

TASSA 2026 CONFERENCE

October 2-4, 2026

Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center
Chapel Hill, North Carolina



TURKISH AMERICAN
SCIENTISTS AND
SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION

Hayatta en hakiki mürşit ilimdir.
(Science is the most genuine guide in life.)

CONFERENCE ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Hasan Ayaz, Conference Co-Chair, TASSA Vice-President; Professor, Drexel University

Canan Dağdeviren, Conference Co-Chair; Associate Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Ercan Alp, TASSA President; Argonne Distinguished Fellow and Senior Physicist, Argonne National Laboratory

Nihat Çubukçu, Assistant Vice President and Senior Scientist, RenaissanceRe

Ayşenil Belger, Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Fevzi Yalın, AGSF Board Member

Aylin Sagay, TASSA Treasurer

Ahmet Alatas, TASSA Managing Director

Host

The TASSA 2026 Conference is hosted by the Aziz & Gwen Sancar Foundation at the Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

We appreciate the support of our sponsors, the Sancar Center staff, and the local volunteers who make this conference possible.

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FROM THE CONFERENCE CO-CHAIRS AND THE TASSA PRESIDENT

Dear Conference Participant,

On behalf of the organizing committee, we welcome you to the TASSA 2026 Conference, hosted by the Aziz & Gwen Sancar Foundation at the Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The objective of TASSA conferences is to bring Turkish-American scientists and scholars under one roof to exchange ideas and to network. The conferences also provide a sustainable "science bridge" that facilitates the flow of knowledge, talent, and technology between the U.S. and Türkiye.

This year's theme, Bridging Innovation in the Era of AI: Transnational Impact Across the U.S. and Türkiye, runs through the entire program. Over two days, keynotes and panels move from the "mind" of AI to its "body" in robotics and sensors, from the laboratory to the market, and from science to philanthropy and society. University presidents and leaders from Türkiye join us to discuss reverse brain drain and lasting institutional partnerships, and a practical session on immigration pathways addresses questions that many scientists and scholars in our community face.

We are honored to open the conference with a keynote address by Nobel Laureate Aziz Sancar and a fireside chat with Gwen and Aziz Sancar, as well as to feature a keynote address by Kenan Şahin, whose generosity has supported TASSA for many years. We are humbled by the caliber of the scholars, founders, and leaders who have accepted our invitation to speak.

The heart of a TASSA conference is its community. Lightning talks and poster sessions showcase the work of students, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, and professionals across every career stage, while the Young Scholar Awards recognize the most promising among them. The Job Fair connects talent with universities and companies on both sides of the Atlantic, and the tribute to Aşık Veysel reminds us of the cultural roots that bring us together.

We are grateful to H.E. Sedat Önal, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the United States, for joining us; to Aziz and Gwen Sancar for opening their center to our community; to our sponsors and partner institutions for their support; and to the many volunteers without whom this conference would not be possible.

We hope this forum will help scholars to learn about one another's work and collaborate further on future projects in the U.S. and Türkiye.

Welcome to Chapel Hill.

Hasan Ayaz
Conference Co-Chair
TASSA Vice-President

Canan Dağdeviren
Conference Co-Chair

Ercan Alp
TASSA President

SPONSORS

TASSA gratefully acknowledges the organizations whose support makes the 2026 Conference possible.

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Host: Aziz & Gwen Sancar Foundation and the Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center



SANCAR
Turkish Cultural &
Community Center

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Schedule at a Glance

October 2 to 4, 2026, Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center, Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Session details follow on the next pages.

Friday, October 2 Arrival Day	12:00 pm onward Arrival and Welcome Afternoon. Registration desk opens at 3:00 pm. Guided tours (limited seats, sign-up required): Aziz Sancar Lab, Biomedical Research Imaging Center (BRIC), Ayşenil Belger Lab, and UNC campus tour with a Turkish student guide. Open visits: Sancar Center and UNC campus self-guided tour.
Saturday, October 3 Conference Day 1	
7:30 - 8:30 am	Breakfast and Registration
8:30 - 9:00 am	Welcome and Opening Remarks Hasan Ayaz & Canan Dağdeviren, Conference Co-Chairs; Ercan Alp, TASSA President; H.E. Sedat Önal, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the United States
9:00 - 9:30 am	Opening Keynote: Science Without Borders: Discovery, Persistence, and Global Responsibility Aziz Sancar, Nobel Laureate, UNC Chapel Hill
9:30 - 10:00 am	Fireside Chat with Gwen & Aziz Sancar: Science and Society Gwen Sancar and Aziz Sancar, UNC Chapel Hill, in conversation with Canan Dağdeviren and Hasan Ayaz
10:00 - 10:30 am	Coffee Break and Poster Session
10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Panel 1: Reverse Brain Drain, Diaspora Impact, and the Türkiye-U.S. Innovation Bridge Ahmet Yozgatligil, Barış Tan, Hasan Mandal, Metin Sitti, Sondan Durukanoğlu Feyiz · Moderator: Süleyman Gökoğlu
12:00 - 12:30 pm	Lightning Talks I Ali Cinar, Uzay Emir, Leyla Topçu Sarıca, Alp Sungu, Nesime Tatbul · Session Chair: İlhan Aksay
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 - 2:00 pm	Poster Session Saturday posters (24), including institutional posters
2:00 - 3:30 pm	Panel 2: The Future of AI: From Foundation Models to Impact in Industry, Science, and Medicine Asuman Özdağlar, Aydoğan Özcan, Ece Kamar · Moderator: Haluk Ünal
3:30 - 4:00 pm	Tea Break and Networking
4:00 - 5:30 pm	Panel 3: Embodied Intelligence: Robotics and AI in the Physical World Taşkın Padır, Metin Sitti, Murat Yıldırım · Moderator: Candan Tamerler
5:30 - 6:00 pm	Remembering Aşık Veysel Çiğdem Özer, granddaughter of Aşık Veysel and President of the Aşık Veysel Foundation · Introduced by: Canan Dağdeviren and Ercan Alp
6:00 - 7:00 pm	Job Fair: Talent and Career Hub
7:30 - 10:00 pm	Reception and Dinner Opening the Evening: Inspiring the Next Generation: Young Guru Academy's Science and Technology Education Movement in Türkiye · Ege Gedikli, YGA · Moderator: Ayşenil Belger

Sunday, October 4 Conference Day 2

7:30 - 8:30 am	Breakfast and Registration
8:30 - 9:30 am	Parallel Sessions TASSA Business Session · Ercan Alp, TASSA President Workshop: Entrepreneurship for Academics: Turning Research into Ventures · Deniz Tudor
9:30 - 10:00 am	Featured Keynote: From Inception to Exit: Lessons from Kenan Systems, TIAX, and CAMX Power Kenan Şahin, Founder and President, Kenan Systems, TIAX LLC, and CAMX Power · Followed by the presentation of the Kenan Şahin Award
10:00 - 10:30 am	Coffee Break and Poster Session
10:30 - 11:30 am	Panel 4: Technology Translation: From Lab to Market Eren Bali, Melik Demirel, Cengizhan Öztürk · Moderator: Can Erbil
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	Lightning Talks II Tolga Ozmen, Mustafa Aksoy, Alper Bozkurt, Deniz Ozenbas, Yasemin K. Akyel · Session Chair: Uzey Emir
12:00 - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 - 1:30 pm	Poster Session Sunday posters (25), including institutional posters
1:30 - 2:30 pm	Panel 5: Science, Philanthropy, and Society: Mobilizing the Turkish-American Diaspora for Impact Rifat Atun, Ayşenil Belger, Halil Özbelli · Moderator: Şenay Ataselim Yilmaz
2:30 - 3:00 pm	Tea Break and Networking
3:00 - 4:00 pm	Panel 6: Navigating Immigration for Scientists and Scholars: Visas, Permits, and Pathways in the U.S. and Türkiye Ayhan Ogmen, Emine Şahin Karakaşlıoğlu · Moderator: Günay Evinch
4:00 - 4:30 pm	Lightning Talks III Gözde Şenel-Ayaz, Idil Baran, Didem Egemen, Mert Deniz Polat, Tuğçe Kınık Yurdal · Session Chair: Nihat Çubukçu
4:30 - 5:30 pm	Young Scholars Awards and Presentations Moderators: Hasan Ayaz and Canan Dağdeviren
5:30 - 5:45 pm	Closing Remarks and Thanks Hasan Ayaz & Canan Dağdeviren, Conference Co-Chairs; Ercan Alp, TASSA President
5:45 pm	Adjourn

- Keynote, opening and closing
- Panels and workshops
- Posters and lightning talks
- Awards
- Special sessions, cultural, career and social
- Meals and breaks

Friday, October 2, 2026

Arrival Day

12:00 pm onward

Arrival and Welcome Afternoon

Registration desk opens at 3:00 pm

Friday afternoon is set aside for optional tours of UNC Chapel Hill research facilities and the surrounding campus. Lab tours and the guided campus tour have limited capacity and require advance sign-up by email; center and self-guided visits are open to all attendees.

Guided Tours (limited seats, sign-up required)

To reserve a seat, email the contact listed for that specific tour. Each tour is handled separately, so please send a separate email for each tour you'd like to join. Seats are confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis.

1. **Tour of the Aziz Sancar Lab**

Visit the laboratory of Nobel laureate Aziz Sancar at the UNC School of Medicine. Limited seats; advance sign-up required.

[Learn more](#) | [Sign up](#)

2. **Tour of the Biomedical Research Imaging Center (BRIC)**

A guided walk through UNC's Biomedical Research Imaging Center, home to advanced human and preclinical imaging facilities. Limited seats; advance sign-up required.

[Learn more](#) | [Sign up](#)

3. **Tour of the Ayşenil Belger Lab**

Visit the lab of Dr. Ayşenil Belger at the UNC Department of Psychiatry, focused on neuroimaging and clinical neuroscience. Limited seats; advance sign-up required.

[Learn more](#) | [Sign up](#)

4. **UNC Campus Guided Tour with a Turkish Student**

Walk the historic Carolina campus with a current Turkish student as your guide. Limited seats; advance sign-up required. Meeting time and location will be shared with registered participants.

[Learn more](#) | [Sign up](#)

Open Visits (no sign-up needed)

5. **Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center**

Explore the conference venue, founded by Aziz and Gwen Sancar, at your own pace. Open throughout the afternoon; drop in any time.

