

AACR Annual Meeting 2022 Highlights

In April of 2022, over 20,000 scientists, clinicians and other health care professionals, and survivors and patients advocates from around the world traveled to New Orleans, Louisiana for the first in-person AACR Annual Meeting since 2019. The excitement at the meeting was palpable, and the theme - *Decoding Cancer Complexity | Integrating Science | Transforming Patient Outcomes* - highlighted the passion the attendees shared for translating the latest advances in cancer science and medicine into improved outcomes for patients. A recurring theme echoed by many attendees was the joy and excitement around coming together again in one place to accelerate progress toward our shared goals.

Over 2,500 Associate Members of the AACR (graduate students, medical students and residents, and clinical and postdoctoral fellows who are enrolled in educational or training programs leading to careers in cancer research) attended the meeting in person. The AACR was pleased to provide over 194 Scholar-in-Training Awards, 10 Women in Cancer Research (WICR) Scholar Awards, 60 Minority Scholar Awards, and 15 Global Scholar-in-Training Awards to support participation of Associate Members in the Annual Meeting. Members took the opportunity not only to attend scientific sessions, but also to participate in professional development sessions sponsored by the Associate Member Council (AMC), Minorities in Cancer Research (MICR) Council, Women in Cancer Research (WICR) Council, and the Science Education and Career Advancement Committee. Session topics included tips for success in graduate and professional school, grant writing, building a mentorship team, starting an independent research lab, and productive peer review, as well as opportunities for one-on-one mentoring through the popular Personalized Career Conversation program.



Global Scholar in Training Award recipients celebrate at the AMC Meet and Greet.

Here, several Associate Members share their takeaways from the 2022 Annual Meeting and the hybrid format:

“The hybrid meeting allowed me to experience all my favorite parts of the AACR Annual Meeting this year - reconnecting with colleagues and friends, learning about new science in a new city, while managing to catch up on all of the sessions without the pressure of missing out on anything. One of my favorite events was meeting the SITA, MICR, and WICR awardees. I had the opportunity to hear about the challenges these early career investigators all over the world have faced over the course of the pandemic and learn how they overcame challenges in resources or funding to pursue their aspirations. This meeting was a reminder that as science and medicine remains a priority, we need to continue supporting the lives and training of the individuals responsible for the future of cancer research.” - Katie Campbell, PhD, University of California Los Angeles

“I prefer being back in person over virtual only because it allows for one-on-one meetings. There is nothing like the in person human experience of meeting someone for the first time. The hybrid meeting is very special because it allows people to still attend even if they can't get time off work. Web based learning has really changed in a positive way since the pandemic so a hybrid option should be a mainstay, if possible. I feel that those who have the means to come in person will, but we should continue to tap into the power of zoom/webex type platforms to keep our trainees even more connected for years to come.” -Bianca Islam, MD, PhD, Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals

“I absolutely loved that AACR was back in person. There is nothing that matches the bond that you develop with people in person that is critical for career development as an Early Career Investigator! I was truly honored to have received the WICR Scholar Award and meet other Women in Cancer Research Scholars. At the various WICR sponsored sessions, including the WICR Meet and Greet, I had the opportunity to connect with female leaders in their fields, identify two new collaborators and potential research opportunities that will now serve as a steppingstone for research in the next phase of my career. I also reconnected with previous mentors at the intersection of surgery and cancer who I have only had the privilege of getting to know virtually. The WICR events allowed me to finally connect with these individuals in person and strengthen our bonds as I embark on my new journey in pursuing surgical oncology.” – Margaret Pichardo, MPH, MD/PhD candidate, Howard University College of Medicine and Yale School of Public Health



Panelists at the Professional Advancement Session: How to Design a Successful Career Path in Cancer Research.

Thoughts on the Professional Advancement Sessions and other professional development opportunities:

"I attended the Professional Advancement session, Productive Peer Review: Improving Science While Avoiding Pitfalls. As a predoctoral student who is transitioning into a postdoctoral position, I am extremely interested in participating in peer review. I believe it is an excellent opportunity to not only learn, but to expand your knowledge base. The panel of speakers gave excellent advice and even had activities for the group to work through. The session itself was interactive and I learned a great deal about the do's and don'ts of being a reviewer. I look forward to putting my new skills to good use!" - Kristin Ann Altwegg, MS, PhD Candidate, University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio

"I was really impressed by the Grant Writing workshop at the Annual Meeting. I have attended many grant writing workshops in the past, but I was intrigued by the title ("Not Your Mother's Typical Grant Writing Workshop") and chose to attend. I'm so glad I did! The speakers provided valuable insights that I had never heard before, and I'm excited to incorporate their suggestions in my next proposal." - Kristin G. Anderson, PhD, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center and the University of Washington

"I was honored to be the recipient of a Scholar-In-Training Award (SITA) this year, which has provided crucial support for my participation in person to the Annual Meeting 2022. The SITA Award Reception was a beautiful ceremony that provided an opportunity to meet and network with the other SITA and GSITA awardees, and to form new professional connections. The reception allowed us to acknowledge our supporter, and for sponsors to appreciate the impact of the awards on the careers of the trainees involved in cancer research. I am grateful to the AACR for supporting the training of early career scientists through these awards, which increase participation to the meeting, especially at a time when young investigators are facing additional challenges in obtaining funding towards their career development." – Francesco Caiazza, PhD, University of California San Francisco



AMC Career Discussion moderators, Dr. Margaret Pichardo (left) and Dr. Golnaz Morad (right), with guest speakers Drs. Katherine Tossas, Dr. Emil Lou, and Dr. Kristin Anderson (middle, left to right) after the session about how to ask for help.

