



## Women In Science Scholars Program

March 28, 2025 Spring Conference Highlights  
Conference Center at NC BioTech

The North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Women in Science Scholars Spring Conference 2025 was hosted by Melissa Chappell, Executive Director of the Foundation. Melissa celebrated the legacy of Nobel Laureate Gertrude B. Elion, highlighting her work as a biochemist and pharmacologist. Dr. Elion's work along with George H. Hitchings and Sir James Black, secured the Noble Prize for their innovative methods in drug design. Dr. Elion worked for Burroughs Wellcome (which is now known as GSK), heading the department of experimental therapy from 1967-1983. Despite facing numerous challenges early in her career, including difficulty finding a paid research job and instead working as a supermarket food quality supervisor, Gertrude B. Elion persevered and eventually worked for prestigious organizations such as the National Cancer Institute, American Association for Cancer Research, the World Health Organization, Burroughs Wellcome, and Duke University.

*2025 Women in Science  
Scholars Spring Conference  
Attendees*



Keynote Marty St Clair shared her professional journey, “*Thirty-Five years of HIV Drug Development: A Message of Hope*” and tied her work to Gertrude B (Trudy) Elion, as she was

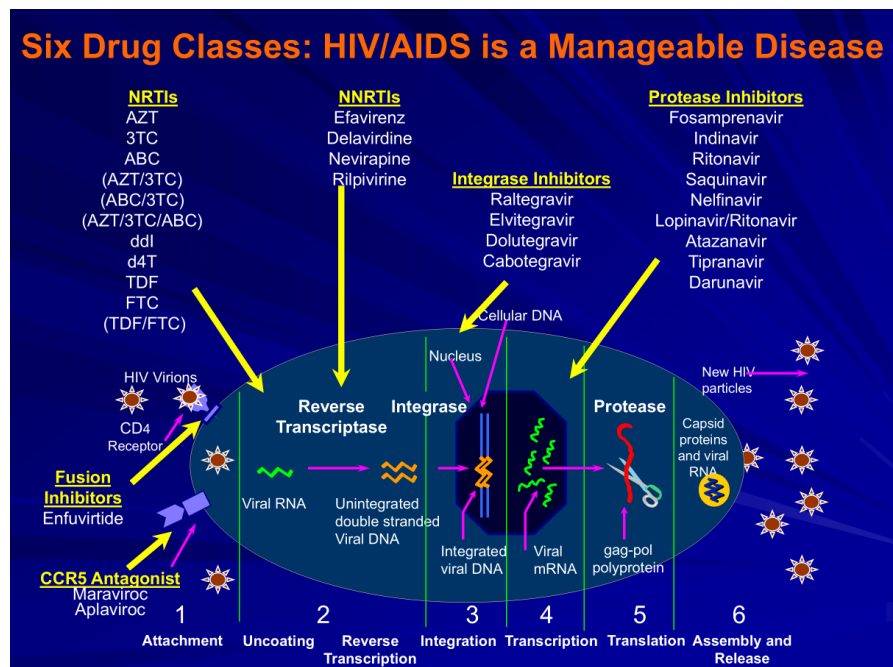
## HIV/AIDS Timeline

- **June, 1984. CDC reported 4918 cases of AIDS in US with 2221 deaths.**
- June, 1984. BW (now GSK) scientists were screening compounds for anti-HIV activity
- **November, 1984. CDC reported 6993 cases of AIDS in US with 3342 deaths**
- November, 1984. Burroughs Wellcome scientists discovered activity of AZT

hired by Trudy. Marty St Clair highlighted her desire to transition from working with the herpes virus to requesting to work with HIV. Marty shared in November 1984 on a Friday, she was checking approximately 350 plates when she saw 16 plates had no plaque, and those plates were treated with AZT. Marty shared how this life changing discovery changed the outcome for patients dying from

