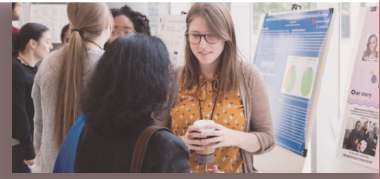
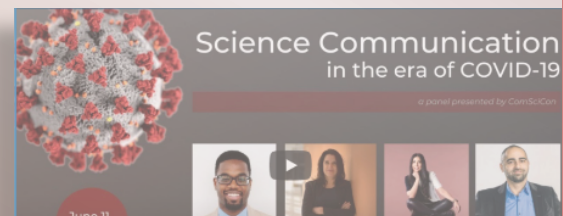


# ComSciCon 2022

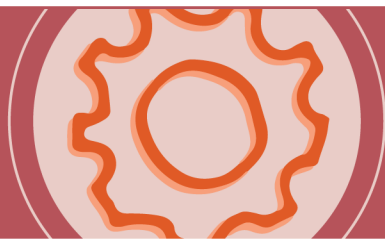
Annual Report



th



A report on the tenth annual  
Communicating Science Conference  
for STEM graduate students



## Table of Contents

Letter from the Organizing Committee.....	3
Organizing Committees.....	4
Attendees.....	5
Testimonials.....	6
Panelists.....	7
Event Summaries.....	15
Sponsors.....	19



ComSciCon



# Letter from the Organizing Committee



Dear Sponsors, Supporters, and other Members of the ComSciCon Community,

This year marks our 10th annual ComSciCon Flagship workshop! Since ComSciCon began in 2012, our goal has been to empower the graduate students who are poised to become future leaders in science communication, encouraging young scientists to expand the impact of research in their field to broad and diverse audiences as ambassadors for science and engineering. ComSciCon aims to connect these inspiring young scientists through our annual Flagship Workshop and the many Local Workshops held in nearly a dozen cities, allowing them to collaborate on new projects and expand the reach of their own initiatives.

After two years of virtual Flagship workshops, we were delighted to return to an in-person format this year, with strict Covid-19 policies in place. For three days, attendees exchanged experiences and ideas through active discussion, collaborated together to revise their own written and creative works, and pushed the boundaries of their capabilities as science communicators.

This year our team of graduate student organizers put together a program including popular events from previous ComSciCon workshops and new, innovative workshop opportunities for our attendees. Panel discussions on pertinent issues such as Diversity and Inclusivity in SciComm and Science Policy provided insight into vital areas of consideration for all scientists, and interactive workshops on Communicating Controversial Topics, Combating Misinformation, and Disability and Accessibility in STEM provided attendees with the opportunity to put their newfound knowledge into practice. Madeline Sofia joined us to give this year's keynote talk, detailing her trajectory from PhD student to NPR podcaster and stressing the importance of inclusive science communication. Our program concluded with a Careers Roundtable, in which attendees were able to get a taste for a diverse set of science communication career options.

In the following pages, we have summarized the work done by ComSciCon during the last year, highlighting the value of our workshops for both the scientific community and the public. We are once again deeply grateful to our sponsors for making this work possible: MIT Office of Graduate Education, the American Astronomical Society, Burroughs Wellcome Fund, the American Chemical Society, University of Maryland Graduate School Science Communication Certification Program, Community Initiatives, and many individual donors.

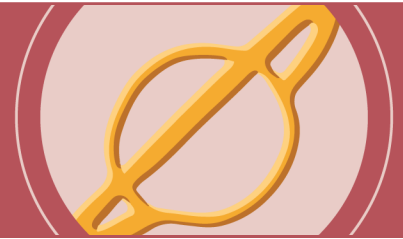
We are looking forward to another year of growth for ComSciCon. You can follow our progress at <http://comscicon.com/>.

Yours truly,

The ComSciCon 2022 Organizing Team



# Organizing Committees



## Logistics Committee

Lauren Girouard-Hallam  
Gus Beane  
Mike Foley  
Leanna Kalinowski  
Claire Lamman  
Nadia Lana  
Björn Lütjens  
Gloria Marino  
Cadence Payne  
Victoria Russell  
Alexia Simon  
Lieke van Son

## Programming Committee

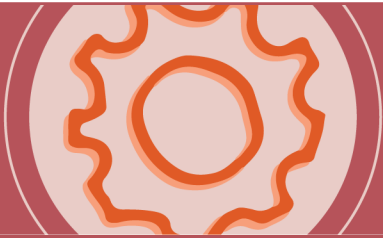
Nicolas Scrutton Alvarado  
Dana Boebinger  
Emily Costa  
Mike Foley  
Julie Fornaciari  
Elena Lin  
Jamie Moffa  
Victoria Russell  
Cadence Payne  
Bill Smith  
Teodora Stoica  
Ralph White III

Awesome!  
Awesome!  
Awesome!

Jargon!  
Jargon!  
Jargon!

Participants used “Awesome” and “Jargon” signals to provide live feedback to their peers during Pop Talks.