"I enjoyed participating in the Personalized Career Conversations Professional Advancement session. PCC provided me the opportunity to receive advice from a senior scientist within my field on navigating

academia and steps on transitioning from a postdoctoral fellow to an independent researcher. Receiving this advice provided me with greater detail on how to be a successful researcher but also discuss the importance of maintaining a healthy work life balance.” - Wayne Lawrence, DrPH, MPH, National Institutes of Health

“I have attended the Personalized Career Conversations session, and particularly appreciated the new format of a panel discussion in the waiting area with the session co-chairs (Antonio T. Baines, PhD, Victoria M. Richon, PhD, and Danny R. Welch, PhD) on various topics related to the career development of early-career researchers, from transitioning between academia and industry to mentorship and work-life balance. This format allowed for an engaging conversation between the co-chairs and all the participants in the Professional Advancement Session as they were rotating in and out of their one-on-one conversations with the mentors.” - Francesco Caiazza, PhD, University of California San Francisco



Faculty mentor Dr. Jim Allison provides career advice for Associate Members at the Professional Advancement Session: Personalized Career Conversations.

“I really enjoyed the Meeting, especially the Professional Advancement Sessions. The AMC has made such an incredible job in choosing the speakers. I have been so inspired by what I learned on the sessions that I am going back to Brazil driven to implement a mentorship program at the department where I'm doing my postdoc.” - Barbara Paranhos Coelho, PhD, university of São Paulo, Brazil

“I had an incredible opportunity to meet one-on one with patient advocates during this past meeting. The advocates included individuals who were themselves cancer survivors or had family members diagnosed with cancer. They shared stories on survivorship and also the trials and tribulations after receiving the diagnosis. They opened up my eyes about all the support systems that have been grass root efforts to help patients navigate the health care system, from learning the basics of what cancer means all the way to helping them coordinate getting an appointment/referrals for a second opinion.” - Bianca Islam, MD, PhD, Case Western Reserve University and University Hospitals

Associate Members were also invited to exclusive member-only networking events, including the Associate Member Meet and Greet, where the AMC welcomed three new members and thanked four members rotating off the council.



Former Associate Member Council members (from left to right) Caroline Smith, Dr. Bianca Islam, Dr. Golnaz Morad, and Dr. Maeve Mullooly are honored for their contributions to the AACR at the AMC Meet and Greet.

“I truly enjoyed the Associate Member Meet and Greet event! I met so many young investigators, both pre and post doc, from around the globe. I made amazing networking connections and developed friendships that I will have the rest of my life. Additionally, I will be moving to Maryland in the fall and a few of the Associate members at the Meet and Greet were from MD and were willing to help me! I am much less nervous for my cross-country move knowing I have like-minded friends looking forward to my arrival in September! AACR is definitely the premier hub of cancer research that brings together thousands of dedicated minds for the single purpose of battling cancer. I could not be prouder of being a member and AMC representative for such an outstanding organization.” - Kristin Ann Altwegg, MS, PhD Candidate, University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio

“The Meet and Greet hosted by the AMC was a wonderful time to connect with peer mentors and colleagues. I learned about what other early career investigators are working on and actually connected with two colleagues who may be potential research collaborators in the near future! It is truly amazing the amount of networking and opportunities that people are exposed to when attending these Meet and Greet events. I highly encourage our Associate Membership to keep attending our sessions as well as other AACR sponsored events like this. You never who you may meet and what opportunities those individuals may bring!” – Margaret Pichardo, MPH, MD/PhD Candidate, Howard University College of Medicine and Yale School of Public Health



Enjoying many opportunities to network at the AMC Meet and Greet.

Several Associate Members volunteered to participate in the Undergraduate Student Caucus and Poster Competition, a forum that brings together undergraduate students at all levels to address educational pathways and explore career options in the cancer field while presenting their own research and competing for prizes at the AACR Annual Meeting.

“I had the amazing opportunity to participate as a panelist at the 17th Annual Undergraduate Student Caucus and Poster Competition during the AACR Annual Meeting 2022. I had the honor of speaking to high school and undergraduate students about my personal journey toward a PhD in cancer research. Many topics were discussed by the panelists including: work/life balance, how to decide if an advanced degree is for you, how to develop your mentoring team, women in STEM, when is a good time to have a family during your career, general career advice, important decision making, and many others. Being a panelist really made an impression on me regarding the importance of the Science Education and Career Advancement Sessions. Additionally, I found it inspiring to listen to the next generation of researchers discuss their projects and future plans.” - Kristin Ann Altwegg, MS, PhD Candidate, University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio



Undergraduate students engage with panelists at the full day USCPC professional development event.

"I found the AACR Undergraduate Poster Session truly inspiring! It was a room full of measured, well-informed, and enthusiastic future cancer biologists from all walks of life! Every poster I judged, I was impressed by not only the overall quality of the poster itself but also how these researchers had a strong grasp of their research and were able to tell me about the next question they want to explore. I walked out of this event feeling hopeful that the future of cancer research rests in very capable hands." - Sunil K Joshi, PhD, MD/PhD Candidate, Oregon Health & Science University



Undergraduates presented their research at the 17th Annual Undergraduate Student Caucus and Poster Competition.

The AACR Annual Meeting 2023 will be held in Orlando, Florida, April 14-19, 2023. Abstract submission will open in the fall of 2022, and we encourage all members to read "[Tips for Writing and Excellent Abstract](#)" for expert advice about abstract preparation. We hope to see you in Orlando!

AACR Associate Member Council 2022-2023