# CAP Foundation Chat - Pathology Grants and Awards

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**Joanna Cermak:**

Welcome to the latest CAP Foundation episode of the College of American Pathologists' CAPcast. I'm Joanna Cermak, donor relations and communications manager with the CAP Foundation. In this episode, we're joined by several pathologists who have received grants and awards from the CAP Foundation and they'll tell us about their experiences. The CAP Foundation aims to develop tomorrow's pathology leaders through awards for advanced training, research and education, as well as to mobilize pathologists to expand health equity in medically underserved communities within the US and globally. Dr. Masa Peric, junior member director with the CAP Foundation, will lead our discussion with three award and grant recipients. With that Dr. Peric, I'll hand things over to you.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Thank you so much. Hi everyone. I am your host, Dr. Masa Peric, CAP Foundation Board junior member director. At first I was a delegate for my program. I've trained at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center slash Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts, where I am currently a fellow. And our program has always been pretty engaged with the CAP, so then I was part of the aact. And then as mentioned, I am currently with the CAP Foundation. So that was a little bit about me and now about our guests. Joining me today are the 2021 Leadership Development Awardee Dr. Amanda Herrmann. Hi, Dr. Herrmann.

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

Hi, Marsha. Great to be here.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Then we also have here with us our 2023 Global Pathology Development Grant Awardee Dr. Kelsey Hummel. Welcome, Dr. Hummel.

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

Hi y'all. Thanks for the invitation.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Thank you for joining us. And finally, our 2021 Informatics, Awardee Dr. Matthew Luo. Hi, Dr. Luo.

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

Hey everyone. So excited to be here.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

So today we will be discussing the foundations that were the opportunities and their impact through our personal stories and experiences. Let's get started. Dr. Herrmann, could you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you learned about the CAP Foundation and about the award you received through CAP Foundation?

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

Yes, Masa really excited to talk about my experience with the Foundation with everybody today. My name is Amanda Herrmann. As I said, I'm currently a transfusion fellow at Houston Methodist Hospital here in Houston. I did my AP/CP residency at UT Houston, just across the street from where I work now. And I discovered the CAP Foundation pretty early in my residency training. And honestly, I think I was just poking around the CAP website looking for things. And I came across the awards page and I looked through them and I thought, well, I qualify for several of these. But the leadership development award kind of spoke to me. I knew I wanted to get more involved with pathology organized medicine, and this seemed like a great opportunity. The Leadership Development Award is offered twice a year and depending on which cycle you win or are awarded in, it either provides funding for travel to the Engaged Leadership Academy, which happens in the fall or travel to the Residence Forum spring meeting, which is usually in March. So I won the spring award, which meant I got funding to travel to the Engage Leadership Academy in the fall. It was a wonderful experience.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

And Matt?

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

Yeah, so my name is Matt l. I'm a fourth year AP/CP resident at the University of Utah slash a U Laboratories. I received the Informatics Award, which basically helps to provide funding for trainees to attend the CAP annual meeting in order to attend informatics courses, network with fellow informatics people, and just kind of nurture the seed of people growing. But currently still few and far between people who are interested in the field of informatics. I first learned about the CAP Foundation through the Residence Forum and whenever you guys would present and talk to us and give us updates, it just really seemed like a wonderful organization that helps foster trainees love for the field of pathology. Yeah,

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Definitely. And I mean it's trainees. We also have some engagement for medical students. So we started even earlier. It's really nice. I mean, you start building this community of pathologists pretty early on, formed through these, so great. Fantastic. What about you, Kelsey?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

Hi everyone. Like I said before, I'm Kelsey Hummel. I am a Cytopathology fellow at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, Texas. And I have been interested in global pathology for a very long time. All throughout my residency. One of the big issues that I found in my residency is it was very difficult to find funding to actually do projects in other countries, more specifically to offer that funding to the pathologists that are in that country, but also to collaborators as well. So I was talking to my mentor, Dr. Daniel Rosen, and he actually brought up the CAP Foundation grant to me and said, Kelsey, this would be perfect. And so we discussed some different global pathology ideas that we had. We had a new one coming up talking about our 3D printed slide scanning device. And then we said, let's do it. We got to at least try. And I was very excited when I got the notice that we had won it because now this wasn't just a talk that we would have thinking about all these different projects that we could do. It actually was becoming a reality.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Wow, that's fantastic. And can you tell us maybe where the project is today?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

So the project right now is, we just got back from Rwanda actually a couple of weeks ago. And the pathologists were really happy with the devices. We actually got to show the director general of the hospital the devices and how they can look at pathology slides on the computer. And the director general is a surgeon, and so he was really interested in it for tumor boards, being able to show the pathology for those kinds of sessions. They want to use the device to scan slides so they can hold educational sessions for lots of medical students because they currently do not have a functional multi-headed microscope. And also to be able to get educational sessions on different cases that they're really struggling with. And with making that connection, we're trying to hold those educational sessions once a month with our pathologists here within the US to try and help build their knowledge and their training of different types of entities.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's fantastic. Congratulations. Yeah, it's really great. Also how, as you said, you can use it for both education but also treatment. What about the award itself? How did it affect you? How did it affect your career? Or even on a more personal level, how did it affect you specifically? Let's start with you, Matt.

