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**KEYSTONE**  **SYMPOSIA**  
Accelerating Life Science Discovery

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# SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES TO FUEL NEW IDEAS AND THE NEXT GENERATION OF SCIENTISTS

A conversation with **VISHVA DIXIT**, Vice President of Discovery Research at Genentech and board member of Keystone Symposia



Since 1972, Keystone Symposia has organized conferences spanning a broad range of topics within biomedical research, designed to encourage scientists to think outside their usual fields and forge cross-disciplinary collaborations. To celebrate its 50th anniversary, Keystone Symposia is launching the Fifty Forward campaign to advance new ideas and support diverse, early-career researchers in the life sciences. Vishva Dixit, Vice President of Discovery Research at Genentech and board member of Keystone Symposia, explains the value of these conferences and the goals of the new campaign.

## How does Keystone Symposia support scientific discovery and innovation?

Our strength is bringing scientists together and giving them time to think creatively. We organize about 60 conferences each year that run the gamut of topics within biomedical science. These meetings are often held in relatively secluded environments because we want the speakers, leaders, and young investigators to intermingle. The goal is to have a relaxed and collegial atmosphere that promotes intense scientific discussion among 100 to 200 people. We also strive to have representation across the board, so our speakers stem from disparate disciplines, organizations, industries, genders, and backgrounds. Our meetings are a melting pot of ideas, contacts, and information exchange, which is catalytic in nature. People leave these meetings energized with new ideas, new connections, and new goals.

## What is the Fifty Forward campaign?

The Fifty Forward campaign celebrates the first 50 years of Keystone Symposia, while also planning for the next 50. We are launching our first capital campaign to raise \$5 million to advance three core tenants

of the organization's mission: to tackle emerging topics within biomedical science; develop and foster diversity in the life science; and provide environments that support the careers of young researchers from across the world.

## Why is it important to address emerging topics in biomedical science?

From the beginning, Keystone Symposia aimed to get ahead of important health problems. They organized the first conferences on HIV and have hosted dozens more since then. Keystone Symposia also identified cancer immunotherapy as an emerging topic before it became a buzzword, and hosted meetings where early-career researchers could see the promise of this discovery, which has now transformed the field of oncology. Right now, we are all facing the challenge of COVID-19, so we have organized virtual conferences about the pandemic—but even before that, we hosted a meeting on “Framing the Response to Emerging Viral Infections” in Hong Kong in 2018 where researchers who would go on to create the Moderna vaccine presented their early work on coronavirus vaccine design. Putting these forums together galvanizes scientists to find solutions to the problems we are currently facing and the problems we will face in the future.

## How are you advancing diversity in the life sciences?

We are not tapping into the full potential of our nation if we don't have the participation of people of all races, creeds, colors, and genders. We, as a nation, suffer from that, because we are not allowing a large fraction of our population to participate in a creative, scientific venture that benefits society. A major goal for us is to advance diversity, not only within our borders, but globally. We offer scholarships for scientists from underrepresented groups and from lower and middle-income countries to attend our conferences.

We also started a Fellows program in 2009 to support early-career scientists from underrepresented groups. Twice a year, we invite our Fellows to our Scientific Advisory Board meetings to engage with academic and industry scientists who are at the forefront of their fields. Each Fellow is also paired with a board member for one-on-one mentoring. Board members help their fellows with grant applications, making new contacts, and setting up collaborations, all of which are critical for launching successful careers. For example, one of my fellows got tenure at an excellent

university in three years and was offered a chair position at another four years later. Our Fellows program is where the rubber meets the road in terms of supporting emerging minds and underrepresented scientists, and we'd like to expand on it as part of the Fifty Forward campaign.

## Why is it critical to provide these opportunities to young scientists?

There's no question that early-career scientists are going to face speedbumps in their careers, but when they come to a scientific meeting, they can see the promise of the field and be energized. It's also important that we expose young scientists to the excitement of what's happening because it's a golden age in biomedical research. What we are able to do today, we couldn't have contemplated even 10 years ago, for instance with the advent of CRISPR. We have to have that pipeline of talent, of youth, of early investigators that are constantly rejuvenating our ideas and energy.

To learn more about upcoming events, visit [Keystone Symposia](https://www.keystonesymposia.org).



# FIFTY FORWARD

In celebration of our 50th anniversary, Keystone Symposia is embarking on a fundraising campaign to ensure our ability to catalyze the cutting-edge in scientific collaboration, innovation & advancement and to support young investigators for generations to come.



## Keystone Symposia seeks support towards the following:

### ADVANCING DIVERSITY IN THE LIFE SCIENCES

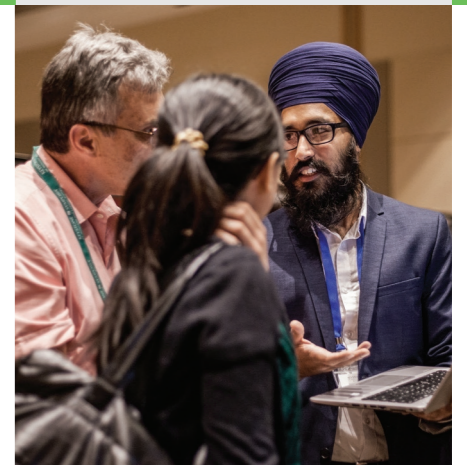
This fund aims to bolster diversity among the scientific workforce, to build a future where biomedical and biological research encompasses and serves the interests of diverse populations. This fund will support our Fellows program, health disparities workshops and other programming for diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives. In addition, this fund will support scholarships for UR investigators and those from low-and-middle-income countries to access our meetings.

### EMERGING MINDS

This fund will invest in our mission to support the next generation of the biomedical and life science workforce. It will also fund scholarships for students, postdocs, and early-career investigators to attend our meetings and support career development programming.

### EMERGING TOPICS

This fund will enable Keystone Symposia to continue to lead the way in cutting-edge programming by supporting conferences in new research frontiers, which hold great promise in revolutionizing science and medicine. By investing in these emerging topics, we bring together and create nascent scientific communities that give rise to novel research directions, innovative technologies and tomorrow's biomedical breakthroughs.



For more information about giving, visit [50.KEYSTONESYMPOSIA.ORG/GIVE](https://www.keystonesymposia.org/give)

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