

INSIDER

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SCIENCE
IN AMERICA

June 2026

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...



Leslie Bruce

Heartfelt greetings and thanks to each of you in this, my final President's Message.

As I shared at our last General Meeting, this has been a remarkable year for our Chapter. Thanks to the generosity and dedication of our members, donors, and supporters, we expect strong financial results that will enable us to continue investing in our Scholars and the future of scientific discovery.

Among this year's accomplishments, we provided a one-time \$3,000 supplemental award to each of our 50 Scholars in response to federal research funding cuts and approved additional funding increases for next year. Our Scientist of the Year event was an outstanding success, raising critical Scholar support while significantly expanding awareness of ARCS and our mission.

We also strengthened our future through new partnerships and initiatives, including the approval of Sanford Burnham Prebys Medical Discovery Institute as our first new educational partner in two decades. We expanded outreach to Scholar Alumni, enhanced our communications infrastructure, began pursuing new grant opportunities, updated our governing documents, and increased our visibility through participation in national ARCS initiatives and major scientific conferences.

None of these achievements happened by accident. They were made possible by an extraordinary group of members who generously contributed their time, talent, energy, and resources. I am especially grateful to our Board of Directors: **Ingrid Benirschke-Perkins, Paulette Roberts, Janet Roemer, Kristin Boyd, Barbara Bry, Rachel Collins, Tamia Strachan, Cathie Atkins, Grace Miller, Cindy Goodman, Margaret Dudas, and Linda Johnson.**

At a time when support for scientific research faces increasing challenges, our Chapter chose to lead—investing more deeply in our Scholars, strengthening partnerships, expanding our visibility, and building a stronger foundation for the future.

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President's Message... Continued from Page 1

It has been an honor and privilege to serve as your president. Thank you for your support, friendship, and commitment to our mission.

All the best,

Leslie K. Bruce, President
ARCS Foundation, San Diego Chapter

Summer General Meeting (June 2, 2026)

ARCS San Diego President **Leslie Bruce** presided over her final General Meeting for the chapter, and what an uplifting gathering it was. Approximately 50 members came together at the La Jolla Country Club for an engaging business meeting, an inspiring presentation by National President **Jill Bray**, and two special award presentations.

Leslie opened the meeting by welcoming several guests and presenting her annual review of chapter accomplishments. Highlights included securing supplemental support for all 50 ARCS Scholars in response to federal funding cuts, adding Sanford Burnham Prebys as a new partner institution, and overseeing an outstanding Scientist of the Year Celebration.

Catie Madani, SOY Chair and SR Liaison, followed with an enthusiastic recap of the Scientist of the Year event, sharing both its impact and success. **Cindy Goodman**, Parliamentarian and Legacy Society Director, provided an update on the Legacy Society and encouraged members to support Member Giving before month-end.

Rachel Collins, VP of Meetings & Social Events, spoke on behalf of **Tami Strachan**, VP of Membership, reminding members that annual dues are payable by June 30.

Paulette Roberts, Nominating Committee Member and VP of Administration, then presented the 2026–2027 Board and Director slate, which was approved unanimously by the membership.

Leslie asked members to be sure to look for the upcoming invitation to the Summer Just for Fun Party which will feature a sunset supper at the Point Loma home of **Doris Ellsworth**. She also urged members to sign up at the registration table for the Getting to Know You Program led by **Suzanne Dixon**.



Jill Bray, ARCS National President

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Summer General Meeting (June 2, 2026)...

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The afternoon featured an informative and inspiring presentation by ARCS National President **Jill Bray**. Jill highlighted the many ways ARCS National supports local chapters and shared the organization's long-term strategic vision. She emphasized the importance of viewing ARCS as a collaborative network, with National serving as a valued partner and resource for chapters.

Jill then presented the National ARCS Sparks Award to **Priscilla Moxley**. For more than 35 years, Priscilla has generously contributed her time, talent, and treasure to ARCS San Diego. Deeply surprised and moved by the recognition, she received a heartfelt standing ovation from the membership.

