I attended the Eukaryotic mRNA Processing conference held at Cold Spring Harbor in Long Island, New York, from August 22nd to 26th, 2023. This conference is renowned for bringing together researchers who specialize in the intricate field of mRNA processing. Its focus on this specific area of science provides ample opportunities for collaboration and inspiration.

With eight sessions covering topics such as RNA Processing in Disease, Mechanisms of RNA Splicing, and RNA modifications, I had the opportunity to immerse myself in discussions and presentations spanning various aspects of mRNA processing. I found the sessions related to RNA splicing particularly captivating since this is the subject of my thesis research project. One highlight was attending a talk given by Jian Zhang from Dr. James Manley's lab. Jian's talk presented his recently published paper on the SF3B1-SUGP1 interaction interface. This topic is directly relevant to my thesis, and it was valuable to hear about his work firsthand. I also had the opportunity to meet him after his talk. We further discussed SF3B1, his experience working with this protein, and how he interpreted data on this protein, providing insights for my research.

Conferences are always the opportunity to interact with people who share the same passion. Through connections of my PI, I had the honor of dining at the same table with many very famous scientists, such as Dr. Douglas Black and Dr. James Manley. Observing their discussions and interactions gave me a glimpse into the life of a very established scientist. I was astonished by their commitment to staying up-to-date with the latest topics and publications, despite their success. This inspired me to strive for excellence in my own research.

In addition to attending sessions and engaging in discussions, I had opportunity to present my work at a poster session. Many people visited my poster, and they were from diverse scientific backgrounds. Given that my project involves both experimental and computational aspects, I found myself explaining deep learning concepts to experimental researchers and providing experimental context to those doing computational research. This experience strengthened my ability to communicate complex ideas to a broad audience. I also received questions from people, some of whom provided perspectives that I hadn't considered before. Moreover, I enjoyed visiting other presenters' posters, where I had the opportunity to ask basic questions about areas outside my expertise – questions that I might have been intimidated to ask in other surroundings. Listening to other people asking questions is also insightful as it taught me lessons on how to ask meaningful questions, enriching my overall conference experience.

I was in the third trimester of pregnancy during the time of conference. There were challenges and inconveniences that I had to overcome. I was surprised to find many female researchers who were also pregnant or caring for toddlers during the conference. Their presence really encouraged me to balance family responsibilities with a successful career. Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed and learned a lot from the conference. I am grateful for the support that I received from my PI and lab mates, who helped me prepare for and attend the meeting in multiple ways. Lastly, I am grateful to GWIS for financial support, which made it possible for me to attend this rewarding event.