AWIS
ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE
Gulf Coast Houston

AWIS GCH Newsletter

2017-Spring 2018

Inside this issue

2017-2018 Board

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Outstanding Woman In Science Seminar Spring 2017
Spotlight on Dr. Pamela Denkins

Dr. Pamela Denkins was honored on May 16, 2017 at the Outstanding Women in Science (OWIS) Seminar Series, presented by the Association for Women in Science Gulf Coast Houston (AWIS GCH), for her contributions at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration Johnson Space Center and for her involvement as a leader in education and outreach. Dr. Denkins shared her experience and expertise with over 60 trainees, faculty, and professionals on a range of topics, including career advancement, personal growth, and pathways to opportunity.

What drew you to pursue a career in science, especially in physics? Was there a defining moment when you knew that this is what you wanted to pursue?

> I was very fortunate to have excellent teachers through my formative years and to be a part of a very intelligent family and extended family. I loved math and physics. As I pondered over my career options, I decided that I wanted to be a research physicist. I wanted the challenge, I wanted to have what I perceived to be an 'advantage', and I wanted to have a notable career.

How is working in industry different from working at NASA? Do you need different skills to succeed in each?

> Skillset is dependent on the profession you choose to pursue. There are jobs and professions that are common to both industry and the government. Within the government, one has the opportunity to change professions without sacrificing tenure. In industry, it's more challenging to do that and remain with the same company.

What was the motivation behind continuing to work at Johnson Space Center while completing your Master's degree? How did you balance a full-time job and a Master's program?

> JSC provided a competitive opportunity to get the JSC Fellowship for grad school. I was selected to receive the fellowship near the end of the completion of my Master's and used the remaining time to begin work on my PhD. For both degrees, I developed my research such that it complemented the work I was involved in at NASA. In both cases, I was able to incorporate the research into my job and vice versa.

How did you succeed in aligning your doctoral research with your work at NASA? Were there any mentors/advisors/supervisors who helped you through this process?

> I sought ways to broaden my work responsibilities to include my research interest (i.e., radiation effects on hardware → radiation effects on human organs). Yes, my supervisor was the most instrumental in my success with achieving my PhD, as well as a NASA subject matter expert who served as a technical advisor on my research topic. My university faculty was extremely open to the research topic and approach.

What kind of career opportunities are available for physics graduates at NASA? Are there programs/fellowships available for graduate students and young scientists?

> Opportunities for physics graduates include: radiation biology, biophysics, radiation science, material science, planetary science, astromaterials, orbital mechanics, orbital debris, programming, management, propulsion, rocketry, spacecraft design, etc. Yes, there are numerous programs and fellowships available for graduate students and young scientists at Education.nasa.gov and Nspires.nasaprs.com.

Outstanding Woman In Science Seminar Fall 2017
Dr. Alicia Monroe

Dr. Alicia Monroe was honored at the AWIS GCH Fall 2017 Outstanding Woman in Science (OWIS) Seminar Series on November 14, 2017. Dr. Monroe was appointed as Provost and Senior Vice President of Academic and Faculty Affairs and Professor of Family Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas in February 2014. At Baylor, Dr. Monroe oversees Baylor's four schools, Academic Affairs, Faculty Development, Faculty Affairs, Center for Professionalism, Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, Graduate Medical Education, Continuing Professional Education, and Educational Outreach (K-12) Programs. She also serves as a member of the Academic Council, the Executive Leadership Team, and the Faculty Senate (as ex-officio).

She formerly served as the Chief Academic Officer, Vice Dean for Educational Affairs, and Professor of Family Medicine at the Morsani College of Medicine, University of South Florida (USF MCOM) in Tampa, FL from 2008-2014. At USF MCOM, Dr. Monroe provided oversight for the undergraduate medical education program, the physical therapy program, and the masters programs in graduate studies. She guided the development of a branch campus and a new medical education curriculum. Dr. Monroe's scholarly interests include physician-patient communication, cross-cultural communication, diversity and inclusion, leadership development, and mentoring training for students and faculty.

