

# SOUTHWEST SOCIETY OF COSMETIC CHEMISTS

Newsletter



WHAT YOU'LL  
FIND?

**SWSCC Events  
Pictures**

**Interview with  
Melanie Smith**

**Formulator on the Spot**  
Meet Camila Powell!

## Welcome to the first edition of 2026

As we step into a brand-new year, the SWSCC Board extends our gratitude for your steadfast support of our chapter and mission. The enthusiasm of our membership is what allows the SCC to remain a leading voice in our industry, even after 80 years.

Inside, you'll find highlights from our recent SW Chapter gatherings, including the unforgettable Gala Dinner Dance. Looking back at that night reminds us how lucky we are to have such a vibrant chapter, and we are thrilled to share those memories with you.

Let's make this year our best one yet - full of fresh ideas, new connections, and continued growth.

Happy 2026, SWSCC!



## MESSAGE FROM THE SWSCC CHAIR PRESIDENT



As we begin 2026, I want to welcome you to a new year of learning, connection, and professional growth within the Southwest Society of Cosmetics. It is an honor to serve as Chapter Chair, and I am grateful for the trust placed in our leadership team, committee chairs, and volunteers who dedicate their time to advancing our mission.

Our industry continues to move quickly, with new technologies evolving, regulatory expectations changing, shifting consumer preferences, and increasing demand for performance and accountability. In that environment, a strong chapter provides something essential: a credible, practical forum where professionals can gain knowledge, challenge assumptions, and build relationships that strengthen both careers and the science behind the technologies and products we create and offer.

In 2026, our focus is clear: deliver value that members can feel. That means consistently high-quality technical programming; meaningful opportunities for students and emerging professionals; stronger member engagement through relevant content and accessible events; and recognition of the suppliers, sponsors, and partners who make our educational mission possible. It also means listening carefully, so that our priorities reflect what members need most from the chapter today.

This year, I encourage you to participate beyond attendance. Bring a colleague. Volunteer for a committee. Suggest a speaker or topic. Share a case study or innovation. Mentor a student. The strength of this chapter is not defined by a single event or a single board; it is defined by sustained, collective engagement and a shared commitment to professional excellence.

To our returning members, thank you for your continued support and leadership. To new members, welcome—you are joining a community that values technical rigor, ethical practice, and collaboration. And to our sponsors and volunteers, thank you for investing in education and community that is building across the Southwest.

I look forward to working with you throughout 2026 to build a chapter that is responsive, relevant, and worth the time and trust you place in it.

Sincerely,

**Mauricio Castro**  
Chair Southwest Society of Cosmetics



FEBRUARY VOL 1, 2026

## 2026 SWSCC OFFICERS & AREA III DIRECTORS



**Mauricio Castro**  
Chair 2026  
Romatech Consultants



**Katrissa Chappell**  
Chair Elect 2026  
Mary Kay



**Carrissa Dowdy**  
Treasurer 2026  
Mary Kay



**Rhonda Solberg**  
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**Lauren Labeaud**  
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Mary Kay



**Michelle Hines**  
Area III Director  
SSC Johnson Lifestyle Brands



**Michelle Carrillo**  
Area III director  
Actera Ingredients



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## 2026 SCC EXECUTIVE BOARD



- **President:** Marisa Plescia – FemChem Beauty.
- **Vice President:** Perry Romanowski – Element 44, Inc.
- **Vice President-Elect:** Valerie George – Simply Formulas.
- **Secretary:** Mindy Goldstein, PhD – Mindy S. Goldstein, PhD, Consulting.
- **Treasurer:** Volodymyr Onyshchak – The Estée Lauder Companies.

### Area I

- Senior Area Director: Amy Marshall – ECKART America/BYK USA.
- Area Director: Chris Burger – Barnet Products Corporation.

### Area II

- Senior Area Director: Caryn Weiss – Amway.
- Area Director: Frank Wagner – Southern Chemical & Textiles, Inc.

### Area III

- Senior Area Director: Michelle Carrillo – MC Beauty Hub.
- Area Director: Michelle Hines, PhD \* – SC Johnson Lifestyle Brands.

### Area IV

- Senior Area Director: Cheryl Seidell-Hili – DeWolf Chemical/Azelis.
- Area Director: Teresa Fleming \* – Edgewell Personal Care/Playtex Manufacturing.