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

Yeah, absolutely. It 1000% changed my career trajectory. I know that attending these conferences is not cheap for trainees, especially if you're not presenting research or you don't have funding from your home institution. Receiving this award definitely helps offset the cost of the wonderful opportunity to be able to come to these events. And as you know, the networking at these events is pivotal to not only getting connections within the world of pathology, but just getting used to feeling at home in our field. And I think the more conferences you attend, the more you network, the more you get to know people, and the more you learn through these meetings, the more the field of pathology begins to feel like home. And it's just such an unparalleled feeling.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

It really is a pathology family. I do feel the same personally. It's really nice. I mean, you do get to meet a lot of new people every time, but there's definitely people you keep seeing from meeting to meeting, and it's always so great to just reconnect and yeah, definitely. What about you, Kelsey?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

Well, the big thing with this is it made a project come true. And what I mean by that is our device is actually, so it's so low cost. To put this into perspective, most slide scanners of the type that we are trying to use are anywhere from $15,000 to $20,000. This one is only $250 that it makes it available to so many people that would not be able to have a slide scanner be able to afford or to, with the upfront cost, they wouldn't be able to take care of the maintenance contract as well. And so it's affected me because we finally got to show what this is capable of. And now that we've had this chance, we are actually expanding to other countries. So the fact that we actually got this from CAP is really huge because now this is a platform now, this is a place where we can be connected with other people who are interested in this, and I'm going to be writing an abstract to try to present it at the CAP annual meeting to really talk to more people and just increase those connections so we can make this project even more widespread and help as many people as possible as far as change career direction.

And now I am absolutely 100% going to make global pathology a part of my contract. Like wherever I try to go, I'm going to try to find a way to keep that as a part of my research because it's something that is really inspiring. It really speaks to me as far as one of my passions.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Yeah, I see what you're saying. I do feel that these awards also just as you explained, help you just gain some new perspectives, see what's possible, what you want for yourself as well and for others. So great. That's amazing.

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

I mean, it's definitely something where I still want to be connected to the Foundation and I want to keep learning more about what CAP has to offer for future endeavors. And knowing that there are people that are really interested in the field of global pathology has made me very interested in staying well connected with cap, trying to attend the meetings as much as I can. I know Matt and Amanda mentioned how expensive it is to go to these meetings, especially as a trainee, but it really inspires me to reach out and also try to offer some mentoring as well to residents and medical students that are interested in global pathology.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's great. So speaking of mentoring, I wanted to ask you, did any of you get a mentor as part of the award?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

Yes, Dr. Daniel Rosen from the Baylor College of Medicine, he has been with me every step of the way. He's really helped with being a great sounding board and just being able to talk things through about, well, how should we approach this and how should we approach that. He's also a very good problem solver, which is what you always need whenever you do global health, because nothing is ever going to go the way that you expect it to. So you need to be able to think on your feet and kind of have that optimism to keep going even when things are tough. And so he's been a great support for me through this whole endeavor.

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

So I can speak for the Leadership Development Award as part of that award. The CAP actually partners you with a local person that has also gone through the Engaged Leadership Academy. And so I was actually partnered with Leilani Valdez, who is local-ish. She's about two or three hours away. She's a practicing pathologist in Victoria, Texas, and she's actually a current CAP Board member. So that was a very fortuitous pairing. She has been a wonderful mentor since all the way back in the day as I have progressed through my involvement with CAP, she has always been there and it's just been a wonderful pairing. And without the Leadership Development award, I definitely would not have had that opportunity. So I think it's really great that the Leadership Development Award not only gets you to these leadership events, but they also set you up for success for future leadership within the CAP by pairing you with people who are involved with CAP and have been through the leadership training as well.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

And has the leadership training this award, has it opened new doors for you or has it changed your career direction, your experience?

