

Inspiring Younger Chemists to become the Future of Science and Leadership

By: Caitlyn L. Mills, NSYCC Chair (caitlyn.mills@nsycc.org)

This past August, twenty-one young chemists and I embarked on an eye-opening, life-changing adventure through the SciFinder Future Leaders program. I first learned about this opportunity from a friend who had participated in the program in the past. The application process involved submitting a CV, a letter of recommendation, and an essay on one's research and experience with SciFinder. Since I use the application often and wanted a behind-the-scenes look into how it was constructed and maintained, I decided to apply. This prestigious program brought together young chemists, not only with different scientific interests, but from different parts of the world. We were given the unique opportunity to learn the inner workings of the Chemical Abstracts Service (CAS) division of ACS as well as to develop our networks and careers (exponentially).

In the first portion of the program, the Future Leaders gathered at CAS headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, for a fast-paced week filled with workshops, focus groups, and fun! From day one, we were immersed in thought-provoking exercises that brought us out of our shells and closer together. We participated in workshops hosted by CAS staff members on communicating science through innovation, marketing, and presentations. Every session offered valuable information and transferable skills that every scientist can benefit from.

After a few days at CAS, we flew to Washington, DC, for a day at ACS headquarters before the start of the national meeting. While at ACS, we participated in a number of workshops and activities on authoring, leadership, communication, and the reviewing of manuscripts. This experience allowed us to interact with ACS staff as well as learn information directly from the experts.

Finally, the Future Leaders got to experience all that the national meeting had to offer. Many of us also had the opportunity to give poster or oral presentations; I was

selected to give an oral presentation during the Graduate Student & Postdoctoral Fellow Symposium hosted by the Division of Biological Chemistry, where I spoke about my current research in protein function annotation using computational methods to predict the function of proteins, and testing these predictions biochemically. This research is crucial to bridge the gap between chemical biology and computational chemistry while providing an approach to functional annotation for wide applications, including drug discovery, alternative energy technology, biofuel production, and controlling antibiotic resistance.

I think I can speak for all of the Future Leaders when I say this program was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that taught us a great deal, not only about ACS and CAS, but also about ourselves as individuals and scientists. The program was intensive and involved long hours over a short period of time, and we all wished we had a little longer. We didn't want the program to end, and we left with an enormous amount of information, unforgettable experiences, and friendships that will last a lifetime. Each person I met during this program, Future Leaders and members of CAS/ACS, inspired me both professionally and personally. I strongly recommend and encourage all chemistry Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers to apply for the SciFinder Future Leaders program. It has been one of the most pivotal moments in my career thus far. For more information, check the CAS webpage (www.cas.org). The application deadline for the next program will be in early 2018. If you would like to learn more about this year's Future Leaders, check out the article in *C&EN* (July 31, 2017, pp. 40-42).

Since returning from my trip to CAS and the ACS meeting, I have fully taken over the chair position of NSYCC. At the meeting, we were honored to win a ChemLuminary Award for Outstanding Sustainability Activity for our Green Chemistry workshop that we co-hosted with UMass Boston and Pfizer last year. We also hosted our annual Fall Mixer night in September, which gave young chemists in the Boston area the chance to get together and network while enjoying some friendly competition through chemistry-themed trivia. On November 18, we will hold our Second Annual Fall Career Symposium at Boston University, which will feature workshops for younger chemists from the

undergraduate to postdoctoral levels to engage them in resume and CV construction, cover letter writing, and confidence building; panels will provide expert guidance on career paths in academia, industry, and other professions. In addition, a separate program for undergraduates will be held at Bridgewater State University on November 29. For more information on these two events, check the NSYCC webpage (www.nsycc.org).

The NSYCC is planning a number of programs for 2018 as well, including our annual Northeast Student Chemistry Research Conference (NSCRC) and hosting events during the Fall ACS National Meeting in Boston in August. I am very excited for all that NSYCC has to offer and to interact with other young chemists in the area!

