

Society of Toxicology Undergraduate Diversity Program Overview

An important priority of the Society of Toxicology (SOT) is to introduce promising undergraduate students to the discipline of toxicology, especially students from groups that are under-represented in the sciences. Beginning at the 1989 SOT Annual Meeting in Atlanta with 10 students and two advisors from local institutions, the SOT Undergraduate Diversity Program has hosted over 1000 students from diverse backgrounds and over 155 advisors. These participants represent about 330 institutions from around the United States. This year 36 students, and 5 advisors received travel support. In addition, all undergraduates who are registered for the meeting can register to participate in the Sunday Undergraduate Education Program. The goal is to encourage students to pursue advanced degrees in the biomedical sciences, especially toxicology.



Students learn about the Poison Squad and the early days of FDA as well as become acquainted with the other participants in the opening session.

The Committee on Diversity (CDI) Reunion on Saturday night is the 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 the activities. More than 30 volunteers serve during each program 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 now count over 300 toxicologists as “Friends of CDI” for their contributions to this program.



Representatives of graduate toxicology training programs provide information for students.

The SOT web feature “Eye on CDI” provides vignettes of some of the Program participants who have pursued science careers. Students report that the Undergraduate Diversity Program provides important insight to assist with their career planning. Students find internship opportunities through contacts made at the meeting; some continue with the research during the academic year. Success of the Program is also 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 significant activity for SOT in **Developing and Supporting Toxicologists to Capitalize on Future Opportunities** building for the future of toxicology. Promoting the recruitment, education, and development of a diverse and creative community of toxicologists is a key strategic priority of the Society.