

Kristen A. Mitchell

Biographical Information:

Originally from Michigan, my family moved to North Carolina when I was a teenager. I attended high school at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics in Durham, which fostered my interests in biology, chemistry and math. A bit of wanderlust led me to the Northwest, where I happily completed my degrees in higher education. I received a B.S. in Microbiology from Idaho State University in Pocatello, ID, followed by a Ph.D. in Pharmacology/Toxicology from Washington State University in Pullman, WA. During graduate school, I became active in the Society of Toxicology (SOT) and served as the graduate student representative for the Pacific Northwest Chapter of SOT.

My graduate research focused on mechanisms of TCDD immunotoxicity. TCDD is a widespread environmental contaminant and representative of a family of chemicals that elicit toxicity by binding to a protein called the aryl hydrocarbon receptor. One of my major findings was that exposure to TCDD suppressed the proliferation of T cells in the immune system, which led to my interest in understanding how TCDD and related chemicals influence cell division in general. To study this, I completed postdoctoral training in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) in Galveston. I used a mouse model of liver regeneration to identify mechanisms by which TCDD impacts the ability of cells to divide and restore liver function. During this time, I was fortunate to have been supported on an NIEHS Training Grant in Environmental Toxicology and an NIH-NRSA Postdoctoral Fellowship. I also took advantage of several opportunities to become involved in advancing the recognition of postdoctoral scientists at the university and national level. In this capacity, I served as Chair of the SOT Postdoctoral Assembly Board and helped usher in a new mentoring program for postdocs within the Society. I also served as Chair of the Organization of Postdoctoral Scientists at UTMB and helped create an officially recognized Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at the university. I was fortunate to have had an excellent experience as a postdoctoral fellow, and advancing the quality of postdoctoral training for newly trained scientists remains something that I am passionate about.

In January 2008, I joined the Department of Biological Sciences at Boise State University, where I am investigating the role of TCDD and related chemicals in wound healing processes in the liver. I am grateful to be working with extraordinarily talented graduate students, postdocs, and undergraduates, and everyday I strive to provide them with the same high-quality mentoring that I enjoyed as a scientist-in-training. Since my arrival at Boise State, I have taken advantage of several opportunities to advance the involvement of students in science across the Northwest. For example, over the past five years, I have served as Chair of the Cell and Molecular Biology Section of the AAAS Pacific Division, where I organize the poster and platform sessions for students and coordinate the judging and awards at the annual meeting. In addition, I continue to be involved in SOT, where I have served as Councilor for the Pacific Northwest Chapter and am currently Secretary/Treasurer for the Immunotoxicology Specialty Section.