

February 24, 2026
Jan R. Cloyde Legacy Award Reflection

Dear Selection Committee,

I am deeply grateful to the donors and organizers of the Jan R. Cloyde Legacy Award for making it possible for me to attend the Keystone Symposia Meeting, Mitochondria Signaling in Physiology and Disease, in Keystone, Colorado.

Presenting my research on how estrogen receptor alpha modulates mitochondrial function in cardiomyocytes was one of the most valuable experiences of the conference. Sharing my work with a diverse audience of scientists allowed me to practice communicating complex ideas to investigators from a wide range of backgrounds and career stages. This experience strengthened my science communication skills in ways that will serve me throughout my career, whether I am writing grants, presenting at future meetings, or collaborating with researchers across disciplines.

Another one of the greatest benefits of attending this meeting was the opportunity to expand my professional network. I had the privilege of connecting with both inspiring early-career investigators and established leaders in mitochondrial biology. The feedback I received on my project was incredibly insightful and helped me identify creative new directions for my work. Several senior investigators offered perspectives that challenged me to think more broadly about the implications of my findings, and I left these conversations with a clearer vision for how to strengthen my dissertation. I was also introduced to innovative experimental techniques and approaches that I plan to incorporate into my research, which will directly advance my project and enhance the rigor of my work.

Beyond the direct impact on my research, this conference reinforced the importance of the questions I am asking. By presenting my work on estrogen signaling in the heart, I was able to contribute to a growing conversation about how reproductive hormones influence organelle function well beyond the reproductive system. Increasing awareness of how hormone signaling impacts women's heart health is a cause I am passionate about, and this meeting provided a meaningful platform to advance that message. The enthusiastic responses and thoughtful questions I received from other attendees confirmed that this area of research resonates broadly within the scientific community.

Overall, the Keystone Symposia has been transformative for my development as an independent scientist. The connections I made, the feedback I received, and the new techniques I was introduced to will all directly advance my research and strengthen my trajectory as I work toward completing my dissertation and building my career. I am truly thankful for the support of the Jan R. Cloyde Legacy Award and the generosity of those who make opportunities like this possible for graduate students.

Sincerely,
Morgan Johnson