

ASPB MIDWESTERN SECTION NEWSLETTER



States included: IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, OK, SD, WV, WI Canada - MB, ON

ASPB Midwestern Section Annual Meeting Report

By Ed Cahoon
ASPB Midwestern Section Chair, University of
Nebraska

The 2014 Midwestern Section annual meeting was held March 22–23 at the Fawcett Center on The Ohio State University campus in Columbus. It was a very successful meeting with 158 registrants, 34 oral and 64 poster presentations, and representation ranging from Nebraska to Ohio. The meeting offered high-quality talks given by graduate and undergraduate students, postdoctoral associates, and one new faculty member, Anna Dobrsta.

The agenda included a keynote presentation by Jay Hollick from The Ohio State University and featured presentations by Marta Laskowski from Oberlin College and R. Keith Slotkin from The Ohio State University. Ulhas Kadam from Purdue University also gave a presentation on the ASPB Ambassador program. The scientific program on March 22 concluded with a highly interactive poster session. Section Chair Edgar Cahoon brought the meeting to an end on March 23 with a thank you to meeting organizer Patrice Hamel from The Ohio State University and the awarding of best undergraduate and graduate student talks and posters and best postdoctoral talks.

The top graduate student talk winner was a tie between Heejin Yoo from Purdue University and Dominic Petrella from The Ohio State University. Wen Dong from The Ohio State University won third place in this category.

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The best graduate student poster winner was a tie between Dalen Fultz and Joy-El Talbot, both from The Ohio State University, and the third-place graduate student poster winner was Sarah Hutchinson, from Southern Illinois Megan Moore, Ohio University, and Benjamin Julius, Truman State University, was awarded third place. The best postdoctoral talk winners were Jie Qu, The Ohio State University; Kengo Morohashi, The Ohio State University; and Rucha Karve, Purdue University. Among the prizes were gift certificates from local coffee house Boston Stoker and local tea house ZenCha Tea Salon.

At the business meeting on March 22, St. Louis was chosen as the host location for the 2015 Section meeting, with incoming section chair Darron Luesse and Dmitri Nusinow from the Danforth Center serving as local organizers. The venue for the meeting will be forthcoming. We hope to see many old and new faces in St. Louis next year!

Save the date!
2015 Midwest Section meeting
at the Danforth Center in St.
Louis, March 21–22, 2015

To see our *Officer Bios*, go to pg. 3

A Brief History of the Midwestern Section

The Midwestern section began as local society meetings at Purdue and University of Minnesota (1926) and Illinois (1948). In 1955, at an invitational meeting in Urbana, the groups formally joined forces and became the Midwestern section and the local university sections disbanded. Today the Midwestern section boasts the largest membership of any of the sections and continues to hold annual meetings to discuss current research within the section.

Current membership in the Midwestern section includes 120 faculty members, 18 post-



docs, 44 graduate students and 14 undergraduate students. States Included in the Midwestern Section are as follows: U.S. – IA, IL, IN, KS, KY, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, OK, SD, WV, WI, and Canada – MB, ON. *Please consider supporting your local Midwestern section today! The cost to join is just \$5! This fee helps fund our annual MW Section meeting, as well as travel and presentations awards for meeting attendees.*

Five Questions with Midwest Section member...

Ed Cahoon. Ed is a Professor of Biochemistry and Director of the Center for Plant Innovation at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln.

1) What is your favorite thing about living and working in the Midwest? I appreciate the closeness to agricultural production. Unlike many people, I see beauty in large fields of corn and soybean. The Midwest is the bread basket of the world, and I hope in some small way that my lab's research can impact crop production and rural vitality. I also appreciate that the people of the Midwest tend to be down-to-earth and hardworking. Midwest farmers also value new technologies, including crop biotechnology, for increasing yields and profitability. The Midwest is the best place to be for plant biology researchers.

