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# The San Diego Chemist

San Diego Section

Volume 38, Number 2 March 2026



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**150**



# ACS SPRING 2026

ATLANTA, GA | MARCH 22–26

IN-PERSON & DIGITAL

[Register Today!](#)

**Dear members,**

February was an exciting and engaging month for our local section! Kicking off at the end of January, we hosted a webinar on **AI in chemistry education with Sharai Mendez**. She offered fascinating insights into how artificial intelligence is reshaping the way we teach, learn, and conduct research in chemistry. Sharai highlighted practical AI tools and their growing applications in academic settings, sparking lively and thoughtful discussion among attendees.

On Feb 19th, we also had the opportunity to host an industry-focused webinar featuring **Dr. Sivapratha Sivabalan from BlueNalu** as our guest speaker. She provided valuable perspectives on innovative food science technologies and discussed the challenges encountered during product development. Her case-based presentation was both engaging and informative, and we sincerely thank everyone who joined us. We look forward to continuing the conversation with another food science-focused talk in **April, centered on food colorants**.

March has been an exciting time for the broader chemistry community as well. The **ACS Spring 2026 National Meeting & Expo** is taking place in Atlanta, Georgia, bringing together thousands of chemists from around the world to share cutting-edge research, exchange ideas, and build new collaborations across diverse areas of chemistry. We would like to extend our appreciation to the councilors who traveled to Atlanta to represent the American Chemical Society and the ACS San Diego Local Section.

In addition to the national meeting, several exciting local outreach activities are underway. ACS San Diego will participate in **Super STEM Saturday** at the California State University San Marcos campus. Our local section will host Booth #95, "Into the Woods." We are grateful to our dedicated volunteers who are representing the section and preparing engaging educational activities designed to spark curiosity and enthusiasm for science among young learners.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce our upcoming virtual seminar, "**Current Applications and Future of Food Colorants – Natural vs. Synthetic**," presented by **Jing Zhao**, Associate Professor in the School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences at San Diego State University. This presentation will provide an overview of the current landscape of food colorants, recent regulatory developments, and emerging sources of natural colorants. Dr. Zhao will also discuss the chemical classes, stability, and applications of natural pigments, as well as her team's research on producing food colorants from microalgae. The seminar will

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take place on Thursday, April 23, 2026, at 6:30 PM via Zoom. **[Register here.](#)**

Finally, March is also a time to recognize and celebrate the contributions of women in science during **Women's History Month**. We celebrate and are grateful for the many women chemists whose dedication, innovation, and leadership inspire future generations of scientists.

Thank you for your continued support of the ACS San Diego community. We look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events, in person or virtual.

Warm regards,

**Jiyue Chen, Ph.D.**  
**ACS San Diego Local Section**

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# Current applications and future of food colorants – natural vs. synthetic

