

THE AWIMS ADVISOR

News from the Alliance for Women in Medicine and Science

Dear Colleagues,

Over the summer, I started an evening routine of taking a walk in my neighborhood. Sometimes, I go solo and listen to my favorite tunes while beholding the beauty of a colorful palette of flowers and trees. Other times, I include my husband and we talk about our day and things that made us laugh. These precious moments of connection and healing, whether it's with nature or with my soulmate and best friend, have been a wellness game changer.



What are the elements of your wellness routine? What keeps you grounded and whole? The American Medical Women's Association (AMWA) recently launched a Healthy Lifestyle Revolution, where women clinicians share their [personal tips](#). I hope you will take a look and be as inspired as I was.

The work of AWIMS and the people who are a part of the journey are an important part of what keep me fulfilled. Thanks so much for all you do to keep our community well and going strong.

Vidhya Prakash, MD
Director of SIU AWIMS

December 2024

The AWIMS Advisor Editorial Board



Dr. Vidhya Prakash
Editor-In-Chief

"Science, for me, gives a partial explanation for life. In so far as it goes, it is based on fact, experience and experiment."
Rosalind Franklin



Dr. Ayame Takahashi
Associate Editor

"The most fatal illusion is the settled point of view. Since life is growth and motion, a fixed point of view kills anybody who has one."
Brooks Atkinson



Ms. Bredina Haden
Associate Editor

"Remember always that you have not only the right to be an individual; you have an obligation to be one."
Eleanor Roosevelt

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AWIMS Spotlight:

Deseray Aguirre, DO

Role at SIU Medicine:

Assistant Professor
Department of Family Medicine - Quincy

Born and raised: Rochester, Wisconsin

Birthday month: March



Family: Father, 2 sisters, 2 brothers, a fiancé, and a cat. My older sister teaches dental hygiene courses, my big brother works in construction, my little sister is a wonderful stay-at-home mom, and my little brother is an electrical engineer. My fiancé and I work at the same clinic; he focuses more on Sports Medicine.

Favorite Book: *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*. It teaches that although someone goes through a lot and has a lot of challenges, the experiences shape them into the person they are today.

Hobbies: Fossil hunting, gardening with my fiancé, hanging out with friends and family.

Personal Heroes: My grandmother was a nurse for terminally ill children. She was a very big part of my life growing up, acting as a second mother. My other hero is my father. Although he has had a lot of hardship, especially with having ESRD, he is strong and has been able to persevere. He sacrificed a lot, working countless hours at a restaurant, for us to have a good life. I owe him a lot.

Most Embarrassing Moment (you are willing to share): My most embarrassing moment was when I was in my first year of undergrad. I was taking Plant Biology at the time (and only had one biology class prior). My grandmother had an abdominal surgery and needed help getting the abdominal binder back on. I was trying to help her and couldn't figure it out. My grandma said, "I thought you were pre-med, Dez." I exclaimed, "Yeah, but I'm in Botany!" My grandma loved teasing me about it. Not one of my brightest moments.

AWIMS Spotlight, continued

Deseray Aguirre, DO

What is your advice for achieving work-life balance? Honestly, being in a field I enjoy, working with patients, residents, and medical students doesn't feel like work to me. I love what I do and feel very fortunate to be in this position. I feel like doing what I love helps prevent burnout.

What is the best piece of advice a mentor gave you? The time will pass anyway, so you might as well do what you love. My biggest mentor, Dr. Droese, was a physician I met when I was working as a medical assistant in an urgent care facility in a medically underserved area. He always approached patients with such kindness and understanding. After nursing school, I quickly realized I wanted to go back to medical school. He was always supportive of my dream. Often times, I was worried about the time and money it would take but he was always reassuring and helped guide me to where I am today. He is a wonderful example of what an exemplary physician looks like and I hope to be half as good as he is one day.

What is your unique contribution to SIU SOM? I am not sure if I'm unique since there are so many wonderful people who work at SIU. However, I do work a lot with community outreach. I am passionate about establishing relationships, meeting people where they are, and teaching residents and medical students compassionate care.

Anything else you would like to add: I love working at SIU-Quincy Family Medicine residency. If anyone has any questions about us, please feel free to reach out!

