

Graduate Women in Science 2013 Spring Travel Award Report

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With the generous support from Graduate Women in Science (GWIS), I was able to attend the 2013 meeting “Mechanisms of Eukaryotic Transcription” that was held August 27th to 31st at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories in Long Island, New York. This is the most prestigious meeting in the transcription field. The 5-day conference covered an intense program, which included a large number of talks and several poster sessions and provided extensive information on the latest breakthroughs in this field. The meeting also offered a great platform to scientists around the world to share knowledge, seek advice, and form professional networks.

The meeting offered 8 sessions of talks focusing on different aspects of the process of eukaryotic transcription. There were 8 talks in each session. Due to my interest in having a broad understanding of this area, and also because of my responsibilities as a microphone carrier, I went to every talk. The cutting-edge techniques and groundbreaking discoveries tremendously expanded the scope of my knowledge and provided valuable information that is relevant to my own research. Among all the talks, I especially enjoyed the last session, in which scientists reported using genomic and systems biological approaches to reveal genome-wide chromatin organization, visualize transcription machinery at high resolution, and elucidate the exquisite control of specific steps in transcription regulation. I also observed the presentation styles of different people and learned how to give a good scientific talk, including how to engage the audience, how to deliver ideas effectively, etc. Additionally, I met with several speakers after their talks. They addressed my questions and deepened my understanding of their talks.

During the meeting I also presented a poster with the title ‘Cdk12 is an RNA polymerase II kinase that is specifically required for the activation of stress responses’. My poster attracted people who are working in the same or related areas and people who study completely different topics but are interested in my research. Discussions at my poster offered constructive suggestions and helped me see my project from new perspectives. I also went to their posters, listened to their stories, and offered my opinions. The poster session was a great occasion for me to share experience, exchange information, and make professional connections.

I am very thankful to GWIS for supporting my attending this conference. It was a very fruitful trip. After I came back I gave a review of this meeting and shared what I learned in our group seminar. Overall, the conference was an excellent opportunity for me to stay updated on the most recent scientific research, get valuable advice on my own project, and expand my professional network.