



For Immediate Release:

February 7, 2018

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SLAS2018 Brings New Meaning to Science Innovation

SAN DIEGO, CA. – [SLAS2018](#) was all about science and innovation as new keynote lectures, cutting-edge podium presentations and the new SLAS Ignite Theater series stoked the collaborative nature of today's life sciences professionals with three days of ground-breaking presentations that left attendees pondering new ways to keep pace with the speed of science. With a record-setting attendance of more than 6,600 attendees representing 40 countries onsite at SLAS2018 in San Diego, there was no lack of education, connection and collaboration.

"Indeed, one of the best aspects of belonging to the SLAS community is the unique access to a knowledgeable, well-connected and multi-disciplinary collection of professionals that is committed to the shared success of each other," said Sabeth Verpoorte, president of SLAS.

The meeting kicked off with a heavy-duty bang of science as Benjamin Cravatt, professor and co-chair of the Department of Molecular Medicine at The Scripps Research Institute, wowed the Monday morning audience with his research group's work developing chemical proteomic technologies that enable protein and drug discovery on a global scale. He told the audience he intends to apply these methods to characterize proteins that play important roles in human physiology and disease.

New podium presentations represented the bread and butter of the SLAS scientific program highlighted by David McLaren's work at Merck and up-and-coming researcher Hugo Sinha from Concordia University. McLaren described the experimental design, validation and application of equilibrium-based, direct and competition binding assays using LC-MS for bound ligand quantitation, and the utility of the method for assessing binding kinetics. Sinha presented a new automated microfluidic tool that targets a specific set of genes in lung cancer cells (specifically H1299 cells) and determines which genes are modulators of cancer progression.

SLAS2018 introduced attendees to a new concept designed to spark collaboration between researchers and industry— [SLAS Ignite Partnership Lounge](#). Coupled with the [SLAS Ignite Academic Theater](#), this new program brought together industry professionals responsible for partnerships and contract relations with prospective partners from academia showcasing the latest research. These parties, representing countries from around the world, convened in the Ignite Partnership Lounge on the exhibition floor to pitch their ideas to interested companies looking for the next big idea.

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Furthering collaboration with an emphasis on entrepreneurship, eight companies were chosen to participate in [Innovation AveNEW](#), a program affording emerging, start-up companies the opportunity to showcase their new products and connect with purchasing influencers that will help enhance their innovations and get them off the ground and running.

“I feel like this is a great platform for your work to be showcased,” said Shaghayegh Harbi from VasculoTox. “We’re developing a prototype and we’re not leaving until our product is finalized.” Harbi presented at the Innovation AveNew panel and served on the mentorship series at SLAS2018.

“I would recommend this conference to young and emerging scientists,” Harbi added.

Three of those young and emerging scientists were recognized as [2018 Student Poster Award Winners](#), a noble honor that includes cash awards of \$500. The winners are:

- John Hickey, B.S., Johns Hopkins University, Poster #1170: [High-Throughput Enrichment and Identification of Rare Antigen-specific CD8+ T Cells](#);
- Sri Teja Mullanpudi, Max Planck Institute for Heart and Lung Research, Poster #1225: [In vivo Screening to Identify Insulin-independent Modulators of Metabolism Identifies Novel Candidates](#); and
- Xiao Wang, BioMEMS Resource Center, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School, Poster #1360: [Squeeze & Chemotax: A High-Throughput Microfluidic Assay for Probing the Effect of Deformation on Leukocyte Chemotaxis](#)

All posters can be viewed at [SLAS2018.org](#).

“The poster competition is a really good idea for anybody looking to see what other types of industries are out there that you can gear your research towards in general, and actually explore more industry application spaces,” said Hunter Stevenson, B.S., poster participant and teaching assistant, University of Texas at Dallas, Biomedical Microdevices and Nanotechnology Laboratory. Stevenson presented poster #1270, [Handheld GMO Biosensor](#).

Three organizations were honored on the exhibition floor with a New Product Award for showcasing exceptionally innovative new products: FORMULATRIX® for CONSTELLATION® Digital PCR System; iotaSciences, Ltd. for isoCell; and Labcyte for Echo 655T Acoustic Liquid Handler. The SLAS2018 exhibition floor is a launching pad for organizations such as these who are introducing new innovations to the market. These new products inform scientists to increase productivity, elevate data quality and reduce process cycle times back in the lab.

The CONSTELLATION® Digital PCR System by FORMULATRIX is a novel microfluidic platform that provides high-throughput absolute quantification of up to 5 target DNA or RNA molecules for EvaGreen or probe-based digital PCR applications. iotaSciences’ **isoCell** product intends to advance, automate and accelerate single-cell work using fluidic walls. Labcyte’s Echo 655T Liquid Handler offers all the benefits associated with non-contact liquid transfer with the new ability to transfer directly from Echo Qualified sample tubes enabling an all acoustic workflow from sample store to screening assay.

The meeting ended on a light-hearted but thoughtful note as Marc Abrahams treated the audience to a laughter-filled send up of The Ig Nobel Prizes: The Fine Line Between Sound and Silly Science. Abrahams main thrust was that humor can provide relief but also insight into the scientific process and perhaps lead to breakthroughs and new discoveries.

Upon the close of Abrahams' presentation, Paul Ju Sung Hung, PhD, COMBiNATi Inc., accepted the honorable Innovation Award for Microfluidic Siphoning Array (MSA) – A Novel Scalable Digital PCR Integrated Platform, a recognition that comes with a \$10,000 cash prize.

SLAS2018 showcases scientific advances and state-of-the-art applications of new technologies via 144 podium presentations, 350+ poster presentations, 300+ multinational exhibitors, 20 short courses, a menu of personalized career services and an abundance of intelligent network-building opportunities. For more information about SLAS2018, visit www.slas2018.org.

SLAS (Society for Laboratory Automation and Screening) is an international community of more than 18,000 professionals and students dedicated to life sciences discovery and technology. The SLAS mission is to bring together researchers in academia, industry and government to advance life sciences discovery and technology via education, knowledge exchange and global community building.

SLAS publishes two MEDLINE-indexed scientific journals, *SLAS Discovery* and *SLAS Technology*. For more information about SLAS and its journals, visit www.slas.org/journals.