

A warm welcome to CCE-XVIII, the 18th Cell Culture Engineering conference!

As we reflect on the 35th anniversary of the CCE conference and the circumstances since CCE-XVI (Tampa, 2018), we owe gratitude to Gargi Maheshwari, Jamey Young, Tim Charlebois and other community members whose contributions towards CCE-XVII provided the foundation for us to build on for CCE-XVIII. Nearly all the registered participants for CCE-XVII chose to defer their registration to CCE-XVIII, a gesture we deeply appreciate, and which has also inspired us and the session, poster, and workshop chairs to develop a compelling program for CCE-XVIII. With ~450 participants from 22 countries and representation across academia, government, and industry, CCE-XVIII reflects the diversity of our vibrant community.

We are excited about the conference program which includes the CCE award lecture by Manuel Carrondo, the Martin Sinacore award lecture by Pooja Jambunathan and Madhuresh Sumit, and keynote presentations by Alison Moore, Guangoing Gao, and Ray Deshaies. The oral sessions include 47 full-length and 11 brief poster talks, and the workshop sessions are comprised of 8 topics that span the breadth of our field. The poster sessions include 252 posters that were carefully selected from a large list of submissions. Recognizing recent progress in the commercialization of multispecifics, we have a session dedicated to this topic with talks ranging from protein design to product commercialization. Our industry stepped up to the challenges posed by the pandemic and learnings from that in the context of the broader portfolio will be discussed in one of the workshops.

We thank the numerous CCE-XVIII sponsors whose contributions enable participation of our academic colleagues and students. Chairs across the early career, workshop, poster, and oral sessions have volunteered their time to assemble high quality presentations that reflect the breadth and diversity of our community. The ECI team, including Barbara Hickernell, Kathy Chan, Kevin Korpics, and Tressa D'Ottavio, is the invisible hand behind every ECI conference, and we have benefited immensely from their expertise as we navigated through the complex CCE-XVIII logistics.

CCE-XVIII was heavily oversubscribed and with the intent to preserve the spirit of the conference, we limited participation to ~450 and regret not accepting several colleagues who wished to participate. Given the complex logistics associated with the cancellation of CCE-XVII, it took us longer than usual to formally notify all participants and we appreciate your patience and understanding.

Your safety is a top priority. Transportation arrangements have been made from the airport to the conference venue and all conference-related activities will be within the conference hotel. In addition, COVID-19 has not disappeared, and we encourage everyone to take commonsense precautions and especially encourage participants who may be immune-compromised to continue to wear a mask even though all conference participants have been vaccinated.

Thanks for your interest in the conference. It's been 5 years since we have been together as a community, and we are delighted to see all of you in Cancun. We look forward to an exciting technical program and opportunities to interact and reconnect.

Laura, Tongtong, and Chetan