### Area V

- Senior Area Director: Kendra Cutcher – DeWolf Chemical, Inc.
- Area Director: Shahin Kalantari \* – D'Avicenna, Inc.



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## EDUCATION MEETING OCTOBER

**Speaker:** Arnie Esperance, Gattefossé.

**Topic:** Sensitive Skin Explained



The sensitive skin care market has seen remarkable global growth in recent years, driven by an increasing number of consumers identifying with sensitive skin. This trend prompted brands to adapt and develop products tailored to these specific needs.

However, the lack of a universally accepted classification for sensitive skin has posed challenges, often leading to misconceptions in the marketplace.

Arnie Esperance, a seasoned expert with over 30 years in the Personal Care industry and Technical Support Director for Gattefossé Corporation's Personal Care Division, addressed this complex topic in his presentation.

Drawing on his extensive experience, from his tenure at Gattefossé and Clinique Color Lab (Estee Lauder Companies) to his active role in the Society of Cosmetic Chemists, Arnie explored the dynamics of treating sensitive skin from both consumer and biological perspectives.

His analysis of current products and emerging technologies provided valuable insights into aligning consumer expectations with scientifically validated approaches, offering key takeaways for professionals across skincare, makeup, and body care sectors.





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## NOVEMBER EDUCATION MEETING & 2026 OFFICER INSTALLATION



The SWSCC November Education Meeting & 2026 Officer Installation brought the community together for an evening of celebration, learning, and innovation.

A highlight of the evening was the Formula Innovation Awards, recognizing the brightest minds and boldest ideas in formulation science.





## NOVEMBER EDUCATION MEETING & 2026 OFFICER INSTALLATION



### 🏆 WINNERS OF THE 2026 SWSCC FORMULATION COMPETITION

- 1st Place: Exfoliate Detox Cleansing Mask – Huy Huynh (Evonik)
- 2nd Place: Star Power Inorganic Sunscreen Bar – Erin King (Evonik)
- 3rd Place: Pouty AF (After Filler) Lip Treatment – Olivia Smith (Goodier Labs)

### 👤 MEET THE JUDGES:

#### **Sarah Dewees (Founder of Dermwel)**

"For me, the most innovative formula is the one where the science clearly serves a real use case. Innovation for its own sake is meaningless unless there's a clear audience who will actually benefit from and use it. Additionally, I looked for formulas that paired true technical advancement with exceptional textural elegance, making high performance actives a pleasure to apply. Ultimately, the winner stood out by delivering on a unique use case while having high dosed, cutting edge ingredients in a sensorially refined system that made advanced skincare both effective and desirable."

#### **Mauricio Castro (Founder of Romatech Consultants)**

- formula overall performance
- sensorial performance
- technical performance of each ingredient
- capacity to include key ingredients from different suppliers.

#### **Carrissa Dowdy (Product Formulation Manager at Mary Kay)**

As a judge for the SWSCC Formulation Competition, I had a front-row seat to what's next in formulation. I assessed entries with a sharp focus on innovation—new formats, fresh delivery systems, and creative ingredient strategies that push beyond the expected—while still holding teams to real-world standards like stability, performance, and manufacturability. It was energizing to see participants translate bold ideas into viable prototypes, and the experience reinforced how powerful smart, modern forms can be when they're backed by solid formulation science.

#### **Alisar Zahr (Senior Director of Research & Clinical Development at Revision Skincare)**



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# Melanie

S m i t h



## From Behind the Pharmacy Counter to Behind the Formula

When you meet Melanie Smith, it doesn't take long to feel her passion for cosmetic science and her deep-rooted belief that you should always follow your curiosity.

But Melanie's journey into the beauty industry didn't begin in a lab. It started behind the counter of a small-town drugstore.

### **Q: Melanie, how did your career begin? What first drew you to cosmetic science?**

It all began when I was in high school. I worked as a clerk in our local corner drugstore. Back then, pharmacy techs weren't really a thing. If the pharmacist saw potential in you, you got to help behind the counter. And I was lucky; my pharmacist took me under his wing.

One day, I asked how he knew so much about cosmetics. His answer changed my life. He said, "Mel, a lipstick and a suppository are made with the same base. They're both waxes that melt at body temperature. The only difference is one has a pigment, the other a drug." That blew my mind. He explained how, in pharmacy school, he'd taken cosmetic formulation classes. That was the moment I saw the connection between science and beauty. I was hooked.

