



EARLY CAREER NUTRITION (ECN) EXECUTIVE BOARD

Member Spotlights

LILIANA AGUAYO, PHD, MPH *CHAIR*



Dr. Aguayo is a community health researcher investigating early-life factors that contribute to reduce risks of childhood obesity and cardiovascular disease across the life course. Her research aims to better understand the early life origins of disparities in obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease, and elucidate the mechanisms through which resilience may buffer the toxic effects of socioeconomic adversity. Liliana loves the opportunity to mentor passionate students, particularly students from underrepresented groups in health sciences. She enjoys walking, especially with her dog Bruno, paddle-boarding in the summer, and spending time with family and friends. Liliana seeks out opportunities to foster and promote a culture of inclusion, equity, respect, and justice. As teacher and mentor at Emory University, and as ECN Chair, she advocates to expand opportunities for all students, nutrition researchers, and ASN Early Career members. Her personal and professional goal is to contribute to the elimination of health and educational disparities and empowerment of vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

ASHLEY TONEY, PHD, RDN *CHAIR-ELECT*



Dr. Ashley Toney received her Ph.D. in Human Sciences with a specialization in Biochemical/Molecular Nutrition and Community Nutrition/Health Promotion from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at the Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute studying oral microbiome and health. Her research interests focus on reducing health disparities by using translational approaches at the bench and in the community as well as bridging the gap between research and practice in underserved communities. As a first-generation student and Latina scientist, she aspires to work with the ECN Executive Committee to develop a pathway within science and professional organizations for individuals who are historically underrepresented in this field. She enjoys meeting her peers and “paying it forward” as so many others have done for her in her career. In her spare time, she enjoys eating delicious food, spending time with her family and friends, and cuddling her pets. [LinkedIn.](#)



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Member Spotlights

NADINE MIKATI, PHD, RDN, LD *PAST CHAIR*



Dr. Nadine Mikati obtained her B.S. degree in Nutrition and Dietetics from the American University of Beirut with distinction. She then earned an M.S. degree in Nutrition and Food Science from Wayne State University and a Ph.D. degree in Nutrition and Dietetics from Florida International University in 2016 where her research primarily focused on obesity prevention. Dr. Mikati has been a Registered Dietitian since 2008. She has over 12 years of varied experience in research, teaching, food service, clinical and community nutrition through working with various hospitals, non-government organizations, universities as well as private practice. She was named Registered Young Dietitian of the Year in 2009 by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Currently, Dr. Mikati is an Associate professor in the Department of Nutrition at the Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine at Nova Southeastern University in Florida, where she has dedicated her time to teach nutrition to future nutritionists, dietitians and physicians; conduct research and serve the community through clinical practice. Dr. Mikati has a vision of fostering belonging and balanced representation through encouraging the inclusion of diverse speakers, members and events.

JULIE PATTERSON, PHD, MBA, RDN, LDN *SECRETARY*



Julie Patterson is Registered Dietitian with a Bachelors degree in Human Nutrition and Dietetics from the University of Illinois-Chicago, a Masters in Business Administration from DePaul University and a PhD in Nutrition Science with a minor in Population Health from the University of Wisconsin - Madison. She has more than 10 years of experience working in health care and is now an Assistant Professor at Northern Illinois University. Her research area is exploring breast/chest-feeding practices that support lactating parents in the health care setting. One step in changing the landscape of diversity and inclusion in the ECN and/or ASN is through outreach and ensuring diversity and inclusion is a part of every conversation from recruiting speakers to recruiting members of the board.



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Member Spotlights

NIKA LARIAN, PHD *SOCIAL MEDIA, MEMBERSHIP, & ENGAGEMENT CHAIR*



Dr. Larian is a Food Loss and Waste Advisor at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). At USAID, Nika works in the Center for Nutrition, where she provides technical expertise, Mission support, and policy guidance, particularly in the areas of food safety and climate smart agriculture. Nika created and produces the [USAID's Kitchen Sink Podcast](#). She is the Chair of the Interagency Food Safety Technical Working Group under the Global Nutrition Coordination Plan (GNCP). Dr. Larian received her PhD in Nutritional Sciences from the University of Kentucky. Her graduate and postdoctoral research focused on wasting during sepsis and the effects of environmental pollutants on human health, namely diabetes and obesity. Nika also works as a fitness instructor at CycleBar. In her spare time, Nika enjoys hiking with her golden retriever, cooking, traveling, and collecting new houseplants. As Social Media, Membership, and Engagement Chair, Nika created the Member Spotlight program to highlight the diversity of ECN membership. [LinkedIn](#). Twitter: @nutritiousnika

