AWIS GULF COAST HOUSTON CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Fall 2015/Winter 2016

AWIS GCH newsletter

Fall 2015/Winter 2016

Letter from the President

Now is an amazing time to be a part of the Association for Women in Science, Gulf Coast Houston (AWIS GCH) chapter. Over the past year, our chapter has grown exponentially and has expanded to include attendees from the biotech and the oil and gas sectors. We are motivated, now more than ever, to reach our goal of equal opportunity for all women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Over the last few months we have been working towards this goal by hosting career development events, extending our outreach opportunities, and increasing our presence with the Texas Medical Center (TMC) as well as in the oil and gas industry. Our three-step career development course began in September with a resume writing workshop at the Rice University Bioscience Research Collaborative. Our panelists shared their career experiences and advised us on navigating the wide world of opportunities within STEM. The second workshop was held at the University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences. In this workshop, our gracious panelists walked us through the interview process, from "Tell me about yourself?" to "You're hired!". The final workshop in the series was held at the Robert Cizik Eye Clinic inside of Memorial Hermann Medical Plaza. It detailed the art of negotiation and focused on entry-level job applicants. Thanks to Niko Niko's and Chipotle for keeping us well-fed during these informative and transformative sessions!

Furthermore, North Star Resource Group generously donated a dinner and seminar at The Grotto – Uptown Plaza where various financial management topics were discussed, including student loan management, asset protection strategies, and investment basics.

We have also arranged diverse and exciting outreach opportunities for you, our members. AWIS GCH members volunteered at The Houston Food Bank and gave a helping hand towards sorting their massive food pantry. We also volunteered at the Children's museum of Houston for their Halloween event. Our science-related engagements included hosting an interactive science table at the 5th annual Energy Day Festival, Downtown in October and Houston Mini Maker Faire at George R. Brown Convention Center in November. All activities were a huge hit among children and their parents.

Part of the mission of AWIS is to acknowledge professional women in science. Our annual Outstanding Women in Science Seminar Series does that by celebrating individuals who have succeeded in their scientific research careers and have been exceptional mentors to trainees. This fall's series celebrated Dr. Helen Piwnica-Worms, Vice Provost of Science at MD Anderson Cancer Center. We were honored to have Dr. Ronald DePinho, President of MD Anderson, introduce Dr. Piwnica-Worms for this momentous occasion.

Many AWIS GCH members also caught up at the Kelvin Arms Pub to meet our TMC trainee peers. This networking mixer included a silent auction, so many of us left as winners!

I feel privileged to share these experiences with you, the successful and uplifting members of AWIS GCH, who are passionate about promoting and supporting women in STEM. I am proud of our talented and dedicated board members who have worked tirelessly to develop AWIS GCH. Our recent chapter growth in numbers of members, career development events, outreach opportunities, and inspirational seminars are due to their efforts and your dedication. The possibilities are endless, and I cannot wait to see where we go from here.

Sincerely,

Brittany C. Parker Kerrigan, Ph.D.
AWIS GCH President 2015-2016

Highlights:

- *Dress for success*
- *Negotiate your way to the top*
- *How to survive a career break*
- *Interview with a science writer*
- *Strategies for the job hunt*
- *OKRA charity bar donates its January proceeds to AWIS GCH*

Inside this issue:

Cover design by Chih-chun Lin.

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Workshop series features the job hunt

By Marife Arancillo

Getting a job means going through the stages of submitting resumé, being asked for an interview, getting an offer, and negotiating salary and benefits. Each stage has different goals and requires different sets of skills. With the goal of setting up STEM applicants for success, AWIS GCH organized a three-part workshop for each step of the job hunting process.

The first part of the workshop series was on writing the resume. The workshop was held on Sept. 21, 2015 at the Biosciences Research Center of Rice University. The first half of the workshop involved a Q & A discussion on how to make a resumé stand out. The panelists for the Q & A this year included Dr. Daniel Carson (Professor of Biosciences and Vice Provost of Strategic Partnerships at Rice University), Dr. Daniel Harrington (Assistant Director of the Collaborative Research Laboratories at Rice University), Dr. Donna Pattison (Instructional Associate Professor and Assistant Chair of Undergraduate Affairs at the University of Houston), and Dr. Maximilian Silvestri (Strategic Technology Manager at Nalco Champion and Ecolab Company). Afterwards, attendees were divided into groups, and each group had a one-on-one discussion of their resumes with one of the panelists.