## Dr. Jing Zhao

Associ. Prof. School of Exercise  
and Nutritional Sciences



### ABOUT THE SPEAKER:

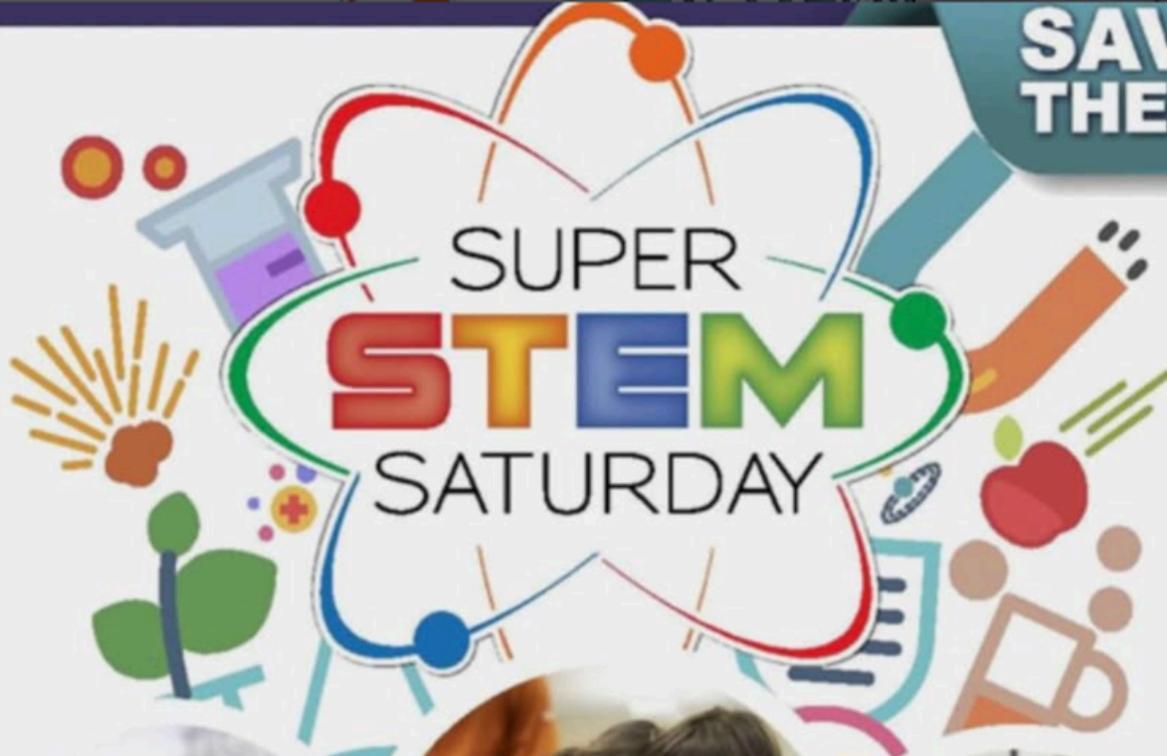
Dr. Jing Zhao is an Associate Professor in the School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences at San Diego State University. Dr. Zhao received her Ph.D. degree in Animal and Food Sciences from the University of Kentucky and obtained her postdoctoral training at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Florida State University, and the University of Kentucky. Dr. Zhao's research focuses on the development, characterization (functionalities, flavor), and utilization of sustainable food proteins, such as plant, algae, and edible insect proteins.

### ABOUT THE TALK:

The presentation will introduce the status of colorants used in foods and the recent regulatory changes. The current and future sources of natural food colorants, and their chemical groups, stability, and applications will be discussed. Specifically, Dr. Zhao will present her team's current research on producing natural colorants from microalgae.



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## Current applications and future of food colorants – natural vs. synthetic

The presentation will introduce the status of colorants used in foods and the recent regulatory changes. The current and future sources of natural food colorants, and their chemical groups, stability, and applications will be discussed.

Specifically, Dr. Zhao will present her team's current research on producing natural colorants from microalgae.

**Dr. Jing Zhao**  
Assoc. Prof. School of Exercise and  
Nutritional Sciences  
SDSU



Register here



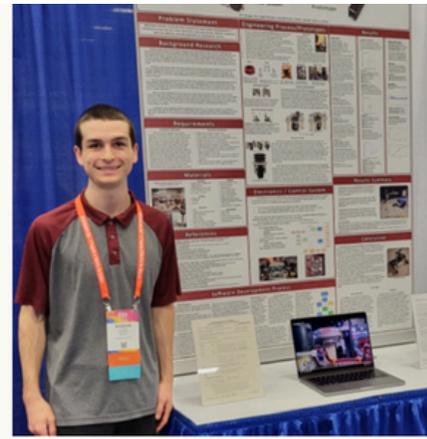
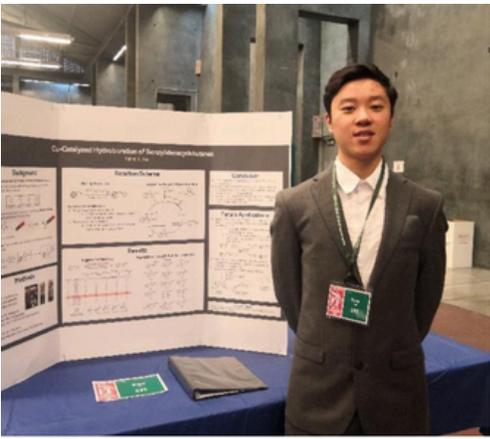
Thursday, Apr 23, 2026



