



Opportunities for Young Scientists at ASCB

I know from personal experience how important the ASCB can be for young scientists. I attended my first ASCB Annual Meeting in 1984 when I was a graduate student, and I was fortunate to have the opportunity to present a Minisymposium talk the next year. It was exciting to be able to present and discuss my work in such a large venue, and looking back I see that meeting as an important event in my scientific development. Ever since that time the ASCB has been my scientific home and a place where my lab presents its work. I have always appreciated how the ASCB Annual Meeting brings people together, offering an exciting and interactive venue for both young and senior scientists. A major mission of the ASCB Annual Meeting is to catalyze interactions between upcoming and established scientists through small table discussions, career workshops, and mentoring sessions. These activities, which have been remarkably successful and are now ingrained in the meeting planning, create small, intimate settings for discussions within a big meeting environment that is rich in scientific content.

While graduate students and postdocs enjoy the ASCB Annual Meeting, the majority of young scientists do not renew their ASCB membership the following year. Therefore, a challenge for our Society is to engage young scientists so that they view the ASCB as their professional scientific home and appreciate the value of continued membership (\$66 for postdocs, \$42 for graduate students, and \$22 for undergraduates). To meet this challenge, we must communicate more effectively with our young scientist members and ensure that we are their advocates.

Why do young scientists need ASCB? As I articulated in last month's President's Column, ASCB is an organization of volunteer scientists who promote our profession through scientific communication (the Annual Meeting, *Molecular Biology of the Cell [MBoC]*, local meetings), advocacy (National Institutes of Health and Congress), and professional development

(careers, science outreach, and education). All of these areas should deeply concern young scientists; they extend beyond the immediate



Ron Vale

needs of your scientific projects but affect your future as a scientist. Joining a professional scientific society is a good means of becoming informed about these broader topics that affect your profession.

Many young scientists are unaware of what the ASCB does beyond the Annual Meeting and of how they can participate. In this column, I would like to address the latter topic by describing a number of programs of the ASCB that are targeted specifically to young scientists. Many opportunities exist, but be aware that this collection of programs is still a work in progress. We want to listen to our young scientists so that we can improve existing programs and develop new ones. My message in this issue of the *Newsletter* is that the senior leadership at ASCB wants to work with you as young scientists to shape the future of ASCB, which will be the ASCB that you will inherit and the one that will support your careers. So join us (from any country) by becoming ASCB members, becoming active in our programs, networking with one another, and giving us your feedback.

Links to all the opportunities for involvement listed below are available at www.ascb.org. Click on "Postdocs/Students," then "Opportunities" or go directly to www.ascb.org/postdoc-student-ops.html.

Help Us on Capitol Hill

One of ASCB's most important activities is to engage with the U.S. Congress and advocate healthy federal funding for research and science education. International scientists have also helped us in this effort. I would like to invite three interested and eager postdoctoral fellows to join me, several members from the ASCB Council, and Public Policy Director Kevin Wilson on June 7 to represent the ASCB. You will visit several congressional Representatives or their staffs to discuss what ASCB does, why basic science funding in biomedical research is

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important, and how such funding benefits our quality of life, education, and the economy. Don't worry if you do not have experience with this sort of activity. We will train you on how to convey these key messages prior to visiting the Congress. This is an excellent opportunity to help your scientific community, improve your communication skills, and be a leader.

Another opportunity for you to help the ASCB and your scientific community with science advocacy is by joining Project 50, the ASCB Public Policy Advocacy Team. You will receive special updates on critical science policy issues, serve as a point of contact in your state to work with the Public Policy Committee, and organize your colleagues in support of biological research.

ASCB members can also sign up to receive occasional email alerts about important action in Congress. If you are concerned about the future of science and scientific funding, you can send messages to your local Representative or Senator indicating your views on these critical legislative actions on Capitol Hill (see also information below on how to become an ASCB Ambassador).

Organize and Co-chair a Minisymposium at the 2012 ASCB Annual Meeting

Is there a topic that you would like to see represented in the Annual Meeting? Would you enjoy the experience of organizing a Minisymposium? Then find a fellow young scientist co-organizer (grad student or postdoc) and submit your proposal for a Postdoc/Grad Student-Initiated Minisymposium at the 2012 ASCB Annual Meeting in San Francisco. The submission deadline is March 21, 2012.

If selected, you will review abstracts in August 2012 and select a total of six talks from submitted abstracts for your session. You will contact the speakers and can allocate \$1,500 for travel. You, as co-chairs, are eligible to speak yourselves and receive part of the travel funds (you receive complimentary meeting registration whether you speak or not). At the meeting, you will give a five-minute introduction to the session, manage speaker times, and handle the Q&A session.

This is a new feature being introduced at the 2012 Annual Meeting. Help make it a success so that we can continue it in future years.

Organize a Local Meeting

Do you want to help to promote scientific exchange at your home institution? Are you interested in getting valuable experience in organizing an entire meeting? Do you want to do something good for your fellow students and postdocs?

