



Ahna Skop is a geneticist, artist and a winner of the prestigious Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). Her lab seeks to understand the molecular mechanisms that underlie asymmetric cell division during embryonic development. The last step in cell division relies on a transient electron-dense structure called the midbody, which resides inside the intercellular bridge between newly forming daughter cells and is a focus of her lab. Mutations in midbody proteins often lead to birth defects, cancer, as well as age-related neurodegenerative diseases, but the connection remains unclear. Understanding cell division is highly dependent on *in vivo* microscopy and large amounts of visual data, which dovetails perfectly with one of her other passions, art. The combination of scientist and artist inspires her to think differently and maintain an open mind. Some of her work can be seen in the main entrance of the Genetics/Biotechnology Center building and outside her lab on the UW-Madison campus. She has also curated and contributed to traveling exhibitions of scientific art called, "TINY: Art from microscopes" and the "Cool Science" image contest from the UW-Madison campus, and for over 22 years

has organized the bi-annual Worm Art Show for the International *C. elegans* Meeting since she was a graduate student. Ahna, who is Eastern Band Cherokee, Ukrainian and Lebanese and the first in her family to obtain a Ph.D., is passionate about increasing the numbers of underrepresented students in STEAM fields.

On the UW-Madison campus and in her department, she has established several very successful recruitment and retention programs, and in 2015, she established stemdiversity.wisc.edu with support from the Sloan Foundation. In 2016, she was awarded the very first of two, Chancellor's Inclusive Excellence Award for her outreach and inclusive teaching efforts. She has served as a board member for SACNAS (Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science), where she has broadened her impact on underrepresented students in science nationally. She currently serves as an advisor to the chief diversity officer at the NIH (Dr. Hannah Valantine), on the ASCB Minority Affairs Committee, and is a diversity consultant to the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI).

Ahna is the child of artists. Her father, Michael Skop, was a bit of a Renaissance man and was a classically trained fine artist who studied with Mestrovic (a pupil of Rodin) and also taught college-level anatomy. Her father operated an art school at their home studio for over 30 years which attracted artists, musicians, archeologists, actresses, and philosophers from all over the world. Her mother was a high school art educator, ceramicist, and has dabbled in fiber art, sculpture and painting. Her two sisters are visual designers and her brother is an industrial designer. Ahna majored in biology and minored ceramics at Syracuse University (1990-1994), where her father had played football and studied with Mestrovic. She received her Ph.D. in Cell and Molecular Biology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (1994-2000) under Dr. John White, and conducted her post-doctoral work at UC-Berkeley (2000-2003) with Drs. Barbara Meyer and Rebecca Heald.

Ahna is a Professor in the Department of Genetics and also an affiliate faculty member in Life Sciences Communication and the Division of the Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She mentors both scientists and art students in her lab, and also serves on the board of the Wisconsin Science Museum, where many of her art-science collaborations are on display. In 2008, she was named a Remarkable Women in Science from the AAAS. In 2015, she was honored as a Kavli Fellow from the National Academy of Sciences. In 2018, she was awarded the first ever Inclusive Excellence Award by the ASCB and HHMI. In 2019, was awarded the honor to serve as a AAAS IF/THEN Ambassador for Women in STEM. Her science and art have been featured by Apple, *The Scientist*, *USA Today*, *Smithsonian*, *PBS.org*, *NPR* and *Science* magazine. One of her great hobbies is cooking/baking, including scientific cakes, and she manages a foodblog, foodskop.com, and her social media sites (@foodskop) in her free time.