ZOOM



6:30pm to 7:30pm PDT



# **This is the 72th annual fair.**

**You can make this an incredible day by volunteering!**

## **Who are we looking for?:**

**Volunteers who can help judge on behalf of the SD-ACS**

**Volunteers should be available from:**

**11:30AM-2:30PM**

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

**Balboa Park Activity Center**

**2145 Park Blvd.**



To **sign up** contact Jim Shih  
email: [jshih@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:jshih@sandiegoacs.org)  
and provide current cell phone# for  
a contact list for the Fair

Date: Friday, April 17, 2026

Hilton San Diego/Del Mar, 15575 Jimmy Durante Blvd, Del Mar, CA

Registration link: <https://sabpa.org/member/event.php?id=100156>

SoCal Association for Biomedical  
and Pharmaceutical Advancements



## The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Frontiers in Therapeutics and Diagnostics (FTD) Forum

SABPA proudly presents the 2026 FTD Forum, showcasing the transformative impact of artificial intelligence (AI) across drug discovery, advanced therapeutics, and precision diagnostics. This year's program features leading scientists and innovators driving breakthroughs in CAR-T cell therapy, in vivo cell engineering, AI-driven RNA, protein and small-molecule design, and AI-enabled pathology and biomarker discovery. Attendees will gain insights into how these advances are reshaping the future of medicine - from fundamental discovery to clinical translation. In addition to cutting-edge scientific presentations, the forum will feature a Poster Session and offer unique opportunities to network, exchange ideas, and collaborate with experts from academia, biotech, and pharma. Join us to explore the next frontier of therapeutics and diagnostics, where AI meets innovation.

Visit [www.sabpa.org](http://www.sabpa.org) for details.

### Program Highlights

- Cutting-edge presentations on AI in drug discovery, therapeutics, and diagnostics
- Advances in CAR-T cell therapy and in vivo cell engineering
- AI-driven RNA, protein and small-molecule drug design
- AI-enabled pathology and biomarker discovery
- Interactive Poster Session showcasing emerging research



Carl June  
Professor  
UPenn



Marc Tessier-Lavigne  
Co-Founder, Chairman & CEO  
Xaira Therapeutics



David Rimm  
Professor  
Yale University



Adrian Bot  
CSO  
Capstan Therapeutics



Chris Hart  
VP  
Eli Lilly



Jadwiga Bienkowska  
Head of CompBio  
Pfizer



Tom Richardson  
Pathologist  
Merck



Eric Walk  
Chief Medical Officer  
PathAI



Niro Ramachandran  
Global Head of Marketing  
IOX Genomics



Andrew Su  
Professor  
Scipps Research



Jennifer Bordeaux  
AD, Digital Pathology  
Navigate BioPharma

**Diego Section, American Chemical Society**

**Executive Committee – Zoom Meeting**

**Thursday, February 5, 2026**

Meeting convened at 6:30pm

In attendance (13): Jiyue Chen (Chair), Desiree Grubisha (Treasurer), Nik Cheksin (Chair elect 2027), Christina Vialva (Alternate Counselor), Surya De (Counselor), Juan Gonzales (Alt Counselor), Jim Shih (Alternate Counselor), Randall Smith, Ryan Smith, Marta Vuckovic (Secretary), Myra Gupta, Carolina Ibarra (Newsletter Editor)

Absent: Jackie Trischman (Immediate past co- Chair), Max Mahler (Immediate past co- Chair),

1. **Approval of meeting minutes for January 2026:** approved unanimously.