Before serving at USF MCOM, Dr. Monroe was on the faculty of the Alpert Medical School at Brown University where she served as the Associate Dean for Minority Affairs and Professor of Family Medicine. Dr. Monroe earned her M.D. degree from Indiana University School of Medicine and completed an internship in psychiatry at Georgetown University Medical Center in Washington, DC. She then completed a residency in family medicine at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, IN. She has received numerous teaching and mentoring awards. She is a past president of the Association for the Behavioral Sciences and Medical Education. She previously served on the Association for American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Behavioral and Social Sciences Expert Panel and was a contributor to the Behavioral and Social Sciences Foundations for Future Physicians. Dr. Monroe was also a member of the AAMC MR5 Committee, the group called to undertake the fifth review of the medical college admissions test and recommend changes for a new version of the exam to be implemented in 2015. She currently serves as the chair of the AAMC Advisory Committee on Holistic Review. She is currently a member of the AAMC Board of Directors and Baylor University Board of Regents.

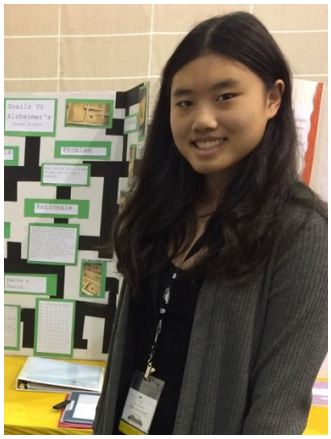
Outstanding Woman In Science Seminar Spring 2018
Dr. Bonnie Baskin

On April 26, 2018 **Bonnie Baskin,** PhD was honored as the AWIS GCH Spring 2018 Outstanding Woman in Science (OWIS) Seminar Series. Bonnie Baskin is a career scientist and business entrepreneur. She is the founder of two successful biotechnology companies, ViroMed Laboratories, Inc. and AppTech Laboratory Services, Inc. Her current and past board memberships include the Minneapolis YMCA, the Minnesota Biotechnology Association, the University of Minnesota Office of Technology Commercialization Advisory Board, Affinity Ventures IV, and the Texas Regional Collaborative for Excellence in Science and Mathematics Teaching. Her many honors and recognitions include the "Entrepreneur of the Year/ Minnesota and Dakotas" award and being a 2012 inductee of the University of Minnesota YMCA Hall of Fame. Although she is now retired, her journey as an entrepreneur continued, as she became the founder and president of The Science Mill. She created The Science Mill with the goal of promoting STEM careers to the new generation. The Science Mill, located in Johnson City, Texas, provides fun, interactive learning activities for all ages that expand students' appreciation and understanding of science.

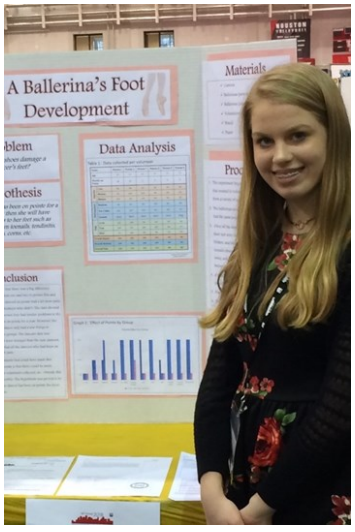
2018 AWIS GCH Scholarship Award Winners

Ms. Susan Liu and **Ms. Natalie McKeig** received the Association of Women in Science Gulf Coast Houston (AWIS GCH) Scholarship Award of Excellence for an outstanding project and presentation. AWIS GCH participated as a special awarding agency with the Science and Engineering Fair of Houston (SEFH) held on February 24, 2018. Out of the 25 Junior Division (grade 7th & 8th) projects judged by Ifrah Chaudhary, our Scholarship Chair (2017-2018), Ms. Liu's project titled "Snails vs. Alzheimer's" and Ms. McKeig's project titled "A Ballerina's Foot Development," won top honors. Both of the budding scientists received a cash prize of $100 and a certificate plaque from AWIS GCH.

Ms. Liu, a student at Knox Junior High School, is interested in medical science. She wants to determine whether ginkgo biloba would regenerate the hippocampus of people who have Alzheimer's disease. After conducting her experiment, this strengthened her resolve to pursue a career in medicine and contribute to the community. Her future goals include developing treatments to enable doctors to diagnose a problem among people with Alzheimer's disease.