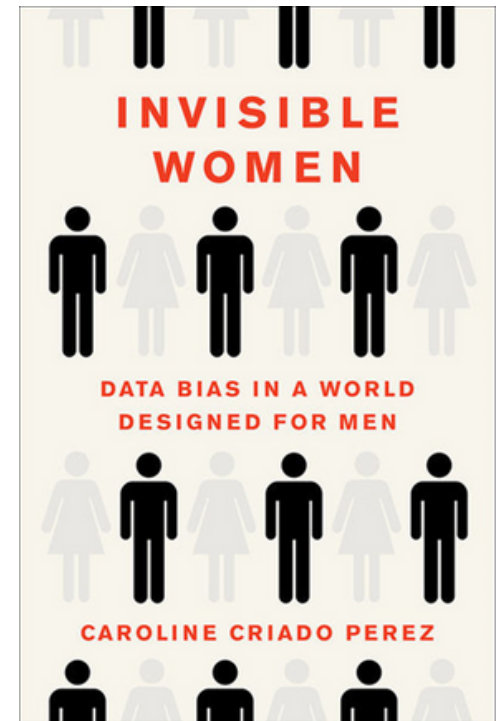
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Around Campus

AWIMS Book Club Relaunch

The relaunch of AWIMS Book Club was a success! A delightful group gathered in Dr. Anna Cianciolo's beautiful home to discuss the book, *Invisible Women*, by Caroline Criado Perez, and indulge in delectable potluck cuisine. Key topics of discussion were gender disparities in society, from the safety standards of vehicles to the sizes of cellular phones. The stimulating discussion about the book was a gateway for participants to share experiences about their childhoods, the US education system, and societal standards for varying genders. The next Book Club will feature Marie Benedict's *Her Hidden Genius*.

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EDI Grand Rounds: *Faces of Medicine*



AWIMS and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion will host a very special virtual EDI Grand Rounds on December 11th from 12-1:15pm featuring the documentary, [Faces of Medicine](#).

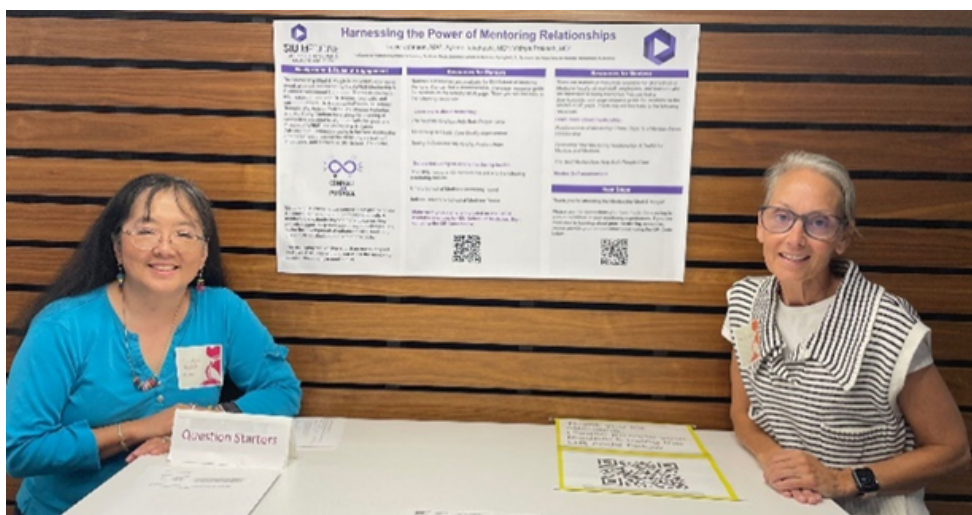
Trailblazing physician, Dr. [Dr. Khama Ennis](#), chronicles the journeys of Black women physicians in the United States.

After the 45-minute film, we will hold a special Q&A with Dr. Ennis. The session is open to all.

You don't want to miss it! Register [here](#).

AWIMS Mentorship Mixer

AWIMS hosted a Mentorship Mixer on August 27th, open to all of SIU Medicine. The networking event was well-attended. Mentors and mentees were given articles on optimizing the mentorship relationship, and connected over delicious lotus drinks and cheesecake with delectable fruit toppings. Ms. Johnson and Dr. Takahashi, co-chairs of the AWIMS Mentorship and Career Advancement Committee, plan to follow up on feedback from the mixer, track mentorship pairings, and plan future mentorship events accordingly.



Left to right: Dr. Ayame Takahashi and Ms. Tracie Johnson



AMWA-AWIMS Mentorship Mixer

On November 12th, AMWA students and AWIMS mentors gathered in the Dean's lobby to connect and have fun. AWIMS Mentorship and Career Advancement Co-Chairs, Ms. Tracie Johnson and Dr. Ayame Takahashi, coordinated a fantastic event that included fall treats from pumpkin donuts to hot apple cider. Special thanks to our dedicated AWIMS mentors who devote their time, energy, and expertise to build our next generation of women physician leaders.

Left to right: Blaine Baer, Sarah Lee, Tracie Johnson, and Dr. Ayame Takahashi.

Below left: Dr. Kelly Hurst with student mentees.