2. **Treasurer's Report:** Local Section budget approved for 2026

Proposed changes to line items from 2025:

Distinguished scientist award dinner up to \$7,500

WCC 2026 Award Ceremony: up to \$7,000

ACS Holiday Dinner party keep at \$4,000

SDSU Chemistry & San Deigo ACS joint seminar: up to \$2,000

Annual ACS picnic in September: up to \$5,000

Med Chem Symposium for 2026: up to \$13,000

Constant Contact social media account: up to \$750

3. Local Section budget final report for 2025 approved:

Vertex sponsorship gift for \$2,000 – Thank you!

Med Chem symposium: 9 sponsors x \$2,000 each = \$18,000

4. Recap of **2026 New Year Hike** jointly organized with SAPBA on **January 24, 2026** (Jiyue)

- Over 100 participants signed up, 70 in attendance
- Some Local Section ACS swag was given away to participants
- Overall, a good turnout and organization
- Thank you, Christina and Myra, for exceptional help!

- possible future events organized jointly
- SABPA booth table during the Med Chem symposium in 2026

5. Re-cap of the online seminar **Applications of AI tools in Chemistry Education and Research** hosted by Sharai Mendez on **Thursday, January 29, at 6:30 pm.**

- Attendance: 20, mostly from academia (SDSU, UCSD, USD, Southwestern College)

6. Upcoming ACS local section events:

**Blue Nalu** food science webinar **on Thursday, February 19, 2026** from 6:30 to 7:30 pm via Zoom

Sivapratha Sivabalan, Ph.D., Food Scientist, Product development

Event will be advertised via February ACS newsletter, and stand alone announcements, as well as sending flyers to SDSU Chemistry department.

**Super STEM Saturday at Southwest College**

Date: **Saturday, March 14** (Pie Day or Pi Day)

ACS will host a table at this event, close to Juan's table

Budget for this event: \$250, included supplies for activities

Juan: Activity area/table with Freaky Foam faces event for kids, very busy, call for volunteers

**Chemistry Olympiad** for high school students in San Diego

Dates: **March 12 and 13, 2026**

Organized by Dr. Joan Schellinger, USD

ACS Local Section will give away prizes

Printed ACS Local Section Award Certificates for top winners in each category

Certificates of appreciation for volunteers that proctor the exam, Christina Vialva has the templates, certificates are in the ACS storage unit

- Organizer will ask about proctoring the exam

**Greater San Diego Science and Engineering 2026 competition** at Balboa Park

Date: **Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

Time: **11:30 am to 2:30 pm**

Location: Balboa Park activity center

Parking will be free for judges with a pass.

Morning and afternoon special sessions awards judges

**Food chemistry seminar** via Zoom on **Thursday, April 23, 2026 at 6:30 pm** via Zoom

**Title: Current applications and future of food colorants – natural vs. synthetic**

**Speaker:** Dr. Jing Zhao is an Associate Professor in the School of Exercise and Nutritional Sciences at San Diego State University. Dr. Zhao received her Ph.D. degree in Animal and Food Sciences from the University of Kentucky and obtained her postdoctoral training at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Florida State University, and the University of Kentucky. Dr. Zhao' research focuses on the development, characterization (functionalities, flavor), and utilization of sustainable food proteins, such as plant, algae, and edible insect proteins.

**Summary:** The presentation will introduce the status of colorants used in foods and the recent regulatory changes. The current and future sources of natural food colorants, and their chemical groups, stability, and applications will be discussed. Specifically, Dr. Zhao will present her team's current research on producing natural colorants from microalgae.