[Learn more](#)

6. **UNC Campus Self-Guided Tour**

Explore the campus on your own using UNC's visitor resources and self-guided routes. [UNC Visitor Center](#)

Saturday, October 3, 2026

Conference Day 1

7:30 - 8:30 am	Breakfast and Registration
8:30 - 9:00 am	Welcome and Opening Remarks • Hasan Ayaz & Canan Dağdeviren, Conference Co-Chairs • Ercan Alp, TASSA President • H.E. Sedat Önal, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the United States
9:00 - 9:30 am	Opening Keynote Science Without Borders: Discovery, Persistence, and Global Responsibility • Aziz Sancar, Nobel Laureate and Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
9:30 - 10:00 am	Fireside Chat with Gwen & Aziz Sancar: Science and Society • Gwen Sancar, Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill • Aziz Sancar, Nobel Laureate and Professor, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill In conversation with • Canan Dağdeviren, Associate Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology • Hasan Ayaz, Professor, Drexel University Conversation Themes • How curiosity-driven discovery shapes medicine and society • Advice for the next generation of scientists and leaders
10:00 - 10:30 am	Coffee Break and Poster Session Turkish tea, coffee, refreshments, with conversation among the posters. Posters are on display throughout the conference; presenters will be at their posters during the dedicated poster sessions on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.
10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Panel 1: Reverse Brain Drain, Diaspora Impact, and the Türkiye-U.S. Innovation Bridge University presidents and leaders from Türkiye join the Turkish-American community to discuss how talent, ideas, and investment can flow in both directions, and what it takes to turn individual success stories abroad into lasting institutional partnerships. Focus • Building sustainable collaborations between the U.S. and Türkiye • Incentives for return or dual engagement • Case studies of successful cross-border labs and startups • Policy, education, and research partnerships • Joint funding mechanisms and institutional collaboration models Moderator • Süleyman Gökoğlu, Past President, TASSA; Retired Senior Scientist, NASA Glenn Research Center Speakers • Ahmet Yozgatligil, President and Professor, Middle East Technical University • Barış Tan, President and Professor, Özyeğin University • Hasan Mandal, President and Professor, Istanbul Technical University • Metin Sitti, President and Professor, Koç University • Sondan Durukanoğlu Feyiz, Professor and Past President, Kadir Has University; Vice President, European Women Rectors Association

12:00 - 12:30 pm	Lightning Talks I Rapid-fire presentations by poster presenters selected from the submitted abstracts. Each speaker briefly shares the essence of their work, from a single result to a new institutional initiative, and the full posters can be seen at the poster sessions. Session Chair • İlhan Aksay, Pomeroy and Betty Perry Smith Professor of Engineering, Emeritus, Princeton University Speakers: Ali Cinar, Uzey Emir, Leyla Topçu Sarıca, Alp Sungu, Nesime Tatbul (titles on page 15)
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lunch
1:30 - 2:00 pm	Poster Session Poster presentations from across the TASSA community: students, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, and professionals from academia, industry, and government, presenting research, projects, and programs at every stage. The session also features institutional posters from universities, research centers, companies, and organizations in the U.S. and Türkiye showcasing their programs, partnerships, and opportunities.
2:00 - 3:30 pm	Panel 2: The Future of AI: From Foundation Models to Impact in Industry, Science, and Medicine Leading researchers and technology executives examine where artificial intelligence is heading, from the large models reshaping industry to the tools transforming scientific discovery and medical care, and what these changes mean for researchers, companies, and society. Focus: the "mind" of AI (models, algorithms, deployment) Moderator • Haluk Ünal, Past President, TASSA; Professor of Finance, University of Maryland Speakers • Asuman Özdağlar, MathWorks Professor and Head, Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology • Aydoğan Özcan, Chancellor's Professor and HHMI Professor, University of California, Los Angeles • Ece Kamar, Chief Technology Officer, Turing; formerly Corporate Vice President and Managing Director, AI Frontiers Lab, Microsoft Research
3:30 - 4:00 pm	Tea Break and Networking Turkish tea, coffee, refreshments. An open half hour to continue the conversation with speakers and fellow attendees.
4:00 - 5:30 pm	Panel 3: Embodied Intelligence: Robotics and AI in the Physical World This panel moves from software to the physical world, exploring how robots, sensors, and insights from neuroscience are giving AI a body, and how these systems are entering factories, hospitals, homes, and the human body itself. Focus: the "body" of AI (robots, sensors and neuroscience) Moderator • Candan Tamerler, Past President, TASSA; Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, and Charles E. & Mary Jane Spahr Professor, University of Kansas Speakers • Taşkın Padır, Professor, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Northeastern University; Amazon Scholar, Amazon.com Inc. • Metin Sitti, Professor, School of Medicine and College of Engineering, Koç University • Murat Yıldırım, Assistant Professor, Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute

5:30 - 6:00 pm	Remembering Aşık Veysel A cultural tribute to Aşık Veysel, the great folk poet of Sivas, whose songs and verse carry the voice of Anatolia. Introduced by • Canan Dağdeviren, Associate Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology • Ercan Alp, Argonne Distinguished Fellow & Senior Physicist, Argonne National Laboratory Speaker • Çiğdem Özer, Granddaughter of Aşık Veysel, President of Aşık Veysel Foundation
6:00 - 7:00 pm	Job Fair: Talent and Career Hub Universities, companies, and startups from the U.S. and Türkiye meet students and researchers seeking positions, internships, and collaborations.
7:30 - 10:00 pm	Reception and Dinner Opening the Evening Inspiring the Next Generation: Young Guru Academy's Science and Technology Education Movement in Türkiye How YGA is bringing science and technology education to <u>two million children</u> across Türkiye, and how the Turkish-American community can take part. Moderator • Ayşenil Belger, Professor and Director of Neuroimaging Research in Psychiatry, and Director of Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Speaker • Ege Gedikli, Young Guru Academy (YGA)

Sunday, October 4, 2026

Conference Day 2

7:30 - 8:30 am	Breakfast and Registration
8:30 - 9:30 am	Parallel Sessions I. TASSA Business Session Annual general meeting of the association. Reports from the TASSA President and Board, followed by elections and open discussion of priorities for the coming year. • Ercan Alp, TASSA President; Argonne Distinguished Fellow and Senior Physicist, Argonne National Laboratory II. Workshop: Entrepreneurship for Academics: Turning Research into Ventures A hands-on session for faculty, postdocs, and students on moving ideas out of the lab: founding a company, working with investors, governance and risk, and the mindset shift from researcher to founder. • Deniz Tudor, Senior Executive in Banking and Financial Technology; Advisor on Risk, Governance, and Innovation

9:30 - 10:00 am	Featured Keynote From Inception to Exit: Lessons from Kenan Systems, TIAX, and CAMX Power Drawing on his guidebook for startups, <i>Lean Startup to Lean Company to Rich Exit</i>, Kenan Şahin shares lessons from founding Kenan Systems and building TIAX and CAMX Power, from the Arthur D. Little legacy to a cathode technology now licensed across the lithium-ion battery industry. The keynote closes with the presentation of the Kenan Şahin Award, and signed copies of his books will be available during the coffee break. • Kenan Şahin, Founder and President, Kenan Systems, TIAX LLC, and CAMX Power
10:00 - 10:30 am	Coffee Break and Poster Session Turkish tea, coffee, refreshments, with conversation among the posters. Posters are on display throughout the conference; presenters will be at their posters during the dedicated poster sessions on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.
10:30 - 11:30 am	Panel 4: Technology Translation: From Lab to Market Founders and academic leaders who have built companies out of university research share how discoveries become products, what the startup ecosystems of the U.S. and Türkiye offer, and how researchers, investors, and institutions can work together to bring science to market. Focus • Commercializing academic research • Startup ecosystems in the U.S. and Türkiye • Venture capital versus public funding Moderator • Can Erbil, Professor, Department of Economics, Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences, Boston College Speakers • Eren Bali, Co-Founder and CEO, Monogram; Founder and former CEO, Udemy • Melik Demirel, Endowed Chair Professor of Engineering and Director, Center for Research on Advanced Fiber Technologies, Penn State University; Co-Founder, Tandem Repeat Technologies, Inc. • Cengizhan Öztürk, Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Boğaziçi University; Co-Founder and Board Member, Boğaziçi University Center for Life Sciences and Technologies (LifeSci), Boğaziçi University Center for Targeted Therapy Technologies (CT3), and Istanbul Health Industry Cluster (ISEK)
11:30 am - 12:00 pm	Lightning Talks II Rapid-fire presentations by poster presenters selected from the submitted abstracts. Each speaker briefly shares the essence of their work, from a single result to a new institutional initiative, and the full posters can be seen at the poster sessions. Session Chair • Uzay Emir, Associate Professor of Radiology and Biomedical Engineering, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Speakers: Tolga Ozmen, Mustafa Aksoy, Alper Bozkurt, Deniz Ozenbas, Yasemin K. Akyel (titles on page 15)
12:00 - 1:00 pm	Lunch
1:00 - 1:30 pm	Poster Session Poster presentations from across the TASSA community: students, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, and professionals from academia, industry, and government, presenting research, projects, and programs at every stage. The session also features institutional posters from universities, research centers, companies, and organizations in the U.S. and Türkiye showcasing their programs, partnerships, and opportunities.

1:30 - 2:30 pm

Panel 5: Science, Philanthropy, and Society: Mobilizing the Turkish-American Diaspora for Impact

Leaders in global health and diaspora philanthropy discuss how giving, mentorship, and institutional partnerships can strengthen science, education, and health in Türkiye and the U.S., and how the Turkish-American community can move from responding to crises toward building lasting impact.

Focus

- Philanthropy as a catalyst for science, education, medicine, and social impact
- Diaspora engagement and Turkish-American giving models
- Supporting young scholars, fellowships, exchanges, and institutional partnerships
- Aligning nonprofit, university, industry, and community priorities
- From emergency response to sustainable long-term impact

Moderator

- **Şenay Ataselim Yılmaz**, Executive Director, Turkish Philanthropy Funds

Speakers

- **Rifat Atun**, Dean of Education and Innovation, Julio Frenk Professor of Public Health Leadership and Professor of Global Health Systems, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health; Director, Health Systems Innovation Lab, Harvard University
- **Ayşenil Belger**, Professor and Director of Neuroimaging Research in Psychiatry, and Director of Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- **Halil Özbekli**, President, Premier Yarns and member of TPF's Founders Society

2:30 - 3:00 pm

Tea Break and Networking

Turkish tea, coffee, and refreshments. An open half hour to continue the conversation with speakers and fellow attendees.

3:00 - 4:00 pm

Panel 6: Navigating Immigration for Scientists and Scholars: Visas, Permits, and Pathways in the U.S. and Türkiye

A practical session on the immigration landscape for researchers: F-1 and OPT, J-1 and the two-year home-residency requirement, H-1B and cap-exempt positions, O-1 and EB-1/EB-2 NIW pathways for researchers, and current policy changes. The Türkiye side covers options for Turkish-Americans and returning scholars, including dual citizenship. Followed by open Q&A.

Moderator

- **Günay Evinch (Övünç)**, Principal, Saltzman & Evinch, PLLC; Former President ATAA, Former Chair TASC

Speakers

- **Ayhan Ogmen**, Attorney at Law, Ogmen Law Firm PLLC
- **Emine Şahin Karakaşlıoğlu**, Attorney at Law, Karakaslioglu Law Firm PLLC

4:00 - 4:30 pm

Lightning Talks III

Rapid-fire presentations by poster presenters selected from the submitted abstracts. Each speaker briefly shares the essence of their work, from a single result to a new institutional initiative, and the full posters can be seen at the poster sessions.