# Attendees

A huge thank you to all of our attendees for joining us this year!

- |                     |                       |                      |
|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| Gervin Apatinga     | Srijana Gautam        | Julie Maurer         |
| Jessie Bersson      | Kaushal Raj Gnyawali  | Brenden Moeun        |
| Melissa Betters     | Ryan Golant           | Ibukunoluwa Naiyeju  |
| Emma Carley         | Nika Hajari           | Elizabeth Nand       |
| Ana Carneiro        | Ashley Hayden         | Pamela Perrimon      |
| Callie Chappell     | Dillon Jones          | Mark Popinchalk      |
| Jessica Chomik      | Apsana Kafle          | Andy Proctor         |
| Brianna Chrisman    | Milanpreet Kaur       | Bec Roldan           |
| Robert Clemenson    | Sarika Khanwilkar     | Meredith Schmehl     |
| Megan Cook          | Elena Krasovskaia     | Nina Sokolov         |
| Jeremy Côté         | Sumeet Kulkarni       | Jimena Stephenson    |
| Natalie Crnosija    | Si Eun (Ruth) Lee     | Victoria Sayo Turner |
| Kaustav Kashyap Das | Giselle Lin           | Manasvi Verma        |
| Meghomita Das       | Gwenyth Lu            | Skyler Ware          |
| Tuba Dolar          | Taissa Lytchenko      | Heather Wild         |
| Andrian Gajigan     | Muhammad Taha Manzoor | Aara'L Yarber        |
|                     |                       | Daniela Zarate       |



# Testimonials



Hear directly from our attendees about what they loved about ComSciCon 2022!

*"The ComSciCon Flagship workshop was **an outstanding opportunity to network with other science communicators** and develop as a leader. I'm looking forward to staying connected with the other attendees, organizers, and speakers and seeing what we all accomplish!"* – Meredith Schmehl, Duke University

*"This was **one of the most impactful experiences** I've had during my time in graduate school. It was wonderful to be in a room full of so many other science communicators whose experiences and goals are similar to mine... Attending ComSciCon made me feel like I'm not alone and it gave me the resources and network to continue to do the work that I love."* – Lizzy Nand, Yale University

*"Are you a STEM grad motivated to share your science in creative ways to a wider audience? Comscicon will put you together with dozens of like-minded folks – just sit back and **watch your enthusiasm for science communication explode.**"* – Sumeet Kulkarni, University of Mississippi

*"A fantastic few days of meeting people from all over the scientific landscape. **Everyone was excited about science communication** and the experience showed me just how much energy and opportunity there is in this area."* – Jeremy Côté, Université de Sherbrooke

*"The ComSciCon Flagship Workshop was truly inspiring. It brought together diverse voices that were experts in the field, and created a safe and joyous en-*

*vironment for all of us to learn from each other, invited experts, organizers, and attendees alike. **I would highly recommend the Flagship Workshop to anyone that is passionate about scicomm**, it will leave you feeling more validated and inspired than ever before!"* – Manasvi Verma, Harvard University

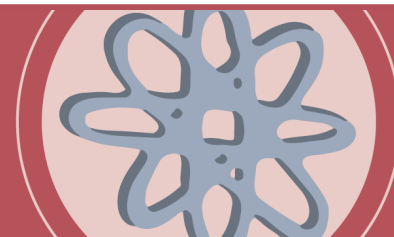
*"One of the most diverse and wholesome conferences that I have attended thus far. The talks, **the workshops and all the panel discussions were engaging and well-tailored to the needs of the audience.** The organizing team did a wonderful job of making sure that the conference was safe and met all the needs of the attendees. Truly a wonderful experience."* – Meghomita Das, McGill University

*"It was **a truly unique opportunity** to meet fellow grad students doing awesome SciComm work, and the atmosphere was very supportive and enriching."* – Ibukunoluwa Naiyeju, McGill University

*"**ComSciCon was a blast!** I have never been in one room with so many phenomenally intelligent people who wanted to communicate their knowledge more effectively. With the average academic journal article only receiving 7 views, one might wonder what can be done to better disseminate the findings. One clear answer: ComSciCon!"* – Andy Proctor, Brigham Young University

*"ComSciCon felt like coming home and meeting like-minded people."* – Anonymous

# Invited Experts



## KEYNOTE SPEAKER

### Madeline Sofia

Maddie Sofia is a scientist and journalist. She got her start as a journalist at NPR in 2016. In 2019, Maddie became the founding host of NPR's award-winning daily science podcast Short Wave. In 2020, Short Wave went on to become the most popular science podcast on Spotify in the United States.



Maddie's work is centered on inclusive communication and increasing the representation of marginalized communities in science journalism. She has reported on COVID, inequities in academia and public health, and some of the earth's most fascinating creepy-crawlies. She is particularly interested in highlighting queer voices and issues.