The second part of the workshop series aimed to prepare applicants for the job interview. Members of the panel include Dr. Michelle C. Barton (Dean of the University of Texas Health Sciences Center Graduate School (UTHSC)), Ms. Desiree Burnley (Director of Competency Management Program at Baker Hughes), Mr. Ahmed E. Mabrouk (Vice President of Electronic Trading at JP Morgan Chase), and Ms. Torri Rose (Chemical Specialist at Exxon Mobil). For the first part of the workshop, the panel talked about the common questions asked during an interview, as well as questions that a candidate could ask a potential employer. Afterwards, attendees sat down individually with one of the panelists to have a mock interview or to address any other questions that they may have had.

"Each stage (of the job hunt) has different goals and requires different sets of skills."

The third part of the workshop was on negotiating salary and benefits. It was held on November 16, 2015 at the Robert Cizik Eye Clinic. The panel was composed of Dr. Kevin A. Morano (Professor of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at UTHSC), Ms. Seavon Chalmers (Business Unit Manager at Baker Hughes), Dr. Emma Fauss (CEO of Medical Informatics Corp), and Ms. Kristine Ray-Bird (Director of Human Resources at Ecolab).

Food and refreshments were kindly provided by Chipotle and Niko Niko's.

AWIS GCH in the Community

By Marife Arancillo

2015 was an amazing year for engaging the Houston community with science! If you missed it, AWIS GCH had booths at the following outreach events:

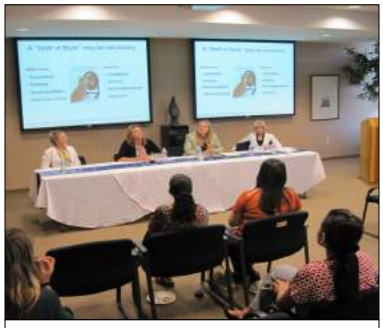
1. Halloween at the Children's Museum of Houston
2. Barnes and Noble Mini Maker Faire
3. Houston Mini Maker Faire
4. STEM Night at the Young Women's Preparatory Academy
5. Houston Energy Day
6. Houston Food Bank

AWIS GCH also collaborated with Ruby on Rails and Trees for Houston. To receive information about outreach events for 2016, please visit our website (awisgch.org) or like us on Facebook.

STEM, HR professionals discuss salary negotiations in workshop

By Marife Arancillo

An AWIS GCH career development workshop tackled the difficult topic of negotiating a salary raise or promotion, particularly during the mid- to senior-levels stages of careers. The workshop was held on August 3, 2015 at the Robert Cizik Eye Clinic of the Memorial Hermann Medical Plaza. First, Dr. Elizabeth Travis, Professor and Associate Vice-President for Women Faculty Programs at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, presented the art of self-promotion. A Q & A session followed with a panel that included Dr. Travis, Seavon Chalmers (Business Unit Manager at Baker Hughes), Kristine Ray-Bird (Director of Human Resources at Global Supply Chain), and Sophia Campbell (Executive Recruiter and Owner of Energy Professional Search). While the discussion engaged the different viewpoints on the panel, the key message was that to obtain a raise or a promo-



Panel members at the Negotiation workshop

Women of AWIS GCH walk the runway in fashion mixer

By Marife Arancillo

AWIS GCH teamed up with clothing retailer Talbots for a fashion show and networking mixer on May 27, 2015. Despite the storms and floods that affected Houston the previous day, approximately twenty members attended the event held in the Talbots store at the Galleria.

On exhibit were stylish professional outfits that could be worn for job interviews or at the workplace. The clothes were modeled by AWIS GCH members Ayesha Khan, Hima Vingapandu, Fabiola Mehta, and Nashwa Kabil. Talbots manager Amanda Rodriguez shared tips on how to mix and match clothing and accessories, and Karen Banks of Mary Kay Cosmetics offered makeup tips. Snacks and refreshments followed the fashion show. After the presentation, some participants mingled and others shopped using a special 25% discount.

Photos by Le Huang.

