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I would like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Graduate Women in Science (GWIS) for supporting my travel to the Red Cell Gordon Research Seminar (GRS) and the Gordon Research Conference (GRC). The Red Cell GRS and GRC are venues to present novel, unpublished data to an audience specialized in erythroid-cell biology. The GRS is a one-day conference preceding the main GRC. The GRS provides the opportunity for trainees to present in a relaxed setting, network, and interact with their peers before the main GRC.

The conference was divided into topically distinct sections, such as epigenetics, metabolism-and disease, all pertaining to erythrocyte biology. The diversity of talks enabled a better understanding of the field as a whole and allowed trainees exposure to different aspects of erythrocyte biology. The wide array of topics allowed trainees the ability to explore how similar scientific questions can be approached by different research areas. In addition to the wide expanse of erythrocyte biology that was covered during the conference, new methodology and technology expected to enhance currently on-going research was introduced.

I presented a poster at both the GRS and GRC entitled “Histone H2A Variants are Required for Normal Erythroid Maturation”. Presenting my poster at both venues afforded me the opportunity to receive comments from my peers and established investigators alike. The comments I received from my peers were primarily technique-based while the comments received by established investigators were big picture questions, including how my research relates to what is already known and how other areas of erythroid-cell biology could impact my research. The comments I received were thoughtful, and the key takeaways will be incorporated into my project.

The GRS and GRC provided ample opportunity to network and socialize. Furthermore, the GRC held a “GRC Power Hour” event, which focused on empowering women in science by providing a forum for women to discuss the challenges that they face in the field. The event was well-attended by all genders and was certainly insightful. I noted that while challenges for women in science were discussed, there was always an attempt at a solution or guidance on handling the various challenges faced.

My attendance at the well-respected GRS and GRC was informative, and the experience added value to both my career and research project. I was able to gather new ideas for my research as well as make connections that have transformed into collaborations following the conference. This amazing opportunity would not have been possible without support from GWIS.