Session Chair

- **Nihat Çubukçu**, Assistant Vice President and Senior Scientist, RenaissanceRe

Speakers: Gözde Şenel-Ayaz, İdil Baran, Didem Egemen, Mert Deniz Polat, Tuğçe Kınık Yurdal (titles on page 15)

4:30 - 5:30 pm	Young Scholars Awards and Presentations Recognition of the TASSA Young Scholar Award recipients, followed by short presentations of their research. Moderators • Hasan Ayaz, Professor, Drexel University • Canan Dağdeviren, Associate Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
5:30 - 5:45 pm	Closing Remarks and Thanks • Hasan Ayaz & Canan Dağdeviren, Conference Co-Chairs • Ercan Alp, TASSA President
5:45 pm	Adjourn

Lightning Talks

Rapid-fire presentations selected from the submitted abstracts. Each speaker has a few minutes to share the essence of their work; the full posters are on display at the poster sessions.

Lightning Talks I Saturday, October 3, 12:00 - 12:30 pm

Session Chair: İlhan Aksay, Pomeroy and Betty Perry Smith Professor of Engineering, Emeritus, Princeton University

1. **Ali Cinar**, Illinois Institute of Technology
Multivariable Artificial Pancreas for Fully-Automated Insulin Delivery in Diabetes
2. **Uzay Emir**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
Beyond BOLD: Emerging Neuroimaging of Brain Function, Metabolism, and Molecular Processes
3. **Leyla Topçu Sarıca**, Brigham and Women's Hospital
Postoperative Delirium Risk in Women in the United States: A Machine Learning Analysis of the National Inpatient Sample
4. **Alp Sungu**, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania
When Does Generative AI Help or Harm Learning? Evidence from Three Randomized Experiments in Türkiye and the United States
5. **Nesime Tatbul**, Intel and Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Building Bridges in AI-Driven Data Systems Research and Education

Lightning Talks II Sunday, October 4, 11:30 am - 12:00 pm

Session Chair: Uzay Emir, Associate Professor of Radiology and Biomedical Engineering, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

1. **Tolga Ozmen**, Mass General Brigham
AI-FLEET: Phase II Multimodal Deep Learning for Fibroepithelial Breast Lesion Classification
2. **Mustafa Aksoy**, University at Albany, State University of New York
Passive Microwave Remote Sensing for Lunar Exploration: Opportunities for U.S.-Türkiye Collaboration in Space Technologies
3. **Alper Bozkurt**, North Carolina State University
From Wearable Sensors to the Internet of Bionic Things: Connected Sensing Across Humans, Animals, and the Environment
4. **Deniz Ozenbas**, Montclair State University
Price Discovery Noise: How Loud Is It?
5. **Yasemin K. Akyel**, University of North Carolina School of Medicine
Repurposing the DNA Labeling Agent EdU for Glioblastoma Therapy

Lightning Talks III Sunday, October 4, 4:00 - 4:30 pm

Session Chair: Nihat Çubukçu, Assistant Vice President and Senior Scientist, RenaissanceRe

1. **Gözde Şenel-Ayaz**, Tandem Repeat Technologies, Inc.
Procell: Vegan Wool made from Fermentation
2. **Idil Baran**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
RSA and Anxiety Symptoms in Adolescence: Implications for AI-Based Assessment
3. **Didem Egemen**, National Cancer Institute
AI-Assisted Visual Evaluation Test for Cervical Screening
4. **Mert Deniz Polat**, Drexel University
Diffuse Optical Neuroimaging for Non-Invasive Assessment of Cerebral Hemodynamics: Translational Case Studies
5. **Tuğçe Kınık Yurdal**, Temple University
Explainable Machine Learning for Predicting Functional Limitations Among U.S. Adult Cancer Survivors Using National Health Interview Survey Data

Poster Presentations

Posters from students, postdoctoral researchers, faculty, professionals, and institutions in the U.S. and Türkiye, presented in two groups. Saturday posters go up Saturday morning before 10:00 am and come down at the end of the day; Sunday posters go up Sunday morning before 10:00 am. Presenters will be at their posters during the poster session of their day. Numbers are abstract numbers and correspond to poster board numbers.

Saturday, October 3 Poster Session 1:30 - 2:00 pm (24 posters)

4	Duygu Yazıcı , University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry, Department of Pediatrics, Allergy & Immunology (Rochester, NY, USA) <i>Common food emulsifiers impair epithelial barrier integrity and trigger pro-inflammatory responses</i>
6	Sezgin Kiren , Winston Salem State University (Winston Salem, NC, USA) <i>Efficient Solution-Phase Synthesis of the DNA Fluoropyrimidine Polymer CF10 using MPEG5000</i>
18	Defne Circi , Duke University (Durham, NC, USA) <i>Challenges and Vision for Standardization of Biopolymer Data Sets for Machine Learning</i>
23	Arda Mert , Department of Biostatistics and Bioinformatics, Duke University School of Medicine (Durham, NC, USA) <i>When Is Zero-Shot Enough? Fine-Tuning Language Models for Temporal Risk Prediction from Clinical Notes</i>
25	Arda Mert , Duke University (Durham, NC, USA) <i>Learning Shared Neural-Behavioral Representations with Recognition-Parameterized Latent Dynamics</i>
27	Ibrahim A. Tursun , Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC, USA) <i>The Complexity Paradox: Decomposing the Effects of Landscape Diversity and Fragmentation on Agricultural Downside Risk</i>
28	Elif Gursay , Eskisehir Osmangazi University (Eskisehir, Türkiye) <i>Cultivating Next-Generation Nurse Leaders: A Model for Establishing Student Nursing Leadership Commissions in Universities</i>
29	İnci Aydın , Lampe Joint Department of Biomedical Engineering, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University (Chapel Hill, NC, USA) <i>Engineering <i>Saccharomyces boulardii</i> to Secrete Mucosal Healing Factors for Therapeutic Application in Inflammatory Bowel Disease</i>
31	Burcu Ercan , Burcu Ercan, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of California, Davis (Davis, CA, USA) <i>Thermal Oxidation of InxAl1-xN Barrier Layers for High-Performance Enhancement-Mode GaN MOS-HEMTs</i>
32	Deniz Beken , Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA, USA) <i>ESP32 Based Microtonal Tuning Device</i>
37	Altona Tufanoglu , Center for Studies of Addiction, Department of Psychiatry, University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine (Philadelphia, PA, USA) <i>Hedonic Capacity is Associated with Demand-Dependent Prefrontal Responses During Sustained Attention in Opioid Use Disorder</i>
38	Ayşenil Belger , Department of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC, USA) <i>Machine Learning Detects Subcortical Brain Asymmetry Associated with Psychotic-Like Experiences in the ABCD Study</i>
39	Tarik Baysal , University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC, USA) <i>SPECTRA: A Synchronized Multimodal Platform Toward AI-Driven Biofeedback</i>
40	Ayşenil Belger , Department of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC, USA) <i>Nexus Lab at Ozyegin University: Building a Neurotechnology and Cognitive Systems Laboratory to Study Human Brain-Behavior Interface</i>
41	Mert Deniz Polat , School of Biomedical Engineering and Science, Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA, USA) <i>Diffuse Optical Neuroimaging for Non-Invasive Assessment of Cerebral Hemodynamics: Translational Case Studies</i>
43	Boran Duman , Drexel University (Philadelphia, PA, USA) <i>Development and Preliminary MRI Evaluation of Accessible Brain Phantom Formulations</i>
44	Sinan Candan , Department of Mechanical Engineering, University of Wisconsin-Madison (Madison, WI, USA) <i>Liquid Metal-Filled Stretchable Sensors Inform In-Situ Rate-Dependent Micromechanics of Soft Materials</i>
47	Fahrettin Ay , Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Texas A&M University (College Station, TX, USA) <i>Ghost Residuals in Physics-Informed Neural Networks and Their Suppression via Volatility-Adjusted Residual Sampling</i>

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- 49 **Mehmet Yıldırım**, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Texas A&M University (College Station, TX, USA)
Physics-Level Security for Critical Infrastructure: Breaking Smart-Grid Dynamic Watermarking and Bounding Machine-Learning Attacks on the KLIN Secure Key Exchanger
-
- 50 **Nur Ceren Selçuk**, Bioengineering Program, University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS, USA)
Machine Learning-Informed Engineering of Multifunctional Suture-Binding Peptides for Antimicrobial Biomaterial Interfaces
-
- 52 **Merve Uslu**, iOrganBio (Durham, NC, USA)
iORGANBIO Creates a Novel Framework for Adaptive Stem-Cell Manufacturing
-
- 54 **Dilay Ozkan**, Statistics and Operations Research, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC, USA)
UNC Emergency Department Operations Research Group
-
- 55 **Gölnaz Karaosmanoğlu**, OSTİM Foundation (Ankara, Türkiye)
OSTİM Üretim Ekosistemi: Türkiye'nin Sanayi Gücünden Yapay Zeka Çağına Köprüler
-
- 56 **Cengizhan Öztürk**, Boğaziçi University (Istanbul, Türkiye)
Boğaziçi CT³: Your Gateway to Translational Biotech Research and MedTech Development in Türkiye
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Sunday, October 4 Poster Session 1:00 - 1:30 pm (25 posters)

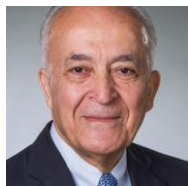
Includes the lightning talk speakers and the Young Scholar Award recipients.