Dressing for success

Charity bar donates proceeds to AWIS GCH

By Marife Arancillo

AWIS GCH is the recipient of a charity bar's proceeds for the month of January 2016. The donation comes from OKRA (An Organized Kollaboration on Restaurant Affairs) Charity Saloon, a non-profit bar that donates its monthly revenue to a selected Houston charity each month. To raise funds for charities, OKRA gives customers a ticket for each food or drink item purchased. Customers then use the ticket to vote for their charity of choice. The next month's proceeds are given to the organization with the most votes.

The bar previously featured AWIS GCH in July 2015, along with three other non-profit organizations: The Periwinkle Foundation, Trees for Houston, and OpHeart. The Periwinkle Foundation, which provides support for children with cancer and other life-threatening illnesses, was the well-deserved recipient at the conclusion of the July campaign. AWIS GCH returned in December and campaigned again during a second chance tournament with other organizations that participated during the year. This time, our organization received the most votes. OKRA presented AWIS GCH with a check amounting to $18000 in February 2016.

AWIS GCH thanks all the members who came out and voted for OKRA during December. The visits to OKRA were wonderful opportunities to talk about the AWIS GCH mentoring, career development, and community outreach programs. The donation will be used to expand the organization's activities, including the development of an awards program for young students and professionals.

Taking a career break

By Monica Reyes

Most career women will take a break either after receiving their advanced degree, during matriculation in an advanced degree program, or during employment. Women may take career breaks because of non-family matters such as discontentment with their current position, or to transition into a new career field/path. Other reasons for taking career breaks are because of family matters, such as maternity leave, personal illness, or caring for another family member. Taking a career break may be daunting to those who have never been through it, so, on behalf of our members, I interviewed someone with relevant experience.

Dr. Lory Santiago-Vázquez, an Associate Professor at The University of Houston-Clear Lake, took a twelve-week maternity leave after the birth of her first child. Dr. Santiago shared with me the problems that she faced, support she had during her leave, and advice to other women planning a career break.

One of Santiago-Vázquez's biggest concerns prior to taking maternity leave was finding someone to assume her teaching responsibilities. She was assigned to teach three courses, so she had to find someone for each class. Luckily, her supervisor was able to help find someone to cover those classes for her. Another worry for Santiago-Vázquez was that her research output would slow during her leave. She would not be able to take on any new students during the semester in which she would be on leave, and would not be able to do field work, which would have involved traveling to Florida and scuba diving. Fortunately, there were still some things under her control. The family support she had during her recovery at home was immense. Santiago-Vázquez credits her husband, mother, and members of her extended family for the moral and emotional support that made her recovery possible.

Dr. Lory Santiago-Vázquez, Associate Professor, UHCL

"one of the best pieces of advice that she can share with someone who will be taking a career break is to plan. "

Santiago-Vázquez says that one of the best pieces of advice that she can share with someone who will be taking a career break is to plan ahead. This probably cannot be stressed enough, she says, regardless of the reason for taking a career break. Santiago-Vázquez also recommends reaching out to peers who have already experienced a career break to find out how they prepared and what else they may have to share about their experience. Assuming that the person is planning to return to the same line of work and not transition to another job or career field, another piece of advice is to stay active in your field by staying connected to colleagues and by attending conferences to stay engaged. She also suggests investigating the possibility of collaborating on projects that allow you to work from home.

Last but not least, Santiago-Vázquez recommends being confident and positive. Realize that the time that you have taken away from your work is just as valuable as the time you have spent at work. There are many different ways to make a career break work for you.

Here are some additional resources for preparing for or returning from a career break:

⇒ www.nature.com/nature/journal/v509/n7500/full/nj7500-389a.html
⇒ http://blogs.nature.com/naturejobs/2015/11/13/women-in-science-a-returners-perspective/
⇒ http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2015/05/accounting-career-breaks
⇒ http://www.nationalpostdoc.org/?page=MaternityLeave
⇒ http://societyofwomenengineers.swe.org/
⇒ www.finishyourthesis.com/academia/
⇒ www.irelaunch.com/
⇒ www.powertofly.com/

Social media workshop explains the professional brand

By Marife Arancillo

"Are You On LinkedIn?", an AWIS GCH career development workshop, was held on March 24, 2015 at the UT-MD Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC). Chris Taylor, Project Director for Office of Career & Entrepreneurship Advancement at MDACC, facilitated the workshop in a packed auditorium. He discussed how to use LinkedIn to build a professional brand and how to cultivate a professional network that can enhance your career.

