

Dear Retina Research Foundation,

The financial support and networking opportunities you provided are greatly appreciated. Your assistance was beneficial in numerous ways beyond removing the financial burdens associated with conference attendance as a Ph.D. student.

During the photo session with the other awardees and the subsequent social, I met several people with interesting research projects. Through these interactions, I learned about techniques that are relevant to my research. For example, one person I talked with taught me about the uses and limitations of spectral domain optical coherence tomography. This technique is currently being applied to improve our understanding of the biomechanical changes that occur in the eye following alterations in intraocular pressure. Now that I have a much better grasp of the details inherent to this technique (and others), I can more fully appreciate studies that are important for my current research.

Additionally, a couple of the people I met during the photo shoot and social came to see my poster presentation the following day. The conversations I engaged in with these awardees and other attendees fostered the development of new connections in the field of vision research. In a few cases, I exchanged contact information with other awardees and attendees in the interest of helping each other with the technical details of particular experimental procedures. Some of these interactions also provided valuable insights and feedback regarding my current research. From such conversations, I arranged my first professional collaboration independent from my graduate research mentor!

Overall, my attendance of the annual ARVO meeting was a very exciting and rewarding experience for me as a second year graduate student involved in vision research. I hope to attend as many future ARVO meetings as time and money permits during and after graduate school. Thank you for providing me with support to attend ARVO this year.