With the goal of promoting scientific communication and fostering local communities of cell biologists, ASCB is pleased to announce financial support for one-day local meetings organized by graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Such meetings will typically involve two or more local research institutions or colleges (within or outside of the United States). Topics can range from basic science to career development, as long as there is clear relevance to the broadly defined field of cell biology. Applicants, who must be or become members of ASCB, are asked to submit a brief proposal together with a budget request (funds might include food for the event and modest funds to invite a guest speaker). The first application deadline is May 1, and the meeting can be held anytime in 2012.

Engage with Other Young Scientists

You can meet and work with other young scientists through the Subcommittee on Professional Training (SCOPT). SCOPT was started as a grass-roots subcommittee of the Education Committee. It is led by postdocs for the purpose of disseminating information on careers and mentoring. SCOPT is concerned with issues pertaining to graduate students as well as to postdocs.

Currently SCOPT is led by Kaushik Gurunathan, Cheston Saunders, and Sarah Szarowicz. Gurunathan is a postdoctoral fellow in the University of Michigan Department of Cell and Developmental Biology in the lab of Ajit Joglekar. Saunders is a doctoral student at the West Virginia University Department of Biology in the lab of Michelle Withers. He is studying methods of scientific teaching in college biology classrooms and the factors that contribute to teaching assistants' acceptance of reform-based educational practices. Szarowicz has recently transitioned from a postdoctoral fellowship at the United States Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Disease to a career at Emergent Biosolutions. There she is a project analyst working on a clinical phase II anthrax vaccine. The co-chairs are eager

to make SCOPT more interactive and have more participation from young scientists. So please help them! Below are some of the things that SCOPT is doing this year. Gurunathan, Saunders, and Szarowicz welcome your ideas for its future growth.

Panel Presentation at the Annual Meeting.

Every year SCOPT plans a career workshop at the Annual Meeting. For the past several years, panelists from various areas have been invited to share their experiences at a program entitled, "Getting Out of the Box: Transitioning to a Career Outside of Academic Research." The co-chairs are now in the planning phase for the 2012 workshop.

ASCB Ambassadors. A personal touch is often the best means for communicating information. In this regard, we need help from young scientist volunteers (from any country) to communicate information about ASCB by becoming ASCB Ambassadors.

As an ASCB Ambassador, you can help us by communicating occasional messages to your colleagues at your institution through emails, email listservs, and social media. Examples of information might include news about ASCB benefits/programs that are particularly relevant for young scientists, science advocacy efforts, new iBioSeminars/iBioMagazine videos, and career/mentoring information on the website or in *MBoC*. This does not require a major commitment of time, and we will make sure that we only call on you occasionally and with information relevant to young scientists.

We will keep ASCB Ambassadors informed of the behind-the-scenes ideas and developments at ASCB with a special biannual email. We also view the ASCB Ambassadors as a resource for soliciting feedback on how we can improve the Society, the Annual Meeting, and our outreach programs. These activities will help to bring ASCB Ambassadors in touch with the senior scientists at ASCB and with leadership issues facing a scientific society. We plan to invite ASCB Ambassadors to a special event at the Annual Meeting.

Social Networking. In addition to facilitating connections among postdocs and graduate students at the Annual Meeting, SCOPT would like to start a year-round opportunity for social networking through the ASCB Facebook site. Please join, participate, and give it a chance to

grow (be patient). We want it to become a good opportunity for networking and a conduit for information. Again, we encourage international membership. Join at www.facebook.com/AmerSocCellBio.

Work with ASCB Committees on Their Outreach Efforts

Our ASCB committees occasionally seek volunteers for their efforts or outreach programs. In addition to the individual committee webpages, these opportunities will be announced on the Postdoc/Student Opportunities webpage and SCOPT Facebook.

Give Feedback and Advice from Young Scientists to the ASCB Leadership

It is important for the senior ASCB leadership (President, Council, and Committee Chairs) to get feedback from young scientists. We are initiating two new efforts to facilitate this interaction. First, we have invited the SCOPT co-chairs to participate in the Council meeting on Dec. 14 and 15, 2012, before our Annual Meeting in San Francisco. This will allow young scientists to be represented in our discussions and will provide a leadership role for the SCOPT co-chairs. Second, to cast our net out for opinions from a broader audience, we will hold a one-hour Town Hall Meeting on Saturday, December 15, from 11:00–Noon. This event will include the entire ASCB Council and be open to any young scientist who would like to attend and have a discussion with the leadership group. More information on the Town Hall will be announced.

Participate in a Fun Networking Opportunity for Young Scientists at the Annual Meeting

We are also trying to organize a special event (possibly with live music) in San Francisco for young scientists to get to know each other. More information will be announced.

Thank you for reading this President's Column. I would also appreciate your bringing this column to the attention of young scientists in your laboratory or elsewhere who might benefit from hearing about these opportunities. As always, I welcome your comments. ■

Comments are welcome and should be sent to president@ascb.org.

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