Ms. Susan Liu



Ms. Natalie McKeig

Ms. Natalie McKeig, a student at St. Anthony of Padua Catholic School, has been performing ballet as a dancer since she was a child. With all that experience, she understands the demands ballet places on the foot and ankle. This strengthened her resolve to pursue a career in dance medicine and contribute to the ballet community. Her future goals include becoming a Podiatrist to understand the structure and function of a ballet's foot, and to clinically assess a dancer's readiness to dance on pointe.

2017 AWIS GCH Award for Excellence in Communication

The AWIS GCH Awards for Excellence in Communication are given annually to graduate and undergraduate students. AWIS GCH solicited essays of 700 words or less on the following topic: "Closing the STEM Gender Gap: Why Is It Important and What Can You Do to Help?"

The 1st place winner (cash prize: $300) was María Elisa Terrón. María was born and raised in Puerto Rico. She came to Houston to pursue a Ph.D. at Baylor College of Medicine. Her work focuses on using the Dopamine Receptor D2 to understand how ligand-binding information is transferred through the transmembrane helices to exert different effects on signaling pathways. She is a fan of Julia de Burgo's poetry and looks forward to getting more involved in advocacy.

The 2nd place winner (cash prize: $200) was Vidyalakshmi Sethunath. Vidya is a PhD candidate at Baylor College of Medicine. Her doctoral research involves solving critical problems that hinder the treatment of breast cancer. She studies the mechanisms of resistance to targeted therapy in HER2-positive breast cancer and seeks to develop novel low-toxicity strategies to overcome this therapy resistance. Vidya is passionate about gender equality in STEM and wants to get involved in initiatives for creating better opportunities for women in academia and industry. Vidya is a trained Indian classical singer, a fitness enthusiast, and is a social butterfly who enjoys having long conversations with people of different cultures and with varied life experiences.

Interview with Melissa Singh at Fannin Innovation Studio

Melissa Singh earned her BS in Chemistry at the University of Maryland in 2001, and her PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at the University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in 2008. She conducted postgraduate research as an NRSA Fellow at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center. Melissa received the Bristol-Myers Squibb Award for Postgraduate Clinical/Translational Research and the Ben F. Love Endowed Fellowship in Innovative Cancer Therapies for her research in glioblastomas. She joined Fannin Innovation Studio as an intern, and is now a principal that leads several therapeutics portfolio companies. She also continues to develop the Fannin fellowship program.

1) What differentiates Fannin Innovation Studio (FIS) from other incubators and accelerators in the Houston startup community?

Fannin Innovation Studio plays a very different role in our ecosystem from the incubators, accelerators, and the many other organizations that support entrepreneurs and their startups. Fannin's role is not to help entrepreneurs with their startups – though we do like to see them succeed. Rather, we ourselves are the entrepreneurial team (i.e. serve as the management team) that develops the technologies.

If you are an entrepreneur who is developing an innovative technology, the ecosystem has many organizations who want to help you succeed, including incubators and accelerators, but also business development groups, Small Business Administration (SBA), and investors. Each plays a different role in helping you, the entrepreneur, succeed. But in all cases, for example, to join JLabs or TMCx, you would need to be an independent startup with a management team and funding.

Unlike accelerators and incubators, the Fannin Studio does not provide space or other support to third-party startups. Instead, we are investing our resources, which includes people, space and funds, to internally develop technologies, most of which have been in-licensed from academic institutions in the Texas Medical Center. Our "customers" are academic inventors rather than the entrepreneur, who are the customers for accelerators and incubators. You could also see us as being like a biotech company, only developing a dozen different technologies in parallel with each other.

2) As a principal at FIS, what are your daily responsibilities?

At Fannin, I wear many hats and have the opportunity to do just about everything that is required for a project to succeed.

My three major areas of focus at Fannin are in-licensing, technology development, and intern/fellowship.

In-licensing is a critical component of Fannin's business model, since most of the technologies that we are currently advancing are licensed from Texas Medical Center institutions. For this, I put on a business development hat. I am part of the team that seeks new technologies, and reviews and evaluates the opportunities within a certain timeframe to recommend further action to the management team. While some of our opportunities are sent over the transom, we also proactively seek new technologies by reading scientific literature, attending seminars and conferences, both scientific and financial, and staying connected with the technology commercialization offices at the academic institutions.

