

Dear Associate Members,

I am pleased to share another update with you on behalf of the Associate Member Council (AMC) of the AACR. To our newest Associate Members, welcome. We are glad you are here. To those who have long been part of our AACR community, thank you for your sustained involvement, your participation in AACR programming, and your commitment to advancing cancer research.

Looking Ahead to the AACR Annual Meeting 2026 As we begin the new year, I encourage all Associate Members to plan ahead and register for the AACR Annual Meeting 2026. The Annual Meeting taking place April 17-22 in San Diego, remains one of the most impactful opportunities for early-career scientists and clinicians to present their research, build their professional networks, and engage with leading experts across the cancer research continuum. In addition to cutting-edge science, the AMC will again host several professional development programs and sessions that are specifically designed for trainees and early-career investigators.

This spring, the AMC will also be sharing a dedicated article focused on strategies for navigating the Annual Meeting as an Associate Member. Please look for this resource in an upcoming issue of *AACR Alert*.

Celebrating Our Newly Elected AMC Members I would like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Associate Member Council. This year's election cycle drew the largest number of applicants we have seen in the past five years, making for an exceptionally strong and competitive pool. The depth, talent, and commitment of applicants made this a particularly difficult selection process, and it speaks to the strength and engagement of our Associate Member community. A formal announcement that recognizes the newly elected AMC members is forthcoming, and I hope you will join me in welcoming and celebrating their service.

Advocacy and Early-Career Hill Day 2026

Advocacy remains an integral part of AACR's mission, and therefore the voices of early-career scientists and clinicians are essential. Early-Career Hill Day 2026 will take place **March 17–18, 2026**, and offers AACR Associate Members a unique opportunity to engage directly with policymakers and advocate for continued federal investment in cancer research and for minimizing the barriers to clinical trials. While applications for 2026 have closed, I encourage you to plan ahead and look for the next application cycle opening later this year!

Runners for Research 5K at the Annual Meeting

I am also excited to announce that this year's Runners for Research 5K will feature a dedicated team composed entirely of Associate Members. This includes all of the associate members who are graduate students, medical students, residents, clinical fellows, and postdoctoral fellows across all areas of cancer research. The 5K is a meaningful way to build community, support cancer research, and connect outside of our traditional scientific

sessions, while we raise money for research. The details regarding registration and team participation are forthcoming, and we hope many of you will join us.

Maintain Your Associate Membership Status

I want to emphasize the importance of maintaining your Associate Membership by recertifying your eligibility. Associate Members who have not recertified their eligibility appear as inactive in AACR membership records and are unable to take advantage of Associate Member benefits. A forthcoming *AACR Alert* article will walk through the recertification process, but I encourage you to review your status now to ensure uninterrupted access to all that AACR offers its Associate Members.

A Personal Note

I am still deeply honored to serve as your 2025–2026 AMC Chair. What has meant the most to me in this role is the sense of connectedness we have continued to build across our Associate Member community, from elevating the work and contributions of our postdoctoral fellows to creating programming and moments of celebration for trainees at every stage. Watching graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, residents, and early-career investigators support one another, celebrate milestones, and step into leadership has been both humbling and inspiring. That collective energy was especially evident in the incredible level of engagement we saw during this year's election process.

I have always considered the AACR Annual Meeting a homecoming. It is a time to reconnect with mentors, colleagues, and friends, where we reflect on personal and professional growth, and return to a shared sense of purpose in advancing cancer research. Leading such an engaged and passionate group of Associate Members has been a true honor, and serving in this role has only reinforced how powerful it is when trainees and early-career scientists feel connected, supported, and valued.

I look forward to the few short months ahead as we continue building toward the Annual Meeting. This year will celebrate 30 strong years of the AMC! As we continue to expand opportunities for professional development, advocacy, and connection, thank you for allowing me the privilege of serving as we work together to advance the mission of the AACR.

Warmly,

Heather K. Beasley, M.S., Ph.D.
Chair, AACR Associate Member Council
2025–2026