2) What has been the benefit to you of belonging to the Midwest section of ASPB? The annual section meetings are very invigorating. It's a real joy to see so many undergraduate and graduate students enthusiastic about their research. It gives me lots of optimism about the future of plant biology research.

3) Who or what has inspired your work the most? My research is primarily in plant lipid metabolism and is built on the foundation of the pioneers in this field, including Paul Stumpf, Grattan Roughan, and Roger Slack. These researchers and their discoveries are my inspiration. I'm also inspired by the trailblazing work of more contemporary researchers, such as Chris Somerville, John Browse, John Ohlrogge, and Sten Stymne. I also feel very blessed to have worked with



"The Midwest is the best place to be for plant biology researchers."

many of these scientists at various points in my career. (I am hopeful that a small portion of their intellect, curiosity, and drive has rubbed off on me.)

4) What projects are you excited about working on in the future? I'm always excited about discovering new lipid biosynthetic pathways and figuring out unexpected intricacies of metabolism. I'm also excited about the possibilities for commercializing novel oil traits in crops such as camelina. On the basic side, I look forward to continuing research on plant sphingolipid metabolism and understanding the functional significance for their immense structural diversity.

5) What is one of your hidden talents? I guess a hidden talent is the ability to perform well with a hard deadline. Although I hate procrastination (but am a champion at it), an impending deadline makes my thinking so much more clear. If I were not in science, I might do well as a newspaper reporter.

Meet your Midwestern Section Officers

Chair: Darron Luesse, Associate Professor of Biological Sciences at Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville. Darron is interested in how plants sense and respond to the environment, with a focus on gravitropism. This will be Darron's fourth year as a Midwestern Section officer, with previous terms as Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice Chair.

Vice Chair: Aaron Wyman, Assistant Professor of Biology at Spring Arbor University, in Spring Arbor, MI. Aaron's research areas include biomineralization in plants, biogenesis and function of plant peroxisomes, characterization of metabolic pathways in microbes, and science education, focusing on plant biology. Aaron joined the ASPB in 2001.

Secretary/Treasurer: Gustavo MacIntosh, Associate Professor of Biochemistry, Biophysics and Molecular Biology at Iowa State University. Gustavo's research focuses on how plants respond to insect attacks and the mechanisms used by insects to avoid plant defenses, as well as rRNA degradation through vacuolar mechanisms. Gustavo has been an ASPB member since 2000. He is also a member of the ASPB Minority Affairs Committee.

Executive Committee Representative and Past Chair, *ex officio*: Edgar Cahoon, Professor of Biochemistry and Director of the Center for Plant Science Innovation at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Ed's research focuses on plant lipid metabolism with the goal of enhancing the nutritional and industrial value of crop plants and improving agronomic performance of crops. Ed has been a member of ASPB since 1988, served as Chair of the MW section in 2013–2014, organized the 2012 meeting in Lincoln, NE and was a monitoring editor for Plant Physiology from 2002–2007.

Annual Meeting Organizer: Dmitri A. Nusinow is an Assistant Member and Principal Investigator at the Donald Danforth Plant Science Center in St. Louis. Dmitri's lab studies how the circadian clock is integrated with environmental signals to control growth, physiology and development in plants. Dmitri joined the ASPB in 2011.

Publications Manager: Valerie Haywood, Instructor of Biology at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH. Valerie teaches introductory biology courses with a research focus on science education. She has been a member of the ASPB since 1998.

Give Your Students Roots

Help your students put down roots – provide them with membership in ASPB!

Have you thought about sponsoring your graduate or postdoc students' ASPB membership? Submit their membership application with your membership fee (if you are not already renewed for 2015), and you will get a \$5 discount on the membership fee for each student you sponsor.

All you have to do is fill out the forms and send them to us with payment. Forms and more information are available at http://my.aspb.org/?Membership_GYSR

Why provide ASPB membership to your student?

Students are the future of plant biology; if we get them involved now, they are more likely to stay involved throughout their career. Membership is as important to students as it is to professional scientists.