March newsletter will have the seminar announcement

**7. February 2025 ACS Newsletter discussion:**

Content: January 2026 meeting minutes

Jiyue and Nick will write a 2026 New Year Newsletter note

Promotion poster for Blue Nalu webinar

Add the schedule for upcoming ACS Local Section meetings for 2026

Discussion for possible in-person Ex Committee meetings: possible venues are: Hologic

Proposed date for the in-person Ex Committee meeting: **Thursday, April 2, 2026**

January 2026 local section newsletter was not published

8. Nick: report from the **2026 ACS Leadership institute** in Atlanta, GA, January 31 and February 1

9. **Spring ACS National meeting** in Atlanta, GA

Dates: **March 22-26, 2026**

Jiyue will reach out to all 6 counselors to ask them if they plan to attend (in person or virtually)

Christina Vialva asked when Local Section alternate counselors are approved to travel to the ACS National meeting

Secretary will request "Yellow Cards" from the National ACS Committee when counselors are not able to attend, and then alternate counselors could attend in their place

Meeting adjourned at 8:13 pm

Next meeting: Thursday, March 5, 2026 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.

**Mini-Chemical MBA: Equity Financing, SAFEs, and Convertible Notes**

**Article Post Icon**

**ACS Webinars**

**March 12, 2026**

[Click here](#)

**The Importance of Human Know-How in AI Execution for Materials R&D**

**March 18, 2026**

**8:00 a.m. PDT**

[Click here](#)

**Medicina ¿natural? Seguridad y eficacia de productos a base de plantas**

**Article Post Icon**

**ACS Webinars**

**March 18, 2026**

[Click here](#)

**Addressing the Critical Need for Real-Time, At-Line Cell Culture Media Analysis**

**March 19, 2026**

**8:00 a.m. PDT**

[Click here](#)

**Turning Waste into Warning: Early Disease Detection through Rapid GC-FID Analysis of SCFAs**

**Article Post Icon**

**ACS Webinars**

**March 19, 2026**

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**c&en**  
CHEMICAL & ENGINEERING NEWS

**Microplastic Analysis in Water Using Vibrational Spectroscopy:**

**Navigating ISO/FDIS 16094-2 standards**

**March 12, 2026**

**FIRST SESSION: 2 a.m. PST**

[Click here](#)

**Advances in Cryogenic NMR Probes for Modern Labs**

**March 17, 2026**

**8:00 a.m. PDT**

[Click here](#)

**Executive Committee Meeting  
Dates 2026**

**First thursdays of  
each month**

**[Zoom Meeting](#)**

**\*Subject to change if  
in person meeting**



The San Diego Section of the American Chemical Society would like to thank our Corporate Sponsors.

### NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS!

Does your non-profit organization have an upcoming event that might be of interest to members of the ACS – San Diego Section? If so, please send your announcement to our current Chair, Jiyue Chen [jchen@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:jchen@sandiegoacs.org). Once approved, Jiyue will see that your announcement is published on our website ([www.sandiegoacs.org](http://www.sandiegoacs.org)) and, if received by the 20th of the month before the event, in The San Diego Chemist newsletter. This is a free service of the ACS – San Diego Section. Take advantage of it!

### ATTENTION ADVERTISERS

Did you know that The San Diego Chemist is the only monthly e-newsletter that targets chemists and chemical engineers in San Diego and Imperial Counties? As soon as our newsletter is uploaded on [www.sandiegoacs.org](http://www.sandiegoacs.org) a separate notification is sent to over 3000 recipients, each potential customer for your products and services! **Quick turnaround:** Ad copy submitted by the 5th of the month will be published by the 15th of that month. Ads submitted after the 5th will be published in the following month.

For more information, please contact:

**Carolina Ibarra** at [cibarra@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:cibarra@sandiegoacs.org)

**THE SAN DIEGO CHEMIST**, the official newsletter of the San Diego Section of the American Chemical Society, published on a monthly basis, can be viewed at

<http://www.sandiegoacs.org/newsletter/>.

All content is published at the discretion of the Section's Executive Committee. Events of interest to chemistry professionals in the community may be included in the events calendar as space permits and are subject to editing for brevity. Advertisements and announcements from the chemistry community are accepted at published rates. The deadline for submitted items is the 5th of the month for publication by the end of that month.