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

Oh, absolutely. I do not think I would have been as involved with CAP or gotten to the level of my involvement with CAP without the foundation of the ELA training and the Leadership Development Award. It really, not only did it provide the skills for being very vocal and excited and really getting others excited about pathology, but it also immersed me in a community of other pathologists who are also very excited about being leaders in pathology. And I met so many people at ELA. One of them was my most memorable, I would say, is Christina. She was actually on RFEC with me. And what's great about ELA is they have residents, fellows do in practice, late in practice, anybody that wants those skills. And so it's very diverse about the pathologist that you will meet there. Another person that I met that ELA was Joe Saad, Dr. Joe Saad, who is also a CAP Board member. I also met Dr. Eva Wojcik, who is the Foundation leader right now. So you never know who you're going to meet at these events, and it's just wonderful how CAP can put all of those incredible resources and exciting people in a room together and you just build relationships. So

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's very true. I mean, yes, you do get a formal mentor, but I feel like also, at least personally, I've just gained so many informal mentors. It's just plenty of really well-meaning good advice and support and ideas. It's really fantastic. So Matt, has the receipt of a CAP Foundation award led to other opportunities? Has it made you more involved in the CAP? Has it opened new doors for you?

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

Absolutely. I think that first and foremost, it made me more comfortable in trying to find my voice within the CAP and pathology in general community. I think that it can be very daunting to apply for awards and feel like, oh, I'm just one small person. Nobody's going to notice me. I'm just a resident, blah, blah, et cetera, et cetera. I think that's false. I think that the CAP community is incredibly welcoming and applying for the award, getting the award and getting to have a hop skip and jump on my networking process, really, it made me more comfortable in standing up for myself, I suppose, in the pathology community and trying to make my voice heard. And so the award definitely made me feel more confident in myself. And as a result, I was able to have the courage to try to get involved in many more things, which led me to applying for more CAP community positions and being able to get a role on CIPI. The Council on Informatics and Pathology Innovation also truly changed my career trajectory. So I definitely think that getting this award, getting the informatics award has opened many doors for me in terms of furthering my career aspirations.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's great to hear. Well, a question for Amanda and for Kelsey then, have you had some unexpected experiences? Has your word also changed your perspectives in a similar way like it did for Matt?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

As far as unexpected experiences, I would say with this project taking off, it actually has led me to work with a lot of other hospitals and lots of other pathologists in different parts of the world. So we've been able to actually reach out to pathologists in Manila in the Philippines. We've been able to reach out to folks in Zambia as well as Ghana. And now the world just becomes completely open to us because all you need is one good success story, and with that you can run with it and be able to do so many additional things with that.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

And what about you, Amanda?

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

I would say yes. The attending the ELA opened more doors than I thought it would. Going into it. I not only met a lot of people while I was at ELA, but I had such a great experience that it fueled me to apply as a junior member to the Professional and Community Engagement Committee that's a CAP committee within the council, CMPD Council on Membership and Professional Development. And the PCEC is the committee that's in charge of putting on ELA. And so having the experience of going through ELA and reflecting on what I liked about it, what I thought we could improve really fueled me to join the committee and participate in putting on ELA for future members. And so I was a junior member committee member for probably two years, and now I just got put on again as a full-time member, full member. Yay. So I'll be there for a while. But it really exposed me to that area of the CAP. Outside of the science stuff that we do and advocacy stuff. There is a huge member part of the work that the CAP does and ELA really brought that to light for me. So that was unexpected, I would say.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Yeah, that's really great. I do believe that, yes, once you get engaged with the CAP and once you step in through the Foundation Award or in some other, there's always something just new and exciting. And as you said, there's a new committee or some new opportunity and I really feel that it can be a lifelong career long thing. It's really great. What would you all tell, or what advice would you give other residents or medical students that are interested in the field of pathology?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

So pathology is amazing is the first thing. There is really no limit to what you can do in the field because it's such an integral part in basically every specialty, every aspect of medicine. You can always find a niche somewhere for you. And honestly, if a place isn't already available, this is your opportunity to make one. And with the CAP, that is entirely possible. So don't give up on yourself. You can find places for you to bloom within pathology.

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

I completely agree, Kelsey, going into pathology, I mean, it's just not taught very well in medical schools anymore, at least the practice of pathology. So it is kind of an unknown when you start, but it's such a cool field. Really anybody with any personality type can find a place within pathology and thrive. If you're super introverted and just want to be at an office all day, there are definitely spots for you. If you're extroverted, very outgoing, likes to talk to a lot of people. I don't know if I would call myself like that, but sometimes I can be, transfusion is where I live because I talk to people all day. And so I think just keep an open mind. You don't walk in expecting one thing, just take it for what it is and take it for the great profession that it is and just explore.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

Matt, what advice do you have for other residents or for medical students who are interested in the field of pathology?

