

CSI 2026 Gillian E. Wu Mentorship Award

Congratulations / Félicitations



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Gillian E. Wu Mentorship Award 2026 Recipient

I received my PhD in Biochemistry from the University of Dundee, Scotland, UK. in 1983, then entered the field of immunology, working as a post-doc with Dr. Alan Williams at the MRC Cellular Immunology Unit at the University of Oxford, UK. My initial project was to determine the function of carbohydrates on lymphocyte cell surface molecules – something that is still poorly understood to this day! Then my project switched to purify, clone and sequence the CD8 molecule.

In a second post-doc with Dr. Ian Trowbridge at the Salk Institute in California, USA, I helped characterize the leukocyte specific molecule, CD45, alongside Dr. Hanne Ostergaard. I began my independent career as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology at the University of British Columbia in 1991. Our research initially focused on the molecular function and characterization of CD44 and CD45 in T cells and other leukocytes. We uncovered molecular mechanisms regulating the interaction of the cell adhesion molecule CD44 with the matrix component, hyaluronan, and began using mouse models of disease to investigate this interaction in the lung under healthy and disease conditions, including inflammation, fibrosis and cancer metastasis. Our current research focuses on the function of macrophages in lung infection, inflammation and fibrosis.

Throughout my career, I shared a passion for science and discovery, have been (and still am) fascinated by immunology, and enjoy interacting with all those who share this enthusiasm. I have been a CSI member for over 30 years and attended several CSI meetings (the earliest of which were held at Lake Louise) joining the friendly and vibrant Canadian Immunology Community. During this time, I received funding for my research from CIHR and NSERC, served multiple times on the CIHR Immunology and Transplantation grant review panel, including as Scientific Officer, and was a member of the Advisory Board for CIHR's Institute of Infection and Immunity. At UBC, I co-directed the Flow Cytometry Unit for 20 years, co-directed the Immunology group in the Life Sciences Institute and served as Associate Head and Departmental Graduate and Post-doctoral advisor.

Now, as Professor Emerita, I help direct an NSERC CREATE Graduate training program in ImmunoEngineering. I have a long-standing interest and commitment to supporting undergraduate and graduate student training in Immunology. I served on 136 student graduate thesis committees, was University Examiner for over 120 thesis defences, and mentored 100 undergraduate, 24 graduate students and 15 post-docs in my lab. It is very humbling to be nominated for the Gillian E. Wu Mentorship Award by my former trainees. Gill was a force of nature and an inspiring mentor for many, including myself as a new faculty member. I am honored to receive this mentorship award named after her.