

Graduate Women in Science Travel Award Report
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The generous Graduate Women in Science (GWIS) Travel Award gave me the opportunity to attend the 2013 biennial meeting on "Eukaryotic mRNA Processing" held at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories (CSHL), New York. This was my first time attending an international conference, and in addition my first opportunity to give an oral presentation at a conference. Many international leading scientists attended the conference, and the smaller size of the conference offered the opportunity to learn about their research first-hand.

Since this conference did not hold parallel sessions, I was able to attend all talks and poster sessions that I was interested in. In addition to learning more about pre-mRNA splicing and research trends in this field, I had the opportunity to learn about topics outside my direct field of expertise. Since I work in a structural biology lab, I particularly enjoyed Dr. Luehrmann's talk on the "3D Cryo-EM structure of the yeast activated spliceosome (B^{act}) and localization of functionally important regions" and Dr. Eric Montemayor's talk (Butcher and Brow laboratories) "Core structure of the yeast U6 snRNP at 1.8 Å resolution reveals an extensive and unusual RNA-protein interface". From these and other talks I developed a broader understanding of the current state of the field and challenges for tackling larger complexes in the future.

During the "RNA/Protein Interactions" session, I presented my crystallographic and biophysical studies on the complex of the subdomains of the alternative splicing factor CAPER α and SF3b155. I was very excited to be given the opportunity to share my work with an international audience from different scientific backgrounds. Following my talk and throughout the conference, I was approached by several scientists, both PhD students and senior scientist from established labs, including the Valcárcel laboratory and the Query laboratory who wanted to discuss my research and were so kind to share some of their findings and thoughts relevant to my work.

Since I had given my talk in the opening session, I had time to take full advantage of the poster sessions, which I found very helpful in expanding my understanding of current research within and outside the field of pre-mRNA splicing. As opposed to the short 12 min talks, the poster sessions allowed not only for a comprehensive discussion of the research I was interested in, but also allowed for questions and clarifications regarding the background of research I was not immediately familiar with.

Several social events further facilitated the interaction with other conferees and sparked several interesting conversations and discussions on scientific and career-related topics. For instance, the career session at one of the dinners allowed PhD students and Postdocs to discuss various topics with faculty. Being from Europe and intending to return eventually, I was particularly interested in learning more about "Careers in Europe", the funding situation there, and similarities and differences in typical career paths compared to the US.

In summary, the conference at CSHL was a valuable experience and a significant milestone of my Graduate School experience. The conference was a unique opportunity for me to share my research and to get feedback on my work. I am truly grateful to Dr. Lynne Maquat and GWIS for supporting my attendance at the 2013 CSHL conference on "Eukaryotic mRNA Processing" as well as my advisor Dr. Clara L. Kielkopf for her encouragement.