1	Metecan Erdi , Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, Harvard University (Allston, MA, USA) <i>High Concentration Antibody Formulations Enabled via Thermostable Ionic Liquids</i>
2	Deniz Ozenbas , Department of Accounting and Finance, Feliciano School of Business, Montclair State University (Montclair, NJ, USA) <i>Price Discovery Noise: How Loud Is It?</i>
3	Edib Keskiner , Ohio University (Athens, OH, USA) <i>From Turkish Farms to Appalachian Jails: A Comparative Look at Rural Disadvantage and Systemic Neglect</i>
5	Mustafa Aksoy , Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University at Albany, State University of New York (Albany, NY, USA) <i>Passive Microwave Remote Sensing for Lunar Exploration: Opportunities for U.S.-Türkiye Collaboration in Space Technologies</i>
7	Ali Cinar , Chemical and Biological Engineering Department, Illinois Institute of Technology (Chicago, IL, USA) <i>Multivariable Artificial Pancreas for Fully-Automated Insulin Delivery in Diabetes</i>
12	Nebile Korucu-Gümüşoğlu , Istanbul Kultur University (Istanbul, Türkiye) <i>Gender Map in Higher Education: Evidence from Istanbul Kultur University</i>
13	Nebile Korucu-Gümüşoğlu , Istanbul Kultur University (Istanbul, Türkiye) <i>Machine Learning-Based Analysis of Predictor Importance for Geopolitical Risk: Comparative Evidence from the United States and Türkiye</i>
14	Deniz Ekinci , Alamo College District, San Antonio College (San Antonio, TX, USA) <i>Artificial Intelligence-Enhanced Geospatial Technologies: Economic Implications and Emerging Industry Domains</i>
15	Mehtap Ekinci , Istanbul University Social Science Institute (Istanbul, Türkiye) <i>AI-Driven Language Learning Technologies: Pedagogical Strengths, Limitations, and Emerging Evidence in English Acquisition</i>
16	Ahmet Berat Ekinci , Ronald Reagan High School (San Antonio, TX, USA) <i>The Transformation of Turkish High School Education in the Age of Artificial Intelligence: A Comparative Analysis of Turkey and the United States</i>
17	Burcu Adivar , Broadwell College of Business and Economics, Fayetteville State University (Fayetteville, NC, USA) <i>From Innovation to Impact: A Transnational Talent Pipeline Powered by Corporate and Civic Partnerships in the AI Era</i>
19	Mustafa Ture , Department of Physics and Astronomy, North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC, USA) <i>Solitonic Superfluorescence: Towards Understanding High-Temperature Quantum Coherence</i>
20	Alper Bozkurt , Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, North Carolina State University (Raleigh, NC, USA) <i>From Wearable Sensors to the Internet of Bionic Things: Connected Sensing Across Humans, Animals, and the Environment</i>
21	Tuğçe Kınık Yurdal , Temple University (Philadelphia, PA, USA) <i>Explainable Machine Learning for Predicting Functional Limitations Among U.S. Adult Cancer Survivors Using National Health Interview Survey Data</i>
22	Yasemin K. Akyel , Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics, University of North Carolina School of Medicine (Chapel Hill, NC, USA) <i>Repurposing the DNA Labeling Agent EdU for Glioblastoma Therapy</i>
24	Leyla Topçu Sarıca , Department of Anesthesiology, Brigham and Women's Hospital (Boston, MA, USA) <i>Postoperative Delirium Risk in Women in the United States: A Machine Learning Analysis of the National Inpatient Sample</i>
26	Gozde Senel-Ayaz , Tandem Repeat Technologies, Inc. (Philadelphia, PA, USA) <i>Procell: Vegan Wool made from Fermentation</i>
30	Tolga Ozmen , Division of Breast Surgery, Mass General Brigham (Boston, MA, USA) <i>AI-FLEET: Phase II Multimodal Deep Learning for Fibroepithelial Breast Lesion Classification</i>
33	Uzay Emir , Biomedical Research Imaging Center, Department of Radiology and Department of Biomedical Engineering, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC, USA) <i>Beyond BOLD: Emerging Neuroimaging of Brain Function, Metabolism, and Molecular Processes</i>
34	Didem Egemen , Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute (Rockville, MD, USA) <i>AI-Assisted Visual Evaluation Test for Cervical Screening</i>

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- 35 **Alp Sungu**, Operations, Information and Decisions Department, The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA, USA)
When Does Generative AI Help or Harm Learning? Evidence from Three Randomized Experiments in Türkiye and the United States
-
- 36 **Nesime Tatbul**, Intel & MIT (Cambridge, MA, USA)
Building Bridges in AI-Driven Data Systems Research and Education
-
- 42 **Idil Baran**, Department of Psychiatry, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (Chapel Hill, NC, USA)
RSA and Anxiety Symptoms in Adolescence: Implications for AI-Based Assessment
-
- 46 **Gulce Aktas** (Philadelphia, PA, USA)
Language Bridge: AI Powered Peer-to-Peer Language and Cultural Sharing and Academic Socializing Platform for Students
-
- 53 **Cevher Dogan**, Independent Researcher and Technologist (Philadelphia, PA, USA)
ScholarFlow: A Working Beta for AI-Assisted, Human-Governed Scholarly Communication
-

Speakers, Moderators, and Organizers

Keynote speakers, panelists, moderators, session chairs, and organizing committee members, listed alphabetically by last name. The blue line under each name shows where in the program you will find them.



İlhan Aksay

Pomeroy and Betty Perry Smith Professor of Engineering, Emeritus, Princeton University
Session Chair, Lightning Talks I

İlhan A. Aksay, born in Paşabahçe, İstanbul, is a dual citizen of Türkiye and the United States. After graduating from Vefa Lisesi in İstanbul (1962), he earned his B.Sc. (1967) in ceramic engineering at the University of Washington, Seattle, and his M.Sc. (1969) and Ph.D. (1973) in materials science and engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to joining Princeton University in 1992, his teaching and research affiliations included the University of Washington, Seattle (1983 to 1992); the University of California, Los Angeles (1981 to 1983); Middle East Technical University, Ankara (1975 to 1981); and the Xerox Corporation Webster Research Center, Webster, New York (1973 to 1975). He is now the Pomeroy and Betty Perry Smith Professor, Emeritus, in the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering at Princeton University.

He is a member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering (2010), the Science Academy, Türkiye (2012), and the U.S. National Academy of Inventors (2014), and was a member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences (TÜBA) until 2011. He is also a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the American Ceramic Society, and an honorary member of the Japanese Materials Research Society. He received the Richard M. Fulrath (1987) and Edward C. Henry (2000) Awards of the American Ceramic Society, the Charles M. A. Stine Award of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers (1997), and the Turkish National Medal of Science (TÜBİTAK, 2001). In recognition of his research and efforts in promoting technology transfer, he was named the Puget Sound Engineering Council's 1988 Academic Engineer of the Year.



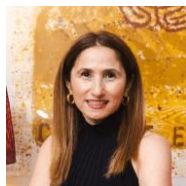
Ercan Alp

TASSA President; Argonne Distinguished Fellow, Argonne National Laboratory
Organizing Committee; Opening and Closing Remarks; Business Session

Ercan Alp received his BSc and MSc degrees from Middle East Technical University in Ankara and his PhD from Southern Illinois University. He joined Argonne National Laboratory in 1984 and worked with the first group of scientists to prepare the scientific case for the Advanced Photon Source (APS). He is known for his pioneering work in nuclear resonant x-ray spectroscopy and inelastic scattering with synchrotron radiation. He formed the inelastic x-ray scattering group at the APS and was responsible for the design and construction of two beamlines dedicated to nuclear resonant and inelastic x-ray scattering.

He has served on international science advisory committees for many synchrotrons and is currently Chair of the SESAME Scientific Advisory Committee. He chaired the Forum on International Physics of the American Physical Society in 2014. He has published over 400 papers, several book chapters, and edited conference proceedings, and has chaired many international conferences. He received the IBAME Award 2019 from the International Board on the Applications of the Mössbauer Effect. Dr. Alp is an Argonne Distinguished Fellow and an elected member of the Science Academy, Türkiye.

Dr. Alp has long been active in TASSA, first as co-chair of the 2016 TASSA Conference, then as an elected member of the Board of Directors, and as President since 2025.



Şenay Ataselim Yılmaz

Executive Director, Turkish Philanthropy Funds
Moderator, Panel 5

Şenay Ataselim Yılmaz leads Turkish Philanthropy Funds as its Executive Director and has been instrumental in the organization since its inception. She is a writer, lecturer, and passionate advocate for social change. She has been recognized with the 2025 Beacon Award presented by the Ellis Island Honors Society, as an International Herst Fellow by the Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, and as a Young Society Leader by the American-Turkish Society. She holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Graduate Center, CUNY, and has completed executive education programs at Columbia and Harvard Business Schools. She is also a trained yoga and mindfulness instructor.



Rifat Atun

Dean of Education and Innovation and Julio Frenk Professor, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
Speaker, Panel 5

Rifat Atun is the Dean for Education and Innovation at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. He is also the Julio Frenk Professor of Public Health Leadership and Professor of Global Health Systems at Harvard University, the first tenured professor of health systems at Harvard and in the world. He directs the Health Systems Innovation Lab and the Advanced Learning Academy at Harvard Chan.

From 2008 to 2012, Dr. Atun served on the Executive Management Team of The Global Fund in Geneva as Director of Strategy, Performance and Evaluation. He has advised the World Bank, the World Health Organization, the G20, and governments worldwide, and is a member of the Singapore Ministry of Health Regulatory Advisory Panel. An entrepreneur and investor, he advises major life sciences companies and start-ups.

His research explores health system performance and innovation. With more than 500 publications in leading journals, he was recognized from 2020 to 2025 by Clarivate/Web of Science as one of the world's Highly Cited Researchers across multiple disciplines, and from 2021 to 2025 by Stanford University/Elsevier as one of the world's most influential scientists. He studied medicine at the University of London as a Commonwealth Scholar, where he completed his postgraduate medical training. He holds an MBA from Imperial College London and is a Fellow of the Royal College of General Practitioners and of the Faculty of Public Health of the Royal College of Physicians in the UK.



Hasan Ayaz

Conference Co-Chair; TASSA Vice-President;
Professor, Drexel University
Co-Chair; Fireside Chat; Young Scholars Awards

Hasan Ayaz is a tenured Professor in the School of Biomedical Engineering and Science within the Nick Howley College of Engineering and

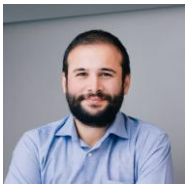
Computing at Drexel University, where he directs the Neuroergonomics and Neuroengineering Lab for Brain Health and Performance Research. His lab develops wearable and mobile brain sensing technologies and uses them to study how the human brain functions during real-world tasks.

Born in İzmir, Türkiye, Ayaz earned his BS in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from Boğaziçi University and his MS and PhD in Biomedical Engineering from Drexel University. Over two decades, he has helped transform functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS) from a laboratory technique into a portable neuroimaging modality, developing miniaturized brain monitoring systems and analysis software used in laboratories worldwide. He also led the software development and contributed to the de novo FDA regulatory approval of the Infrascanner, the first handheld optical device for detecting traumatic intracranial hematomas, now deployed in more than 40 countries.

His research in neuroergonomics, the study of the brain at work and in everyday life, spans cognition and performance in healthy participants from toddlers to older adults and in clinical populations including ALS, epilepsy, autism, and substance use disorders. A major current focus is human-machine and human-AI interaction: trust in robots and autonomous systems, brain-computer interfaces, and neuroadaptive technologies that augment human performance.

Ayaz has authored over 120 journal publications, and cited more than 12,000 times, is a founder of the International Neuroergonomics Conference series, co-editor of the Elsevier book *Neuroergonomics: The Brain at Work and in Everyday Life* and founding Field Chief Editor of the *Frontiers in Neuroergonomics* journal.

He has served TASSA since its beginnings, first as a conference volunteer in 2006 and student representative on the board (2007 to 2009), then on its technical and IT committees, later as committee chair, and subsequently on the executive board and the Board of Directors, where he currently serves as Vice President.



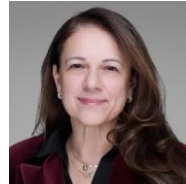
Eren Bali

Co-Founder and CEO, Monogram; Founder and former CEO, Udemý
Speaker, Panel 4

Eren Bali is an engineer and entrepreneur who founded two major technology companies: Udemý (NASDAQ: UDMY) and Carbon Health.