Before hosting Short Wave, Maddie hosted the NPR video show Maddie About Science and co-developed the worldwide NPR Scicomms program. The program (now at Boston University) focuses on supporting scientists interested in science communication through mentorship, community, and editorial support. The program has helped more than 100 scientists get published in popular science outlets. Previous to NPR, she received her Ph.D. in microbiology and immunology from the University of Rochester Medical Center.

Maddie is currently freelancing, teaching, and speaking. She enjoys talking with students about careers outside of academia, inclusive science communication, and storytelling. Maddie has been designing and participating in science communication workshops for more than 10 years. She enjoys cooking, reading SciFi, and frolicking in the mountains with her partner Natalie.

## SCIENCE POLICY PANEL

### Saud Anwar

State Senator Saud Anwar was first elected to the Senate in February 2019 to represent the residents of the 3rd State Senate District towns of East Hartford, East Windsor, Ellington and South Windsor. Saud was first elected to public office in 2011 as a member of South Windsor's Town Council. He has served two terms as South Windsor mayor, once from 2013 to 2015 and once from 2017 to 2019.

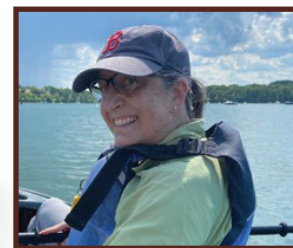


Saud is a medical doctor with specializations in treating lung diseases and critical care medicine, occupational and environmental medicine. He currently serves as Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine at Manchester Memorial and Rockville General Hospitals. Saud was trained in pulmonary and critical care medicine at, and holds a Master's Degree in Public Health from, Yale University.

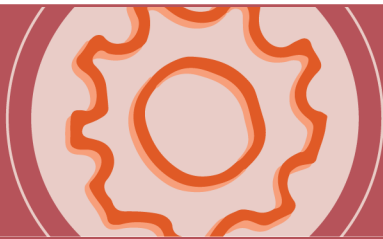
Saud also works with humanitarian and peace initiatives on a local, national and global scale. He has organized medical missions for disaster relief, receiving citations for doing so from former Governor Jodi Rell, United States Senator Richard Blumenthal and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz.

### Pam DiBona

Pam DiBona is an activist with Extinction Rebellion and Scientist Rebellion in Boston. She holds an M.S. in Environmental Science/Microbiology as well as a Graduate Certificate in Critical and Creative Thinking/Science in a Changing World from UMass Boston. Her work focuses on water resources, coastal habitats, and building capacity among community-based groups







# Invite Experts

for water quality monitoring, data management, and sharing results with decision makers. She has explored the public sector as both a manager and a union member; the nonprofit sector, where she designed informal ocean education programs; and the private sector with environmental consulting firms (one good and one evil). With regard to communicating with multiple audiences, Pam has been a lobbyist at the Massachusetts State House, a reporter and editor for the Somerville Community News, prepared speeches for the Commissioner of a state agency, and writes a mean grant proposal. Most recently she has been coordinating and preparing for street teach-ins about the climate crisis with Scientist Rebellion members. She is always happy to chat with anyone hoping to enter the environmental landscape of Massachusetts or coastal New England.

## Claudia Ward-de León



Claudia Ward-de León is a nationally published writer with more than a decade of experience distilling scientific and technical information for public consumption and writing about complex subjects for the general public.

As a Communications Strategist at the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS), she leads creative teams in developing communications pieces that support the organization's scientific analysis and advocacy in the Global Security and Clean Transportation's programs. These pieces include social media graphics, blogs, web pages, and multimedia for policymakers, community organizations, the media, and UCS' supporters. A first-generation immigrant from Guatemala, Claudia holds an MFA in Writing from Emerson College and a BA in Journalism from Southern Connecticut State University.

When Claudia is not thinking about Climate Change or Nuclear War, she likes to spend time in the woods and experiments with cooking, photography, and poetry.

## COMBATING MISINFORMATION WORKSHOP

### Matt Heid

Matt Heid is the senior communications strategist at the Union of Concerned Scientists, where he has spent the past decade developing and implementing communication and campaign strategies that promote and defend science-based decision making, advance progress on climate change, and help build a safer, healthier world for all. He currently co-leads the organization's campaign to counter disinformation, including trainings and workshops that empower science advocates with the knowledge and tools they need to effectively respond to disinformation.



## CAREERS ROUNDTABLE

### Diana Chien

Dr. Diana Chien has led the MIT Communication Lab's mission to support engineering trainees' technical communication skills since 2017, after working with the program since its launch in 2013. From 2013-2015, while completing her Ph.D. in Microbiology, Diana was a Biological Engineering (BE) Communication Fellow. From 2016-2017, she led the BE Communication Lab. During that time, she also co-led the design and launch of the CommKit, the Communication Lab's suite of online resources, which has received praise from global audiences.

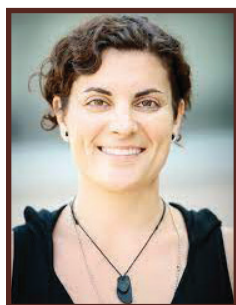


# Invited Experts



Diana's dedication to science communication grows out of her longtime passion for both biology and writing: as an undergraduate at Princeton University, she majored in ecology and evolutionary biology and minored in creative writing. Her poetry and fiction have received awards from and been published in major literary magazines.

