

GWIS Travel Award Report 2017
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First and foremost, I would like to thank Graduate Women in Science (GWIS) for sponsoring my attendance at the American Thoracic Society (ATS) International Conference in Washington, D.C., from May 20th-24th, 2017. The ATS conference brings together over 10,000 clinicians and basic scientists from around the world with a focus on pulmonary disease, presenting an ideal environment to network and learn the latest research in the field.

At the conference, I had the opportunity to present a poster entitled “Novel role for protein kinase D in regulating airway epithelial cytokine secretion and barrier integrity.” There is a growing interest in the impact of airway barrier dysfunction in respiratory infection and chronic disease, and many investigators were interested in learning about our work on epithelial barrier integrity. Several others were interested in learning more about protein kinase D. I was able to discuss not only my findings and receive feedback on my project, but also discuss recent work others have done related to protein kinase D in other models. The lectures and poster discussion sessions also increased my knowledge of current directions in pulmonary research. For instance, I learned how the lung microbiome relates to the gut and oral microbiome and how it changes in different disease states. Similarly, I was able to learn more about current work relating to other interests of the Georas lab, such as asthma and particulate matter exposure.

I participated in several networking and professional development opportunities at the conference. One highlight from the Center for Career Development was hearing several journal editors give writing and publication advice. The ATS also has a mentor program that matches trainees with established members, who help young scientists navigate the conference and networking opportunities. Over coffee, we discussed career advice and key events for early career/trainees to attend, meeting up again at the assembly meeting in the evening. I plan to continue to stay in touch with my mentors.

In summary, attending the ATS International Conference was incredibly beneficial to my graduate training. The poster session helped me develop my communication skills; lectures/sessions increased my knowledge of current advances in lung biology; and the mentorship program helped develop my professional skills and establish a long-term networking contact. Again, I would like to thank GWIS for supporting my attendance at the 2017 ATS conference and look forward to future participation in GWIS activities.