He is now the founder and CEO of Monogram, a company building a new user interface for AI.

He earned double majors in computer science and mathematics from Middle East Technical University and won a silver medal at the 2001 International Mathematical Olympiad, along with awards in his other interests, including computer science, physics, and chess.



Ayşenil Belger

Professor of Psychiatry and Director, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, UNC-Chapel Hill

Organizing Committee; Speaker, Panel 5; Moderator, Dinner

Ayşenil Belger, PhD, is Professor and Director of Neuroimaging Research in Psychiatry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Director of the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, and Adjunct Associate Professor of Radiology at the Duke-UNC Brain Imaging and Analysis Center. Her research focuses on translational and interdisciplinary studies of the cortical circuits underlying attention, executive function, and emotion processing in the human brain, as well as their breakdown in neuropsychiatric disorders such as autism, schizophrenia, mood disorders, and PTSD. She combines functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), electrophysiological scalp recording (EEG), functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS), experimental psychology, and neuropsychological assessment techniques to explore the behavioral and neurophysiological underpinnings of sensory and cognitive impairments across disorders. Her integrative research has most recently examined electrophysiological and functional abnormalities in young autistic children, as well as children, adolescents, and adults at clinical and familial risk for psychosis. She is part of a large interdisciplinary team conducting multi-institutional studies of the impact of early childhood abuse and neglect on adult brain function, structure, and substance abuse outcomes.

Recent studies from Dr. Belger's laboratory have demonstrated that parents of children with autism share phenotypic and neurobiological markers associated with aberrant social information processing, and that abnormal neural oscillatory activity in multiple frequency bands is associated with specific higher-order cognitive and affective processing impairments in patients with schizophrenia and their unaffected first-degree relatives. She currently examines stress regulation and brain function in adolescence and risk for psychosis. She mentors undergraduate, graduate, and medical students, postdoctoral trainees, and junior faculty, and teaches Cognitive Clinical Neuroscience at UNC.



Nihat Çubukçu

Assistant Vice President and Senior Scientist, RenaissanceRe

Organizing Committee; Session Chair, Lightning Talks III

Nihat Çubukçu has a career spanning more than two decades in atmospheric sciences and computational modeling. He is Assistant Vice President and Senior Scientist at RenaissanceRe, where he has worked since 2006 on advanced modeling and analytics in weather and catastrophe risk. Prior to joining RenaissanceRe, he was a Senior Scientist and Technologist at Weather Predict Consulting (2003 to 2006), where he developed weather forecast models and administered high-performance computing systems, including Linux and IBM AIX platforms.

His academic journey began at Istanbul Technical University, where he earned his undergraduate degree in Meteorological Engineering. He then pursued graduate studies at Florida State University, earning a Master's and a Ph.D. in Meteorology, Oceanography, and Computational Sciences. Between 2000 and 2003, he continued at FSU as a Research Scientist and System Administrator. He has strong skills in AI, Python programming, data analysis, and prediction.

Beyond his professional life, he is passionate about soccer and road biking and has participated in numerous charity rides across Türkiye, Germany, and the United States, raising funds for underprivileged children in remote Turkish village schools through the Bridge to Türkiye Fund. He is deeply committed to community service, having volunteered with several nonprofit organizations, including the

American Turkish Association of North Carolina and the Aziz and Gwen Sancar Foundation, where he serves as Vice President of the board. He lives in North Carolina with his wife and daughter.



Canan Dağdeviren

Conference Co-Chair; Associate Professor, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Co-Chair; Fireside Chat; Aşık Veysel Tribute; Awards

Canan Dağdeviren is a tenured Associate Professor in the MIT Media Lab's Program in Media Arts and Sciences, where she leads the Conformable Decoders research group. She is also faculty lead for the MIT Media Lab's Women's Health Program, WHx. Her lab develops mechanically adaptive, body-integrated technologies that translate physical patterns from the human body and the natural world into meaningful signals, therapeutic action, and usable energy.

Born in Istanbul, Dağdeviren earned her PhD in Materials Science and Engineering from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where her research focused on patterning techniques and piezoelectric biomedical systems, spanning flexible mechanical energy harvesters, multifunctional cardiac vessel stents, wearable blood pressure sensors, and stretchable bio-patches for sensing skin mechanics. Before joining MIT as a faculty member, she was a Junior Fellow of the Harvard Society of Fellows and conducted postdoctoral research at the MIT Koch Institute for Integrative Cancer Research, where she designed and fabricated multifunctional, minimally invasive neural interfaces capable of delivering drugs on demand while precisely modulating neural activity for neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease.

At the Media Lab, her Conformable Decoders group creates next-generation wearable, implantable, and minimally invasive systems that seamlessly interface with the body, guided by the belief that the body continuously produces coded physical patterns that carefully designed materials and devices can decode to improve human health. A major focus of her recent work is women's health innovation. Through WHx she advances wearable and personalized systems for early detection, monitoring, and more equitable access to care; her wearable ultrasound breast patch, inspired in part by the loss of her aunt to breast cancer, reflects this mission.

Her research has been featured by Smithsonian Magazine, Popular Mechanics, CBS News, the Los Angeles Times, BBC News, New Scientist, IEEE Spectrum, Physics World, Nature Materials, and others. Her recognitions include MIT Technology Review's 35 Innovators Under 35, Forbes 30 Under 30 in Science, the Science & SciLifeLab Prize for Young Scientists in Translational Medicine, the NSF CAREER Award, and the 3M Non-Tenured Faculty Award. In 2023 she was named to the BBC 100 Women list. She received tenure at MIT in 2025 and was inducted into the AIMBE College of Fellows in 2026.



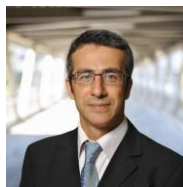
Melik Demirel

Huck Chair in Biomimetic Materials, Penn State University; Co-Founder, Tandem Repeat Technologies

Speaker, Panel 4

Melik Demirel, Lloyd and Dorothy Huck Chair in Biomimetic Materials at Penn State University, is a scientist and innovator (National Academy of Inventors member) with expertise in biotechnology, nanotechnology, and materials science. He founded two biotech companies: one focused on decarbonizing textiles with protein-based fibers (Tandem Repeat) and the other developing AI infrastructure for engineering biology (Molecular Composites). Over the last two decades, Professor Demirel and his research team have focused on developing functional nanoscale biomimetic materials, designing, fabricating, and synthesizing advanced materials by studying the functional transitions of biomimetic systems both computationally and experimentally.

His achievements have been recognized through a Young Investigator Award from the Department of Defense, an Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship, a Wyss Institute Visiting Scholar appointment at Harvard University, an Institute for Complex Adaptive Matter Junior Fellowship, the Nicholas and Gelsa Pelick Biotechnology Innovation Award, the Pearce Development Professorship, and a Penn State Engineering Alumni Society Outstanding Research Award. He received his PhD from Carnegie Mellon University and his BS and MS degrees from Boğaziçi University, Istanbul.



Uzay Emir

Associate Professor of Radiology and Biomedical Engineering, UNC-Chapel Hill

Session Chair, Lightning Talks II; Speaker, Lightning Talks I

Uzay Emir, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Radiology and Biomedical Engineering at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a faculty member of the Biomedical Research Imaging Center (BRIC). His research focuses on developing advanced MRI and magnetic resonance spectroscopy technologies to study brain function, metabolism, and disease, with particular expertise in ultra-high-field imaging and ultrashort-echo-time methods.

Dr. Emir received his early academic training at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. His subsequent research career included positions at the University of Minnesota, the University of Oxford, and Purdue University, as well as research collaborations with the University of Cambridge, before he joined UNC. His work bridges biomedical engineering, neuroscience, and clinical imaging, with an emphasis on translating innovative imaging technologies into tools for understanding human health and disease. He is also actively involved in mentoring the next generation of scientists and building interdisciplinary and international research collaborations.



Can Erbil

Professor of the Practice, Department of Economics, Boston College

Moderator, Panel 4

Can Erbil is Professor of the Practice in the Department of Economics at Boston College's Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences. An applied economist with more than 30 years of experience, he specializes in international trade, economic development, economic modeling, and public policy. His recent work also explores inequality, artificial intelligence, and the use of technology in economics education. He has worked as a consultant for the World Bank and the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, experiences that have shaped his interest in how rigorous research becomes useful to decision-makers.

He is Director of the EcoMod Modeling School, where he helps train researchers and policymakers in applied economic modeling, and serves as Middle East Regional Faculty Advisor for the Aspire Leadership Institute, supporting opportunities for young leaders. A graduate of Deutsche Schule Istanbul and Boğaziçi University who earned his Ph.D. at Boston College, Erbil has spent much of his career connecting academic communities in Türkiye and the United States. His involvement with Bi' Dünya Kivılcım reflects his commitment to building connections across the Turkish diaspora, and his service on the advisory board of the New England Turkish Student Association (NETSA) supports students' educational and professional growth. He brings to conversations about technology translation an economist's interest in the institutions, financing, and partnerships that help promising ideas move from research into practical use.



Günay Evinch (Övünç)

Principal, Saltzman & Evinch, PLLC; Former President, ATAA; Former Chair, TASC
Moderator, Panel 6

Günay Evinch (Övünç) is a second-generation Turkish American lawyer, born in Chicago and raised in San Francisco. He established his law firm, Saltzman & Evinch PLLC, in Washington, DC in 1994. Since then the firm has served as General Counsel to the Turkish Foreign Mission in Washington; other major clients include the Turkish Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Health, TOBB, the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye, Ziraat Bank, and TRT World.

In 2013, Evinch was inducted into the Washington DC Cosmos Club (est. 1878) as its first Turkish American jurist. From 1991 to 1993 he was a U.S. Fulbright Scholar at Ankara University, studying the Armenian events of 1915, counter-terrorism, and counter-insurgency with applications to the PKK. He earned his Juris Doctor at Washington & Lee University (1991), studied EU law at the University of Madrid (1989), and earned bachelor's degrees in Economics and Public Service at the University of California, Davis (1986), where he was elected Student President of his law school and served as Student Programs Director of his university.

Evinch is an appointee of Maryland Governor Wes Moore as Commissioner for Middle Eastern Affairs and supports the Governor's Cabinet on Subnational Diplomacy. He is also Chair of the Maryland Secretary of State Türkiye Sister State Committee. He served as President Obama's Turkish Heritage Community Liaison to the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence and was an intern of the late Congressman Tom Lantos. He also served as the first American-born President of the Assembly of Turkish American Associations (2009 to 2011), Co-Chair of the Turkish American National Steering Committee (2016 to 2020), and Board Member of the World Affairs Councils of America (2009 to 2011).



Ege Gedikli

Young Guru Academy (YGA); Consultant, Boston Consulting Group
Speaker, Reception and Dinner

Ege Gedikli holds an MBA from Harvard Business School and graduated magna cum laude from Koç University with a double major in Electrical & Electronics Engineering and Industrial Engineering. He ranked 10th nationwide in Türkiye's university entrance exam. His interest in science began at İzmir Science High School, where he was part of the school's Physics and Chemistry science olympiad teams and represented Türkiye in international science project competitions, earning global awards in Europe and Latin America. His academic journey also took him to Asia and the United States through exchange programs at Nanyang Technological University and UCLA.