After the presentation, participants lined up at a complimentary photo booth to have their headshots taken by postdoctoral fellow and photographer Dr. Argentina Ornelas and enjoyed food that was generously provided by Chipotle.

Photo by Argentina Ornelas.

Chris Taylor, Project Director, Academic Affairs, Faculty & Academic Development

Dr. Helen Piwnica-Worms honored in OWIS Seminar Series

By Marife Arancillo

This year's Outstanding Women In Science (OWIS) Seminar Series acknowledged the achievements of Dr. Helen Piwnica-Worms, Professor of Cancer Biology and Vice Provost of Science at The University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center (MDACC). Dr. Piwnica-Worms's key contributions in science include the elucidation of biochemical interactions between proteins that are critical for cell cycle checkpoints. Her discoveries revealed novel therapeutic targets against cancer, and treatment approaches based on her work are now undergoing clinical trials. Currently, her laboratory is focusing on defining the drivers for metastasis to find treatments for aggressive cancers. In addition to being a successful scientist in cancer research, she is an enthusiastic and passionate mentor and role model for women in STEM.

The ceremony was held on October 5, 2015 at Onstead Auditorium at MDACC, and kicked off with an introduction by MDACC President Dr. Ronald Depinho. Dr. Piwnica-Worms then delivered an honorary lecture, in which she talked about her career trajectory in both research and administration. Her role model is Gerty Cori, the first female Nobel Prize winner, and so she referred to each research and personal milestone as a "Gerty Cori" moment. Among her personal advice to women in science were to ask the right questions, embrace new technologies and to collaborate, to network, and to be passionate.

Dr. Helena Piwnica-Worms

Photos by Marife Arancillo

AWISGCH members learn important strategies for better financial planning

By Deepika Kumar

Each year, AWIS GCH organizes a financial planning workshop to educate graduate students and postdoctoral fellows on simple yet important strategies for financial planning and management. This year's workshop was hosted by North Star Consultants of Texas (Austin) at the Grotto Ristorante.

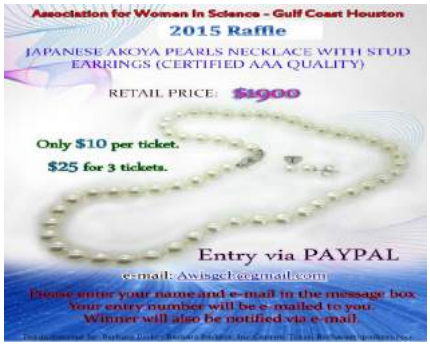
Chris Wilbur, a financial advisor at North Star Consultants, emphasized the importance of thinking in the long term and of generating savings. Through examples, he illustrated good ways to save in preparation for retirement, including company 401Ks and Roth IRAs. AWIS GCH members were also educated on management of financial reserves, debt and risk. A good piece of advice was paying off loans with high interest rates and managing loans with lower interest rates.

Wilbur also suggested aiming at saving approximately 20% of one's monthly income. He explained that hard cash is always invaluable and therefore, it is good to cultivate a habit of saving monthly. The evening culminated with a Q & A session and a scrumptious dinner which was provided by the Grotto Ristorante.

Auction and pearl raffle held to raise funds for AWIS GCH

By Marife Arancillo

The annual silent auction, a major fundraising event and networking mixer for AWIS GCH, was held on September 25, 2015 at the Kelvin Arms Pub in Rice Village. Items open for bidding included books, athletic equipment, and even lessons for salsa dancing, foreign languages, computer programming, and laboratory techniques. The silent auction also featured the ongoing Pearl Raffle, the winner of which will receive a Japanese Akoya Pearl necklace-and-earring set worth $1,900. All proceeds from the silent auction and the Pearl Raffle will be used to fund the career development and community outreach programs of AWIS GCH.



Career Profile: Becoming a Scientific Writer

By Deepika Kumar

Kimberly A. Mankiewicz, PhD, ELS is a Medical/Technical Writer in the Ruiz Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Science at McGovern Medical School at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth). She also serves as the Secretary of the AWIS GCH chapter.

1)What made you choose science as a career? You were awarded a Ph.D. in biophysics/biochemistry; what drew you to that field specifically? Did you have a mentor who greatly influenced your career decisions?