Fannin's primary goal is to develop novel and effective therapeutics and medical devices. After in-licensing, we spend the bulk of our time advancing the technologies in Fannin's pipeline to the clinic. I am responsible for several of the therapeutics projects at Fannin, and manage the multiple aspects of preclinical development to advance our drug candidates from the discovery stage through IND-enabling studies and to the clinic. This includes support of project teams around late-stage discovery activities, responsibility for preclinical study design, drug substance and product manufacturing, oversight of safety and toxicology studies, supervision of both internal activities and those at contract research organizations, coordination of the team (including internal scientists, consultants, etc.), study design and analysis, management of budgets, writing grants and reports, and assembly of any documentation. I also am responsible for managing intellectual property and other licensing-related reports.

Lastly, I am the director of Fannin's internship and fellowship program. The internship program is a part-time program designed to provide graduate students and postdoctoral fellows with the opportunity to get a sense for what preclinical development is like. Interns spend 1-1.5 days a week with us for three months and contribute to projects that are relevant to the development of one or more of our portfolio companies. We have had over 160 interns work with us over the past 5 years, many of which have continued to work in life sciences commercialization in some way. The fellowship program is a two-year, full-time program designed to support the development of future leaders in life sciences commercialization. It is anticipated that the fellows will take on more of a leadership role within the Fannin projects and also participate in a development program designed to complement the experiential learning activities.

Interview with Melissa Singh (continued)

3) You have mentored many graduate students/ interns. What are the qualities you are looking for in terms of being a successful entrepreneur?

Many of the qualities that make one a successful graduate student or postdoc are the same for being a successful intern or fellow at Fannin. I feel that graduate students and postdocs can learn just about anything – it is what we are trained to do! – but I do look for individuals with a solid science background. Additionally, I have found that individuals with the following attributes typically end up successful:

- Self-managing and autonomous. These individuals are able to work effectively with little supervision and are focused on getting tasks accomplished. They tend to be more proactive instead of waiting for someone to instruct at every step.
- Leadership. Candidates who have taken on a leadership role in some capacity demonstrate that he/she has the willingness and desire to take charge of a project and take ownership of the results.
- Risk-taker and resilience. Most of the life science start-ups fail (just like experiments in the lab!). You have to be willing to take risks and embrace activities where there is uncertainty in the future – and pick yourself up and keep moving when things don't go as expected.
- Strong interpersonal skills. Developing a therapeutic or medical device product requires the coordination of a team of people. It is critical to be able to communicate with a broad range of people, listen to different points of view, and have an upbeat, positive attitude.
- Flexibility. You have to be willing to adapt and change as new knowledge is gained and to solve problems as they arise. You want to be able to find creative and effective solutions to issues.

4) What did you learn from your graduate school and post-doc training that you find most helpful to your current work?

The research training that I received as a graduate student and as a postdoctoral fellow really provided the foundation to be able to easily transition into a career that is focused on applied science. Many of the skill sets learned throughout the graduate and postdoc training period are transferrable to other career paths. The list of things that I learned that are helpful for my position today is quite long, but if I had to select just a few I would say that the desire to tackle complex topics and quickly come up to speed in a new field, the ability to critically think about problems and ask important questions, and program leadership are among the most useful.

5) Any advice for graduate students/postdocs who are looking to transition into life science entrepreneurship?

I have two suggestions for trainees who are looking to explore other career options, including a life sciences entrepreneurship. First, start building your network of contacts. I really cannot stress this enough. Be open to networking both within your field of interest as well as beyond. When you make it a point to network, and network effectively, you open yourself up to so many more options, some of which you did not even realize were a possibility.

The second suggestion that I have is to get involved in activities outside of your primary area of research to help expand your skill sets and experiences. I feel that this helps one better define what attributes of a career are most important and rule out things that are not a good fit. Additionally, these activities are what will set you apart from other candidates who will also have strong scientific backgrounds. You should leverage the opportunities in the ecosystem and be open to trying new things.