Ege is currently a Consultant at Boston Consulting Group (BCG), where he works with organizations on strategy, transformation, and growth across industries and geographies. He is based in Miami and previously worked in BCG's Istanbul office.

Alongside his professional career, Ege has been deeply involved in social impact and youth leadership for more than a decade. He is an alumnus of Young Guru Academy (YGA), a nonprofit that develops socially conscious leaders and ventures addressing societal challenges. Through YGA he has contributed more than 10,000 volunteer hours, with a particular focus on expanding access to science education and supporting visually impaired individuals. As project leader for YGA's World Science Movement, he helped bring hands-on science education to underserved communities across Türkiye; the initiative has since reached more than 1.9 million students. He has also led initiatives at the intersection of technology and social impact, including a hackathon focused on solutions for visually impaired people.

Beyond work and social impact, Ege has competed in basketball and rowing, earning medals at national championships. He is also a national bridge champion and twice represented Türkiye at the European University Games, where his team placed third.



Süleyman Gökoğlu

Past President, TASSA; Retired Senior Scientist, NASA Glenn Research Center
Moderator, Panel 1

Süleyman Gökoğlu received his B.S. in Chemical Engineering and Mathematics from Boğaziçi University (1978) and his M.S., M.Phil. (1980), and Ph.D. (1982) in Chemical Engineering from Yale University. He spent his entire career, from 1982 until his retirement in 2026, at the NASA Glenn Research Center, where he served as Acting Branch Chief of the Low-Gravity Exploration Technology Branch, as Project Scientist and Team Leader on multiple space-flight projects, and as Technical Lead of multiple NASA contracts valued in the hundreds of millions of dollars. His awards include the NASA Exceptional Service Medal, the NASA Silver Snoopy Medal, and many NASA Superior Achievement Awards.

His expertise spans heat and mass transport phenomena, chemically reactive flows, and computational modeling. He has been part of many aeronautics and space-flight programs related to advanced high-temperature composite materials, environmentally protective coatings, microgravity combustion and fluid physics, spacecraft fire safety, in-situ resource utilization, waste management processes for space missions, flow control and film cooling in turbomachinery, and the Human Research Program, specifically the Cross-Cutting Computational Modeling Project. He has more than 100 archival publications.

Dr. Gökoğlu was the inaugural President of TASSA (2004 to 2008) and is a past president of multiple Turkish American societies and associations. He has been married to Tuba for 42 years; they have two daughters and two granddaughters.



Ece Kamar

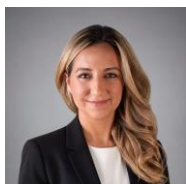
Chief Technology Officer, Turing; formerly Corporate Vice President, AI Frontiers Lab, Microsoft Research

Speaker, Panel 2

Ece Kamar is the Chief Technology Officer of Turing, where she leads the development of AI technologies that push frontier AI capabilities and bring them to enterprises. Before joining Turing, she spent 16 years at Microsoft, most recently as Corporate Vice President leading the AI Frontiers Lab, a mission-focused group within Microsoft Research dedicated to advancing the capabilities, efficiency, and control of AI. There she led research on the Phi family of small language models and on agentic AI, and led the development of tools, benchmarks, and open-source projects, including AutoGen and the Fara agentic models. She contributed to the influential "Sparks of AGI" paper and earlier served as Deputy Director of Microsoft Research Redmond.

Her research centers on building AI systems that work reliably in the open world and in collaboration with people, drawing on artificial intelligence, human-computer interaction, responsible AI, and AI safety. She has long studied AI's impact on society and how to make AI systems reliable, fair, and trustworthy. She was instrumental in building Microsoft's Responsible AI efforts, served as Technical Advisor to Microsoft's internal committee on AI, Engineering, and Ethics, and helped bring models such as GPT-4 into Microsoft products in a reliable and controllable way.

She is an Affiliate Faculty member in Computer Science and Engineering at the University of Washington and Adjunct Faculty at Sabancı University. She was a member of the first study panel of Stanford's AI100 and currently serves on the National Academies' Computer Science and Telecommunications Board. She has served on the organizing committees of leading AI and HCI conferences and has received multiple best paper awards. She holds a BS in Computer Engineering from Sabancı University and a PhD from Harvard University, where she worked with Prof. Barbara Grosz on human-AI collaboration.



Emine Şahin Karakaşlıoğlu

Attorney at Law, Karakaslioglu Law Firm PLLC

Speaker, Panel 6

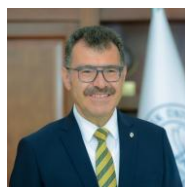
Emine Şahin Karakaşlıoğlu is a U.S. immigration attorney and the founder of Karakaslioglu Law Firm PLLC in New York City. Admitted to practice law in New York, she has more than

fifteen years of legal experience spanning Türkiye and the United States and represents individuals, families, entrepreneurs, professionals, and international companies in a wide range of U.S. immigration matters.

Her practice includes employment- and business-based immigration, extraordinary ability and talent-based cases, investor and intracompany transfer visas, employment-based permanent residence, family-based immigration, adjustment of status, and U.S. citizenship and naturalization matters. She regularly represents professionals with distinguished careers, including scientists and researchers, entrepreneurs and business leaders, artists, athletes, and academics seeking temporary or permanent immigration options in the United States. She also advises U.S. and international businesses on immigration strategies for executives, managers, specialized employees, investors, and key personnel, developing individualized legal strategies based on a client's professional background, achievements, business activities, family circumstances, and long-term plans.

Her perspective on U.S. immigration law is also shaped by her own experience as an immigrant and entrepreneur. She originally came to the United States with her family through the E-2 treaty investor visa program and later built her legal career and law practice in New York,

which gives her a practical understanding of the legal, professional, and personal considerations involved in establishing a life and career in the United States. Having practiced law in both Türkiye and the United States, she brings a cross-border perspective to her work and regularly assists clients navigating immigration between the two countries.



Hasan Mandal

President and Professor, Istanbul Technical University

Speaker, Panel 1

Hasan Mandal is the Rector of Istanbul Technical University (ITU) and an eminent materials scientist with extensive experience in

higher education leadership, research management, innovation, international collaboration, and university-industry partnerships. He began his academic career at Anadolu University, where he was appointed Assistant Professor in 1994, Associate Professor in 1996, and Professor in the Department of Ceramic Engineering in 2001. He subsequently served at Sabancı University as Director of Research and Graduate Policies (2011 to 2015) and Vice Rector (2012 to 2015).

He has held several senior leadership positions within Türkiye's higher education and research system: Member of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) since 2015 and its Vice President from 2016 to 2018, and President of TÜBİTAK, Türkiye's Scientific and Technological Research Council, from 2018 to 2024. Since August 2024 he has served as Rector of ITU, one of Türkiye's leading institutions in engineering, technology, and innovation. His national and international responsibilities include Deputy President of the Presidential Council for Science, Technology and Innovation Policies of the Republic of Türkiye since 2018, Chairperson of the UN Technology Bank for Least Developed Countries since January 2024, President of WAITRO (World Association of Industrial and Technological Research Organizations) since January 2023, and Regional Vice President of INAVETA. He has also served as President of the European Ceramic Society, Chair of the Global Engineering Deans Council, First Vice President of the International Federation of Engineering Education Societies, and Chairperson of EELISA (2025 to 2026).

Professor Mandal holds a B.Sc. (Honours) in Metallurgical Engineering from Middle East Technical University (1987) and a Ph.D. in Ceramic Materials from Newcastle University (1992). His research record includes more than 150 publications, over 2,000 citations, an h-index of 27, and six international patents. He has received the TÜBİTAK Science Award, recognition among the top 2% of the world's most influential scientists, and Honorary Professorships from the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences and Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics, China.



H.E. Sedat Önal

Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the United States

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Ambassador Sedat Önal was appointed Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the United States in April 2024. He previously

served as Permanent Representative of Türkiye to the United Nations (2023 to 2024), Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (2018 to 2023), and Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to Jordan (2012 to 2016).

Ambassador Önal joined the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1985. After working at the Department of Personnel (1985 to 1990) as Attaché, he was posted to Kuwait as Third Secretary (1991 to 1993) and served as Vice Consul at the Consulate General of Türkiye in Münster, Germany (1993 to 1997). After returning to Türkiye, he worked as Second Secretary in the Deputy Directorate General for Expatriates and Bilateral Cultural Affairs (1997 to 1998). He then served as Consul at the Turkish Consulate General in New York (1998 to 2002), Deputy Chief of Mission at the Turkish Embassy in Tehran (2002 to 2005), Head of Department at the Deputy General Directorate of Middle East in Ankara (2005 to 2007), Consul General in Vienna (2007 to 2009), and Minister-Plenipotentiary Deputy General Director at the Deputy General Directorate of Middle East (2009 to 2012).

Ambassador Önal was born in 1963 in Kayseri. He is a graduate of Ankara University's Faculty of Political Sciences and is fluent in English. He is married and has a daughter.



Halit Özbelli

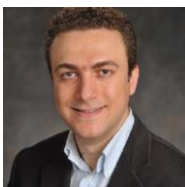
President, Premier Yarns; Member, TPF Founders Society

Speaker, Panel 5

Halit Özbelli is a Turkish-American business executive and entrepreneur with a long career in the U.S. yarn and textile industry. He is the

owner and founder of Premier Yarns, a distributor of hand-knitting yarns, which he started in 2005. He has spent decades building his business career in the United States. He is an alumnus of Tarsus American High School in Türkiye and a graduate of the University of Hartford with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

Beyond business, Halit Özbelli and his wife, Yonca Özbelli, are involved in philanthropy. As members of the Turkish Philanthropy Funds Founders Society, they are recognized for their support of philanthropic initiatives connecting the Turkish American community with charitable causes in Türkiye and the United States. He resides in Mooresville, North Carolina, with his wife and has two children.



Aydoğan Özcan

Chancellor's Professor and HHMI Professor, University of California, Los Angeles

Speaker, Panel 2

Aydoğan Özcan is the Chancellor's Professor and the Volgenau Chair for Engineering Innovation at UCLA and Associate Director of

the California NanoSystems Institute. He is an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering (NAE) and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts and a Fellow of the U.S. National Academy of Inventors (NAI). He holds more than 95 issued patents in microscopy, holography, computational imaging, sensing, mobile diagnostics, nonlinear optics, and fiber optics, and is the author of one book and co-author of more than 380 publications in leading scientific journals.