Science was always "my thing." I got the best grades in science in school, and I took honors science classes in high school, so it was a natural progression for me to go to college and major in biochemistry. I felt I could conceptually put science together whereas I couldn't really understand arts or humanities. Also, my dad is a physician so that piqued my interest in science.

I did my undergraduate degree at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. However, I knew I couldn't reach where I wanted to go with a B.S., so I decided to pursue an advanced degree. Dr. Vasanthi Jayaraman was an assistant professor in the Chemistry department at Marquette when I was completing my B.S. I like chemistry and how it interplays with biology, and Vasanthi's research spans neuroscience, biology, and chemistry. So, after Vasanthi came down to UTHealth, I joined her lab for my Ph.D. at The University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences at Houston. My dissertation involved structural studies of glutamate receptors using spectroscopy.

My career is not considered an alternative career anymore, but 8 years ago, when I graduated, scientific/technical writing was considered a new and upcoming field. Alternative careers weren't always looked upon favorably, but Vasanthi really encouraged me to pursue it. I think it is different now because alternative careers are more accepted and prevalent than they were 10 years ago.

2)What drew you towards scientific/technical writing (as opposed to conventional careers in science such as research in academia/industry)? Did you always have an interest in writing? Did you have any mentors to guide you towards technical writing?

"Grad school taught me how to think my way through a scientific problem and what is important for explaining your work to other people. "

I believe there are 3 phases of science: the conception phase where you get an idea going, the middle phase where you execute it, or as I call it the "banging your head against the wall phase", and the end where you put it together and publish it. So, what I do now are the first and third phases. I was always an above average writer; however, I didn't know how it was going to apply to the grand scheme of my life. I like writing an argument and persuading people to support an idea. That's half the fun of science: presenting what you have done and telling people why it is important. That was why I gravitated towards writing.

I also think in science you have to have very talented hands, and I break a lot of stuff (laughs). I got better in graduate school, but technical proficiency is very important for working in a lab. Also, I got tired of the experiments dictating my life. I finished grad school in 4 years, but I worked around the clock. I actually had to figure out what a normal life was after grad school. My boyfriend suggested that I get a hobby and I asked "what's that?" (Laughs).

As I said, Vasanthi really encouraged me to pursue scientific writing. My Chairman, Dr. Robert Feldman, is also very encouraging and a great mentor. I handle the publications, presentations, book chapters, grants, and other science communication projects for our department. Being able to communicate the results of your work is a crucial part of the science research machine. You can get great results but if you can't explain them how are you going to advance science?

3)What skills did you learn in graduate school that was the most useful for your field, in addition to writing?

Vasanthi is a great writer, and she taught me how to present a concept and write an argument (such as in a grant setting) or present results understandably (like with a manuscript). Ph.D. training involves a lot of writing. Grad school taught me how to think my way through a scientific problem and what is important for explaining your work to other people. While I may not use my spectroscopy training on a daily basis, training in the scientific method and how to critically analyze and solve a problem is a useful skill. I learned the scientific method in high school and grade school, but I didn't really apply it to a project until this level of my education. The critical thinking skills I further developed in grad school have been invaluable.

The connections I made in grad school were also invaluable. I had a fellowship with the Houston Area Molecular Biophysics Program through the W.M. Keck Center for Interdisciplinary Bioscience Training of the Gulf Coast Con-

sortia. I loved having that fellowship! I would go to seminars every Friday. They had a little reception after the seminars, where I met all kinds of people. Definitely, the networking and connections I made with other people in the Houston science community was another part of grad school I am really grateful for. I met other people who were doing research like mine, which was awesome too.

I will tell you though that even though I'm in a non-traditional career, those three little letters [Ph.D.] after your name get you your foot in the door. They give you just that much more credibility to take you to where you want to go.

4)What kind of duties do you perform on a day-to-day basis? What do you enjoy the most about your job? What is the most challenging part of your job?

On a day-to day basis, I review papers, presentations, grants, figures, whatever projects I have been asked to help with. I do more editing than writing. Usually a faculty member will give me a manuscript or a presentation or even a figure to review. I'm basically always reviewing a document or putting together a figure and trying to make it clear and cogent. I help the faculty express their ideas clearly, and then I submit their papers and keep a track of them. I also make sure that their presentations make sense and help them with the intricacies of PowerPoint. I have also become the "figure person" which involves using a lot of Photoshop.