## **Q: So you became a pharmacist first. What made you switch paths?**

Yes, I went on to study pharmacy at Northeastern University in Boston. But even then, the dream of working in cosmetics never left me. I squeezed in independent research projects, making lotions and experimenting with formulas. I graduated and took a job in a pharmacy, but I knew almost immediately that I wasn't going to stay.

The work was stable and respected, but something was missing. I wasn't creating. I wasn't innovating. I'd come home exhausted, feeling like a piece of myself was stuck behind that counter. I remember crying to my husband – we were newly married at the time – how this wasn't where I wanted to be or how I envisioned using my pharmacy knowledge. I'll never forget how he told me he'd support whatever path I chose and encouraged me to pursue my dream of formulating cosmetics.

So I enrolled full-time to get my Master's in Pharmacy at the University of Rhode Island, focusing my research entirely on cosmetic formulation. It was a bold move, but it opened every door I was meant to walk through.

## **Q: What was it like making that leap at the time?**

It was scary, but also thrilling. I had no roadmap, but I had this drive to try. Thankfully, I landed a teaching assistant role and could still work part-time in pharmacies. With that and my tuition covered, I was earning as much as I had full-time, except this time, I was working toward something I truly loved.

The suppliers I met during my research, companies like Croda and Amerchol, were incredibly generous. They sent me raw materials for my projects and encouraged me. I've never forgotten that kindness. After graduating, my husband and I traveled through Europe for six months with just \$500 to our name when we returned. The deal was: whoever got a job first would decide where we'd move. I landed a position at Chesebrough-Ponds in Connecticut, and that was the beginning of my real career in cosmetics.

## **Q: What was that transition like, pharmacy to cosmetics?**

I realized very quickly how valuable my pharmacy background was. Emulsions are emulsions, whether they carry a drug or a pigment. My training gave me a scientific edge and a better salary. Thanks to mentoring from Gail Bucher of Gillette, I learned to negotiate my worth. She told me to always ask for the pharmacist's pay grade, and I did. That made a huge difference, especially early on when every dollar mattered.

But beyond the technical side, cosmetics gave me something pharmacy couldn't: the joy of creation. I wasn't just dispensing formulas, I was making them. I could take an idea and turn it into a product people would wear, love, and feel confident in. That's powerful.

## **Q: Any moments in your career that really stand out?**

So many, but one I always go back to is the creation of the Nighttime Recovery System at Mary Kay. It started as a simple idea, a swirl of cream and gel, and grew into this full-blown, cross-functional project. Marketing, manufacturing, R&D, even machinists were involved. At one point, a machinist made a mistake while testing a swirl pattern. That mistake became the final design! We called it serendipity, and I even gave him an award for it.

That project was magic. Everyone felt ownership, from the lab bench to the production floor. It was creative, collaborative, and efficient. We created something beautiful without needing million-dollar machinery. That, to me, is innovation at its best.

## **Q: You've also been very involved in the SCC. How did that shape your career?**

Immensely. I joined the New England Chapter early on, then the Southwest Chapter when I moved to Dallas. One of the first things I was asked to do was join the Christmas party committee, and that's how I met incredible people who became lifelong colleagues and friends.

I eventually became Secretary, Vice Chair, and Chair of the chapter, and later joined national committees. Being involved gave me a bigger voice in the industry, but more importantly, it expanded my network. Every opportunity I had, whether consulting, formulating, or mentoring, was shaped by the connections I made through SCC.

## **Q: What advice would you give to someone just starting out?**

Follow your dream. Seriously. Even if it seems off the beaten path. If I had stayed in retail pharmacy, I would have been fine—but I never would have felt fulfilled. I would've always wondered, "What if?"

Also, get involved in your local SCC chapter. Don't just attend, participate.

Volunteer. Introduce yourself. The people you meet will help you, teach you, and inspire you. And someday, you'll do the same for someone else.

Lastly, embrace challenges. Every time something seemed impossible, whether it was replacing parabens, cutting formula costs, or innovating with limited resources, it became an opportunity to grow. Challenges push you to think differently, to learn more, and to become better.



FEBRUARY VOL 1, 2026

## SWSCC GALA DINNER DANCE

Hello SWSCC,

What an unforgettable evening! On December 5th, 2025, we came together to celebrate the 50th anniversary of SWSCC at our spectacular gala dinner dance. The energy in the room was incredible, and the sense of community and pride was truly inspiring as we marked this impressive milestone in our chapter's history.

