

Society of Toxicology Undergraduate Diversity Program

An important SOT priority is to promote the recruitment and development of a diverse and creative community of toxicologists. One way this is achieved is by introducing promising undergraduate students to the discipline of toxicology, especially students from groups that are underrepresented 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, Georgia. To date, this hugely successful program has hosted over 1,000 students from diverse backgrounds and over 160 advisors. These participants represent more than 340 institutions from around the United States. This year, 36 students and two 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 toward 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.

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

CDI members organize this program, which includes special toxicology lectures, mentoring, discussions about applying for and succeeding in graduate school, and poster presentations, among other activities. More than 80 volunteers serve each year as speakers or host and peer mentors, as well as in other roles. Special recognition also is extended to those who have procured National Institutes of Health funding and corporate sponsorship to supplement the support from SOT. We are incredibly grateful to have over 300 toxicologists as "Friends of CDI" who contribute to this program.



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

Program alumni report that the Undergraduate Diversity Program provides important insight to assist with their career planning. Students also make contacts that lead to summer research opportunities. The program's success also is indicated by the number of program alumni who have assumed leadership roles in SOT and the scientific community. Many speakers and mentors are past program participants. The SOT web feature "[Eye on CDI](#)" provides vignettes from program participants who have pursued careers in science, and a 2019 [Communiqué blog](#) provides a personal perspective on the program's influence.

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