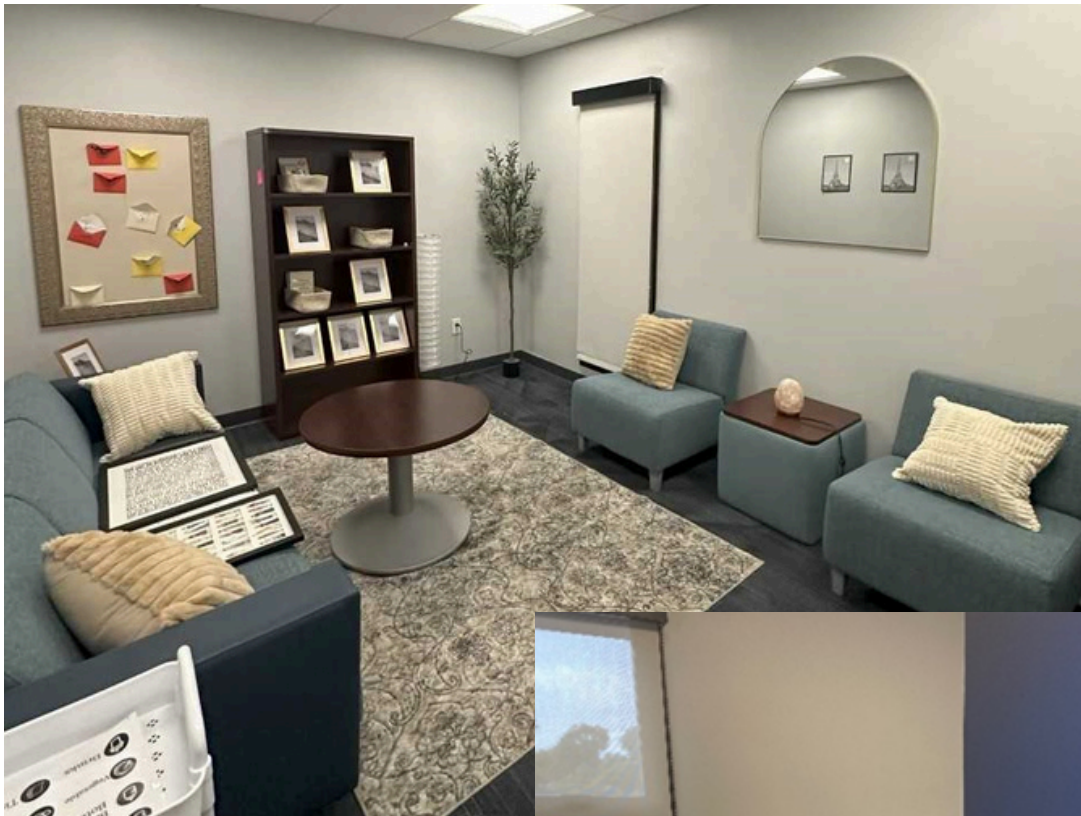
Below right: More student mentees!



AWIMS Wellness and Lactation Rooms Open!

The AWIMS Wellness and Lactation Rooms have officially moved to the new Atrium in the 801 Building. The Wellness Room is just behind Beth's Café in Room 2373, with the Lactation Room next door on the right. AWIMS has requested dark window blinds for the Lactation Room to ensure privacy.

AMWA leaders, Sarah Lee and Hannah Schmidt, and Office of EDI's Lesley Barfield were instrumental in revitalizing the rooms. Stop by to rest, relax, or reflect. The space is yours!



AWIMS in the Community

Colors of Health Fashion Show



On September 6th, AWIMS hosted its second annual Colors of Health Fashion Show at the Hoogland Center for the Arts in Springfield.

Ms. Erica Johnson was the main architect of the program. Local dancing troupe, Global Girls, and poet, Ms. Donna Jefferson were featured. Founder and President of the Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network (SIAN), Ms. Veronica Espina, accepted the AWIMS Community Engagement Award on behalf of her impactful organization. Dr. Victoria Nichols Johnson was honored with the AWIMS Community Engagement Award for her immense contributions to the medical profession and to our community.

The fashion show itself was moderated by Ms. Besserat Habtes, who enlightened our audience about heart disease, human trafficking, opioid addiction, and mental health as models strutted their stuff in colors representing each entity.

SIU School of Medicine models included Ms. Jessica Derhake, Dr. Ayame Takahashi, and Dr. Pranuthi Dasari. All proceeds went to SIAN.