Give Your Student Roots so they can grow to become an integral part of the plant biology community.



"Students are the future of plant biology..."

Accolades Section

Csengele Barta, Assistant Professor of Biology of the Department of Biology at Missouri Western State University has been awarded a Young Faculty Travel Grant to present her work at the Plant Biology 2014 Meeting in Portland, OR. Dr. Barta has also been awarded a Missouri Western State University PORTAL (Program of Research, Teaching and Applied Learning) Grant to conduct summer research with her students, investigating the function of isoprene in kudzu (*Pueraria lobata*) plants.

Alyssa Castle, a sophomore at Spring Arbor University in Spring Arbor, MI, and a research student working with Aaron Wyman, was accepted into the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor School of Pharmacy REU. Alyssa helped characterize potential plant peroxisomal proteins in Laura Olsen's lab. She also gave an invited talk at the closing session for the Pharmacy REU.

Karen Chanchavac, a sophomore at Spring Arbor University (SAU) in Spring Arbor, MI, and a research student working with Aaron Wyman, received an in-house grant from SAU for research this summer. Karen characterized potential plant peroxisomal proteins with Dr. Wyman and helped design several new lab projects for undergraduate classes taught by Dr. Wyman.

Sandra Pitcher is a Biology with Botany Concentration senior at Missouri Western State University (MWSU), and key member of the local chapter of the BBB (Tri Beta) Biological Honors Society. Sandra has been a very active research student since her freshman year, designing and conducting multiple plant biology research projects at MWSU. She has been recently awarded the Blake Scanlon and Student Excellence Awards for her research at MWSU.

Avery Tucker, B.S. in Plant Biology, Ohio University, working in Sarah Wyatt's lab, won a Fulbright Scholarship to do research in China this January, 2015.

Positions Available

Graduate Assistantships in Plant Biology, Ohio University, Athens, OH: Research and teaching assistantships are available to study plant gravitropism. The major goal of the research is to characterize the signal events that confer the gravitropic signal. The successful candidate must be accepted to the [Environmental and Plant Biology Graduate Program](#) at Ohio University, but may participate in the [Molecular and Cell Biology Graduate Program](#). Positions are available starting in January 2015. ALL application materials must be received by Nov. 1, 2014. Additional positions may be available for Fall 2015, with a Jan. 2015 deadline. For more information contact Dr. Sarah Wyatt, Environmental and Plant Biology, Ohio University, wyatts@ohio.edu

Complex Biosystems Ph.D. Program, University of Nebraska-Lincoln: This program is directed toward students interested in applying quantitative statistical and computational approaches to multiple areas of biology including human health, medical biochemistry, microbial metagenomics, and integrative plant biology. This interdisciplinary program provides students laboratory rotations on diverse topics, and one semester of teaching experience. In the first, students consider "big questions" in multiple areas of life sciences, addressing them with current technical and analytical

approaches. In addition to scientific communication skills and ethical approaches to research, students acquire a foundation in population, cellular and molecular life sciences; statistics; bioinformatics; and computational analysis. This unique graduate program is tailored to the student's specific desired outcomes, offering a flexible curriculum and broad interdisciplinary training. Additional information can be obtained by contacting: Dr. Melanie Simpson, Phone: (402)472-9309; Email: msimpson2@unl.edu

Summer Internship, Dow AgroSciences, Indianapolis, IN: Dow AgroSciences is searching for the best and brightest students who are interested in R&D summer internship opportunities. Qualified interns should be pursuing a degree in biology, chemistry, informatics, or closely related majors. These are full-time positions available from May until August at our headquarters in Indianapolis, IN. Applications will be accepted between August 1 and November 1, 2014 for the 2015 summer program. For more information and to apply visit our website: <http://www.dowagro.com/careers/internships/lab.htm>.

Want to advertise a position, share some exciting news, or be featured in our next newsletter? Please send items to Valerie Haywood no later than December 1, 2014: vxh20@case.edu