We were thrilled to welcome 585 guests who filled the ballroom with laughter and excitement. Throughout the evening, more than 60 prizes found happy recipients, adding extra sparkle to the festivities and keeping everyone on their toes.

DJ Andy kept the dance floor buzzing with fantastic music, while the casino tables offered a little friendly competition and plenty of fun. One of the night's most memorable moments was our balloon drop—let's just say, the first attempt gave us all a good laugh (balloons really do have a mind of their own!). But on the second try, the balloons cascaded perfectly, making for a magical scene.

Guests enjoyed delicious food and drinks throughout the night, and we were honored to have several special tenured members with us, each of whom has played an important role in our chapter's story. A touching video interview and a slideshow of historical photos reminded us how far we've come together.

Our 50th anniversary celebration was made possible by the generous support of our Platinum, Gold, and Bronze sponsors. We are deeply grateful for their partnership and commitment to our mission. We would also like to extend a heartfelt thank you to our goody bag donors, whose thoughtful contributions helped make the event even more memorable for all our guests.

A huge thank you goes out to everyone who purchased tickets and joined us for this milestone event. Special gratitude is owed to the hardworking event committee whose dedication made the evening a resounding success. We also collected enough toys again this year for the kids at Children's Medical Center - Dallas which allowed them to have a very fun holiday party. This is always my favorite part of the event and I am always proud of how everyone contributes.

Reflecting on our journey, it's amazing to see how SWSCC has grown from a small group of 40 members to a vibrant chapter of over 300 strong in just fifty years. This progress wouldn't have been possible without the passion and involvement of each and every member.

With this golden celebration behind us, I can't help but feel excited for what the next decade will bring. Here's to continued growth, stronger connections, and new milestones ahead—especially as we begin to look forward to our 60th anniversary!

Don't miss the chance to relive these wonderful memories—visit the SWSCC website to view a full gallery of gala photos and see all the highlights for yourself. I have provided few from the gala below.

It was an absolute joy to celebrate with you all. Thank you for being part of our story and for making the 50th anniversary gala truly special. Wishing you all the best for 2026 and beyond!

With heartfelt appreciation,

Mary Miller  
Legacy Chair, SWSCC



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# SWSCC GALA DINNER DANCE

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### Honored Tenured SWSCC Members

Melanie Smith  
 Margo Stout  
 Dawn Burke-Colvin  
 Lisa Jones  
 Lou Fisher  
 Akshay Talati - SCC President