DYLAN BAILEY, MS, RD, FAND *SOCIAL MEDIA, MEMBERSHIP, & ENGAGEMENT CHAIR*



Dylan is a Senior Nutrition Specialist with Ketchum who works across nutrition, food, beverage, ingredient, agriculture and wellness accounts to ensure accuracy in reporting science and research communications, as well as providing strategic reputation management counsel. Dylan has also published several scientific manuscripts in peer-reviewed journals. His research interests include appetite hormones, obesity, weight bias, feeding behaviors, diversity in the dietetic profession and the impostor phenomenon among nutrition and dietetics professionals. He has been featured in publications including Food and Nutrition Magazine and Practice Applications of the Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. Dylan also spends time mentoring students about the growing field of nutrition communications and precepting dietetic interns from internships around the country. Dylan serves as Past-Chair for the Cultures of Gender and Age Member Interest Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and is also the Social Media Chair for the Early Career Nutrition Interest Group of the American Society for Nutrition.



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Member Spotlights

AMANPREET CHEEMA *DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION CHAIR*



Amanpreet Cheema is the Director of Division of Clinical Research, and Assistant Professor at KPCOM's Institute for Neuro Immune Medicine (INIM). She is a nutritional biochemist by training and has earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Nutrition from Florida International University. Before her doctorate, she completed Master of Science in Biochemistry from Panjab University (India). In her early career research, she evaluated factors involved in aging related disorders with a focus on minority health and disparities. Dr. Cheema currently oversees clinical research program at INIM overseeing large, multisite, multi-study, highly complex research projects in Gulf War Syndrome/Gulf War Illness, Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and Post COVID Syndrome. She has expertise and research interest in the identification of diet, natural bioactive products, and nutraceuticals as potential therapeutic agents for complex illnesses using immunological, nutrigenomics, metabolic and cognition related biological and functional parameters. Being a first generation immigrant herself, she is a strong proponent of opportunity for underserved populations and being a URISE Faculty mentor (funded by NIH), provides mentorship to NSU students pursuing undergraduate, graduate, and medical degrees in clinical research and scholarship.

KATHERINE BALANTEKIN *AT-LARGE DELEGATE*



Dr. Katherine Balantekin is a faculty member in the Department of Exercise and Nutrition Sciences at the University at Buffalo. She graduated from Cornell University with degrees in biological sciences and dietetics, completed her dietetic internship at University at Buffalo, earned her doctoral degree in nutritional science with a concentration in human development and family studies from Penn State, and completed her postdoctoral fellowship at Washington University School of Medicine. Her research interests focus on parental influences on eating behavior and the intersection of obesity and eating disorders. Katie is hoping to increase awareness about the ECN among undergraduate and graduate students early in their training. In her free time, Katie chases around her three young daughters.

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Member Spotlights

NAFISA JADAVJI, PHD *EVENTS CHAIR*



Dr. Nafisa M. Jadavji is a Neuroscientist. She is an Assistant Professor at Northwestern University, Research Professor at the University of Arizona, and Carleton University. In 2012, she completed her doctoral training at McGill University in Montréal, Canada. Her laboratory investigates how the brain responds to different biological processes throughout the lifespan. More specifically, her lab studies the brain, maternal nutrition contributions to offspring neurodevelopment, neurological diseases (e.g. stroke and vascular dementia), and aging. Dr. Jadavji has supervised and mentored over 50 undergraduate, graduate, and postdocs so far during her scientific career. When she is not in the laboratory, teaching, or writing, Nafisa enjoys cooking and baking gluten free treats. She is also an avid traveler, runner, and knitter. Nafisa has been part of ASN since 2015 and participated in the annual meeting, as well as had my students present their data at the meeting. In 2022 she joined the ECR interest group as the Events Chair and is assisting with planning the mentoring program and leading webinar organization. As a young faculty member, she thinks mentorship is very important for young scientists. [LinkedIn](#): [Website](#). Twitter: @nafisajadavji