Dr. Özcan's major awards include the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE), the International Commission for Optics ICO Prize, the SPIE Dennis Gabor Award, the Optica Joseph

Fraunhofer Award and Robert M. Burley Prize, the Rahmi Koç Science Medal, the Keith Terasaki Innovation Award, the SPIE Biophotonics Technology Innovator Award, the University of California Innovation Award, the SPIE Early Career Achievement Award, the Army Young Investigator Award, the NSF CAREER Award, the NIH Director's New Innovator Award, the Navy Young Investigator Award, the IEEE Photonics Society Young Investigator Award and Distinguished Lecturer Award, the National Geographic Emerging Explorer Award, the NAE Grainger Foundation Frontiers of Engineering Award, and MIT's TR35 Award, for his seminal contributions to computational imaging, sensing, and diagnostics. He is an elected Fellow of Optica, AAAS, SPIE, IEEE, AIMBE, RSC, APS, and the Guggenheim Foundation, a Lifetime Fellow of Optica, NAI, AAAS, SPIE, and APS, and is listed as a Highly Cited Researcher by Clarivate Web of Science.



Asuman Özdağlar

MathWorks Professor and Head of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, MIT

Speaker, Panel 2

Asuman Özdağlar is the MathWorks Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and Head of the Department of Electrical

Engineering and Computer Science (EECS) at MIT. She is also Deputy Dean of Academics for the MIT Schwarzman College of Computing.

Her research expertise includes optimization, machine learning, economics, game theory, and networks. Her work has pioneered algorithms for distributed optimization and game-theoretic learning, with broad applications in multi-agent dynamics, federated learning, and robust adversarial machine learning, and her work on social and economic networks has spearheaded network-based approaches to economic dynamics, systemic risk, and misinformation and influence in social networks. Her recent research focuses on game-theoretic artificial intelligence, studying multi-agent decision-making and reinforcement learning, human-AI collaboration, and the interplay between algorithms, human behavior, and interventions, with the aim of designing incentives, fine-tuning and steering paradigms, and communication and signaling mechanisms that optimize social welfare. Another strand of her group's research explores the economics of data in systems with multiple human-AI participants and data informativeness for downstream decision tasks.

Professor Özdağlar is the recipient of a Microsoft fellowship, the MIT Graduate Student Council Teaching Award, the NSF CAREER Award, the 2008 Donald P. Eckman Award of the American Automatic Control Council, the 2014 Spira Teaching Award, and the Keithley, Distinguished School of Engineering, and MathWorks professorships. She is an IEEE Fellow and an IFAC Fellow and was selected as an invited speaker at the International Congress of Mathematicians. She received her Ph.D. in electrical engineering and computer science from MIT in 2003.



Çiğdem Özer

Granddaughter of Aşık Veysel; President, Aşık Veysel Foundation

Speaker, Remembering Aşık Veysel

Çiğdem Özer is the founder and Chair of the Board of the Aşık Veysel Foundation. Born in Istanbul in 1975, she graduated from the Public

Relations and International Relations departments at Anadolu University and from the E-Commerce and Marketing program at Istanbul University, and received English language education in London and Malta. During her professional career, she held managerial positions at Akbank for 23 years, gaining extensive experience in management, corporate communications, organization, and representation.

Actively involved in civil society, she serves as a Board Member of Sivas Platform and a Member of the Board of Trustees of the Sivas

Hizmet Foundation. She was also active in politics for a period and ran as a parliamentary candidate in the 2018 general elections.

Bringing her experience in the corporate and civil society sectors into the fields of culture and arts, she founded the Âşık Veysel Foundation in 2023. The Foundation aims to preserve Âşık Veysel's works, philosophy, and humanistic values, pass them on to future generations, and introduce this cultural heritage to wider audiences both nationally and internationally. As Chair of the Board, she continues to lead initiatives focused on cultural heritage, arts, education, and social impact.



Cengizhan Öztürk

Professor of Biomedical Engineering, Boğaziçi University; Co-Founder, LifeSci, CT3, and ISEK
Speaker, Panel 4

Cengizhan Öztürk (MD, Marmara University School of Medicine, 1984; PhD in Biomedical Engineering, Drexel University, 1997)

completed his postdoctoral studies at the Medical Imaging Laboratory of Johns Hopkins University. He joined Boğaziçi University's Institute of Biomedical Engineering as a faculty member in 2000 and worked as a visiting scientist at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) between 2002 and 2008. In addition to his medical imaging research, his recent work emphasizes the development of novel imaging systems and biomedical devices in Türkiye, aligned with the principles of democratizing and making research accessible.

Between 2008 and 2013, Prof. Öztürk served as coordinator and later founding director of the Center for Life Sciences and Technologies at Boğaziçi University (Boğaziçi LifeSci), whose Medical Device Development Laboratory operates an ISO 13485-accredited cleanroom for in vivo medical devices, alongside a vivarium, a test and analysis unit, and a preclinical imaging unit. Boğaziçi LifeSci is now in its second major development phase, focused on targeted therapy technologies: the Boğaziçi Center for Targeted Therapy Technologies (CT3) was established at the end of 2024 with a special national grant (Law 6550) to become both an academic center of excellence in targeted therapies and a regional hub for their translation into clinics and economic value.

Since 2014, Dr. Öztürk has been the founding coordinator of the Istanbul Health Industry Cluster (ISEK), and since 2023 he has served as founding President of the Board of Directors of the newly established ISEK Association. Boğaziçi CT3 and ISEK support incubation and acceleration programs for MedTech startups at Teknopark Istanbul's BioCube, which also provides ready-to-move-in wet labs and GMP-ready pilot production facilities.



Taşkın Padır

Professor of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Northeastern University; Amazon Scholar
Speaker, Panel 3

Taşkın Padır is a Professor of robotics at Northeastern University, Founding Director of the Institute for Experiential Robotics, and an Amazon Scholar. With over 25 years of experience and more than 120 publications in robotics, embodied AI, and shared autonomy, his team engineers intelligent systems, from robotic assistive mobility platforms to dexterous industrial systems, designed to seamlessly elevate human potential.



Kenan Şahin

Founder and President, Kenan Systems, TIAX LLC, and CAMX Power

Featured Keynote

Kenan Şahin is an academic, scientist, inventor, technologist, serial entrepreneur, and philanthropist. Educated at Robert College of

Istanbul and at MIT, he later served on the faculty at MIT, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Harvard University. While an academic, he founded Kenan Systems with his own funds, grew it into an international company of 1,000 people, and sold it to Lucent/Bell Labs, where he ran one of Lucent's groups and served as a VP of Technology at Bell Labs.

In 2002 he founded TIAX with his own funds. In 2014 he spun out TIAX's Advanced Battery Materials and Design division into a separate company, CAMX Power. He continues as president of TIAX and CAMX.

Dr. Şahin has received many awards, including being named a Technology Pioneer by the World Economic Forum, the Golden Door Award of the International Institute of Boston, the Ellis Island Medal of Honor (a recognition entered into the U.S. Congressional Record), and the Richard J. Bolte Sr. Award for Supporting Industries. He is or has been on the boards of MIT (life member), Argonne National Laboratory, the Executive Committee of the Council on Competitiveness in Washington, DC, the MIT Energy Initiative Advisory Board, NEMA, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Boston Symphony.



Aziz Sancar

Nobel Laureate; Sarah Graham Kenan Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics, UNC-Chapel Hill
Opening Keynote; Fireside Chat

Aziz Sancar, MD, PhD, is the Sarah Graham Kenan Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of North Carolina School of

Medicine. He was born in Savur, Mardin, Türkiye, in 1946, where he completed his primary and secondary education. He received his MD in 1969 from the Istanbul University School of Medicine. After practicing medicine in Savur for two years, he attended the University of Texas at Dallas, where he obtained a PhD in Molecular Biology in 1977 with his work on DNA repair. He conducted postdoctoral work at Yale University on the molecular biology of DNA repair from 1977 to 1982.

He joined the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics at UNC-Chapel Hill in 1982, where he has researched DNA repair, the cell cycle and cancer treatment, and the biological clock. He has published 288 research articles and 33 book chapters. Prof. Sancar is a member of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Turkish Academy of Sciences, the recipient of the Vehbi Koç Award from the Koç Foundation of Türkiye in 2007, and co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2015.



Gwen Sancar

Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics, UNC-Chapel Hill
Fireside Chat

Born in Waco, Texas, Gwen Boles Sancar graduated from Baylor University in 1972 with a Bachelor of Science in Biology. She entered

the Program in Molecular Biology at the University of Texas at Dallas (UTD) in 1972 and received her PhD in 1977. While at UTD, Gwen met Dr. Aziz Sancar, who was also studying there; they married in 1978. From 1977 to 1980 she carried out research in the Department of Hematology and Oncology at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, New York, and then joined Aziz in the laboratory of Dr. W. Dean Rupp in the Department of Therapeutic Radiology at Yale University School of Medicine.

In 1982 she and Aziz joined the faculty of the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In 2007 they founded the Aziz and Gwen Sancar Foundation to promote understanding of Türkiye and the Turkish people and to provide housing for visiting Turkish scholars in Chapel Hill. After many successful years, Gwen retired as Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics in 2016 to concentrate on establishing the Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center in Chapel Hill.



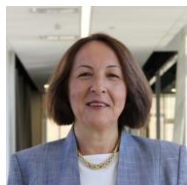
Metin Sitti

President and Professor, Koç University
Speaker, Panels 1 and 3

Metin Sitti has been President and Professor of Koç University in Istanbul since fall 2023. He was previously Director of the Physical Intelligence Department at the Max Planck

Institute for Intelligent Systems, Germany (2014 to 2023), Professor at ETH Zurich, Switzerland (2020 to 2024), Professor at Carnegie Mellon University (2002 to 2014), and Research Scientist at UC Berkeley (1999 to 2002). He received his BSc (1992) and MSc (1994) in electrical and electronics engineering from Boğaziçi University and his PhD in electrical engineering from the University of Tokyo (1999). His research interests include wireless medical devices, small-scale mobile robots, bioinspiration, and physical intelligence.

He is a member of the U.S. National Academy of Engineering, Academia Europaea, the Max Planck Society, and ELLIS, an IEEE Fellow, and a Fellow of ECLT. His recognitions include Highly Cited Researcher (since 2021), the Frontiers of Science Award (2025), the Materials Science Leader Award (since 2023), the Breakthrough of the Year Award at the Falling Walls World Science Summit (2020), an ERC Advanced Grant (2019), the Rahmi Koç Science Medal (2018), the SPIE Nanoengineering Pioneer Award (2011), and the NSF CAREER Award (2005). He has supervised and mentored over 75 PhD students and 85 postdocs, around 70 of whom are now professors around the world. He has published two books and over 460 journal articles and holds over 30 issued patents. He founded Setex Technologies Inc. to commercialize his lab's gecko-inspired microfiber adhesive technology, and is Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Micro-Bio Robotics and an Associate Editor of Science Advances.