## Jacqueline Goldstein



Dr. Jacqueline Goldstein is a queer, first-generation American, astrophysicist and science communication trainer. She is the Instructional Designer at the MIT Communication Lab, where she develops and leads workshops for engineering graduate students in technical communication and peer-coaching best practices. She earned her PhD in Astronomy, minoring in Life Sciences Communication, at the University of Wisconsin. She has been a radio host for astronomy news on WORT 89.9FM Madison, has authored a science comic book about her research on vibrations in stars, has trained researchers in story communication with Story Form Science, and is the co-creator of the science communication research blog SciCommBites.

Dr. Goldstein views training in academic science communication as a means to deepen scientific understanding, grow knowledge, promote collaboration, cultivate belonging, foster identity, and strengthen community. With the MIT Communication Lab she co-developed a workshop for best practices in Inclusive Coaching, and as an Advancing Research In Society (ARIS) Fellow she is co-developing a guide for best practices in Inclusive Broader Impacts. She is actively seeking to deepen her knowledge and understanding of equity and inclusion in science and science communication.

Dr. Goldstein values community organizing. She has been a leader in her graduate labor union, and is the founder of the community-centered Queer Climbing Social in Madison, Wisconsin. Outside of academia and organizing, she enjoys hiking with her dog and exploring gluten-free baked goods. She currently lives in Somerville, Massachusetts but is originally from San Francisco, California and misses the redwoods.

## Susan Heilman



Susan Heilman, PhD (she/her) is a life-long STEM learner and educator. She received her BA in Biochemistry from Vassar College and went on to do cancer research at UMass Medical School where she received her PhD in Biomedical Sciences. Heilman then entered the world of informal science education, as an educator at the Museum of Science Boston, delivering live presentations in current science, generating lightning, and wrangling porcupines. Over the past few years, the Museum of Science's mission and Heilman's job description has evolved into being more community focused. As part of the Current Science Communication team, Heilman leverages the Museum's regional leadership position to convene members of academia, industry, government and the community to work on a variety of topical issues including vaccines, artificial intelligence and mental health. Her role is to foster these relationships, develop new ones, and create innovative programs to further their missions. In her spare time, she loves to cook, read, and play video games with her family.



# Invited Experts

## Ashley Smart

Ashley Smart is the associate director of the Knight Science Journalism Program at MIT and a senior editor at Undark magazine. He was previously a senior editor at Physics Today magazine. Smart was a 2015-16 Knight Science Journalism Fellow and has served on the advisory boards of the Council for the Advancement of Science Writing and The Open Notebook. He holds a PhD in Chemical and Biological Engineering from Northwestern University. Smart is co-editor of "A Tactical Guide to Science Journalism: Lessons From the Frontlines" published in 2022 by Oxford University Press.



joined Veritasium full-time as a producer. Over the past year, she has gotten to hone both her scicomm skills and her production skills in days that are filled with anything from focused scriptwriting to business logistics to (once) filming from a helicopter.

Emily is excited about the accessibility created by the intersection of science and popular media and hopes to pursue that area in the future. She was born and raised around Boston, and after a five-year journey of living in NYC and then LA, she has moved back home to Boston and is excited to connect with other science media folk in the area! She is extremely game to discuss food, hikes, music, movies, internet pop culture, and, of course, scicomm.

## Emily Zhang

Emily is a producer at the science YouTube channel Veritasium. She graduated from Columbia University last year, where she received a B.A. in astrophysics. Originally she had full intentions to apply to grad school, but her love of the arts got her involved in theatre, writing, and video production during college – and once she learned about the science media world, she had to give it a shot. Towards the end of her undergraduate studies, she picked up scicomm experience from running BlueShift, Columbia's astronomy club, working an internship at the Chandra X-ray Center, and publishing her first major article after working with an NASW mentorship program.

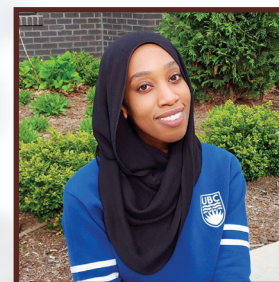


Upon graduating, she spent the summer learning about radio at Science Friday under the AAAS Mass Media Fellowship while also beginning her work with Veritasium. After the fellowship finished, she

## *DIVERSITY IN SCI COMM PANEL*

## Asma Bashir

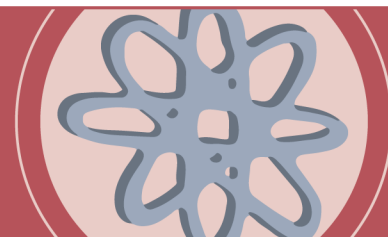
Dr. Asma Bashir is a neuroscientist by training, having completed her PhD in Neuroscience at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. For her PhD, she used preclinical and clinical approaches to investigate mechanisms of traumatic brain injury that lead to cerebrovascular compromise and axonal damage, including preclinical evaluation of a promising therapeutic. She previously completed her BA in Psychology at Boston University.



