This year was another great year for SSR. The conference in San Jose, CA was exceptional, with great science and great colleagues. The WinRS breakfast symposium was “Overcoming Impostor Syndrome”, with great advice from Drs. Janice Bailey, Zelieann Craig, Kate Loveland and Pia Xia. If you missed the symposium, or you’d just like a recap, one is included on pages XXX – YYY. Female scientists made up five of the seven major award winners, including:

Marilyn Renfree (Carl G. Hartmann Award)
Francesca Duncan (Virendra B. Mahesh New Investigator Award)
Sally Darney (Jansen Distinguished Service Award)
Barbara Vanderhyden (Trainee Mentoring Award)
Annie Newell-Fugate (Janice Bahr Junior Scientist Travel Award)

We are pleased to also highlight an article by Yasmeen Hussain, where she highlights her experiences working as a science advisor in a congressional office, and her experiences at the intersection of science and government.

Lastly, Nikki and I are pleased to introduce the new WinRS co-chairs, Dr. Aimee Katen and Heather Fice. Although we are sad to be resigning our positions as co-chairs, we confident that they will do WinRS proud and keep supporting and encouraging women and minorities in reproductive sciences at every turn.
Firstly, we would like to thank Nikki and Shavahn for the wonderful work that has been done with WinRS under their leadership. After attending the WinRS Breakfast this year and reading each bulletin, it has become clear that they have been dedicated to building this committee to support women in reproductive sciences and address the unique issues we face in this career path. We are looking forward to continuing the work that they have been doing by keeping you up to date with the amazing work from women within the society, highlighting female post-docs and trainees, sharing STEMINIST literature, promoting networking between WinRS members, and planning an engaging breakfast for SSR 2020!

If anyone has suggestions or things they would like us to share, do not hesitate to reach out to us! Stay tuned for future exciting things!

Dr. Aimee Katen, Heather Fice. SSR WinRS Co-Chairs 2020
I often find myself in a conversation that goes like this:

Me: “I recently finished a year as a science advisor in a Congressional office”
Them: “That must have been…interesting…”

The implication, and the following conversation, often touches upon the dysfunction of government, the perceived low status of facts in politics, and the question of how I, a reproductive biology researcher, could fit in with politicos. But, in all honesty, the experience was interesting! I had an incredible opportunity to learn how the legislative branch of the US government functions from the inside of a member’s office.

As a Congressional staffer, I was fortunate to be able to advise on legislative activity on science, technology, energy, environment, and education issues. I briefed the Congressman with technical and contextual information and prepared amendments to bills for House Science Committee hearings and markups on issues as varied as bitcoin, equipment upgrades at National Labs, and National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA’s) goals and budget. I worked to advance – drafting, seeking endorsements, getting other Members of Congress to support, and helping to make public statements about – legislation on issues ranging from federal employees’ access to scientific literature to public service loan forgiveness.

Through the Congressman’s role as co-chair of the bipartisan Research and Development Caucus, I was able to set up public briefings on topics like cell-cultured meat, technology helping veterans, and biochemists’ endeavors to address the opioid epidemic. And I also had the opportunity to meet with constituents, make funding requests, and provide vote recommendations related to issues within my portfolio.

The experience of working inside the US Congress left me with a more positive impression of the government than I had started with. I found myself surrounded by interesting, driven, intelligent people who cared deeply about their work. Nearly all of the people I met, regardless of political party, were incredibly dedicated to the goal of public service. I saw political division creating barriers to progress, yes, but I also saw people reach out to seek compromise when they didn’t have to.

As generally is the case when putting oneself in someone else’s shoes, I also gained more respect for the work that legislators and their staff do. It’s easy to see how the slow movement on important issues like reproductive healthcare, gun safety, and environmental protection is frustrating to the public. I see why one would lament the gridlock and look upon those who are a part of it and ask “Why can’t they get anything done?” I learned early on in my time in Congress that the system is set up to be slow, and the goal is not to pass laws but instead to stop bad laws from being passed.

Through this and other positions, I’ve also learned more about how the voices of the scientific community are heard in government. Previous to my time in Congress, I had the opportunity to serve in a role peripheral to the government, as an Associate Program Officer at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. The National Academies is not a government entity, but instead brings together experts from the scientific community to develop findings and recommendations directed towards stakeholders including the government. In this position, some of my responsibilities included conducting literature reviews, tracking down existing data, and reporting on patterns to study committees of the National Academies. These committees of disciplinary experts produced reports that were then cited in Congressional hearings, speeches, and legislation.
You (and my hypothetical conversation partner at the beginning of this piece) may still be wondering what motivated a scientist to enter the world of policy and politics. In the previous ten years as a graduate and undergraduate student, I found myself drawn to opportunities to participate in student government, community volunteer work, teaching, departmental service, and science outreach. As a researcher, I found discussing ideas and presenting at conferences to be more gratifying than my day-to-day labwork and data analysis.