CHRISTINA SCIARRILLO, PHD, RD *EVENTS CHAIR*



Dr. Christina Sciarrillo is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) - NIDDK, where she studies how diet and nutrition influence the regulation of body weight, body composition, and energy metabolism and expenditure. Prior to Christina's time at the NIH, Christina was a Postdoctoral Fellow at Baylor College of Medicine studying the developmental programming of obesity. She earned an M.S. and Ph.D. degree in Nutritional Sciences from Oklahoma State University, where her research focused primarily on developing novel screening tools for pediatric non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. She is also a Registered Dietitian and passionate about empowering and supporting the next generation of nutrition scientists, especially those from underrepresented groups in biomedical sciences. Christina is dedicated to fostering an inclusive and positive culture within science and academia that promotes equity and representation. During her spare time, Christina enjoys spending time with family and friends, exploring new places, running, hiking, and cooking yummy food! Twitter: @CmSciarrillo. [LinkedIn](#)

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Member Spotlights

LAUREN O'CONNOR, PHD, MPH *AWARDS CHAIR*



Systematic Review Methodologist at the Texas A&M Agriculture, Food, & Nutrition Evidence Center New bio: Lauren O'Connor is a nutrition scientist and epidemiologist who has over a decade of experience investigating how certain foods, such as red meat or processed foods, and dietary patterns affect cardiometabolic health and risk for obesity-related chronic diseases using a variety of methods and study designs. She is currently a methodologist for the Texas A&M Agriculture, Food, & Nutrition Evidence Center and was previously an investigator at the USDA's Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center as well as had a special research appointment at the National Cancer Institute. She has contributed to large nutrition public health efforts including the Dietary Reference Intakes for fat and carbohydrates, the 2020-25 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, as well as advancements for NCI's dietary assessment tools including Automated Self-Administered 24-Hour (ASA24®) Dietary Assessment Tool.

ANDREA CHARVET, PHD, RD, LDN *AWARDS CHAIR*



Dr. Andrea Charvet completed her Bachelor of Science in Dietetics and Nutrition at the Universidade Federal do Parana, Brazil. In a large teaching/research hospital, her work was focused on pediatrics, as part of a multidisciplinary team using the ketogenic diet as an alternative treatment for children with epilepsy. Dr. Charvet moved to the U.S. in 1998 and earned a M.S and later a Ph.D. degree in Dietetics and Nutrition from Florida International University. After working for many years in the community setting with low socioeconomic status families, Dr. Charvet's research focused on examining risk factors for childhood obesity to help children and families promote healthy living through nutrition. For her work, she was selected as a fellow in a National Institute of Health/National Institute of General Medical Sciences funded scientific enhancement program. Dr. Charvet is currently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Human Nutrition at the Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in Florida, where she teaches nutrition courses and mentors students in research. She also dedicates her time to clinical practice and research efforts at the amyotrophic lateral sclerosis clinic at the NSU Health Neuroscience Institute. As part of the ECN Executive Board as an Awards Chair, Dr. Charvet envisions inclusive and diverse opportunities for ECN members to showcase their research and receive recognition for their efforts.

[LinkedIn:](#)



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Member Spotlights

ESTER OH, PHD *NOMINATIONS CHAIR*



Dr. Ester Oh is a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Division of Renal Diseases and Hypertension at the University of Anschutz Medical Campus. She obtained her Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences from the Pennsylvania State University. Her long-standing research interest is to evaluate new, evidence-based, dietary/supplement interventions to improve vascular function and delineate the underlying sex-specific mechanisms in populations at high cardiovascular risk, including chronic kidney disease. She seeks to employ a clinical and translational approach to identify integrative mechanisms (systemic to cellular) that mediate vascular dysfunction and to evaluate novel interventions to improve vascular function in humans and murine models. In her free time, she goes skiing in the Rocky Mountains! Dr. Oh is excited about ASN's efforts to improve diversity and inclusion, and hopes to promote and contribute to a diverse community within the ECN.

REBECCA JONES-ANTWI, PHD, MPH *NOMINATIONS CHAIR*



Dr. Jones-Antwi is a social epidemiologist investigating the landscape of places and health with a special focus on contextual, social and environmental determinants of health. The major themes center on understanding obesity dynamics across the lifecourse, the utilization of migration as a lens to evaluate health, and disaggregation of data such as within multiracial populations. Rebecca is an assistant professor in epidemiology at Baylor University in the Department of Public Health. She studied history and biology at Centre College before pursuing a MPH in global health and a Ph.D. in Nutrition and Health Sciences both at Emory University
X formerly twitter: @drjones_antwi_