During her final year as a doctoral student, Dr Bashir founded Her Royal Science, a podcast that aims to humanize STEM researchers hidden behind the walls of the academic ivory tower, with a focus on stories of individuals from historically excluded groups. Inspired by {THE AND} card game, Her Royal Science is a warm space for guests to share their personal experiences and words of wisdom, where Dr Bashir aims to cultivate



# Invited Experts



and guide honest conversations that will encourage her audience to think about the systems of oppression that target the most marginalized members of our society.

Since starting Her Royal Science, Dr Bashir has expanded her platform's brand offerings into education and film. She is particularly passionate about teaching and mentoring the next generation of STEM trainees and podcasters, and has enjoyed many fruitful collaborations with professional organizations and academic institutions to lecture about science, communication, and the intersection of the two. The Her Royal Science platform also celebrated the release of an eponymous short film earlier this year, which offers a candid look into the makings of her podcast.

## HEART OF SCICOMM WORKSHOP

### Gb Kim

Gb Kim is a visual artist and a scholar of aesthetic politics, decolonial theory, and history & philosophy of science. Kim believes her responsibilities lie in using artistic practices to disrupt scientific practices, fully accounting the history and philosophy of science, and ultimately enabling a humane medical and technological future. Their ongoing work is focused on imagining non-apocalyptic science fictions/futures. Gb received a BFA in Illustration from Parsons The New School and an MA in Arts Politics from NYU Tisch School of Arts. Currently she works with the XBio division of the Science Communications Lab (<https://explorebiology.org/>) as the primary illustrator.



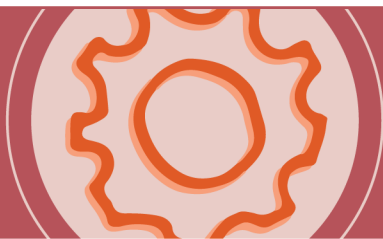
### Huei Sears

Huei Sears (she/her) is a fifth-year graduate student at Northwestern University in the Department of Physics & Astronomy and the Center for Interdisciplinary and Exploratory Research in Astrophysics (CIERA). Her research focuses on the host properties of long-duration gamma-ray bursts in the early universe.



Huei earned her B.S. in 2017 in 'Mathematics, Advanced' from Lyman Briggs College (LBC) at Michigan State University (MSU) while also completing the requirements for a double major in 'Astrophysics.' Although now undeniably an astronomer, Huei chose mathematics for her degree because of her love of calculus and the numerous extracurricular activities offered by the Department of Mathematics. After graduating from MSU in 2017, Huei took a gap year and started post-baccalaureate work in astronomy at MSU, served as public outreach coordinator for the campus observatory, and volunteered on a U.S. Senate campaign as a campaign finance intern.

Now in graduate school, Huei is an active member of the Astrobites collaboration. Astrobites is an international collaboration of graduate students who write daily paper summaries about recent astronomical research. Astrobites is American Astronomical Society (AAS) sponsored and gets nearly 1,400 web visits per day. In addition to daily science reviews, they also publish 'Beyond' posts that cover all non-research aspects of the (astro) graduate school experience. Now in her third year of membership in the collaboration, Huei currently serves on the DEI, hiring, and administrative committees in addition to co-managing their social media accounts.



# Invited Experts

## CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS WORKSHOP

### Shannon Rose Geary

Shannon is a science journalist and illustrator from Massachusetts. In 2019, they graduated from Tufts University with a B.S. in Biochemistry and a lot of confusion about what to do with their life. While at Tufts, Shannon worked as a STEM education teacher for elementary school students and a cartoonist for the Tufts Daily. After graduation, they worked as a research assistant, a barista, and a science communicator before going on to get their M.S. in journalism from Columbia University.



Shannon focused their journalistic training around investigative skills, audio/video production, and reporting on health and science topics in an ethical, accessible way. During their time at Columbia, Shannon developed a passion for reporting on LGBTQIA+ communities and telling queer stories. Their thesis project looked at the barriers transgender adults in the United States face when attempting to access gender affirming care and how those barriers were affected by the COVID pandemic.

Currently, Shannon works as the assistant producer for Big Picture Science podcast, a production of the SETI Institute. Every week, they get to create shows about bugs, dinosaurs, medical history, and more while asking the big picture questions, like “how DO scientists know where to look for sunken ships?” and “where did that background noise in my audio file come from?”.

When they're not writing or producing, Shannon loves to create art. They draw, paint, and make digital illustrations - both science focused and not. Their ultimate career goal is to have a work space filled with Weiner dogs, nice pens, and a soft drink machine that dispenses endless cherry-vanilla Diet Coke.

