

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



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.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 and 2021 programs embraced a virtual format. Of the students selected in 2020, 8 eligible students accepted the invitation to participate again in 2021 and 19 additional students were chosen. The Committee on Diversity Initiatives (CDI) notes outstanding progress toward the SOT goal of encouraging students to pursue advanced degrees in the biomedical sciences, especially toxicology. Successes to date mark outstanding progress toward the goal of encouraging students to pursue advanced degrees in the biomedical sciences, especially toxicology.

CDI members organize this program, which includes special toxicology lectures, mentoring, discussions about applying for and succeeding in graduate school, career exploration, among other activities. Students also attend Annual Meeting sessions. For on-site meetings, more than 80 volunteers serve each year as speakers or host and peer mentors, as well as in other roles.



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.