Slate of Candidates, 2019 Election

President-Elect: Allison Didychuk

I am a Damon Runyon Postdoctoral Fellow in Britt Glaunsinger's lab at UC-Berkeley studying Kaposi's sarcoma herpesvirus gene expression and packaging. I am originally from Canada, but did my undergraduate studies in North Dakota and my graduate studies at University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I was lucky to have heard about GWIS. I have been a GWIS member since 2013 and have previously served as National Treasurer (2016-2018) and Vice-President (2018-current).

Vice President: Brooke Long

Brooke Long is a PhD Candidate in Geology at the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SD Mines). She received her MS in Paleontology at SD Mines and her BS in Geology at Texas Christian University. Brooke was a founding member of the GWIS Black Hills Chapter and has previously served as the chapter Vice-President and currently serves as the chapter President. Brooke is leading the 2019 GWIS National Conference in her position as the Planning Chair.
Membership Committee: Alice Edwards

I'm a mental health advocate, researcher, and administrator who supports small businesses, startups, and nonprofits as a consultant to encourage innovative thinking, positive growth and change that honors the worth of each individual. I provide executive coaching and support with everything from initial administrative processes for starting an organization, strategic management and business growth, to closing or transitions of business ownership. While I love working with many types of organizations, I have a special affinity for technology projects and am involved in multiple health, wellbeing, and AI-related endeavors and regularly utilize a combination of Agile process management and Appreciative Inquiry strategy and change management. I am also completing my PhD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology where I particularly seek to understand how to support individuals who might otherwise be discriminated against or experience adverse impact. I am passionate about educating and informing positive change for all types of inequities, globally, and across the lifespan. As a writer, I span multiple genres, from grant writing and 501(c)3 applications, technical writing, scholarly writing, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry.

Nominating Committee: Madigan Cochran-Bjerke

Madigan is currently a Master’s student in SDSM&T’s Geology and Geological Engineering program, with an emphasis in Geology. Her research involves using close-range photogrammetry techniques to create accurate 3D virtual models of fossils. She earned her B.S. in Geology from SDSM&T in 2017. She is a member of the Black Hills chapter of GWIS and is serving as the Marketing Chair and Merchandising Co-Chair for the 2019 GWIS National Conference. She was recently recognized as a 2019 Outstanding Student Organization Member of the GWIS Black Hills chapter by the SDSM&T Leadership Hall of Fame.
Board of Directors: Michelle Booze
Dr. Michelle Booze is New England born and raised, but has spent more than a decade in South Dakota. She received her B.S. in Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology from the University of New Hampshire. Michelle received her Ph.D. in Reproductive Endocrinology from the University of South Dakota. In October 2017, she completed a three year post-doc and moved on to a clinical lab position. Michelle is now an embryologist at South Dakota’s only fertility clinic.

Michelle has a strong belief in the service side of being a scientist and how important it is to engage the public in all things science. Through her local chapter, Eastern South Dakota, Michelle has organized numerous science-based activities with kids of all ages, given presentations to college aged young adults about what it means to be a scientist, and has mentored several young women in high school and the undergraduate level to help them progress along their career paths.

Michelle and her Husband and Toddler live on a lake in the middle of the country where she enjoys gardening, fishing, and long walks taking in the South Dakota sunset.

Board of Directors: Gazelle Rastegar
I bring almost two decades in business management in healthcare and technology, in both corporate and the startup settings, where I developed the skills to build and scale companies while working with people from diverse professional fields to accomplish corporate goals.

In my most recent role, I advised startup healthcare technology companies at Cedars-Sinai accelerator on their operational and sales and distribution strategies. Previously at Vitalacy, I successfully scaled the company’s operations by structuring a $70 million distribution partnership agreement with Henry Schein (NASDAQ: HSIC), a recognized leader among technology solutions providers for the healthcare industry.

During my tenure at Johnson & Johnson, I achieved measurable success for driving revenue growth for the company’s product portfolio in B2B channels. I ranked highly in J&J’s annual performance metrics and won the President’s Cup Award on multiple occasions - the highest distinction at Johnson & Johnson.
I would be remiss not to add that contributing to a start-up at its earliest stage has been one of the most fulfilling experiences in my career. At Agensys (acquired by Astellas Pharma), I implemented gene discovery projects to identify novel changes in prostate cancer, which resulted in an increase in the firm’s patent portfolio and licensing deals with major biotechnology companies.

It is the culmination of these experiences that gives me the conviction to join GWIS Board of Directors to help lead this organization in guiding women in the scientific fields to pursue their career ambitions, bring innovative therapies for patients in need, and add to our national economic growth.