## DISABILITY IN STEM WORKSHOP

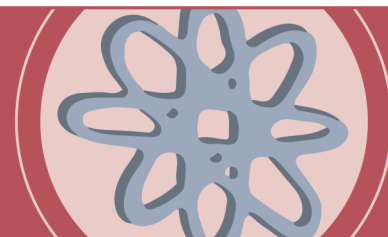
### Gabi Marks

Dr. Gabi Serrato Marks is an MIT-trained scientist with a passion for expanding access to science. As a Partner at Stellate Communications, she primarily supports academic researchers, facilitating greater engagement with scientific and non-scientific audiences alike.



Gabi received her B.A. at Bowdoin College and her doctorate in geochemistry from MIT. Her research focused on generating records of past climate change using cave deposits. She enjoys creating all types of media: Dr. Serrato Marks has published work in Scientific American, Audubon, and the PBS Eons YouTube Channel, and has been featured in several articles and podcasts (Nature Career Guide, Physics Today, Disability Visibility). Gabi is also co-editing an anthology of personal stories from disabled scientists (under contract with Columbia University Press). You can find Gabi on Twitter as @gserratomarks, or in Boston drinking iced coffee with her husband and two cats, Spock and Moose.

# Invited Experts



## CREATE-A-THON EXPERT REVIEW PANEL

In addition to many of the invited experts above, our Create-a-thon reviewers also included the following invited experts.

### Julie Rorrer

Dr. Julie Rorrer is an Arnold O. Beckman Postdoctoral Research Fellow and Fellow of the Communication Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her research focuses on the heterogeneous catalytic upcycling of waste plastics and sustainable feedstocks. She received her B.S. in chemical engineering from Arizona State University and her Ph.D. in chemical engineering from the University of California, Berkeley, where she was a National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellow. She is also the founder of the ongoing outreach initiative ColorMePhD, a free coloring book series communicating PhD-level research to a broad audience, which aims to inspire the next generation of scientists and improve visibility for scientists from traditionally-excluded backgrounds.



aspects of the video production process including scripting, filming, being on camera, editing, and visual effects. During COVID, he did all of these things by himself in his apartment as part of his series called Home Labs. This series challenges students to do science and engineering projects with things they have in their homes. The videos are as silly as possible because why not? Please check them out!

### Rodrigo Garcia

Rodrigo has completed a Ph.D. in Neuroscience where he studied how astrocytes contribute to sensory processing, as well as in neurodevelopmental disorders. After a brief postdoc investigating the structural underpinnings of new memory formation, he decided to make a career change into Science Education and Communication. Currently, he works with teams of PhDs to create original, animated content for undergraduate courses consumed by students at universities around the world.



### Rahi Patel



Rahi Patel is a science communicator based in Boston, MA. He currently works at the MIT Museum as a Curiosity Correspondent. In this role, he makes educational and inspirational videos for middle schoolers. He is involved in all

### Gourav Khullar

Gourav Khullar is an extragalactic astronomer, who works on understanding the assembly of mass in distant galaxies. Having obtained his PhD in 2022 from the University of Chicago, he has employed both ground- and space-based telescopes (including Hubble and JWST!) to obtain observations of massive galaxies for his work. Gourav has been a writer and administrator at Astrobites since 2015, having written (or contributed to) ~30 articles, and led initiatives related to education, equity and inclusion,







# Invited Experts

and organizational health. He is the co-founder of IDEA — Inclusion, Diversity and Equity in Astronomy — a grassroots organization of astronomers at the University of Chicago that since 2017 has conducted peer education and organized for social justice and policy reform. He has also conducted science communication at the Adler Planetarium, as part of the Astronomy Conversations series. Gourav is a fan of non-fiction books, cricket (both in the field and on his playstation), and mixing music. In September 2022, he will start as a Samuel P. Langley PITT PACC Astronomy Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Pittsburgh.

## Pinar Gurel

Pinar Gurel grew up in North Carolina and obtained her B.S. in Chemistry from UNC- Chapel Hill in 2009. She pursued her PhD in the Higgs lab at Dartmouth, where she investigated the biochemical mechanisms of actin cytoskeleton dynamics. During her PhD, Pinar was an active member of the Dartmouth Figure Skating Team, and attended her first ComSciCon meeting in 2014. After completing her PhD in 2015, Pinar conducted postdoctoral studies in the Alushin lab at the NIH in Bethesda, MD, then relocated with the lab to Rockefeller University in NYC, where she



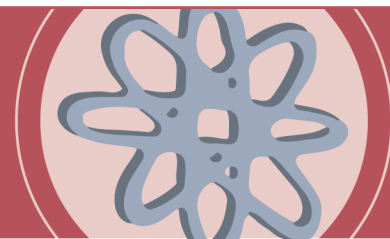
used cryoEM to understand how mechanical forces influence actin structure. In 2018, Pinar transitioned to a career in industry at Alkermes, located outside of Boston MA. Her focus is on protein engineering and design to develop therapeutics for immuno-oncology. Throughout her training, Pinar has always dedicated time towards science outreach, policy and mentoring efforts in both local and national settings. In addition to her passion for science, Pinar enjoys spending time with family and friends, and loves traveling, especially to warm destinations

## Tim De Chant

Tim De Chant is a senior climate reporter at TechCrunch and the founder of Future Proof, a publication covering climate and energy. He is also a lecturer in MIT's Graduate Program in Science Writing and has written for The Wire China, the Chicago Tribune, NOVA Next, and Wired magazine, among others. De Chant was awarded a Knight Science Journalism Fellowship at MIT in 2018, and he received his doctorate in environmental science, policy, and management from the University of California, Berkeley, and his bachelor's degree in environmental studies, English, and biology from St. Olaf College.