Candan Tamerler

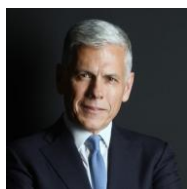
Past President, TASSA; Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Spahr Professor, University of Kansas

Moderator, Panel 3

Candan Tamerler is the Charles E. & Mary Jane Spahr Professor in the Department of

Mechanical Engineering and Director of the Institute for Bioengineering Research at the University of Kansas (KU), where she has served as Associate Vice Chancellor for Research since 2022 and, from 2019 to 2022, as Associate Dean for Research of the School of Engineering. Prior to KU, she was a faculty member in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering at the University of Washington, where she was one of the core faculty who established the NSF-MRSEC-supported Genetically Engineered Materials Science & Engineering Center (GEMSEC) and served as its Assistant Director until 2013. From 2002 to 2010 she was Professor and Chair of the Molecular Biology and Genetics Department at Istanbul Technical University, where she founded and directed the Molecular Biology-Genetics and Biotechnology Research Center (MOBGAM). She received her B.Sc., M.Sc., and Ph.D. from Boğaziçi University, was a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Westminster, and has been a visiting professor at Nagoya University, Japan.

Her research focuses on molecular engineering design strategies for biomimetic, bioactive, and bio-hybrid biomaterials and targeted delivery systems, and her group has adapted multimodal AI/ML approaches in interface engineering to couple with diverse biological functions. She has more than 200 publications and several patent applications. She received the 2023 Distinguished Scientist Award of the Functional Materials Division of The Minerals, Metals & Materials Society and is a Fellow of the Turkish Academy of Sciences, the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE), and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). She is a Past President of TASSA.



Barış Tan

President and Professor, Özyeğin University
Speaker, Panel 1

Barış Tan is President of Özyeğin University and Professor of Industrial Engineering and Business Administration. He received his B.Sc. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from

Boğaziçi University and his M.S. and Ph.D. in Industrial and Systems Engineering from the University of Florida. His research is in operations research and industrial engineering, with a focus on the design and control of production systems, supply chain management, and stochastic modeling; his work has received distinctions including the Turkish Academy of Sciences Distinguished Young Researcher Award (TÜBA GEBİP), TÜBİTAK and NATO research fellowships, and best paper awards. He has held visiting academic appointments at Harvard University, MIT, the University of Cambridge, University College London, and Politecnico di Milano.

Before joining Özyeğin University as President in 2024, he spent three decades at Koç University, where he served as Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the College of Administrative Sciences and Economics, and Director of the Graduate School of Business. His academic and administrative work has included research development, educational innovation, interdisciplinary collaboration, internationalization, and university-industry engagement. He has served, and continues to serve, on advisory and governing boards of universities, international organizations, and corporations, including EFMD, Kyoto University Graduate School of Management, Lahore University of Management Sciences, Nottingham Business School, emlyon business school, ISM University of Management and Economics, Migros, CCI, and Anadolu Isuzu. His current work combines academic research, university leadership, and international collaboration in higher education and innovation.



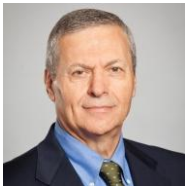
Deniz Tudor

Senior Executive in Banking and Financial Technology; Advisor on Risk, Governance, and Innovation

Workshop: Entrepreneurship for Academics

Deniz Tudor is a C-suite executive, thought leader, writer, and tech-forward strategist with more than 20 years of corporate, startup, consulting, and academic expertise. She is known throughout her career for establishing new companies, products, departments, and global teams from the ground up. She has been a trusted C-suite leader, insightful advisor, and executive partner in a career spanning Moody's, Bread Financial (parent company of Comenity and Comenity Capital Banks), Chatham Financial (an OTC derivatives and capital management company), and most recently the payment platform and fintech TabaPay. She is a transformational change agent who bridges risk and business, drives innovation, and builds strong relationships with all stakeholders, including regulators, auditors, investors, rating agencies, and external consultants.

She has a PhD in economics from the University of California, San Diego, and a master's in law from Fordham University. She also holds an accounting degree from Harvard and leadership certificates from MIT and Yale. In her free time, she enjoys reading, writing, presenting at industry conferences, running, traveling, and spending time with her family.



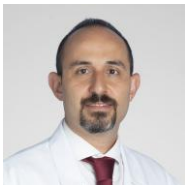
Haluk Ünal

Past President, TASSA; Professor of Finance, University of Maryland

Moderator, Panel 2

Haluk Ünal is a Professor of Finance at the Robert H. Smith School of Business, University of Maryland, and an Academic Visitor at the Bank of England. He also serves as Managing Editor of the Journal of Financial Services Research. Previously, he was a Special Advisor to the Center for Financial Research of the FDIC and a member of the Academic Council of Standard & Poor's.

He holds doctorates in finance from The Ohio State University and in economics from Istanbul University, as well as an MS in accounting from Ohio State, and has taught at Ohio State and The Wharton School. He teaches corporate finance, asset-liability management, credit risk management, and fixed income derivatives. His research focuses on money market funds and bank scope economies, with recent work addressing green financing and the pricing of biodiversity degradation in the mortgage market. His research is extensively published in top-tier finance journals, including The Journal of Finance, the Journal of Financial Economics, and The Review of Financial Studies. He served as President of TASSA from 2010 to 2019.



Murat Yıldırım

Assistant Professor, Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute

Speaker, Panel 3

Murat Yıldırım, PhD, is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Neurosciences at Cleveland Clinic's Lerner Research Institute and an

Assistant Professor at Cleveland Clinic Lerner College of Medicine. He leads the Neurophotronics and Computational Neuroscience Laboratory, where his team develops optical and artificial intelligence-based technologies to understand how brain-wide neural dynamics interact with behavior in health and disease.

Dr. Yıldırım received his undergraduate and MSc degrees from the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Middle East Technical University in Ankara. He earned his PhD from The University of Texas at Austin, where he developed nonlinear optical microscopy technologies in the laboratory of Adela Ben-Yakar, and completed postdoctoral training at MIT with Mriganka Sur and Peter So, developing one-, two-, and three-photon imaging and optogenetic methods for studying neural activity across spatial scales. His work has enabled deep imaging of neuronal activity in the awake brain and label-free three-photon imaging of intact human cerebral organoids.

At Cleveland Clinic, his laboratory integrates large-scale brain imaging, closed-loop virtual reality, multimodal behavioral measurements, and machine learning. His team developed DeepFaceMouse, which uses facial dynamics to predict cortex-wide brain activity, and NeuroPupil, a cross-species deep-learning platform for scalable pupillometry, and applies these technologies to glioblastoma, autism-associated PTEN mutations, and multiple sclerosis. His research also extends to AI-driven digital pathology for breast cancer and breast-to-brain metastasis. Dr. Yıldırım is committed to strengthening scientific connections between the United States and Türkiye; his long-term vision is to transform complex imaging, brain, and behavioral signals into clinically useful biomarkers for precision neuroscience and oncology.



Ahmet Yozgatlıgil

President and Professor, Middle East Technical University

Speaker, Panel 1

Ahmet Yozgatlıgil received his B.Sc. and M.Sc. degrees in Mechanical Engineering from Middle East Technical University (METU) in 1996 and 1998 and completed his Ph.D. at Drexel University in 2005. He continued his academic career in the United States at the University of Maryland and the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) before joining the Department of Mechanical Engineering at METU in 2007, where he was promoted to Associate Professor in 2014 and Professor in 2019. At METU he served as Vice Chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering (2011 to 2014), Vice Dean of the Faculty of Engineering (2015 to 2016), Advisor to the Rector (2016 to 2019), Director of the Vocational School (2017 to 2019), and Vice Rector responsible for research, innovation, and internationalization (2019 to 2020), as well as Vice Chair of the Board of METU Technopolis.

His research focuses on engine technologies, energy systems, and combustion. He has been a visiting researcher at NASA Glenn Research Center, Argonne National Laboratory, the Japan Microgravity Center (JAMIC), and the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). He has served as Chair of the Board and Director of the İzmir Biomedicine and Genome Center and as a Board Member of the METU MEMS Center and TÜBİTAK UZAY. Between 2020 and 2023 he was Vice President of TÜBİTAK and President of the TÜBİTAK Marmara Research Center, and, within the framework of Türkiye's EUREKA Chairmanship, Chair of EUREKA until June 2023.

From June 2023 to August 2024, Prof. Yozgatlıgil served as Deputy Minister of Industry and Technology of the Republic of Türkiye. He was appointed Rector of Middle East Technical University on August 16, 2024. He also serves as a Board Member of TÜBİTAK, ASELSAN, and the Mechanical and Chemical Industry Corporation (MKE), and of the SAHA Istanbul Defence, Aerospace and Space Cluster Association.

Practical Information

Venue

Sancar Turkish Cultural and Community Center

Address:

1609 E Franklin St

Chapel Hill, NC 27514

All sessions, meals, poster sessions, and the Saturday reception and dinner take place at the Center unless otherwise noted.

Getting There

The nearest airport is Raleigh-Durham International (RDU), about 20 minutes from the venue by car. Rideshare and taxis are available at the airport. Free parking is available at the Center.

Registration

Registration includes admission to all sessions, breakfast and lunch on Saturday and Sunday, coffee and tea breaks, and the Saturday reception and dinner. Register at this [link](#). The registration desk is open Friday from 2:00 pm and Saturday and Sunday from 7:30 am. Please wear your name badge throughout the conference. More info here:

<http://www.tassausa.org/Annual-Conferences/2026/Registration>

Posters and Lightning Talks

Abstract submission has closed. Accepted posters and the lightning talk speakers selected from the submitted abstracts are listed in the Lightning Talks and Poster Presentations sections of this program. Posters are presented in two groups, Saturday and Sunday; please check the Poster Presentations pages for your day. Poster boards are [W x H inches]; posters in either portrait or landscape orientation are welcome as long as they fit on the board. Please bring your printed poster and set it up on the morning of your poster day before 10:00 am. Saturday posters should be taken down at the end of Saturday; Sunday posters remain on display through Sunday afternoon.

Job Fair

Universities, companies, and startups wishing to host a table at the Saturday Job Fair should contact

conference@tassausa.org

Meals and Dietary Needs

All meals are served on site. Please indicate dietary restrictions when you register or let the registration desk know on arrival.

Dress Code

Business casual for the conference sessions; business attire is suggested for the Saturday reception and dinner.

Stay Connected

Share your photos and highlights with **#TASSA2026** and follow TASSA on LinkedIn, X, and Instagram. Conference updates and any schedule changes will be posted at www.tassausa.org.

Contact

Conference email: conference@tassausa.org

Weather

Early October in Chapel Hill is typically mild, with daytime highs around 75°F (24°C) and cooler evenings. A light jacket is recommended for the evening events.

The poster features a large group of diverse professionals in business attire, including men and women of various ages, standing in front of a large, white, two-story building with a red roof. The background is a warm, golden sunset sky. At the bottom, a blue globe shows the outlines of the United States and Turkey, with glowing lines connecting them. The overall theme is international collaboration and innovation.

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TURKISH AMERICAN SCIENTISTS AND SCHOLARS ASSOCIATION

TASSA 2026 CONFERENCE

 *Bridging Innovation in the Era of AI:*
Transnational Impact Across the U.S. and Türkiye 

OCTOBER 2-4, 2026

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NOTES



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