Different papers require different emphasis. Sometimes it's just a matter of redirecting the writing a little bit. However, I always keep in mind that I am really making suggestions for a paper, and I don't take it personally if my suggestions aren't used. After all, I'm not the expert on the topic.

I do miss the getting up and moving around from working in a lab, because I sit in the office and in front of the computer all day. However, I really enjoy ophthalmology. I didn't know you could divide the eye in so many ways! I work with a lot of sub-specialists, and it has been fun. I've had to learn clinical science writing, which is very different from basic scientific writing. In clinical writing communication of the results requires a different set of skills. That was a whole new experience for me.

Deepika: what do you enjoy the most?

Kim: I really like grant writing. I like the idea of explaining a concept that the faculty member is trying to get across, *via* my writing. I think it's cool to take a new idea and try to persuade somebody to fund you, to execute that idea. It is hard and probably one of the more stressful aspects of my job, but I do love it. There's just something exciting about new science.

Grant writing is also the most challenging part of my job because the funding environment right now is so competitive! It's harder to get grants these days so you have to look for alternative sources of funding. That has also been interesting. It's not all about NIH grants anymore. I have also learned about writing foundation grants, which can differ greatly from NIH grants.

D: So, what kind of foundation grants surprised you; was there a foundation for something that you were not expecting?

"It's not all about NIH grants anymore. I have also learned about writing foundation grants, which can differ greatly from NIH grants"

K: The flexibility of foundation grants surprised me. NIH requirements are very specific, but foundation grants are more open. Even being open on the formatting sometimes lets you explain a concept better, at least differently. I also didn't realize the variety of programs that foundations funded. I worked on a grant with our low vision specialist, Dr. Bhavani Iyer, recently to apply for the Lion's Club International Foundation SightFirst program. It was a community grant where we got money to expand low vision services in the greater Houston area. It was the 3rd largest grant given in Texas by this foundation, which was a cool accomplishment.

5)What are the common career trajectories for scientific writers? Do people usually stay on as career writers? What kinds of organizations employ scientific/technical writers?

I don't think there is a common career trajectory. Last year I rejoined the American Medical Writers Association (AMWA), and I'm the City Coordinator for Houston for the Southwest chapter. From my association with AMWA, I have met people who do all kinds of things. I have met one person who works in more of a public relations environment, others who freelance, and others who work at nonprofits. Development writing and medical education are other routes to take. Other writers work at science societies. They join scientific journals and work as editors. Science journalism is another big trajectory. The sky is the limit for where you can go. People take all kinds of routes. I don't think there is a common path.

D: I think that makes it much more exciting!

K: Yes, it does. However, it is important to get a feel of where you want to go; at least, know whether you want to explore the technical side, like I did, or be more in the public realm like a science reporter.

As for organizations, AMWA is definitely one to look at. That's how *I* found my job, from AMWA. We organize a lot of events like networking socials and webinars. The Southwest Chapter has a large network in Houston. Membership is not expensive for students. There are also other science writers' associations. If you want to get into science journalism, there is the National Association of Science Writers. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) also offers fellowships.

AMWA is definitely the place to start because its members do all kinds of science-related writing. They are in a variety of positions, and it's a good way to see what paths people take. Also, talking to people in the field is always useful. I get e-mails saying "hey, can I come and talk to you?", and I have no problem sitting down and talking about my career trajectory.

6)A lot of technical writers freelance to build a body of work before

they have regular clients. Did you ever freelance? Or would you consider freelancing?

I wrote articles for a local newsletter to gain some experience. I have always found that people will take free help. I have heard of people starting a blog to have a body of work behind them. There are opportunities if you search for them.

I think freelancing is a hard road; you have to get your own clients. Some people love freelancing and do it really well. I just don't think I would be one of them. I like the security of health insurance and a job. I like going into my office every day. However, if you want to do freelancing, AMWA has a large freelancing community, and they have resources that will inform you on how to get started. It's a very good organization for freelancers.

7)What advice would you give to people interested in scientific writing as a career? What are some of the important skills that a scientific writer should have?

Make sure you can write! Make sure you are going to like being chained to a desk and a computer. The one thing that is nice about what I do is that I can do it from anywhere, as long as I have an internet connection and my computer. For example, if I am on vacation, and we have a deadline, I can still get my work done. If someone needs me to do a quick thing, I can do it and easily send it off. I do miss the getting up and doing something different everyday like I did in the lab, but I really think this career is the right fit for me.