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KALINA HODGES, PHD *AT-LARGE DELEGATE*



J. Kalina Hodges is an Assistant Teaching Professor at the Pennsylvania State University, where she teaches in the undergraduate nutritional sciences program and uses kinetic modeling to investigate the tissue-specific metabolism of dietary bioactive components in humans. She has training in micronutrient metabolism, clinical nutrition, and kinetic modeling. She earned her M.S. in Food Policy and Applied Nutrition at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University and Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences at the Pennsylvania State University. She holds a B.A. in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics from the University of Pennsylvania. She is committed to inclusive and collaborative research, mentorship, and pedagogy. In her free time, she enjoys reading, running, and spending time with her loved ones. As an At-Large Delegate at ECN she contributes towards a mentoring program to support ASN early career professionals.

MARIANNE COLLARD, PHD *AT-LARGE DELEGATE*



Dr. Marianne Collard is a Research Assistant Professor in the Department of Dermatology at Boston University. Dr. Collard received her BS in Bioengineering with a concentration in Biomedical Engineering from Cornell University. She then earned her doctorate in Integrative Physiology and Pharmacology from Wake Forest University, and completed her postdoctoral training at Boston University. Her current research investigates the role of lipid metabolism and epigenetics in melanoma progression and therapeutic resistance. In addition to research, Dr. Collard is highly involved in teaching and mentoring students. Dr. Collard has been involved in ASN since 2017 and was the Chair of the Student Interest Group (SIG) during the 2019/2020 term. She is excited about ASN's efforts to improve diversity and inclusion, and pledges to contribute to the movement by confronting her own biases, ensuring diverse speakers at ECN-hosted webinars, and fostering international collaborations in ECN-led events. In Dr. Collard's spare time, she enjoys spending time with family, running, gardening, and hiking. [LinkedIn](#)

PATRICIA WOLF, PHD *AT-LARGE DELEGATE*



Dr. Patricia Wolf is an Assistant Professor of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. Dr. Wolf completed her PhD in Nutritional Sciences with a focus on microbial sulfur metabolism at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. During her graduate training, she simultaneously completed the Didactic Program in Dietetics and became a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist. She was a postdoctoral fellow in the Cancer Education and Career Development Program NCI T32 at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her research investigates microbial mechanisms of cancer health disparities related to inequitable food access and quality. In her free time, Dr. Wolf volunteers as an RDN for a clinic that serves the uninsured. She also enjoys cooking, growing vegetables, going for long walks à la Elizabeth Bennet, and chasing after her newly mobile son. As the At-Large Delegate of the Early Career Nutrition Executive Board, Dr. Wolf aspires to promote opportunities that will bring together diverse early career scientists and policy experts aimed to create solutions that will remove barriers to nutrition equity in an effort to reduce health disparities.

HANNAH OH, SCD, MPH *KNS REPRESENTATIVE*



Dr. Hannah Oh is an Associate Professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management at Korea University. Dr. Oh currently serves as the Korean Nutrition Society Representative in the ECN. She is a nutritional epidemiologist focusing her research on lifestyle risk factors (obesity, diet, physical activity, screen time) for cancer and cardiovascular diseases. She completed her doctoral degree (Sc.D.) in Epidemiology and Nutrition from Harvard University and master's degree (MPH) in Global Health from Emory University. She also received her postdoctoral training at the US National Cancer Institute. In the ECN, she will contribute to improving diversity and inclusion by developing active international collaborations, particularly between the US and Asia.



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SIMIN MEYDANI, DVM, PHD *ADVISOR*



Dr. Simin Nikbin Meydani is Director of the Immunology Laboratory at Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University, and Professor of nutrition and immunology at Tufts' Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy. Her previous positions included Vice Provost for Research at Tufts University, and Director of JM USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts. Her scientific interests include the impact of nutrition on aging and age-associated diseases, its role in immune and inflammatory responses and predisposition to infectious diseases. Simin's lab is currently studying the effects of adding a fruit and vegetable mixture to daily diets and its implication on obesity, age-related diseases, health- and life-span. She is recipient of several awards including the American Aging Association Denham Harman Lifetime Research Achievement Award; American Society of Nutrition Herman Award in clinical nutrition; ASN Lederle Award in Human Nutrition Research; Fellow of Hedwig van Ameringen Executive Leadership in Academic Medicine; American College of Nutrition Grace Goldsmith Award; International HERMES Vitamin Research Award. She has served/is serving on several government, industry, and foundations advisory boards. She is past president of American Society for Nutrition and American Aging Association.