The final tribute of the afternoon honored President **Leslie Bruce**. **Ingrid Benirschke-Perkins**, President-Elect, presented Leslie with a bouquet of flowers and an



Jill Bray and Priscilla Moxley



Leslie Bruce

engraved vase on behalf of the Board, recognizing her vision, energy, and unwavering dedication over the past two years. Ingrid also expressed her sincere appreciation that Leslie will continue to serve the chapter as VP of Marketing & Communications.

As the meeting adjourned, members left with a sense of pride in the chapter's accomplishments and excitement for the year ahead. Heartfelt thanks to **Laurie Roeder** for capturing the highlights with these wonderful photos!



Pattie Wellborn, Priscilla Moxley, Barbara Baxter, Doris Ellsworth



Summer General Meeting (June 2, 2026)...

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Barbara Doren, Leslie Bruce, Jill Bray



Holly Heaton, Suzanne Dixon, Kathe Albrecht, Catie Madani



2026-2027 Board Members: Cathie Atkins (VP, University Relations), Margaret Dudas (VP, Administration), Leslie Bruce (Past President and VP, Marketing & Communications), Alice Brown (Recording Secretary), Laurie Roeder (VP, Meetings & Social Events), Paulette Roberts (VP, Fund Development), Ingrid Benirschke-Perkins (President)

Scientist of the Year Celebration (May 17, 2026)

Nearly 200 guests gathered at The Conrad in La Jolla on May 17 to celebrate **Dr. Sonia Ancoli-Israel**, the 2026 ARCS Scientist of the Year (SOY), whose pioneering research has transformed our understanding of aging and sleep.

The festive evening opened with a reception featuring 18 of this year's 50 ARCS Scholars, who presented their groundbreaking research during a dynamic poster session.

Their work offered a vivid and inspiring reminder that the next generation of scientific leaders is already hard at work advancing discovery and innovation.



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Scientist of the Year Celebration (May 17, 2026)...

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Following the reception, guests moved into the Baker-Baum Concert Hall for the main program. President **Leslie Bruce** welcomed the audience and then invited the Scholars into the hall, accompanied by the traditional trumpet processional. It is always a moving moment to see all 50 Scholars gathered on stage, knowing they will soon head out into the world to advance science in America and beyond.



The audience was then captivated by a short video montage created by the exceptionally talented **Rob Healey**, introducing each Scholar in their own words. Hearing their heartfelt expressions of gratitude, determination, and inspiration made it difficult to hold back tears of pride and joy.

Next, distinguished ARCS Scholar alum **Noah Milman** from the Oregon chapter spoke briefly about his own research on the role of sleep in social development and cognitive decline. He emphasized the profound impact the ARCS award had on the trajectory of his career and the opportunities it made possible.

The crowning moment of the evening was the keynote address by our 2026 Scientist of the Year. **Dr. Ancoli-Israel** was introduced by **Cathie Atkins**, VP of University Relations and her close friend and colleague of 44 years.



Noah Milman

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Scientist of the Year Celebration (May 17, 2026)...

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Over the course of a distinguished career, **Dr. Ancoli-Israel** has reshaped our understanding of sleep in older adults, and she delivered a captivating presentation drawn from a lifetime of discovery.

Among her key findings: it is not aging itself that causes poor sleep, but rather the many conditions that often accompany aging. While the need for sleep remains constant throughout life, the ability to sleep well changes with age. She highlighted the high prevalence of sleep disorders among older adults, the strong connection between poor sleep and both medical and psychiatric illness, and the promising discovery that treating sleep apnea in patients with mild dementia may improve cognition. She also described how increasing light exposure in nursing homes can help stabilize circadian rhythms and improve sleep quality.

With characteristic warmth and humility, **Dr. Ancoli-Israel** reminded the audience that science is never a solo endeavor, generously crediting the colleagues and students who contributed to her work throughout the years. She was presented with a stunning piece of metal art, *Time and Dreams Intertwined*, created by **Janet Hubka**, founder of ilus art and former ARCS member. It was a fitting tribute to a lifetime devoted to illuminating the science of sleep.