To explore career possibilities, I attended career seminars and started to reach out to people in my network for informational interviews. These informational interviews were informal conversations about what the person does, how they got to where they are, and their advice for someone looking to go into their line of work. Often, these individuals also suggested other people I could talk to or happy hours to attend, and my network grew. I became intrigued by policy roles, and was able to take advantage of my ability to take courses outside of my graduate program to enroll in a class in the School of Public Policy. Taking this class on science and technology policy, as well as other extracurricular courses such as one on science communication and the media, confirmed my interest in the intersection of science and policy. I also tested the waters on my interest in politics, traveling with the graduate student government to our state capitol to advocate for funding for higher education.

In the end, I realized that a career in science policy would be an ideal intersection of my experience as a researcher, my skill in outreach and communications, and my enjoyment of working with others to serve the public good. There are many careers in science policy (including in government, foundations, and universities), many ways to get into that type of work (such as a fellowship program or becoming a rotator at the National Science Foundation), and just as many other ways to participate in policy (from advising local governing bodies to voting in elections). Regardless of how you choose to engage with policy or government, I hope that you find the experience as…interesting…as I have.

Bio: Yasmeen Hussain currently works as a Policy Analyst & Program Manager for the Professional Development Hub, an initiative to support career development of graduate students and postdocs, administered through the University of Massachusetts Medical School. Previously, Yasmeen completed the AAAS Congressional Fellowship sponsored by the Biophysical Society, working on science and education issues in the office of Rep. Bill Foster in the US House of Representatives. She also was an associate program officer with the Board on Higher Education and Workforce and the Committee on Women in Science, Engineering, and Medicine at the National Academies, where she completed a Mirzayan Science and Technology Policy fellowship. Yasmeen earned her PhD in biology at the University of Washington in Seattle, where her research focused on chemical communication between sperm and eggs, and BS degrees in mathematics and biology from the University of Utah.
WinRS Breakfast: Overcoming Impostor Syndrome

Janice Bailey, PhD
Scientific Director of the Québec Research Funds for Nature and Technologies

Zelieann Craig, PhD
Associate Professor
Animal Sciences and Physiological Sciences, University of Arizona

Kate Loveland, PhD
Centre Head
Centre for Reproductive Health Hudson Institute of Medical Research
Head of Postgraduate Studies
School of Clinical Sciences, Monash Health Translational Precinct

Ping Xia, PhD
Director
Assisted Reproductive Technology Laboratories
Assistant Professor
Gynecology and Obstetrics, John Hopkins Medicine
• Be AWARE that you have impostor syndrome

• Always accept yourself

• Think about who you are working for. Remembering that you are working for the public / research community / underrepresented can help bring you strength

• Use tools such as hypnotherapy

• Set a schedule and set achievable goals daily

• Take breaks, preferably doing something you really love

• Have a network of friends, family and colleagues you can rely on and who will support you

• Find ways to renew your confidence

• Stay physically active (yoga, Zumba, etc.)

• Remember, no one is perfect
• Maintain your CV and look at it often to remember your accomplishments

• Be aware of your outward appearance, particularly in early/mid-career

• Keep to a script and/or prescribed facts when you are in meetings (don’t ramble)

• Avoid passive phrases (I think, I believe, etc)

• Keep a “Feel Good” folder – include paper acceptance letters, lecture invitations, anything which makes you feel good when you receive it.

• **Accept yourself**
Dr. Ping Xia shared her self-hynotherapy techniques for managing anxiety and imposter syndrome:

“Stand up
Shake your hands and relax
Slowly close your eyes

Breathe in: while you breathe in, take all the energy from the universe into your body.
Breathe out: While you breathe out, let out all of your negative thoughts
Take three breaths.
Innnnnn and out. Innnnn and out. Innnnn and out.

Tell yourself, “I can accept myself for everything I do, even though it’s not perfect. I am a very smart and beautiful person. I can achieve anything I want.

Now, open your eyes and tell yourself, “wake up”.”
WinRS Breakfast: Overcoming Impostor Syndrome

Breaking-down Imposter Syndrome: 
Dr. Valerie Young’s Subgroups

**The Perfectionist**
- Sets excessively high goals
- If goals unmet feels self-doubt

**Do you:**
- Micromanage?
- Have difficulty delegating?
- Need work to be 100% perfect?
- If you miss your high standards you feel like you are not cut out for job?

**The Superhuman**
- Works longer hours than the rest of team to prove worth

**Do you:**
- Stay later at work, past the point that is required?
- Find down time wasteful / get stressed not working?
- Sacrifice hobbies for work?
- Feel you haven’t earned your title, so much work harder than others?

**The Soloist**
- Feels asking for help reveals them as an imposter

**Do you:**
- Feel that you MUST accomplish things on your own?
- Frame requests in terms of the requirements of the project, rather than your needs as a person?
- Think “I don’t need anyone’s help”?

**The Expert**
- Measure abilities based on how much they know/can do
- Feel they can never know enough, fear being seen as inexperienced or lacking knowledge

**Do you:**
- Shy away from job postings unless you meet EVERY requirement?
- Constantly seek out training/certification because you think you need it to succeed?
- Shudder when someone calls you an expert?

**The Natural Genius**
- Judge their abilities by ease and speed, not their efforts

**Do you:**
- Feel you can handle everything on your own?
- Have a gold-star, straight A track record?
- Avoid challenges because it’s uncomfortable to try something you’re not already great at?

**Are you:**
- Used to excelling without effort?

**Were you:**
- told growing up that you’re the "smart one"?