Photo and caption

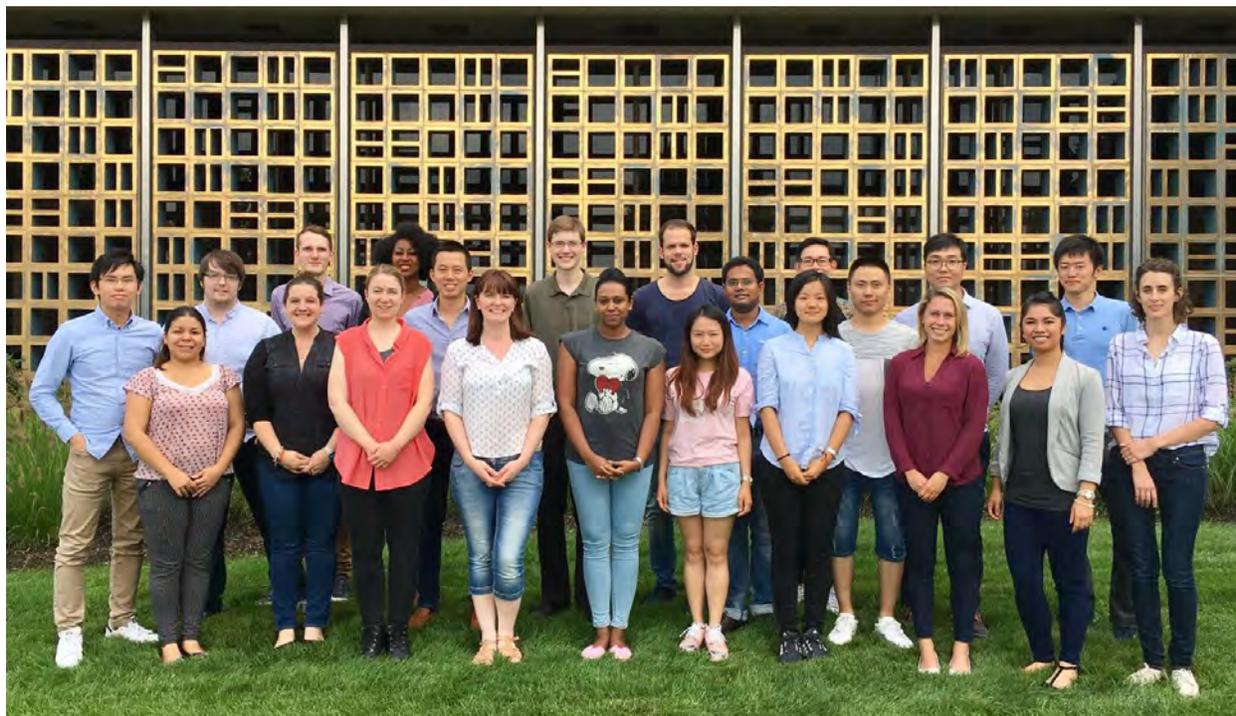


Photo by Peter Carlton (CAS)

SciFinder Future Leaders 2017 Class at CAS. (l-r): Wai Chung Fu, Hong Kong; Gabriela Tormet-Gonzalez, Brazil; Craig Fraser, Singapore; Caitlyn Mills, USA; Torsten John, Germany; Lisa Alcock, Australia; Nacole King, USA; Jeffrey Mak, Australia; Nicola Bell, Scotland; Michael Schulz, USA; Margaret Sivapragasam, Malaysia; Gaston Richelle, Netherlands; Minjia Hu, Canada; Biswajit Mondal, India; Jie Wang, China; Andy Tay, USA; Xiaoxia Chang, China; Morgan Cichon, USA; Youngjin Kim, South Korea; Alyssa Avestro, England; Masafumi Yanase, Japan; Elisa Ivry, Israel.

Editor's note: Torsten John, a graduate student at the Leibniz Institute of Surface Modification, was a participant in the NESACS-GDCh German Exchange to Boston and New Haven (for NERM) in October 2013.