Leslie Bruce, Sonia Ancoli-Israel, Cathie Atkins

Following the program, guests returned to the courtyard for dessert and conversation with our speakers, Scholars, and friends. It was truly an inspiring evening and a proud moment for our chapter.

Heartfelt kudos to the SOY Committee for pulling out all the stops to make this celebration so memorable: **Catie Madani** (Chair), **Leslie Bruce** (President), **Cathie Atkins**, **Ingrid Benirschke-Perkins**, **Grace Miller**, **Lisa Perich**, **Laurie Roeder**, **Janet Roemer**, **Tanya Schierling**, and **Ann Siemens**. Special thanks to **Rob Healey** for his outstanding technical support.



2026 ARCS Scholar Graduations at USD and Scripps Research

(May 14-15, 2026)

By Leslie Bruce

There's nothing quite like watching an ARCS Scholar graduate. You feel like a proud auntie, elbowing your seatmate and whispering, "That's my girl!" or "That's my boy!" In those moments, your commitment to these students – and to others like them through ARCS – is renewed. The value of the work we do through ARCS is reaffirmed. You beam with pride.

I had that experience several times during the week before SOY, and I'm still glowing. Chapter Recording Secretary **Grace Miller** and I attended the hooding ceremony for the Nursing PhD graduates at the University of San Diego. (Grace will shadow longtime ARCS Liaison to USD **Caroline Etland** this coming year, with hopes of giving Caroline a well-deserved break in 2027–28.)

The ceremony featured Hahn School of Nursing Dean **Jane Georges**, whose nearly tearful remarks movingly captured the magnitude of the impact these graduates can make. While nurses play a vital one-on-one role with patients, nurse scientists have the potential to improve – or even save – thousands of lives at a time by transforming the delivery of healthcare.

One by one, a dozen nursing graduates crossed the stage, bowing their heads as faculty mentors draped silken doctoral hoods over their shoulders before posing for photos to the cheers of family and friends. We applauded enthusiastically for our graduating ARCS Scholars: **Andrea Correia, Oliver Erece, Sandy Jellen, and Kristina Lopez.**



(l to r): Dr. Cynthia Connolly, Grace Miller, Leslie Bruce, Andrea Correia, ARCS Alum Oliver Erece, Sandy Jellen, Kristina Lopez and Dean Jane Georges

At the luncheon afterward, the Scholars thanked us and our Chapter for the support they had received throughout their PhD journeys. I asked our USD hosts whether more ARCS members might attend next year's ceremony, thinking it would make an uplifting field trip. Their answer was an enthusiastic yes—so Members, look forward to an immensely rewarding experience next year!

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2026 ARCS Scholar Graduations at USD and Scripps Research (May 14-15, 2026)...

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Later that same week, I attended the Scripps Research graduation, where two of our Scholars were honored. Although **Garrett Lindsey** was unable to attend, **Justice Fleischmann** was there to bask in the warm tribute offered by one of his faculty mentors.



SR Scholar Justice Fleischmann
and Leslie Bruce



SR Scholar Alum Chris Cottrell
and Leslie Bruce

I was seated next to **Chris Cottrell**, an SR ARCS alumnus and senior research scientist working on HIV vaccines. Chris shared that royalties from his contributions to the development of the Pfizer COVID vaccine – work he conducted while still a graduate student – enabled him to establish an endowed graduate student childcare supplement fund at the Institute. The fund helps increase stipends and offset childcare costs for student researchers. He explained that when he and his wife were graduate students at Scripps, his parents helped pay for childcare for their daughter, and without that support they would not have been able to complete their training. That experience inspired him to “pay it forward” to the next generation of scientists. How proud I am that our Chapter supported him!

