



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 26, 2023

2023 Connecticut Women of Innovation® Honored at Awards Ceremony

Outstanding Achievements in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics

Connecticut's current and future leaders in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics – and their contributions to innovation and breakthroughs, career opportunities and advancement, economic growth and the state's future – were highlighted at the 18th annual **Women of Innovation®** awards, presented by the Connecticut Technology Council.

The 2023 Women of Innovation finalists were recognized in an awards ceremony held Wednesday at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. Nine award winners were announced from among 34 finalists in seven innovation and leadership categories.

The event (first in-person since 2019) brought together CTC members, sponsors, partners and supporters, government representatives, as well as finalists' colleagues and families. A lively networking reception was followed by a short ceremony recognizing all finalists and announcing the winners.

In addition to CTC host and lead sponsor Medtronic welcoming remarks, the program included remarks by Paul Lavoie, Connecticut's Chief Manufacturing Officer, and Dr. Christine Broadbridge, SCSU's Executive Director of Research and Innovation. Dr. Dwayne Smith, interim president of Southern Connecticut State University, and Colleen Bielitz, Million Women Mentors CT State leader, were also in attendance. Congratulatory remarks, by video, were shared by U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal and Connecticut Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz. Blumenthal and U.S. Senator Chris Murphy provided congratulatory certificates to the winners and finalists.

The winners, by category, were: *Academic* - **Laurie Caines** - Associate Professor of Medicine, UConn Health Center; and **Ivana Milanovic** - Professor of Mechanical, Aerospace & Acoustical Engineering, University of Hartford; *Community* - **Dana Gilland** – Senior Vice President, Environmental Social Governance, ApiJect Systems Corporation; *Corporate* - **Nancy Miller** - Director, Project Engineering, Triumph Group; *Entrepreneurial* - **Michelle Frank** - Chief Growth Officer, Goodroot, Inc.; *Research* - **Elise Courtois** - Director, Single Cell Biology Lab; Senior Research Scientist, The Jackson Laboratory and **Akiko Iwasaki** - Sterling Professor, Immunobiology & Professor, Dermatology & Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology, Yale University; *Collegian* - **Fei Dou** – Ph.D. Candidate, University of Connecticut; and *Youth* - **Ana-Lois Davis** - Student, CREC Academy of Aerospace & Engineering.

There were co-winners in two categories, Academic Innovation and Leadership, and Research Innovation and Leadership. Lead event sponsors Medtronic, Day Pitney LLP and Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP announced and presented the awards. Scholarship sponsors presented awards and checks to the youth finalists.

"I am extremely impressed with the great contributions these outstanding women have had and continue to have on the technology ecosystem and our society. The class of 2023 certainly have earned this distinction," said Giovanni Tomasi, President/Chief Technology Officer of RSL Advanced Lighting Technologies and Board Chair of CTC.

"The Connecticut Technology Council is proud to host the Women of Innovation event back in person and with the generous support of our members, sponsors, and partners," said Milena Stankova Erwin, CTC's

Executive Director. “The energy in the room was palpable. We were thrilled to welcome our guests, honor our finalists and celebrate their impressive accomplishments and noteworthy contributions.”

The award-winners and 34 finalists - selected from a field of over 80 nominees – are scientists, researchers, academics, manufacturers, student leaders, entrepreneurs, and technicians who are catalysts for scientific advancement throughout Connecticut.

The 18th annual Women of Innovation® sponsors were led by long-time supporter Medtronic (Platinum); Axinn, Veltrop & Harkrider LLP and Day Pitney LLP (Gold); University of Connecticut (Silver); and Connecticut Department of Economic & Community Development; FuelCell Energy, Inc.; and McCarter & English (Bronze). Supporting sponsors are Bento Engine, Carillon Technologies, Empowering Pathways LLC, HyAxiom Inc., iCleanse, KeyBank, Nassau Financial Group, NBT Bank, Nel Hydrogen, Precision Combustion, Inc., RSL Advanced Lighting Technologies, Thorney Advisors, and Visual Technologies Inc. Scholarship funding was provided by Carillon Technologies, FuelCell Energy, and The Jackson Laboratory, supplemented by individual contributions and CTC funds. Media Sponsor was WTNH News 8.

Additional information about Women of Innovation and the Connecticut Technology Council can be viewed at www.ct.org/womenofinnovation. A copy of the Women of Innovation event program can be seen there.