# Event Summaries



During each annual ComSciCon workshop, attendees not only hear from our expert invited speakers, but also participate in a number of unique, hands-on workshops to learn new skills in science communication.

## *KEYNOTE LECTURE*

The ComSciCon 2022 Flagship workshop welcomed Dr. Maddie Sofia as our keynote speaker. Dr. Sofia was the co-host of NPR's science podcast "Short Wave" until 2021 and star of the "Maddie About Science" videos. Before her work on "Short Wave," Dr. Sofia was an assistant producer and associate producer on the NPR Science Desk. Additionally, she collaborated with NPR's Joe Palca to launch an NPR program that trained young science communicators. During her keynote talk, Dr. Sofia shared her journey from a graduate student in the sciences into science communication. She encouraged discussion with attendees as she shared her experiences, both the positive and negative. Her keynote gave our attendees the rare opportunity to ask questions (both personal and professional) about the similar journey many of our attendees hoped to make in finding ways to communicate their science.

## *DIVERSITY IN SCICOMM PANEL*

Participants were invited to join panelists for a discussion surrounding equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice in STEM and science communication. Speakers Dr. Asma Bashir (she/her), Gb Kim (she/they), and Huei Sears (she/her) shared lived experiences that inspired their work. Through podcasting, visual arts, and writing, speakers touched on ways they center marginalized perspectives in science communication, challenge systems of oppression within and outside of academia, and build safe communities within their networks. This session gave participants a unique opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and identities, and explore ways to create more inclusive environments of their own.

## *CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS WORKSHOP*

The Controversial Topics workshop was led by Shannon Geary, a science journalist and illustrator with expertise in reporting on health and science topics in an ethical, accessible way, with a particular focus on stories from LGBTQIA+ communities. Their seminar was titled, "Mom, the experts are fighting again': Talking about controversial science" and encompassed a range of topics relevant to crafting the message, engaging with audiences, and enabling empathetic, impactful dialogue over controversial science. They shared crucial lessons on how to craft accessible, purposeful science communication, from considering the various forms of "expertise", to identifying stakeholders and creating opportunities for dialogue and understanding, to practicing "community-centered science." Their presentation culminated with a "Civic Science Forum," a small group activity in which attendees plotted out how they would report on two "controversial science" scenarios, identifying community stakeholders and experts to speak to, considering the stakeholders' concerns and the potential outcomes of their reporting, and evaluating which forms of media/outlets would best serve their reporting and its intended audience. By the conclusion of the workshop, attendees were equipped with practical and actionable lessons to communicate controversial topics with accessibility, inclusivity, and advocacy in mind.

## *DISABILITY IN STEM WORKSHOP*

As we create new pieces of science content, whether in academic settings or science communication settings, the access needs of disabled individuals are, in many cases, not considered. To address issues of

# Event Summaries



inaccessibility in science communication, participants joined expert and disability advocate Dr. Gabi Serrato Marks in a two-hour workshop that introduced the varying forms that disability can take, as well as ways to integrate accessibility considerations within our scientific content for all to enjoy. Attendees first engaged in discussion about how to develop effective alternative text (alt-text) for digital images used in different contexts: social media, manuscript figures, blogs, and the like. As videos are an increasingly popular form of communication, Dr. Marks then gave a guided tour on how we can make the information in videos more accessible through captions, guiding words on screen, and color design. Attendees were invited to share what they learned from the workshop by creating a short TikTok/Instagram video on a topic of choice. Attendees were highly engaged, using props, different settings, learned material, and personal experiences to create fun and engaging videos.

## CREATE-A-THON

Instead of a Write-A-Thon for this year's ComSciCon, we decided to expand our horizons and create a more unique experience that encompassed all major forms of science communication: a Create-a-thon. In

the beginning of the summer, attendees were asked to discuss a science topic of their choosing through creating one of the following: 1) written piece of work 2) audio experience (ex: a podcast) 3) video project (ex: Youtube video) 4) visual art piece (ex: comic book). Once selected, the attendees were asked to edit and improve upon their work leading up to ComSciCon, with the help of their peers and an expert reviewer. In addition, the attendees were to draft an accompanying pitch discussing the purpose of their work, with the idea that this could be sent to an editor, producer, or publisher. We provided a list of "publication partners," various science and general interest outlets who've agreed to review pitches from ComSciCon attendees.

