



## Dear Members & Friends of SCGDB

I write to you all as incoming President to the Society. I am honored to have been chosen to help lead the Society for the next 2 years. SCGDB continues to be the premier research society for science of the craniofacial complex, has been a key resource in communication among members and importantly, in promoting trainee development and advocacy. I have seen this society grow in the last 15 years under exceptional leadership of my colleagues who have worked to establish the financial and organizational health of the Society, fostering us to grow as a community. It is my hope to extend our mission to promote scientific discussion of new findings in the craniofacial field, to increase collaboration among members, and facilitate trainee development and patient advocacy. A goal of the next few years is to use our position to extend our community of researchers and to support our young scientists. Our strength is in our community and our diversity at every level; we must sustain this core as it fuels our success. I am excited about the Society's future and leadership and look to a constructive, exciting tenure to help promote craniofacial research, education and advocacy.

## Building on an impressive past

I take over from **Dr. Amy Merrill**, who for over the last 4 years of leadership, first as Vice President, then as President has led the Society with a steady and clear focus. Under her leadership, we have grown in new dimensions in patient advocacy and support of broader craniofacial research community. But under-the-hood, the changes and structure formulated in the operations of the Society and its affiliations driven by her leadership have set the stage for a solid future for the Society. Of note is negotiating a renewed association agreement with the American Association for Anatomy, which through shared interest in education and research will continue to promote the mission of both groups for at least the next 5 years. The health of the Society today is also directly due to the efforts of past officials, **Drs. Jean-Pierre Saint-Jeannet** and **Juhee Jeong** (both from New York University College of Dentistry), **Dr. Katherine Fantauzzo** (from University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus) as well as continued assistance from **Drs. Rolf Stottman** (Nationwide Children's Hospital, Ohio) and **Sam Bruggman** (Cincinnati Children's Hospital). But a special call-out to **Dr. David Clothier** (University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus) needs to be made. David served as President prior to Amy and stayed on as President *ex-officio* and under whose level-headed guidance and participation, the Society has emerged in a refined position to be able to meet future opportunities. David has shouldered the Society with firm determination of its future – his guidance will be missed, but his efforts remain.

## Welcoming new leadership

I take the lead from an impressive team, but I am pleased that Amy is staying on as *ex-officio* President to help transition the next two years. Our secretary, Katie Fantauzzo is also continuing, providing her unwavering guidance and organization, for which I am overwhelmingly thankful. In addition, Juhee Jeong continues to provide leadership assistance with financial health of the Society and our investments in the future. The leadership of the Society is growing - in the last Annual meeting of the Society in Kansas City a new Vice President **Dr. Lisa Taneyhill** from the University of Maryland and treasurer, **Dr. Eric Van Otterloo** (University of Iowa), were elected to lead the society. Lisa is an international leader in study of neural crest specification and has been a long-standing leader in the craniofacial and anatomy community. Lisa Tannehill is chairing a Society symposium at the **Annual American Association of Anatomists meeting in March 2025**, which is the cornerstone to our continued efforts in education, community integration and growth. Eric has been an active



member of the Society and brings his expertise in cell signaling and disease modeling of craniofacial disorders to the team. His expertise and unwavering support of the SCGDB community has been invaluable in the past and even more so now.

### **Vision for the future of the Society and bolstering our strengths.**

I quote words of Dr. Merrill in her previous SCGDB letter here in that 'the SCGDB is only as strong as its members'.

This could not be more true.

As I write, the last weeks of early 2025 have been overwhelmingly unsettling. It is important at this juncture to emphasize that what makes our community function, and is at the core of our future strength, is its diversity. Diversity at every level, from people, disciplines, and research. We are a broad community and only function as a welcoming one. Other options are not acceptable, nor inline with the Society's mission or goals.

To accomplish such broad engagement and to push our Society into new directions, I encourage you to take an active part in your Society to advance its priorities in research, teaching, communication, and ultimately patient care. Talk to colleagues, new investigators, and students who may not know of the broader SCGDB community. Our Society is an enthusiastic supporter of junior scientists and continues to strive to provide professional growth opportunities in the form of presentation of work on a national stage, the establishment of professional networks, and interactions with leading craniofacial scientists in a friendly informal atmosphere. As stated earlier, we are the premier organization for the study of craniofacial biology across disciplines. Our annual meetings have been and continue to be essential for communication and promotion of science and the community. Please encourage your colleagues and trainees to join the Society and take advantage of what it has to offer. We welcome students, post docs, and professionals from the US and abroad to become members and participate.

Build the diversity in community that you want for our future Society and be a part in supporting craniofacial research community at all levels.

As we start the new year, I encourage all of you to engage in our Society by renewing your membership with AAA (with SCGDB as your affiliate of choice), attending the annual meeting, presenting your work, and spreading the word about our Society to your colleagues.

I look forward to having you as part of the Society and look forward to a bright future of the craniofacial community of researchers!

Best from Boston,

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