About the Connecticut Technology Council: *The Connecticut Technology Council is a statewide member-based trade association focused on uniting and growing Connecticut’s technology community by connecting leaders and organizations and providing tech companies access to resources for growth. With a diverse member and partner network, CTC is a hub that brings together the state’s technology community, public sector, and service providers to network and advance Connecticut’s reputation as a tech-centered state.* www.ct.org

2023 Women of Innovation® Award Winners

Academic Innovation & Leadership

DR. LAURIE CAINES *Associate Professor of Medicine, Director, Clinical Skills Assessment Program, University of Connecticut Health Center*

Laurie is an internist and Associate Professor of Medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine (UConn SOM). She has had multiple roles in undergraduate medical education and now serves as Interim Assistant Dean of Clinical Medical Education. She was awarded a grant from the NBME to create a clinical reasoning assessment for medical students and serves as Treasurer of the Directors of Clinical Skills Education.

IVANA MILANOVIC *Professor of Mechanical, Aerospace & Acoustical Engineering, University of Hartford*

Ivana is a professor of mechanical engineering with ongoing research in vortical flows and inquiry-based learning. She is a contributing author of more than 100 journal articles, NASA reports, conference papers, and software releases. Her work on enhancing STEM education with simulations and applications has been featured in IEEE Spectrum, Ansys Academic Web Seminar, Ansys Blogs, COMSOL News Guest Editorial, COMSOL Blogs, KGH interview, and Design World among others.

Community & Innovation Leadership

DANA GILLAND *Senior Vice President, Environmental Social Governance, ApiJect Systems Corporation*

Dana has over 25 years of corporate legal expertise, driving positive global change as a trailblazer in innovation, technology, and philanthropy. A recent Presidential Volunteer Service Award recipient, the White House recognized Dana for community service leadership. Her contributions span many areas, including advancing diversity in corporate boardrooms, mentoring, helping to improve access to medicines, and supporting the mission of various charities.

Corporate Innovation & Leadership

NANCY MILLER *Director, Project Engineering, Triumph Group, Inc.*

Nancy's interest in engineering and aerospace started at an early age encouraged by her engineer father and pilot mother. After earning a degree in mechanical engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, she relocated to Connecticut to work for Collins Aerospace in Windsor Locks. She then moved on to Triumph Group in West Hartford. Over the course of her career, Nancy has worked as a stress analyst, designer, writer, project engineer and is now an engineering director.

Entrepreneurial Innovation & Leadership

MICHELLE FRANK *Chief Growth Officer, Goodroot Inc.*

As an accomplished sales leader and entrepreneur for over 20 years, Michelle is instrumental in identifying new business opportunities and implementing innovative commercial strategies for solutions and technologies created within the Goodroot community. As Chief Growth Officer, she is responsible for recruiting top talent, developing market strategies, and building successful sales and marketing strategies. Michelle is committed to empowering and arming the industry with products and solutions that make healthcare more affordable and accessible for every American.

Research Innovation & Leadership

ELISE COURTOIS *Director, Single Cell Biology Lab; Senior Research Scientist, The Jackson Laboratory for Genomic Medicine*

Elise holds a Ph.D and is a molecular biologist who utilizes state-of-the-art single-cell and spatial multiomics technologies to explore complex human diseases. After her postdoctoral training in Singapore, she joined The Jackson Laboratory in 2017. As Director of the Single Cell Biology Lab, she pioneers these innovative technologies for research on Women's Health, particularly on endometriosis. In addition to her research, Elise advocates for increased awareness and funding for the disease.

AKIKO IWASAKI *Immunobiology & Professor, Dermatology & Molecular, Cellular & Developmental Biology, Yale University*

Akiko's research focuses on the mechanisms of immune defense against viruses at mucosal surfaces. Professor Iwasaki has been a leading scientific voice during the COVID-19 pandemic and is also well known for her Twitter advocacy on women and underrepresented minorities in the fields of science and medicine. Additionally, Akiko is an Investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute.

Collegian Innovation & Leadership

FEI DOU *2023 Graduate, University of Connecticut and University of Georgia*

Fei obtained her Ph.D. in Computer Science and Engineering from the University of Connecticut, supervised by Prof. Jinbo Bi. Her research concentrates on harnessing AI/ ML techniques to bolster the efficiency, privacy, and scalability of the Internet of Things (IoT). Fei's investigations encompass various IoT domains, including location-based services, natural disaster damage detection, intelligent agriculture, recommender systems, and wireless sensor networks. She is currently an Assistant Professor in the School of Computing at the University of Georgia.

Youth Innovation & Leadership

ANA-LOIS DAVIS *High School Student - CREC Academy of Aerospace & Engineering*

Ana-Lois is a high school senior who is active in FIRST robotics as a build team captain, drive team member, STEM outreach volunteer and 2023 FIRST Dean's List national winner. As a Girl Scout Ambassador, she mentors younger scouts. She's a student inventor and researcher competing in the Connecticut Invention Convention, Science Fair and ISEF. She is currently a Discovery to Cure intern at Yale University, researching gynecological cancers.