After creating a rough draft of their piece and pitch, attendees peer edited each others' drafts remotely, revised their pieces to final drafts, and then discussed each other's work together and with an appointed expert reviewer in the Create-a-thon workshop portion of the conference. Overall, the Create-a-thon enabled attendees to leave ComSciCon with a piece of content they'd produced, practical advice on how to pitch content and communicate complicated, sometimes intangible topics using accessible and engaging language, and the personalized learning that comes from hearing others' helpful perspectives of their own work. In the past, attendees have pitched and published their Create-a-thon pieces in popular science outlets, field-specific science blogs, or on ComSciCon's blog, and we anticipate that this year's attendees will do the same. Finally, we've expressed our availability to support them after this conference, both regarding potential publication of their piece and general advice on their science communication journey.



# Event Summaries



## SCIENCE POLICY PANEL

The science policy panel sought to examine how science and policy interact at various levels, from grassroots to organizational to legislative. Panelists included Dr. Saud Anwar, pulmonary doctor and Connecticut state senator, and Pam DiBona, activist at Extinction Rebellion and Scientists Rebellion. They relied on their various experiences throughout the science policy process. Questions centered around how science is shaped through the policy-making process, how people can participate in science policy at various levels, and how they have been able to influence science policy in their positions. Panelists graciously answered prepared and audience questions alike, filling the full two hours allotted. The session was lively, with numerous audience questions which often sparked interactive discussions between the panelists and other attendees. Key takeaways from the session included advice on how to get involved at any level, tips on how to rally your local community to foster change, and encouragement for attendees as the future of science policy. Overall, the discussions within the panel were rich with insight and advice, remaining a valuable addition to the larger discussion on science communication.



disinformation, response best practices, and building your narrative. The workshop included small group activities on these topics, videos to watch, and actions to try in various scenarios. The attendees were active in asking questions, challenging the topics, and engaged throughout the two-hour workshop.

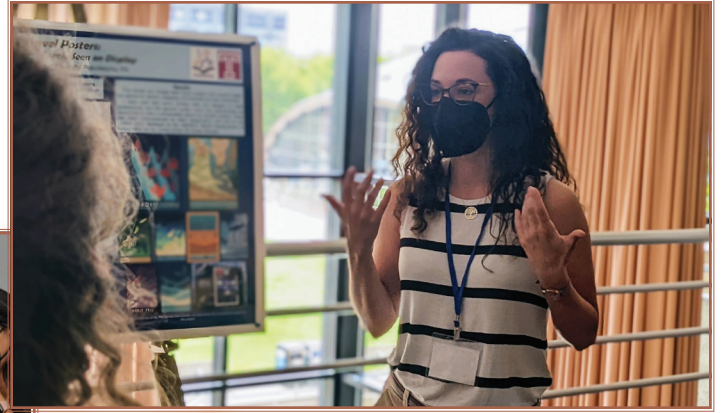
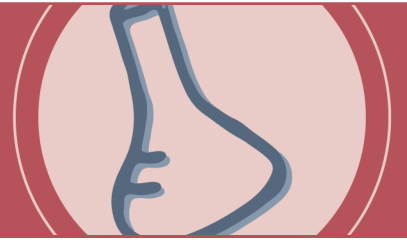
## CAREERS ROUNDTABLE

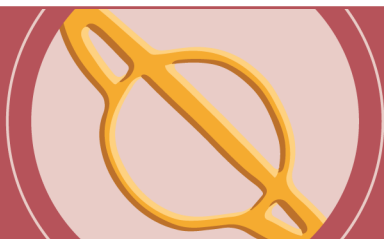
SciComm Careers Roundtables was a two part event that helped the attendees get a taste for a diverse set of scicomm career options. The first part of the event was a panel where five speakers, Dr. Ashley Smart, Dr. Susan Heilman, Dr. Diana Chen, Dr. Jacqueline Goldstein, and Emily Zhang. We asked our panelists three questions to get an idea of their own career paths, including science museums, writing, video production, and workshop and trainings. After the initial panel, we broke out into nine different roundtables, including experts from the rest of the workshop, that had between 3-10 attendees at each table. We switched tables halfway through the second hour, so the attendees can have further connection with the speakers. The roundtables provided small scale discussion and allowed the attendees to get their career questions answered.

## COMBATING MISINFORMATION WORKSHOP

The Misinformation Workshop was led by Matt Heid, from the Union for Concerned Scientists. In this two hour workshop, Matt covered various topics on mis- and disinformation in science. The topics included defining disinformation, how it is used, establishing trust, common pitfalls to avoid when handling

# Event Summaries





# Sponsors

## Thank you to our sponsors!

We want to thank each and every one of our sponsors for ComSciCon 2022. We couldn't have made CSC21 happen without their generous support. Thank you!

If you would like to add your support for future ComSciCon workshops and events, then please visit our [donate page](#). Any and all of your gifts are appreciated.



Office of  
Graduate Education



BURROUGHS  
WELLCOME  
FUND 



AMERICAN  
ASTRONOMICAL  
SOCIETY



ACS  
Chemistry for Life®