HIV/AIDS. She highlighted the whirl wind approval of AZT to combat HIV by the FDA on March 19, 1987. Noting Trudy Elion’s helpful advice back in 1985, “It’s okay to be nervous, to be scared” in reference to Marty presenting in a room that could seat 30,000 people when AZT was being announced to combat HIV/AIDS. Today HIV/AIDS is a manageable disease, and Marty St Clair is still working on

enhancements. Marty mentioned the Red Ribbon pin on her lapel is the universal symbol for Aids Awareness, and she always wears one. She also noted December 1 is World Aids Day. Marty’s passion for making the world a better place was seen on many levels as she demonstrated her advocacy in Aids Walks including her family and



lamas. Marty continues her HIV work today in Clinical Virology, in ViiV Healthcare.

The afternoon session was led by Marissa Ross, PharmD, Medical/Scientific Manager, Mature and Marketed Products, ViiV Healthcare. She shared her experiences “*Navigating from a Mentee to Mentor in the Women in Science Program*”. She sought out how to be named as a Women in Science Scholar at North Carolina State University where she completed her undergraduate education. During her time as a scholar, she had intentional conversations with



### Professional Program

- UNC-CH Eshelman School of Pharmacy; PharmD**
  - Initially waitlisted
  - Involved in Student Organizations
  - Be open-minded
  - Networking
  - Invest in resources early
- CVS Pharmacy Intern**
  - Promotion opportunity
  - Learning to set boundaries & saying “NO”
- ViiV Healthcare Consultant**
  - Opportunity from my network
  - Importance of Attention to Detail
- Dermavant Sciences Consultant**
  - Opportunity from my network & performance on rotation
  - Explicitly state “I enjoy the work I am doing”

her mentor Betsy Walton. Marissa graduated from NCSU with a BS in Biological Sciences, and minors in Biotechnology & Technical and Scientific Communications. She secured work at CVS as a pharmacy technician and that experience helped her decide to

pursue a PharmD. She highlighted that sending an email to one of the graduate programs that she had been wait-listed for was returned with an acceptance offer. She graduated in 2021 from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Eshelman School of Pharmacy with a PharmD.

Highlights included:

- Be open-minded.
- Secure your resources early - if you are graduating from a program that has a final exam for licensing — pick up a copy of the review book for your exam and start to study it – don’t wait until you graduate.
- Network, build your connections while in school, and ask your professors, mentors, colleagues, and preceptors questions.
- Teamwork is important.

Today, working at ViiV Healthcare allows Dr. Ross to continue being surrounded by role models, like herself who are passionate about science, changing outcomes for patients and making the world a better place to live.

Ross Gosky, PhD, Associate Dean, School of Graduate Studies and Victoria Calberg, MA Ed, Director, Graduate Admissions at Appalachian State University highlighted the many graduate opportunities at [Cratis D. Williams School of Graduate Studies](#). ASU has approximately 21,000 undergraduate students and 1,900 graduate students currently enrolled. ASU offers a multitude of higher learning graduate programs. Options include master degrees



as well as dual master degrees, graduate certificates, and several doctoral programs. Key highlights include that learning can be hard, but pushing through even in the hard times is beneficial and rewarding. Application timelines vary and students should visit the website to apply. Additionally, all students interested in applying in the audience were encouraged to scan a QR code to apply and the application fee will be waived.

A scholar focused session provided opportunities for five NC GlaxoSmithKline Foundation Scholars to present their research. Presenters shared their research involving T cells, proteins, peptides, organ bismuth compounds and molecular hydrogen.



*Scholars left to right: CJ Froese, UNC Wilmington, Aneka Nestvogel, UNC Wilmington, Izzie Meyers, Davidson College, Morgan Micharski, Elon University and La-Nay Distin, Wingate University.*

Melissa Chappell closed the conference with acknowledgements and praise for all the presenters and attendees, and invited the attendees to save the date - Monday, October 6, 2025 for the Annual Meeting.