Keynote speaker **Peter Dervan, PhD**, delivered a compelling defense of scientific research in America. A Professor Emeritus of Chemistry at Caltech, he reflected on the extraordinary generational impact of scientific mentorship. Dervan had mentored Scripps Research President and CEO Peter Schultz, who in turn mentored another leading scientist, who then mentored yet another renowned researcher. Dervan affectionately referred to the final scientist in that lineage as his “great-grandchild” – a poignant illustration of the continuity of discovery across generations.

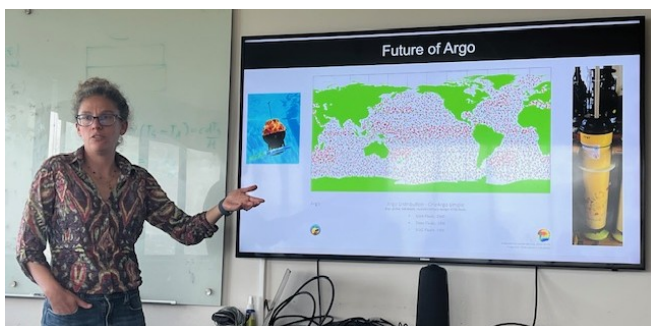
Dervan also shared a striking perspective on the return on America’s investment in science. He recalled asking an economist to estimate the impact of taxpayer funding for scientific research since the launch of Sputnik in 1957. The estimate: American taxpayers have invested roughly \$2–3 trillion in scientific research since then, generating an astonishing \$50–60 trillion in economic prosperity. Yet another reason ARCS proudly stands with science!

Scripps Research Director and ARCS member **Nicola Wilkins-Miller** assured us that more ARCS members would be warmly welcomed at next year’s ceremony – another fascinating and affirming field trip to look forward to.



Field Trip to Scripps Institution of Oceanography (May 1, 2026)

Thanks to Chapter Field Trip Co-Director **Cindy Wollaeger**, more than a dozen ARCS members and their friends met at UCSD's Scripps Institution of Oceanography (SIO) on May 1 to learn how faculty and student scientists collect data on the warming of the earth's oceans through the Argo project. SIO both founded the project and leads all US participation, interacting with numerous global partners.



Professor Sarah Purkey, PhD shows float locations on a global map.

As explained by Physical Oceanography Professor **Sarah Purkey, PhD**, Argo is an almost 30-year long international program that collects information from inside the ocean using a fleet of 4500+ robotic instruments deployed in oceans all over the world. These "floats" – all of which deployed by the U.S. are built on site at SIO – are like giant syringes, drifting with the ocean currents and moving up and down between the surface, a mid-water level and

the ocean floor. Each instrument (float) spends almost all its life below the surface, measuring temperature, salinity, pressure and oxygen, pH, nitrate, and chlorophyll.

Argo data are now the most abundant source of underwater information. These data help scientists understand how the physical state of the ocean is changing over time. Over its long lifespan, the ARGO data has contributed to many applications, including weather forecasting over land and the ocean; early warning for extreme weather events; operational military support and search and rescue; oil and gas energy management and operations; ocean current predictions for maritime safety and route selection; and federal marine law enforcement.



Professor Purkey demonstrating parts of the float.



ARCS members and friends examine the lab where floats are manufactured.



Members and friends enjoying a lunch at Caroline's near the Scripps Pier.



ARCS Scholars & Scholar Alumni Making Headlines



Hannah Battey (2025-2026 ARCS Scholar in the Joint Doctoral Program UCSD and SDSU) has been named a Merkin Graduate Fellow, a distinction that supports international research experiences. Through the fellowship, she spent three months in Sri Lanka helping establish clinical recruitment sites and train teams for her research on bacterial pneumonia, conducted in collaboration with the La Jolla Institute for Immunology. Hannah's work integrates her background in biology with epidemiology, combining laboratory science, global patient recruitment, and data analysis to better understand disease targets. The experience strengthened her global research perspective and reinforced her commitment to a future in infectious disease research, including diagnostics, antimicrobial resistance, and vaccine development. Read the full story here:

<https://publichealth.sdsu.edu/news/2026/jpd-scholar-hannah-battey-named-merkin-graduate-fellow>

Scholar Alumni – Where Are They Now?