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<b>4.5" x 4.75"</b>	\$200	\$184	\$163
<b>8.5" x 5.5"</b>	\$400	\$360	\$310
<b>full page</b>	\$655	\$590	\$510

Discounts will be available for issues not shown. Please send your jpg to:

**Carolina Ibarra** at [cibarra@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:cibarra@sandiegoacs.org)



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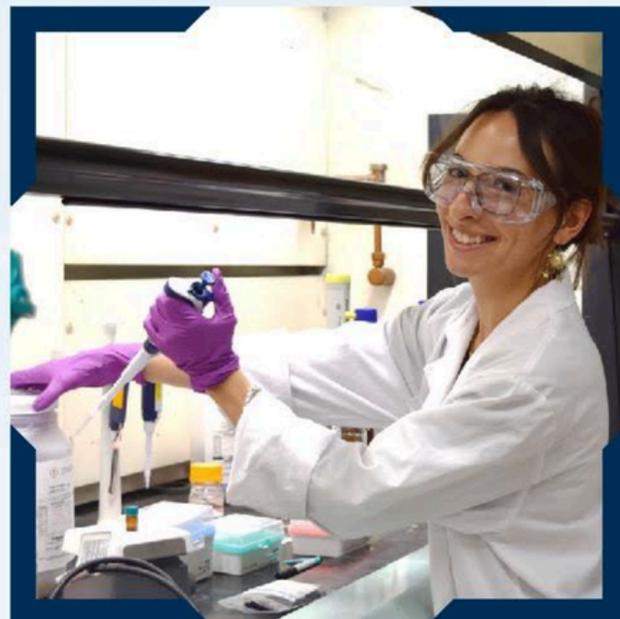
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 [www.csusm.edu/chemistry](http://www.csusm.edu/chemistry)

 [apanahi@csusm.edu](mailto:apanahi@csusm.edu)



### ATTENTION COMPANIES!

Do you hire student workers?  
If you have open positions in chemistry and biochemistry that would be of interest to college students, such as summer internship opportunities, here is a list of contacts you'll want to keep handy. The people listed below are the faculty advisors of the ACS Student Affiliate groups for all chemistry programs in San Diego County. These professors can get the word out to all chemistry and biochemistry majors at their schools about jobs, career fairs, open houses, etc.

#### **CSUSM**

Kang Du [kdu@csusm.edu](mailto:kdu@csusm.edu)

#### **SDSU**

Peter van der Geer - undergrad. advisor  
[pvanderg@sdsu.edu](mailto:pvanderg@sdsu.edu)

#### **UCSD**

Jereny Klosterman [jkk@ucsd.edu](mailto:jkk@ucsd.edu)

#### **San Diego Mesa College**

Synthia Chang  
[schang001@sdccd.edu](mailto:schang001@sdccd.edu)

#### **Southwestern College, Chula Vista**

Juan Gonzalez  
[jgonzalez3@swccd.edu](mailto:jgonzalez3@swccd.edu)

#### **Miramar College**

Rebecca Bowers-Gentry  
[rbowersg@sdccd.edu](mailto:rbowersg@sdccd.edu)

#### **University of San Diego**

Christopher Daley  
[cjdaley@sandiego.edu](mailto:cjdaley@sandiego.edu)

#### **Point Loma Nazarene University**

Laurance G. Beauvais  
[laurancebeauvais@pointloma.edu](mailto:laurancebeauvais@pointloma.edu)

#### **Palomar College**

Heriberto Rivera [hrivera@palomar.edu](mailto:hrivera@palomar.edu)

#### **Mira Costa College**

Kent McCorkle  
[kmccorkle@miracosta.edu](mailto:kmccorkle@miracosta.edu)

#### **Grossmont College**

Hima Joshi Hima [Joshi@gcccd.edu](mailto:Joshi@gcccd.edu)

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**For information contact:**

**Carolina Ibarra**

**[cibarra@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:cibarra@sandiegoacs.org)**



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**[cibarra@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:cibarra@sandiegoacs.org)**