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

I could not agree more with my other panelists here. I think that applying for awards, getting involved can be really scary, can seem really scary in theory, but you never know what's going to happen unless you try, unless you try to get involved. And when you do, you just find such a welcoming and loving field filled with people who just want you to succeed. And as the great Michael Scott once said, you miss a hundred percent of the shots. You don't take Wayne Gretzky. And I think that is true. I think that just really encapsulates the process of getting involved with pathology in the CAP as well.

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

I completely agree, Matt. You can't win if you don't apply. So take a leap. If one of the awards fits you and you think it would be a great opportunity, just apply. And if you don't win, apply again.

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

Yeah, and I definitely don't be afraid of failure. Yes, definitely just apply. And the more you apply for things, the more practice you get at writing 500 word statements on why you love something, which at this point in your lives, the more of these you write, the more comfortable you get writing them. And the better these statements will become and the higher your chances of being able to get involved is. So I completely agree. Just give it a shot. Why not?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

I totally agree with you, Matt. The practice makes perfect. I've applied for several awards in the past. I was not awarded them, and at first it feels a little disheartening, but the fact was, having done that practice, having actually gone through the process of writing a proposal, going through the process of getting the IRB approved, getting a budget sheet put together, all of this is incredibly helpful. No matter what you do in your future career, even just trying this as very useful and you'll automatically take yourself out if you don't try. So at least go for it. And if you don't succeed, figure out why and try again.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's some great advice. Thank you all so much for that. And what is one piece of advice that you have for somebody who is considering to apply for an award right now?

**Dr. Kelsey Hummel:**

I would say the most important thing to look at is really read the application and focus your project on what the application entails. So for example, the Global Development grant really wanted to focus on impact and talking about connections. And so when I proposed my project, I really wanted to focus on how the device would help with the education for those pathologists, but more specifically it was education. With those pathologists cases, they're not just reviewing cases that we in the US are providing, they're looking at their own cases, it's their own stuff, it starts to become theirs. So think about the impact that the grant would have on you. Think about what it would have an effect on the people that you're working with, and I think that's what's most important.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's great. Thank you so much for underlining the importance of just showing a clear vision, I guess, of having goals and realizing how what you do will impact your life and lives of others. Thank you.

**Dr. Amanda Herrmann:**

As someone who has been on the other side of it, and I've actually evaluated some of the applications for the Leadership Development Award, you can really tell who spent time on it and didn't just rush and put it together. So I would say really read the questions, make sure you're answering them correctly or as best that you can or as best as you see fit, but really, really put some effort into it and don't leave it to the last minute. You can definitely tell on the other side of things, those that do and do not.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's great practical advice. Thanks so much for that insight, Amanda. And what about you, Matt? Do you have some advice?

**Dr. Matthew Luo:**

I think that the best advice I have is also, unfortunately a little nebulous, but my advice would be just feel your passion, really understand what it is you want. For me, I think informatics is super neat, and so the Informatics Award really stood out to me. And when you feel your passion and talk about it with your colleagues and other people at your program, the more you talk about what you've enjoyed, the better you get at expressing it. And I feel like a lot of the actual content in my application came from conversations I had with my fellow residents and talking about things I liked about informatics, what I wanted to do in the field of informatics. Yeah, again, the practice makes perfect model of just talking about what I liked about informatics, really fueled the content of my application. And once I knew what I wanted, the rest of the application just kind of becomes more administrative things of requesting things here and there. But the actual heart of the application came from me just feeling my passion for informatics.

**Dr. Masa Peric:**

That's lovely. Yeah, you definitely want to present honestly what it means to you and show what you value about it. So that's great advice. Thank you. I want to thank Dr. Herrman, Hummel, and Luo for joining me today to share their stories. And I would also like to thank our listeners. We hope you learned more about the incredible work of the foundation through this discussion. If you are interested in applying for one of the awards discussed today, or just to learn more about all the grants and awards the foundation offers, please visit our website@foundation.c.org. And last but not least, thank you so much to CAP Foundation donors. Without your support, none of this great work would be possible. Thank you.

**Joanna Cermak:**

Well, thank you all for the great conversation about CAP Foundation Awards, and thank you to all of our listeners for tuning into the CAP Foundation episode of CAPcast. To learn more about the Foundation, apply for a grant or an award or donate visit foundation.cap.org. The link is in the resources section of the show notes. Keep up with the foundation stories and grant and award opportunities by following us on social media @CAPFNDN. And once again, thank you to all of our donors who make all of this possible. Stay tuned for future episodes of CAPcast.