

Noelle Morrow
Jan R. Cloyde Legacy Award
Post-Conference Reflection

I attended Cell Symposium: Exercise Metabolism in Lisbon May 5-7 to present a portion of my doctoral dissertation titled “ER α governs the sexual dimorphism in HSP72-mediated control of mitochondrial function, exercise capacity, and insulin sensitivity.” This preliminary data showed sex differences in regulation of heat shock proteins and mitochondrial control in mice and has implications for improving our understanding of the unique responses women have to physical activity. I am thrilled to be able to spend my graduate education studying two topics I am passionate about: exercise physiology and women’s health, and I hope to become one of the leading researchers in this field. I was also pleasantly surprised that there were multiple poster and oral presentations addressing sex differences each day of the conference. Not only does this mean an important, and often under-looked, aspect of physiology and medicine is being addressed more often, but also that the topic of my own research is reaching an important moment, which will lead to more opportunities as I progress through my career.

This conference helped me to continue to build up my presentation skills. I have given two oral presentations before, once as part of an undergraduate summer research program at Skidmore College and once as a research assistant at the Joslin Diabetes Center to explain our CRISPR Genome Editing Core. This oral presentation was unique for me in that 1) it was to a wide range of individuals outside of my institution and 2) it was only a two-minute talk. This meant that it helped me to build on my ability to efficiently and effectively communicate my research to a wider audience. Science communication, particularly how it pertains to women’s health, has always been a passion of mine, so this is a vital skill for me to continue to develop. After the brief oral presentation, I presented this same research during a poster session. Members of the symposium came with questions and perspectives that allowed me to think about mitochondria dynamics through a new lens and provided me with ideas for new directions of my research. These conversations will be extremely valuable as I build my dissertation proposal and prepare for my oral qualifying exam and progression to candidacy in the fall.

Cell Symposium was a relatively small meeting compared to other conferences I have been to, given the specificity of the topic. I thoroughly enjoyed this smaller setting as it gave me the opportunity to meet and begin to network with leading investigators in the field. During my undergraduate education at Skidmore, a small liberal arts college, I was able to gain vast hands-on experience in physiology research, including a first-author publication, but was limited in the people I was able to network with and the complexity of science I was able to do. At UCLA, I have access to far more resources and this symposium helped me build networking skills and make connections for future scientific collaborations. I am incredibly grateful to my mentor, Dr. Andrea Hevener, for providing me with this opportunity and to the Iris Cantor UCLA Women’s Health Center for funding this experience through the Jan R. Cloyde Legacy Award.