

Society of Toxicology Undergraduate Diversity Program

An important priority of the Society of Toxicology (SOT) is to promote the recruitment and development of a diverse and creative community of toxicologists. One way that is achieved is by introducing promising undergraduate students to the discipline of toxicology, especially students from groups that are under-represented in the sciences. The SOT Undergraduate Diversity Program began with 10 students and two advisors from local institutions at the 1989 SOT Annual Meeting in Atlanta. A reflection on the 30th anniversary of the program is provided in this [Communiqué blog](#). To date, this hugely successful program has hosted more than 1,000 students from diverse backgrounds and over 160 advisors. These participants represent more than 340 institutions from around the United States. This year, 37 students and three advisors received SOT travel support. In addition, all undergraduates registered for the Annual Meeting can register to participate in the Sunday Undergraduate Education Program. Successes to date mark outstanding progress towards the goal of encouraging students to pursue advanced degrees in the biomedical sciences, especially toxicology.



Fun meets facts as the students learn about the Poison Squad and the early days of the US FDA during the program opening ice-breaker.



Program participants establish networks to provide input as they develop career plans.

The Committee on Diversity Initiatives (CDI) Reunion on Saturday night is an opportunity for all those who have been involved with the Program through the years to greet each other and meet the current year participants.

Members of the CDI organize this program, including special toxicology lectures, mentoring, discussions about applying for and succeeding in graduate school, and poster presentations, among other activities. More than 80 volunteers serve during each year as speakers, host and peer mentors, and in other roles. Special recognition is also extended to those who have procured NIH funding and corporate sponsorship to supplement the support from the Society of Toxicology. We are incredibly grateful to over 300 toxicologists as “Friends of CDI” for their contributions to this program.

The SOT web feature [“Eye on CDI”](#) provides vignettes from Program participants who have pursued careers in science; a recent [Communiqué blog](#) provides a person perspective of the program impact. Program alumni report that the Undergraduate Diversity Program provides important insight to assist with their career planning. Students also make contacts which lead to summer research opportunities. Success of the Program also is indicated by the number of Program alumni who have assumed leadership roles in the Society of Toxicology and in the scientific community. Many speakers and mentors are past program participants.

The SOT Undergraduate Diversity Program has been a high impact activity for SOT in to promoting the recruitment and development of a diverse and creative community of toxicologists.