Regarding skills, knowledge of Microsoft Word is very important. As I am involved in a lot of figure creation and I do a lot of presentations, PowerPoint is really helpful for me. Photoshop skills are invaluable because figure creation is key to illustrating your science. Sometimes a figure can say more than you can in words. Knowing a good reference program is also useful, whichever you pick. I use Endnote; some people use Mendeley, others use Papers, even Microsoft Word has functionality for references. So pick one and use it, because that is going to be your best friend with all the editing that occurs in the writing process.

Patience is a useful quality to have, because there are some days when I can't put a sentence together. Other days I can finish in twenty minutes. Each day is different. Further, don't be afraid to state your opinion if an idea can be presented differently. Don't forcefully go after somebody, but be willing to say that this can be done another way and see what they think. Don't be afraid to speak up for what you want, which I think applies to other careers for women in science too.

Be prepared to be frustrated when you hit writer's block. It's okay. It's the same as "hitting the wall" with science experiments when you can't go any further. And don't get discouraged. This field is a little hard to break into.

One of the better pieces of advice *I* got was to start looking for a job during the last year of my Ph.D. It was hard to get my foot in the door then. Most places wanted experience, and they didn't consider my Ph.D. as part of my experience, most of the time. Then one day, I looked at the AMWA jobs board, found my current job, and sent my CV. The rest is history.

"don't be afraid to state your opinion if an idea can be presented differently"

8)Scientific writing is a nascent field, what are the steps required to be a scientific writer? Are there any specific qualifications one needs? Is a certificate program/certification in Technical Writing recommended for someone interested in this career? Do you believe that the market for technical writers will increase in the future?

No special qualifications are needed. I think as long as you can write well and explain the science clearly you have a shot. A background or a foundation in science can be useful to understand and explain concepts in your writing. There are a few certifications available. There is the Editor in Life Sciences (ELS) certification that is given by the Board of Editors in Life Sciences. AMWA has also recently started a Medical Writers Certified™ program. Other than that, there are really no certifications that are required, but they can enhance your career. Specialized fields may have certifications. I have my Ph.D. and ELS certification.

I feel this is a growing field. People are realizing that writers are important to explain scientific results clearly and cohesively, and the increasing number of jobs available is a reflection of that. There's so much variety in the types of scientific writing and the jobs available.

9)Do you get to interact with other scientific writers? Is there some sort of community? And do you mentor budding writers?

I definitely interact with a lot of people, especially with the AMWA local chapter. It has been a lot of fun to learn about what other people do. It's not hard to find people willing to give advice based on their careers. I'm always happy to talk to people if they want to talk to me.

10)What is your take on science journalists (those who write about science for the general public)?

The main focus of science journalists is to explain the results of scientific studies to the general public. I think they have a huge responsibility of explaining really complicated topics to people who don't have a science background. People outside of science can be really intimidated by it, and science journalism acts as a mediator between the general public and scientists. I think they play an important role in the news cycle.

D: In the future, do you think that the fields of technical/scientific writers and science journalists will merge?

K: I don't think so; I think they are two distinct pathways. There is the technical side where you are associated with science and research almost as a scientist. The other path diverges into journalism which is more about the news story aspect of science. I don't think they will ever merge, but the two sides will communicate together for sure.

Dr. Kimberly Mankiewicz can be contacted for more details on scientific/technical writing at: awisgch@gmail.com

Milestones in Careers of AWIS GCH Members

Awards, Fellowships, and Grants

Dr. Marife Arancillo received a postdoctoral fellowship from the National Ataxia Foundation. The fellowship is for up to $35,000 for one year of research into the cause, treatment, and cure for ataxia, a debilitating motor disorder. Dr. Arancillo works as a postdoctoral associate at Baylor College of Medicine.

M. Deweese

Dr. Menton Deweese received a Postdoctoral Fellowship in Cancer Prevention Research from the National Cancer Institute. Through this fellowship, Dr. Deweese aims to understand the brain correlates of attentional biases toward cigarette-related cues in smokers and non-smokers by measuring event-related potentials (ERPs) derived from the electroencephalogram (EEG) and therefore advance the identification of a reliable, electrocortical index of nicotine addiction that, in the long-term, may ultimately contribute to more refined and individualized treatment strategies. Dr. Deweese also recently won 1st Place in Population Science in Bayer HealthCare Pharmaceuticals' Poster Presentation competition. Dr. Deweese works as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Dr. Brittany Kerrigan was selected as a 2015-2017 T32 Interdisciplinary Translational Cancer Nanotechnology Fellow. The stipend and scholarship of this joint program between Rice University and the University of Texas' MD Anderson Cancer Center support specialized coursework, conference-related travel, and living expenses.