SHEILA FLEISCHHACKER, JD, PHD, RDN *ADVISOR*



Sheila Fleischhacker, PhD, JD, RDN is a Senior Technical Advisor for Nutrition Security on joint detail between the National Institute of Food and Agriculture and the Food and Nutrition Service at the United States Department of Agriculture. Dr. Fleischhacker received her bachelor's degree in 2000 and J.D. in 2007, with a Certificate in Health Law from Loyola University Chicago and Ph.D. in Integrative Biosciences/Nutritional Sciences from The Pennsylvania State University in 2004. Her post-doctoral training focused on urban and regional planning and public health nutrition at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She completed her Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) internship through a distance program at Iowa State University in 2018. She was admitted into the Illinois Bar in November 2007.



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TAYLOR BANH *SUSTAINING PARTNER CHAIR*



Taylor is a Nutrition Scientist with experiences in both the food and dietary supplement industries. He currently works at General Mills where he is responsible for conducting and leveraging research to support key nutrition science strategies for General Mills' key brands. Taylor also serves as the Vice-Chair of the Cognitive Health Committee at the Institute for the Advancement of Food and Nutrition Sciences (IAFNS) and Sustaining Partner Chair of the Early Career Network at the American Society for Nutrition (ASN). He is passionate about mentoring and educating nutrition students about fulfilling careers outside of academia. In his free time, Taylor enjoys traveling the world with his wife and giving their Samoyed dog the best life ever. Taylor received his PhD in nutrition from The Ohio State University in 2018 and his BS in dietetics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2013. Feel free to connect with him on Twitter (@taylorbanhphd) or LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/in/taylorbanhphd/>)!

NATALIA POVEDA REY *INTERNATIONAL AT-LARGE DELEGATE*



Dr. Natalia Poveda Rey is a nutrition researcher with 10 years of experience in the field of nutrition. Natalia is a Colombian native where she received a Bachelor of Science in Nutrition and Dietetics and a Master of Science in Biochemistry. In 2022, she received a PhD in Nutrition and Health Sciences from Emory University. The focus of her doctoral dissertation was the life-course epidemiology of adult body composition through three distinct lenses: growth across the life span, early life nutrition, and the adult environment through the analysis of six birth cohorts from five low- and middle-income countries and a nationally representative survey. During her postdoctoral training, She expanded her work on nutrition and life course epidemiology by harmonizing and combining nationally representative US cohorts to create synthetic trajectories to study obesity dynamics during the first three decades of life and their links with subsequent health outcomes. Through this multidisciplinary training in biomedical sciences, public health, and nutrition and life course epidemiology, Natalia's primary research interests in life course epidemiology and population sciences aim to understand the etiology and mechanisms underlying cardiometabolic and diet-related health outcomes at individual and population levels across the life span.

NKEMJIKA UMERAH, PHD *FANUS REPRESENTATIVE*



Dr. Nkemjika is a Nutritionist lecturing at Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria. She is an Associate Professor and the former Head of the Department of Food Science and Technology. She has been a lecturer for many years and very eager to impact knowledge both in a formal and informal setting. She has carried out a lot of research with regards to nutrition management of non-communicable diseases using laboratory animals and humans. She is passionate about teaching and mentoring students in the area of Nutrition Sciences. She got her Masters and PhD in Human Nutrition and Dietetics from University of Nigeria Nsukka, Nigeria. Feel free to connect with her in [Google Scholar](#) or [Research gate](#):

JOSEPH KINDLER, PHD *FUNDRAISING CHAIR*



Dr. Joseph Kindler is an Assistant Professor of Nutritional Sciences at the University of Georgia. Dr. Kindler's research focuses on identifying diet and chronic disease-related threats to lifelong bone health. His lab uses various bone imaging methodologies for clinical and translational research studies, including high resolution peripheral quantitative computed tomography (HR-pQCT), peripheral quantitative computed tomography (pQCT), and dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA). Ongoing studies in Dr. Kindler's lab involve characterizing effects of youth-onset type 2 diabetes and cystic fibrosis on peak bone strength, and the role of the "gut-bone axis" in diet-related effects on bone. Through his role as Fundraising Chair of the ECN, Dr. Kindler has helped promote career development of ASN members by leading the planning of a seminar on the dynamic funding landscape for early stage nutrition researchers.