**SAN DIEGO SECTION OF THE AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY**
**EXECUTIVE**

Chair: Jiyue Chen	(2026)	858-260-8283
Chair-elect: Nik Chekshin	(2026)	
Secretary: Marta Vuckovic	(2026)	
Treasurer: Desiree Grubisha, Heron Therapeutics, desgrubisha@gmail.com	(2028)	858-254-5497
Councilor: Hui Cai 2026-2028		
Past Chair Jackie Trischman, CSUSM	(2026)	858-414-3323
Past Chair Max Mahler	(2026)	619-405-5509

**Councilors**

Hui Cai, WuXi AppTec	(2025)	858-361-8838
Surya K. De, Conju-Probe	(2028)	858-337-4961
Desiree Grubisha, Heron Therapeutics	(2028)	858-254-5497
Valerie Kuck	(2027)	973-744-5510
David Wallace, Wallace Scientific Consulting	(2028)	858-638-1866

**Alternate Councilors**

Ben Pratt, Pratt Pharma Consulting LLC	(2025)	858-945-7893
Jim Shih, Eli Lilly & Co	(2028)	626-826-3561
Juan Gonzalez-Gonzalez	(2027)	619-813-8520
Ryan Smith	(2027)	619-744-2220
Christina Vialva	(2028)	951-287-4503

**Members-at-Large**

Jessica Le		
Randall Smith	(2025)	
Sharai Mendez	(2028)	

**STANDING & SPECIAL COMMITTEES**
**Awards Nomination Committee**

Valerie Kuck (Co-Chair)		973-744-5510
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**ChemExpo**

Jackie Trischman, CSUSM		858-414-3323
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**Communications Committee**

Surya K. De, Conju-Probe.		858-337-4961
Desiree Grubisha, Heron Therapeutics		858-254-5497
Carolina Ibarra (Newsletter Editor & Social Media Manager)		619-618-9240
David Wallace, Wallace Scientific Consulting		858-638-1866

**Distinguished Scientist Awards Nomination Committee**

David Wallace (Chair), Biosplice Therapeutics		858-204-5412
Surya K. De, Conju-Probe		858-337-4961
Hui Cai, WuXi AppTec		858-361-8838
Jim Shih, Eli Lilly & Co		626-826-3561
Peter Iovine, USD		619-260-4028
Jackie Trischman, CSUSM		858-414-3323

**Education Committee**

Valerie Kuck		973-744-5510
Joan Schellinger, USD		619-260-7960

**EarthFair**

OPEN

**Finance Committee**

David Wallace (Chair)		858-204-5412
Ryan Smith		619-744-2220

**Fundraising Committee**

OPEN

**Government Affairs Committee**

Hui Cai, WuXi AppTec (Chair)		858-361-8838
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**Law Committee**

Ryan C. Smith, Duane Morris LLP		619-744-2220
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## 2026 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE & COMMITTEE MEMBERS

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### Mad Science Program

OPEN

### MedChem Symposium

Ben Pratt (Co-Chair), Pratt Pharma Consulting LLC  
Mark Tichenor (Co-Chair), Janssen Pharmaceuticals, Inc.  
David Wallace (Co-Chair), Biosplice Therapeutics  
Tao Wu (Co-Chair), Kumquat Biosciences

858-945-7893  
858-334-8914  
858-638-1866  
858-922-0428

### Membership Committee

OPEN

### Nominations Committee

OPEN

### Picnic Committee

Jim Shih, Eli Lilly & Co.

626-826-3561

### Professional Development Committee

Valerie Kuck

973-744-5510

### Public Relations Committee

OPEN

### Senior Chemists Committee

OPEN

### Seniors Breakfasts

OPEN

### Women Chemists Committee

#### Committee Chair

Jiyue Chen email contact for the WCC is [ACS-WCC@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:ACS-WCC@sandiegoacs.org).

### Younger Chemists Committee

Christina Vialva, [cvalva@sandiegoacs.org](mailto:cvalva@sandiegoacs.org)

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