Specifically, for life science entrepreneurship in Houston, you can find labs or projects within your lab that are more geared towards product development or industry relationships, join and contribute to organizations like BioHouston or Enventure, actively participate in the Bioventures program or Start-up Challenges, attend TMCx and JLabs events, or participate in internship programs. Fannin has an internship (part-time) and fellowship (full-time) program designed to provide graduate students and postdocs with the opportunity to explore what it is like in a life sciences start-up environment and contribute to the progress of our portfolio projects. If you are interested in these programs, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Melissa Singh, PhD

Hurricane Fundraiser with Charming Charlie Fall 2017

On October 28, 2017, AWIS GCH hosted a fundraiser at Charming Charlie-Katy to raise funds for hurricane Harvey relief. AWIS GCH board members concurrently raised awareness for women in STEM by performing science activities and interacting with customers.

Monthly Networking Opportunities

AWIS GCH hosts a networking event on the first Tuesday of each month. Come meet people and try a different place every time! You can share your ideas and needs with your AWIS GCH representatives, and discuss workshop and career development opportunities that you'd like to see offered in the future. Your AWIS GCH representatives look forward to meeting you there!

Networking Bootcamp Spring 2019

Learn to network effectively while having fun! AWIS GCH is proud to offer the Spring 2019 edition of our popular Networking Bootcamp! Networking is a skill, not a talent. And it is right now at the tip of your fingers-learn the tools this workshop has to offer! Dr. Agathe Bourgogne will be leading the event, which will start on February 22, 2019. Visit http://awisgch.org for more information and to sign-up!

Strategies for Writing Interview-Winning CVs and Resumes

On September 28, 2017, AWIS GCH hosted Part 1 of a professional development workshop series. The workshop consisted of open discussions and roundtables focused on tips and strategies for writing CVs and resumes that would lead to getting an interview. AWIS GCH is very thankful to the panelists, which were: 1) Colby Suire, Director of Immune Monitoring at Cell Medica, Inc., 2) Joseph Senesac, VP of Viral Vector Manufacturing and Assay Development at Bellicum Pharmaceuticals, Inc., 3) Kristin Bird, VP of Global Human Resources at Nalco Champion, 4) Warren Denning, Medical Science Liaison at Juno Therapeutics, 5) Erin Stashi, Medical Science Liaison at Celgene, 6) Sina Safayi, Assistant Director of Career Development at UTHealth, 7) Karen Motsinger, Talent Acquisition Consultant/Recruiter at UTHealth, 8) Ivan Liadi, Consultant and President of the Texas Medical Center Consulting Club, 9) Dipali Date, Business Developer at Fannin Innovation Studio.

Building Confidence for the Big Stage

On February 16, 2018, AWIS GCH hosted Part 2 of a professional development workshop series. Namita Dodwadkar, Ph.D., a senior scientist in Pharmaceutical Sciences at GreenLight Biosciences, spoke to the audience about pursuing their personal passions and ambitions while enjoying a successful professional career. Prior to her current position she completed postdoctoral research training in a start-up company and worked for Novartis as a Senior Scientist. In addition to being a scientist, Namita was crowned as the first Mrs. India Worldwide in 2016 and the first Mrs. India USA in 2014. As an actress and model, she has appeared in TV commercials and modeled for brands like CVS, Dunkin Donuts, Santander Bank, and eBay, and played lead roles in various feature films, short films, and web series. She teaches Latin (advanced Salsa and Bachata) and Bollywood dances. In her talk, she spoke about her experiences and shared many tips on building confidence throughout all aspects of one's life.

Workshop: How to Get Noticed and Get Recruited

On April 19, 2018, AWIS GCH hosted a professional development workshop for their members and the public. The panelists for this workshop were Karen Motsinger, Talent Acquisition Consultant/Recruiter at UT Health, Melinda Cochrum, MSL Recruiter at Sembio, and Laurissa Gann, Manager of Education and Access Services at MD Anderson. The workshop focused on how to build a strong online professional presence and stand out to recruiters. AWIS GCH thanks all of the panelists for sharing their wonderful tips!

Networking Bootcamp Spring 2018

The popular Networking Bootcamp took place during Spring 2018. Dr. Agathe Buorgogne, Associate Director of Program Management at Immatics Biotechnologies led 4 bootcamp sessions over 2 months. Participants learned the nuances of building a professional network successfully. As the workshop progressed, participants learned how to approach and effectively communicate with colleagues and professionals at networking events. This was accomplished by interactive exercises, feedback from Dr. Bourgogne and fellow participants, and application of these exercises in recommended networking events!

AWIS
ASSOCIATION FOR WOMEN IN SCIENCE
Gulf Coast Houston

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/

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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