

Graduate Women in Science 2013 Spring Travel Award Report
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I would like to thank Graduate Women in Science (GWIS) for a generous travel award, which enabled me to attend the 100th Annual International Conference of the American Association of Immunologists (AAI) from May 2nd to 7th in Honolulu, Hawaii. This is a premier research conference for immunology investigators from throughout the world and was also the first immunology meeting that I attended. It gave me the opportunity to form professional connections with other investigators and students in my field of research, in addition to being exposed to a diversity of immunology research.

During my time at the conference, I attended numerous platform talks that were relevant to my research as well as several that just piqued my interest. I had the opportunity to enrich my knowledge in my particular field in addition to learning about topics outside of my field. I particularly enjoyed the sessions on innate immunology and the Distinguished Lecture by Ruslan Medzhitov on basic inflammatory processes. I was also able to attend a platform talk given by a member of my lab. This allowed me to not only support him but also talk with him after his presentation to learn about the process of speaking at a large meeting. I attended several sessions that were applicable to research being conducted by my lab mates so that my trip would be beneficial to others as well. When I returned to lab after the conference, I gave a lab meeting on what was new and exciting at the conference.

The conference was ideal for my poster presentation on “Methods to improve the efficacy and safety of red blood cell and platelet transfusions.” We know that red blood cell and platelet transfusions are associated with many inflammatory complications that can be mediated by the innate immune system. I had previously presented my work to researchers in the field of transfusion medicine or to platelet experts. This was the first time I had the opportunity to present my work to immunologists. At my poster presentation, I was able to practice conveying my research to people with different scientific backgrounds. My discussions with others helped me form new ideas on how to approach my research.

I would like to thank GWIS for supporting my attendance at 2013 AAI conference, which expanded my scientific knowledge and offered me the chance to present my research. I formed many new connections, met a few of our collaborators for the first time, and explored post-doctoral and career options. This certainly was a great opportunity for me and has enriched my graduate experience.