Keith W. Sockman, PhD (1996, SDSU) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Biology and Curriculum in Neurobiology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He earned an MA in Biology at SDSU in 1996 and went on to complete a PhD in Zoology at Washington State University in 2000. He did his post-doctoral work at The Johns Hopkins University from 2001-2004.



Throughout his career, Dr. Sockman has maintained an interest in the interface between ecology, behavior, and physiology and has used birds as a study system for his research. Recently, he has focused these interests on neurobiology and how, mechanistically, the brain integrates ecological and social information during reproductive decision-making. He is also interested in how the effects of latitude on daylight availability may have influenced the evolution of avian migration and photoperiodism.

Stefanie Nuñez, MD (1995-1996, UCSD) is board-certified in pulmonary diseases, critical care medicine and sleep medicine. She enjoys all aspects of pulmonary medicine and sleep disorders, and is currently the medical director of Valley Medical Center Respiratory Therapy and Pulmonary Rehabilitation in Renton, Washington.

Dr. Nuñez was raised in Reno, Nevada and completed her undergraduate studies in biological sciences at Stanford University. She received her medical degree at UCSD in 1996 and completed her



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Scholar Alumni – Where Are They Now?...

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internship and residency training in internal medicine at University of Texas-Southwestern in Dallas in 1999. She returned to the West Coast for her fellowship training in pulmonary and critical care medicine at the University of Washington from 2000-2003.

Her clinical experience includes working as a primary-care physician in an underserved community and as an internal medicine hospitalist in Tacoma. She joined Southlake Clinic in 2003 and Valley Medical Center in 2017. In her spare time, Dr. Nuñez enjoys spending time with her family, camping, traveling and reading a good book.

Nicole Mareno, PhD, RN (2007-2009, USD) is a registered nurse and Certified Intuitive Eating Counselor in Atlanta, Georgia. She opened her private practice, Nuture Consulting, in 2018. In her private practice, Nicole treats adults healing from eating disorders, working at the intersection of mental health and nutrition. She uses a variety of therapeutic modalities including cognitive behavioral approaches, somatic approaches, and values-driven interventions.



Nicole helps her clients learn to nourish and care for themselves fully, feel positive about their food decisions, and respect their bodies by balancing nutrition and pleasure in eating. She approaches food and eating in a whole-person manner, considering all aspects of health and well-being (e.g., biology, environment, dimensions of health, social support, culture, financial needs, etc.) to be important, related, and relevant to nutritional self-care.

Nicole was born and raised in San Diego and moved to Atlanta, Georgia in 2009, after receiving her PhD in Nursing at USD's Hahn School of Nursing and Health Science. She has worked in a wide range of settings, including hospitals, clinics, and communities.

She is a member of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association. As helping professionals, psychiatric nurses fulfill many roles on the healthcare team and are qualified to implement counseling techniques such as motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral therapy.

Nicole is also a member of the International Association of Eating Disorders Professionals and a member of the local Atlanta chapter. She is training to be a Chi-for-Two embodiment coach, a trauma healing method.

Nicole is an avid runner, enjoys golfing and skiing, and has recently started taking adult ballet classes. She has an English Setter named Beau, who sometimes makes guest appearances during virtual sessions with clients.



ARCS Calendar of Events

JULY

- Tuesday, July 21 – Board Retreat (Joya Kitchen)

AUGUST

- Tuesday, August 18 – Board Meeting (via Zoom)
- Sunday August 30 – Just for Fun Party (Doris Ellsworth's home)

SEPTEMBER

- Tuesday, September 15 – Board Meeting (via Zoom)

OCTOBER

- Tuesday, October 20 – Board Meeting (via Zoom)
- Tuesday, October 27 – Fall General Meeting (La Jolla Country Club)