H. Roshanravan

Hila Roshanravan was awarded a University of Houston Natural Science and Mathematics Alumni Association Scholarship for the 2015 – 2016 academic year. This year, Ms. Roshanravan also received a Travel Award from the American Society of Nephrology - Kidney STARS program, a Society of Women for Education Endowed Scholarship from the University of Houston System, and a World Hellenic Biomedical Association in Medical & Biosciences Research & Management Scholarship. Ms. Roshanravan also received a Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation grant for research on Type-I diabetes. Ms. Roshanravan studies and works as a graduate research assistant at the University of Houston.

Dr. Triparna Sen was one of two postdoctoral recipients of The Jeffrey Lee Cousins Fellowship in Lung Cancer Research in 2015, which was generously created by the Cousins family in memory of Jeffrey Lee Cousins. The $2,000 award recognizes excellence in and unique contribution to lung cancer research. Dr. Sen was also chosen by the American Association for Cancer Research - Women in Cancer Research Scholar Committee to receive a $1,000 Scholar in Cancer Research award to defray expenses associated with the upcoming International Conference on Molecular Targets and Cancer Therapeutics at which she will present two abstracts.

Publications

Arancillo M, White JJ, Lin T, Stay TL, Sillitoe RV. 2015. In vivo analysis of Purkinje cell firing properties during postnatal mouse development. J Neurophysiol. Jan 15;113(2):578-91.

Kim Y, **Roshanravan H**, Dryer SE. 2015. Syndecan-4 ectodomain evokes mobilization of podocyte TRPC6 channels and their associatd pathways: An essential role for integrin signaling. Biochim Biophys Acta. Oct;1853(10 Pt A):2610-20.

A. Kotrutsou

Kotrotsou A, Schneider JA, Bennett DA, Leurgans SE, Dawe RJ, Boyle PA, Golak T, Arfanakis K. 2015. Neuropathologic correlates of regional brain volumes in a community cohort of older adults. Neurobiol Aging. Oct;36(10):2798-805.
Dr. Kotrotsou works as a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Diagnostic Radiology in The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

Simon EB, Oren N, Sharon H, Kirschner A, Goldway N, Okon-Singer H, Tauman R, **Deweese MM**, Keil A, Hendler T. 2015. Losing Neutrality: The Neural Basis of Impaired Emotional Control without Sleep. J Neurosci. Sep 23;35(38):13194-205.

Wu YJ, Tejero R, **Arancillo M**, Vardar G, Korotkova T, Kintscher M, Schmitz D, Ponomarenko A, Tabares L, Rosenmund C. 2015. Syntaxin 1B is important for mouse postnatal survival and proper synaptic function at the mouse neuromuscular junctions. J Neurophysiol. Jul 22:jn.00577.2015.

Email your achievements to 'awisgch@gmail.com' with the subject line 'milestones' and we will include them in the next newsletter.

AWIS
ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE
Gulf Coast Houston

Spring events

- Career development workshop– iCorps: Transform your research into a Business
- Medical writing workshop (co-hosted with The American Medical Writers Association)
- Leadership and mentoring workshop by Joan Mitchell
- Outstanding Women In Science Seminar Series– Dr. Rebecca Richards-Kortum
- Salsa Dance Lesson & Mixer

For more information please visit: http://awisgch.org/

AWIS GCH is dedicated to supporting women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in Texas's Gulf Coast and Houston region by providing opportunities to participate in professional networking, mentoring, and leadership activities. AWIS membership provides a portfolio of personal benefits as well as the satisfaction of lending your voice to a multidisciplinary grassroots movement supporting women in STEM.

To become a member visit http://awisgch.org/membership/

Application for students: ***http://tinyurl.com/q8q8kxz***

For everyone else: ***http://tinyurl.com/qg8cgsx***

AWIS GCH student members may join AWIS national for free. For more details and other membership questions please contact awisgch.membership@gmail.com

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