

SOT Undergraduate Education Program for Minority Students Celebrates 20th Anniversary



An impressive milestone was reached in March 2009 with SOT hosting a selective group of undergraduate students from groups under represented in the sciences at the 2009 Annual Meeting. For almost every year in the last two decades, SOT has received funding from the NIH Minority Access to Research Careers program to provide travel support for students and advisors selected through a national application process. A special event was held on March 14 celebrating this milestone, and the program was also recognized during the SOT Awards Ceremony on March 15 with a special [citation](#).

Claude McGowan, co-chair of the anniversary events along with **Vicente Santa Cruz**, said "For the past 20 years, a significant number of undergraduate students have been given not only some valuable face time with practicing toxicologists, but also afforded the opportunity to learn first hand what Toxicology is, what Toxicologists do, where they work, what types of salaries are possible, the types of career opportunities that are available, and where to go for training. All this has been accomplished during an extended weekend in March!! Whether or not past participants have chosen toxicology or a related biological sciences discipline as a career path is not as important as is knowing that this brief but impressionable look at the lives and careers of members of

SOT most likely influenced their career path decision making in some way."

Currently three program alumnae—**Vanessa Silva**, **Adrian Nanez**, and **Jennifer Rayner**—have stepped into leadership roles in SOT by serving on the Committee for Diversity Initiatives. Another alum participating in the 2009 program was **Antonio Baines**.

During the celebration event, photos from the last decade cycled on the screen as students who were in the program in the past, those who were in the early years, current participants, and others supportive of the program continued to network. Dr. McGowan noted "The photos from past sessions clearly show that each SOT member who has taken the time to interact with and engage the visiting students in discussions of career opportunities has a deep commitment to the objectives of the program. They care about the students, they care about the Society, they care about the future of our discipline, clearly they care."



Anniversary celebrants hear the history and accomplishments of the undergraduate program



Faye Calhoun Broadwater encouraged students to take advantage of opportunities for careers in research

Of the many people responsible for the success of the program, four were selected for special recognition. In introducing special speakers **Faye Calhoun Broadwater** and **Marion Ehrich**, McGowan said, "Vision, commitment, caring, dedication, tenacity...are all words that describe these individuals and their actions on behalf of the SOT's Educational goal of attracting more minority students to the discipline. In 1989, Drs. Ehrich and Calhoun Broadwater worked with others to address this issue and successfully brought local students to the Annual Meeting in Atlanta and the following year in Miami. This eventually led to funding from the NIH-Minority Access to Research Careers Program. Dr. Ehrich served as initial Principal Investigator (PI) for the Grant before passing the baton on to **Myrtle Davis-Millin**, who diligently preserved the funding through several cycles before passing the stewardship responsibilities on to the current PI, **Jose Manautou**." All four received a special plaque.

Dr. Calhoun Broadwater puts the program in perspective when she says, "This program has stood the test of time and proven that with our kind of support and mentoring, we can increase and retain minority scientists in toxicology. Most impressive is the fact that those who were mentored in the first 10 years have stepped up to the task of carrying on this Program as well as becoming known for developing students at their home



20th Anniversary Celebration of the Undergraduate Program honored individuals who were instrumental in the development and growth of this effort, including (left to right) Claude McGowan, Mari Stavanja, Fay Calhoun, Marion Ehrich, and Adrian Nanez.

Paracelsus Outside the Classroom Was Huge Success in Baltimore

On March 15, the excitement in the Baltimore streets for St. Patrick was equally matched inside the Port Discovery Children's Museum. The Society of Toxicology K–12 Task Force, under the sponsorship of the Communications Committee, organized an energetic and successful outreach event in association with this year's Annual Meeting.



"Paracelsus Outside the Classroom" introduced children to the role of toxicology in every day life through hands-on experiments and a scavenger hunt of toxicology facts. More than 800 small children and their families were exposed to various toxicology concepts, including oxidation, chemical reactions, and healthy habits to prevent disease. Children from various organizations (SOT membership, Boys and Girls Club, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Big Brother/Big Sister, home schools, and elementary schools) took part in the event, having learned about it from various networking and publicity sources in the Baltimore area. SOT paid for reduced rate tickets and distributed them to those who registered in advance.

Stacie Wild (registration). Kristie Gulick was the assistance was provided by Martha Lindauer and

Lead by **Maureen Gwinn**, the other Task Force members organizing the event included **Joanna Matheson** (experiments), **Suzanne Fitzpatrick** (volunteer coordination), **Daniel Arrieta** (volunteer recruitment), **Kathy Gabrielson** (high school recruitment and organization), **Katie Sprugel** (scavenger hunt), and **Mary Stapleton** at UMBI, and SOT staff

and **Betty Eidemiller**.

[Paracelsus Outside the Classroom](#) was modeled after an outreach event that the SOT National Capital Area Regional Chapter has sponsored for the past two years in Frederick, MD. The three experiments were selected from those used in this pilot event, and included Baggie Science, Bouncing Ball, and Friendly Fungus. Two weeks prior to the event, high school volunteers were trained in the experiments, and then lead the younger children in these experiments with the assistance of SOT members. In this way, this event not only exposed the younger children to toxicology, but also served as an excellent training exercise for the high school students. Further, the high school students were able to interact with established scientists and learn more about career opportunities in toxicology. The scavenger hunt highlighted various key points in toxicology, including natural toxins, pesticide use, toxic effects of lead, food safety, and others, using displays that were already present in the museum. The Maryland Poison Control Center was also on hand with a booth on household poisons. Representatives also answered questions throughout the day to help kick off Poison Prevention Week.



At [Port Discovery Children's Museum](#) (target age group grades 1–6) from 10:00 AM to 12:00 NOON families pre-registered through SOT rotated through the three different experiments, participated in the scavenger hunt, or did independent exploration, or combinations of those activities. At noon, the museum opened to the public, who were then encouraged to participate in all aspects of the event, including experiments, demonstrations, and the scavenger hunt. At 2:00 PM, the second session officially began with a wave of more pre-registered individuals to take part in all events until the museum closed at 5:00 PM.

More than 40 high school students (primarily juniors and seniors) were scheduled a half day as experiment leaders at Port Discovery and the other half day at University of Maryland Biotechnology Institute (UMBI). There they

engaged in an experiment extracting natural plant products and looking for toxic effects on bioluminescent bacteria. Students were welcomed by **Bill Hays** or **Marion Ehrich**, active participants in SOT Educational Outreach activities, who interacted with area scientists about the Society of Toxicology. A mentoring sign-up sheet was supplied so that students interested in a mentoring experience could be matched by their interests and that of area scientists.