Colors of Health Fashion Show - continued



Global Girls Dance Troupe



Ms. Veronica Espina
Springfield Immigrant Advocacy Network



Pictured left to right: Dr. Vidhya Prakash, Dr. Victoria Nichols-Johnson, Ms. Erica Austin, Ms. Donna Jefferson



Pictured left to right:
Dr. Vidhya Prakash,
Ms. Erica Austin,
Ms. Jessica Derhake,
Dr. Pranuthi Dasari, and
Dr. Ayame Takahashi with members
of the Global Girls Dance Troupe

IWIL Symposium

Illinois Women in Leadership (IWIL) hosted its annual symposium on September 25th. SIU School of Medicine's Department of Internal Medicine, Office of Human Resources, and Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion sponsored the event. Below are some reflections from our SIU attendees.

- A large group from the Air Force (or Air Force Reserves) had two full tables at the conference. During a break, this group was out taking a photo in front of a backdrop IWIL set up for photos. A woman asked if she could join the photo as she too was a veteran. The group welcomed her to join them and you could see the pride on all their faces. It was nice to see this joyful moment for the group and the welcome they gave the women who wanted to join them.
- Loved the "You are allowed" cards to boost resilience. I took enough for all the women on our small, but mighty team. One of the keynote speakers, Kim Becking, also reinforced how to use positivity to build a positive and momentum building mindset.
- Although I thought I drank enough water, I was woefully wrong and underestimated how much I needed to make better choices to build my body. I felt empowered by the theme of understanding my body and not battling my body.
- Gained a nice understanding about intergenerational communication as both a leader (supervising others in a different generation) and as a person supervised by someone in a different and younger generation.
- Loved the "Home Inspiration" presentation. It is vital not to neglect your home space as a contributor to building a sanctuary and safe space for your respite from your work life.

Dr. Christy Hamilton

This was my first time attending the symposium, and I am very appreciative of the opportunity to attend and represent SIU Medicine. What struck me the most was how many women I knew throughout the Springfield community in different sectors attended the IWIL Symposium as well. I really enjoyed the keynote speakers who I felt brought a personal touch to their talks. What I enjoyed the most was the opportunity to attend some different breakout sessions that were not necessarily directly related to the research I do at SIU School of Medicine. It was a time for me to explore my additional interests, allowing me to fully express my whole self, and connect with other women in the community. All in all, it was a fantastic day.

Dr. Georgia Luckey

Articles and Quotes

[Toward Gender Equity in Academic Promotions](#)

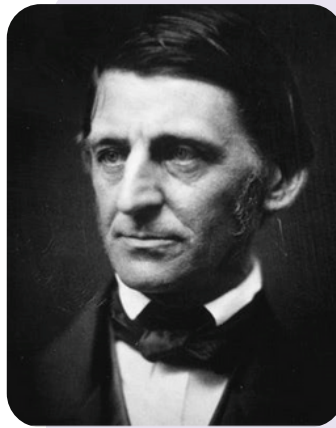
[Journey Towards Gender Equity in Medicine](#)

[Toolkit for Gender Equity in Pediatrics](#)



"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

[Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)



"Our greatest glory is not in never failing, but in rising up every time we fail."

[Ralph Waldo Emerson](#)



[Eleanor Roosevelt](#)

"Courage is more exhilarating than fear and in the long run it is easier. We do not have to become heroes overnight. Just a step at a time, meeting each thing that comes up, seeing it is not as dreadful as it appeared, discovering we have the strength to stare it down."



"May your choices reflect your hopes, not your fears."

[Nelson Mandela](#)

AWIMS Advisory Board



Wendi El-Amin, MD



John Flack, MD



Susan Hingle, MD



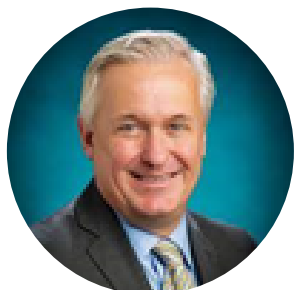
Kari Wolf, MD



Debra Klamen, MD



David Steward, MD



Douglas Carlson, MD



Jody Lack, MD



Donald Torry, PhD

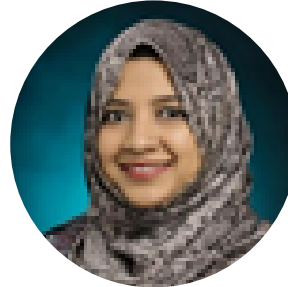


Diane Hillard-Sembell, MD

AWIMS Executive Committee

Education

Dr. Aysha Rafaquat and Dr. Robert Robinson



Research/RISE WIMS Program

Dr. Heeyoung Han and Dr. Georgia Luckey



Community Engagement

Ms. Erica Austin



Mindfulness and Wellness

Dr. Alex Hopkins



Mentorship and Career Advancement

Ms. Tracie Johnson and Dr. Ayame Takahashi