lehman-McKeeman Early Career Award In Mechanistic Toxicology



We are excited to announce that our newest endowment fund created to honor Lois D. Lehman-McKeeman has achieved permanent status! This fund was developed to provide awards that will highlight meritorious achievements of early career scientists across academia, industry, & government in the field of mechanistic toxicology.

This award will recognize scientists who:

- Are within the first 10 years of receiving their professional (MS and/or PhD) degree
- Have a record of exemplary research demonstrated by publications, grant applications, and/or regulatory filings
- Have a demonstrated commitment to teaching and/or mentoring activities

We will begin disbursing awards this year. We are proud to add this recognition program that will honor Dr. Lehman-McKeeman's outstanding contributions to our field while supporting the next generation of mechanistic toxicologists.

A Message from Your Student Representative



Hello everyone!

My name is Gina Capece, and I am excited to serve as the Graduate Student Representative for the Mechanisms Specialty Section for 2026-2027! I am a PhD Candidate in the Joint Graduate Program in Toxicology (JGPT) at Rutgers University. As a Graduate Student Representative, I also serve on the SOT Graduate Student Leadership Committee (GSLC), where we work to create opportunities and events that support the growth and success of graduate students.

The SOT Annual Meeting is a great place to network and learn more about different career paths within toxicology. Trainees can present their work, gain feedback, exchange scientific knowledge, and participate in a variety of professional development events and programs organized by SOT/GSLC (please visit <https://www.toxicology.org/groups/gs/graduates.asp> for more information). Here are some key events to look forward to:

- Student/Postdoctoral Scholar Mixer
- Chat with an Expert
- Tox ShowDown
- Volunteer Opportunities

Graduate students—don't miss out! The Mechanisms Specialty Section offers travel awards and recognition for outstanding research and educational achievements. Check deadlines above and get involved—these opportunities are here for you! Feel free to reach out to me with any questions at gc679@rutgers.edu. I look forward to seeing you all at the 2027 SOT Annual Meeting in San Antonio!

A Message from Your Postdoctoral Representative



Howdy, postdocs!

My name is Candace Longoria, and I am your Postdoctoral Representative for the Mechanisms Specialty Section for 2026-27. I am currently a Postdoctoral Research Associate at Rutgers University in the department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. As your Postdoctoral Representative, I hope you will find me accessible to help with questions and as a resource for both current and prospective postdoctoral members. The SOT Annual Meeting is coming up March 14-17, 2027 in my home state—we're heading to San Antonio, Texas!

If you're planning to apply for awards (which you should), please see which opportunities align with your research below:

- [Award Opportunities at the 2027 SOT Annual Meeting](#)
- [Society of Toxicology \(SOT\)](#)

SOT, its Specialty Sections, and its Special Interest Groups provide several awards specifically for postdoctoral trainees to support research, conference travel, and professional development. With that, the Mechanisms Specialty Section offers multiple awards to postdocs so please see what applies to you.

As a reminder, the abstract deadline for SOT 2027 is Friday, November 13th this year—plan accordingly to prepare an outstanding abstract and land yourself a talk. Don't forget to register after you submit your abstract, either. Early bird registration for SOT 2027 ends Jan. 22, 2027. More information about abstract content, dates, and links are below:

- [Abstract Submissions for 2027 SOT Annual Meeting and ToxExpo](#)

SOT is a spectacular opportunity to meet new people (peer and professional) and to explore research topics and careers. One event I recommend is the postdoctoral luncheon, which is happening on Tuesday, March 16th. This is an event specifically aimed at postdocs; it's only a \$12 add-on during registration and they typically give away prizes too. Hopefully you can stop by and we can commiserate in solidarity.

If you're ready for next steps, as an SOT member you have access to the SOT Job Bank. Here, employers of all backgrounds are looking for someone with your skills and expertise!

- [Toxicology Jobs at the SOT Job Bank](#)

Maybe you're just looking at different fields and want to explore? There's also an award for that: the New Experiences in Toxicology Program (NEXT). The deadline is September 30th so hurry:

- [New Experiences in Toxicology Program, Society of Toxicology](#)

And, of course, you can begin your networking journey with us! The Mechanisms Specialty Sections is ready to connect on LinkedIn (SOT Mechanisms Specialty Section). Also, the SOT Postdoctoral Assembly (PDA) regularly shares webinars, networking opportunities, and events via ToXchange.

Lastly, I am a resource for all but especially fellow postdocs. If you want to know more about MechSS, awards, or just want to say hi, you can always shoot me an e-mail: Candace.Longoria@Rutgers.edu.

See y'all in Texas,

Candace Longoria, Mechanisms Postdoctoral Representative

We want to hear from you!



The Mechanisms Specialty Section is looking for alternative ways to promote community among our membership. Would virtual seminars and/or workshops (outside of the annual meeting) be of interest to you? Please take our very brief poll:

<https://forms.gle/7hx1PisKtKP5hcSi6>

Virtual seminars and workshops outside of the annual meeting

Networking opportunities

Mentorship programs

Professional development resources

Social media engagement strategies



Please share your thoughts and suggestions with any member of the Executive Committee!

Follow Us on Social Media!

X @SOT_Mechanisms

in www.linkedin.com/company/SOT-Mechanisms

Call for Officer Nominations!

Each fall we seek volunteers from our members to serve on the Mechanisms Leadership Committee. The continued success of our Specialty Section is dependent upon the efforts of those willing to serve. We have 4 positions that will be available for the 2027-2028 year (shown below). Self-nominations are highly encouraged. Nominees will be reviewed by current officers and a ballot compiled for election. If you are interested in any of the positions listed, please contact Udayan Apte (uapte@kumc.edu) or Joe Zagorski (zagorsk4@msu.edu). Please submit all nominations by November 30th, 2026.

Open Positions for 2027-2028:

- **Vice President-Elect** (*4-year commitment, advances in Presidential Chain*)
- **Junior Councilor** (*2-year commitment, advances to Senior Councilor*)
- **Postdoctoral Representative** (*1-year term*)
- **Graduate Student Representative** (*1-year term*)

Please don't forget that abstracts are due to [SOT](#) by **November 13th, 2026**, and apply for the many SOT career achievement, graduate student, and postdoctoral awards applications also available outside of the Mechanisms Specialty Section (<https://sot.toxicology.org/award>).

We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio, Texas, for the 2027 SOT Meeting!

