

We are pleased to be able to offer the Career Round Tables Session again this year, both in-person at the Graduate Hotel in Nashville and virtually on Zoom as part of our hybrid Retreat.

Discussion leaders will meet with small groups of trainees to discuss career path navigation and opportunities based on their experiences in their field. There will be three 25-minute rounds:

Round Table Discussion Leaders (Blue indicates attending in-person):

Paul Akhenblit, PhD - Pathology Diagnostic Liaison, Bristol-Myers Squibb

Paul is a medical science liaison with Bristol Myers Squibb, acting as a two-way conduit for scientific exchange between physicians and medical strategy. He used connect with pathologists while supporting oncology, but has recently moved to dermatology.

Luis G. Carvajal-Carmona, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine, University of California Davis School of Medicine, UCD Genome Center

Dr. Luis Carvajal-Carmona is a professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Medicine and holds the Auburn Community Cancer Endowed Chair in Basic Science in the University of California Davis (UCD). He is the Associate Director for Basic Science at the UCD Cancer Center. He has a Ph.D. from University College London and carried out postdoctoral training at the London Research Institute and the University of Oxford. Dr. Carvajal-Carmona specializes on cancer genetics, epidemiology, cancer health disparities and global health.

Casey Droscha, PhD - Associate Director, Research & Development, CentralStar Cooperative

As Associate Director of R&D and Graduate Adjunct Faculty Member within the Dept. of Large Animal Clinical Sciences at Michigan State's College of Veterinary Medicine, Casey advises CentralStar research funding in their projects investigating various aspects of dairy science, molecular genetics, and biomarker discovery. His lab specializes on the development of molecular diagnostic assays, genetic tests, and population (herd) level epidemiology of economically important diseases.

Shannon Elisabeth Elf, PhD, Assistant Professor, The Ben May Department for Cancer Research, The University of Chicago

Shannon received her B.A. in Biology from Bowdoin College, and her Ph.D. in Molecular & Systems Pharmacology from Emory University. She completed her doctorate in the laboratory of Dr. Jing Chen. She pursued her postdoctoral work in the laboratory of Dr. Ann Mullally at Brigham and Women's Hospital / Harvard Medical School. She started her independent laboratory at the University of Chicago in 2019. Shannon's work focuses on identifying and characterizing novel molecular dependencies in myeloid blood cancers, with a particular focus on ER stress pathways.

Jamie Fox, PhD, Human Molecular Geneticist , PREVENTIONGENETICS

Jamie Fox is a native Wisconsinite and grew up in the small town of Crivitz in Northeastern Wisconsin. She completed her undergraduate studies at St. Norbert College in the Green Bay area where she majored in Biochemistry and Biology. After college, she entered the Interdisciplinary Doctoral Program in Biomedical Sciences at the Medical College of Wisconsin. She joined the lab of Dr. Brian Volkman and completed her graduate studies on the analysis of the chemokine, XCL1. She then went on and did a short postdoctoral fellowship under Dr. Scott Hebring at the Marshfield Clinic Research Institute where she used genome and phenome-wide analysis to study the etiology of type 2 diabetes and also worked on a pharmacogenetic study. In 2019, she became a human molecular geneticist at PreventionGenetics in Marshfield, Wisconsin.

Brittelle Kessler, PhD, Medical Director, Cadent Medical Communications

Brittelle graduated from the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus with a PhD in cancer biology in 2017. Since then, she has been in the medical writing field. In her current position, she leads scientific strategy and content development for commercial educational initiatives for a variety of healthcare provider audiences across a range of therapeutic areas.

Natalya Ortolano, PhD, Assistant Editor, Drug Discovery News

Natalya graduated with a PhD in cell and developmental biology from Vanderbilt University in 2021. She conducted research on human development for nearly ten years, but in graduate school, she realized that she enjoyed reading papers, writing grants, and presenting her research more than doing experiments at the bench. She started writing articles for university news outlets, the American Society for Cell Biology's blog The Post, and Scientific American. After completing her AAAS Mass Media Fellowship at STAT News, she decided to pursue science writing as a career. In her current role at Drug Discovery News, she scours the news and literature for news story ideas, pitches ideas to an editor, interviews experts as sources, and writes stories published online and in print.

Gabrielle Rushing, PhD, Associate Director: TSC Alliance

Gabrielle joined the TSC Alliance (non-profit) staff in December 2019 and works remotely from Nashville, TN. Her efforts focus on stimulating innovative research and growing the Natural History Database and Biosample Repository projects. She completed her PhD at Vanderbilt University, studying TSC SEGA tumor development and neural stem cells under the guidance of Dr. Rebecca Ihrie. Prior to joining the TSC Alliance, Gabrielle served as Project Manager for the PREDICT (Pharmacogenomic Resource for Enhanced Decisions in Care and Treatment) program at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Gabrielle has previous experience working with nonprofits including an internship at the TSC Alliance in 2017, where she participated in the March on Capitol Hill, contributed to the Patient-Focused Drug Development meeting, and wrote the research presentation summaries at the International TSC Research Conference. Additionally, Gabrielle served as the Research Director for the Thisbe and Noah Scott Foundation from 2016-2019.

Laura Sullivan, PhD - Senior Marketing Manager, Genentech

Laura works at Genentech as a Senior Marketing Manager supporting oncology products and marketing efforts for healthcare provider and patients. She has also had a number of roles in the Strategic Insights and Analysis division at Genentech, leading teams and driving decision making across the company through secondary data analysis, forecasting, market research, and competitive intelligence. Prior to joining Genentech, Laura worked as a Senior Consultant at ClearView Healthcare Partners, a life science strategy consultant firm supporting strategic decision making and business decisions at pharmaceutical and biotech companies.

David Vaught, PhD, Manager, Scientific Review, Susan G. Komen®

Dr. Vaught joined Komen in 2015 as a Scientific Grants Manager and currently holds the position of Manager, Scientific Review. His primary responsibilities include post-award grants management of a portfolio of Komen funded research grants, and leading the Application and Peer Review process. He also helps in highlighting grantees that have contributed innovative and promising new discoveries in the breast cancer field through Komen communication pieces. Prior to joining Komen, Dr. Vaught was a Department of Defense Postdoctoral Fellowship recipient under the mentorship of Dr. Rebecca Cook at Vanderbilt University. His work centered on the study of ErbB3 and ErbB4 to understand how aberrant changes during mammary gland development and physiological alterations i.e. pregnancy and lactation, affect breast tumorigenesis. He also completed his graduate training at Vanderbilt, where he studied the Eph receptors in development and their role in breast cancer metastasis to the bone. Dr. Vaught has authored and co-authored several peer-reviewed scientific articles.