As basic and clinical scientists, how do we sustain our momentum and achieve our research goals in these times of challenging funding?

The world of academic research and medicine is vital to achieving scientific advances and is also a yardstick by which investigators and institutions are often judged. In this challenging funding climate, it is perhaps not surprising that the most common question I get asked is Chair of the ATVB Council revolve around the status of research funding by the American Heart Association.

Our Council has a strong base of basic and translational researchers, many of whom have received research support from the AHA at various career levels, including established investigator awards, grant-in-aids, postdoctoral fellowships, and scientist development grants. As a result, we continue to lobby strongly for sustained funding of key AHA grants programs, particularly those targeted to early-career investigators.

At our last ATVB leadership meeting, we were encouraged to hear the good news that 2015 was a record-breaking year for AHA fundraising, with more than $800 million raised. This represents a doubling in donations over the last five years. Importantly, the AHA President Mark Cregan, MD, and President-elect Steve Houser, MD, indicated that the AHA is strongly committed to funding existing programs, such as those targeted to early-career investigators, even as they expand into funding larger-scale collaborative grants.

I hope this encouraging news is a sign of an upward trajectory that will continue to gain momentum in 2016.

Women’s Leadership Committee Report

At this year’s Scientific Sessions in Orlando, the Women’s Leadership Committee (WLC) was proud to host its annual Networking Luncheon. This popular event is led by ATVB faculty and centers around roundtable discussions that cover topics such as career opportunities, setting priorities, networking, writing successful grant applications, conflict resolution, fostering collaborations, mentoring, and tips for obtaining a first faculty position. The high attendance by both male and female scientists and clinicians offered a great opportunity—particularly for junior investigators—to network, exchange ideas, and initiate new collaborations. The WLC expresses its gratitude to all those individuals who served as discussion leaders.

The WLC is currently finalizing plans for the Mentor of Women Award Luncheon to be held at the upcoming ATVB | PVD 2016 Scientific Sessions in May, and is eagerly anticipating a large number of applications for the abstract- and poster presentation-based Junior Investigator Award for Women. The ATVB Council’s WLC continues its efforts to provide visibility and career development opportunities for promising young investigators, and we encourage you to attend and support events sponsored by our committee. We look forward to seeing you in Nashville!

Early Career Corner

The ATVB Early Career Committee as we return from the most recent Scientific Sessions in Orlando. As usual, our Early Career members shone bright at Sessions with outstanding oral presentations and highly attended poster sections. The annual ATVB Early Career Investigator competition was held Sunday, Nov. 15, and our four finalists showcased some of the best young talent the ATVB Council has to offer. The winner this year was Dr. Cristoph Zehender, for his presentation on long non-coding RNAs in angiosogenesis! Congratulations!

We also held our annual Early Career Networking reception, where the 75 top-scoring abstracts from ATVB Early Career members were invited to present posters. This event is always a great place to mingle and network with colleagues, which can be difficult to do at a large meeting like Sessions. It also provides a terrific informal venue for ATVB Council Early Career members to meet senior investigators within our council and throughout the AHA. We are grateful to our sponsors, Gilead, Merck, Regeneron and Isis Pharmaceuticals, who helped us put on a fun and productive evening.

In addition to networking with colleagues at the Networking reception, we also awarded the ATVB Council Award for Outstanding Research by an Early Career Investigator at the event, and this year’s winner was Sara Keming for her top-scoring abstract titled “Loss of Notch1 in the secondary heart field exacerbates aortic aneurysm and causes aortic rupture in Marfan syndrome mice.” Well done!

As the days get warmer and nights get longer, we are gearing up for the ATVB | PVD 2016 Scientific Sessions to be held in Nashville, and the EC committee is busy preparing another series of events for our early-career members. In 2015, we sent out a survey asking your opinion about the events the EC committee put on every year, and how we might improve things. If you missed the survey, please feel free to send any feedback to the Chairs of the EC committee, Katery Rayner, Rayner@attleeheart.co.uk, and Nick Leeper, n sleeker@stanford.edu. We always welcome your feedback and want to make your experience as an early-career member of the ATVB Council as fun and productive one. Make sure to become an AHA member to take advantage of discounted registration at all AHA meetings. And we’ll see you in Nashville! Yeehaw!

Message From the Editor

As research in the fields of arteriosclerosis, thrombosis, and vascular biology continues to grow and submissions to the ATVB Journal continue to rise, our Council continues to seek ways to engage investigators in the field. While we have a strong history of organizing events that provide broad engagement at meetings (e.g., networking receptions and interactive poster sessions), we also recognize that there are numerous opportunities for broadening engagement of potential new members in the Council. One such example has been through support of events aimed at engaging Chinese investigators presenting ATVB-related research at our meetings. At both Scientific Sessions and the spring meeting, more than 150 investigators from China attended or presented at networking and poster sessions held prior to the “main” meeting. These events not only provide a unique forum for investigators to meet a large number of investigators from their home country, but also engage the global community in the mission of the American Heart Association. We are always looking for ways to broaden the reach of the ATVB Council, so please contact myself or our Council Chair with any suggestions you may have for new events or activities that will increase the impact of our Council on the scientific community.

Don’t miss the ATVB | PVD Scientific Sessions May 5-7 at the Omni Nashville, in Nashville, Tennessee. Visit my.americanheart.org/abssessions for more information.