### 2025 SWSCC 50th Anniversary Gala Committee

Maurico Castro  
 Terri Easley  
 Mary Miller  
 Jeni Thomas  
 Kim Wandell



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# SWSCC GALA DINNER DANCE



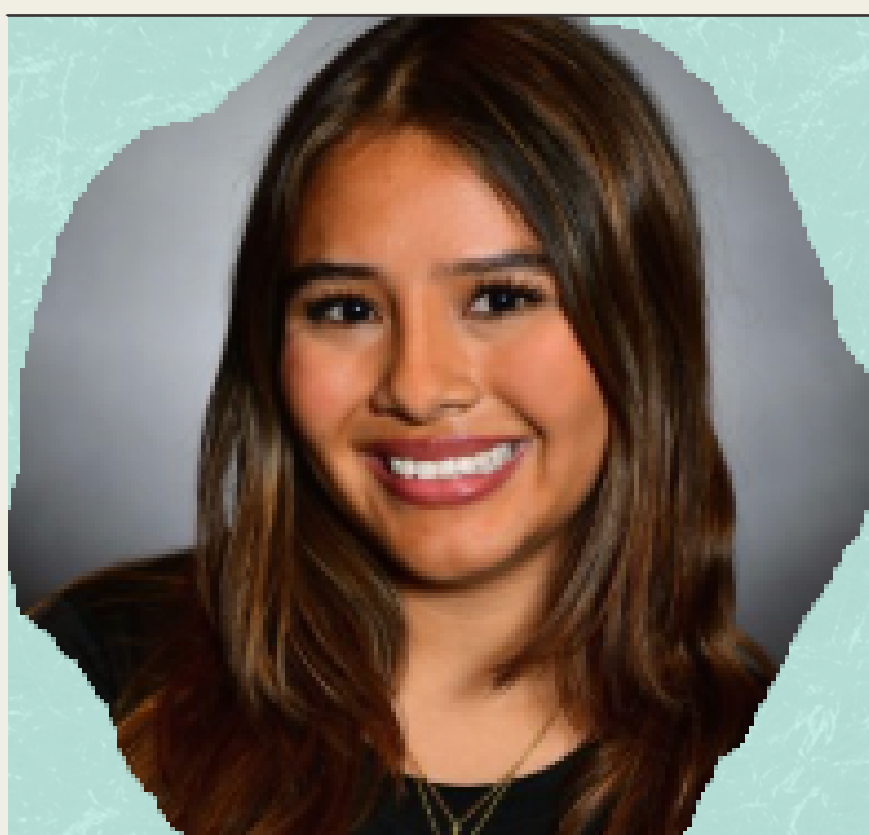


FEBRUARY VOL 1, 2026

# SWSCC GALA DINNER DANCE



## Formulator on the Spot



*Hi, I'm Camilla!*

Hi, I'm **Camila Powell!**

I'm a **Lab Technician at Goodkind Co.** and the **Social Media Chair for the Southwest Society of Cosmetic Chemists (SWSCC)**. I'm passionate about connecting science, creativity, sustainability, and community.

My path in cosmetic science began at the **University of Texas at Austin**, where I earned my Bachelor's degree in Chemistry. Since then, I've combined my love for chemistry and beauty to build a career focused on innovation and collaboration.

Over the past two years, I've led **Goodkind Co.'s annual visits to UT Austin**, where we've connected with more than **80 chemistry students each year** to inspire future scientists in the beauty industry.

I'm currently pursuing my **Master's in Cosmetic Science at the University of Toledo**, where I'm expanding my expertise in formulation and product development. I've also had the opportunity to attend the **Future Chemists Workshops** at both **NYSCC Suppliers' Day** and **California SCC Suppliers' Day**, experiences that have deepened my understanding of the field and strengthened my professional network.

This year, I was also selected and awarded a scholarship for the **Hispanic Austin Leadership (HAL)** program, which is helping me grow as a community-focused leader.

### About me

I love bringing scientific precision and creativity together to craft products that make people feel confident in their skin. My role at Goodkind Co. involves applying my quality, efficiency, and innovation skills across stability testing and formulation.

Beyond the lab, I'm always looking for new challenges and opportunities to grow. This year, I'll be participating in the L'Oréal Brandstorm competition, where I'll get to combine innovation, strategy, and sustainability to tackle real-world challenges in the beauty industry.

### Fun facts!


- I can solve a Rubik's Cube in under a minute 🧩
- I attended Ulta Beauty World, one of the most energizing and inspiring experiences I've shared with my friends at Goodkind 📍
- I'm always up for organizing, connecting people, and turning ideas into action 💡
- My dream lab playlist? A mix of Bad Bunny, Feid, Rauw Alejandro & Young Miko that keeps the energy flowing! 🎵


# Upcoming events.

2026

**FEB**  
**26**

## **SWSCC EDUCATION MEETING**

 The art of texture: Hydrocolloids as the key to sensory innovation by **Jordi Saurat**

 Time: 5:00-8:30 p.m

 Location: The Victoria Restaurant, Farmers Branch, Tx


**MAR**  
**25**

## **SWSCC EDUCATION MEETING**

 Details: to follow

**APR**  
**21**

## **SWSCC EDUCATION MEETING**

 Details: to follow

**APR**  
**22**

## **GOLF OUTING**

 Details: to follow

**MAY**  
**27**

## **SWSCC EDUCATION MEETING**

 Details: to follow

**SEP**  
**15**

## **SUPPLIERS' DAY**

 Details: to follow

**OCT**  
**21**

## **SWSCC EDUCATION MEETING**

 Details: to follow

**NOV**  
**18**

## **SWSCC EDUCATION MEETING**

 Details: to follow

**DEC**  
**11**

## **SWSCC DINNER DANCE**

 Details: to follow

# 2026 SWSCC SUPPLIERS' DAY

**Save the date!**

**Tuesday, September 15, 2026**

**Venue: Irving Convention Center at Las Colinas  
Hotel: The Westin Irving Convention Center at  
Las Colinas**

**Additional details—exhibitor information,  
sponsorship opportunities, and attendee  
registration—will be shared soon.**





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