



## Not Just Your PI's Society Anymore: ASCB Supports Student/Postdoc-Led Local Meetings

Two of ASCB's most important missions are to promote scientific communication and mentor young scientists. This year, the Society has launched two new initiatives that will further both goals and provide more leadership opportunities for students and postdocs: a graduate student/postdoc-initiated Minisymposium at the Annual Meeting and graduate student/postdoc-led local meetings.



Ron Vale

The ASCB Annual Meeting has long served as a centerpiece for both communication and mentoring. Continuing this tradition, this year's Annual Meeting in San Francisco will feature a fabulous smorgasbord of scientific talks and posters as well as opportunities for young scientists to obtain career and scientific advice through panel discussions and career discussion and mentoring roundtables with leading scientists. And for the first time this year, we also solicited ideas for a Minisymposium to be chaired and organized by students/postdocs. Rachel Roberts-Galbraith from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and Curtis Thorne from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Dallas, were chosen to lead a Minisymposium on the Cell Biology of Regeneration. We received many applications for this opportunity, so ASCB plans to have more student/postdoc-chaired Minisymposia at the 2013 Annual Meeting.

The second new initiative by ASCB is to fund one-day local meetings organized by students and postdocs. In May ASCB announced a competition for such meetings. We received excellent applications and decided to support eight of them. These upcoming local meetings encompass considerable diversity with regard to both topic and geography (topics, locations, and organizers are listed at the end of this column). And at its recent meeting and leadership retreat, the ASCB Council decided

that student/postdoc-organized local meetings are great activities and that ASCB will continue to support and further promote them. This President's Column is intended to make our membership aware of this new direction and to encourage young scientists to think of ideas for meetings that you would like to see happen in your local communities. ASCB is not just your PI's Society anymore!

### Student/Postdoc-Led Meetings: Sending the Right Message

ASCB views our student and postdoc members as being central to the future of our Society; we need to encourage their initiative and harness their energy. Having students and postdocs take the lead in planning meetings helps them to learn leadership and organization, skills that are critical for their future careers in science or related occupations. They are ready to do more work than pipetting and to make more contributions than producing papers.

Senior scientists often do not provide enough leadership opportunities for the young scientists working in their labs. Sadly, some PIs even discourage activities within the scientific community, believing that they take too much time away from the bench. In reality, however, running a local meeting is a very manageable time commitment, and the time spent is more than compensated for by the great learning experience of starting with an idea and bringing it to fruition. There are other tangible benefits for the organizers. Organizing a meeting brings peer recognition, is a nice addition to a resume, and, perhaps most important, offers the tremendous personal satisfaction of knowing that one has made an important contribution to one's local scientific community.

### Why Local Meetings? Why ASCB?

Local one-day meetings certainly are not a new invention, and many of them are organized by students and postdocs. Local meetings

#### The American Society for Cell Biology

8120 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 750  
Bethesda, MD 20814-2762, USA  
Tel: 301-347-9300  
Fax: 301-347-9310  
ascbinfo@ascb.org, www.ascb.org

#### Officers

Ronald Vale	<i>President</i>
Don W. Cleveland	<i>President-Elect</i>
Sandra L. Schmid	<i>Past President</i>
Thoru Pederson	<i>Treasurer</i>
Kathleen J. Green	<i>Secretary</i>

#### Council

Sue Biggins  
David Botstein  
A. Malcolm Campbell  
Raymond J. Deshaies  
Benjamin S. Glick  
Akihiro Kusumi  
Inke Nätbke  
Mark Peifer  
James H. Sabry  
David L. Spectro  
Jo Ann Trejo  
Yixian Zheng

#### The ASCB Newsletter is published 11 times per year by The American Society for Cell Biology.

W. Mark Leader	<i>Editor</i>
Johnny Chang	<i>Production Coordinator</i>
Kevin Wilson	<i>Public Policy Director</i>
John Fleischan	<i>Science Writer</i>
Thea Clarke	<i>Director, Communications and Education</i>

#### Advertising

The deadline for advertising is the first day of the month preceding the cover date. For information contact Advertising Manager Ed Newman, [enewman@ascb.org](mailto:enewman@ascb.org).

#### ASCB Newsletter ISSN 1060-8982 Volume 35, Number 6 July 2012

© 2012 The American Society for Cell Biology. Copyright to the articles is held by the author or, for staff-written articles, by the ASCB. The content of the *ASCB Newsletter* is available to the public under an Attribution-Noncommercial-Share Alike Unported Creative Commons License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0>).

Postmaster: Send change of address to:  
ASCB Newsletter  
The American Society for Cell Biology  
8120 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 750  
Bethesda, MD 20814-2762, USA

**Having students and postdocs take the lead in planning meetings helps them to learn leadership and organization, skills that are critical for their future careers in science or related occupations.**

**The new student/postdoc-led local meetings differ from what ASCB and other societies have offered in the past in that they are “bottom up,” conceived by students and postdocs rather than organized “top down” by a society or PIs.**

have a great track record of promoting a sense of local scientific community, fostering camaraderie, providing students and postdocs additional opportunities to present their work, getting people from different local institutions together, and stimulating new contacts and collaborations.

So what can ASCB offer beyond what is already taking place? First, we hope to stimulate more such meetings. By providing funds and announcing application deadlines, we hope to plant seeds for students and postdocs to think about ideas for meetings and reduce the activation barrier for getting started. The magic sauce of these local meetings is the energy of the organizers.

Second, ASCB can offer funds to assist the execution of the event (the recently selected meetings were funded at \$1,200–\$1,500 each). Funding allows the organizers to invite and pay the travel costs of an outside “keynote speaker” and buy food/refreshments, which are always a magnet for students and postdocs. However, the organizers are free to write a budget plan that will best serve the goals of their meeting. For most local meetings, these funds suffice to pull off a successful event. Beyond the grant, the ASCB office in Bethesda, MD, will work with local organizers to make posters for the event that can be distributed locally. ASCB staff will also email ASCB members in the area near the meeting to make them aware of the event. If the organizers need more funds, ASCB sponsorship and initial funding provides important validation upon which to seek further institutional or company support.

ASCB as well as other scientific societies have sponsored short (a few days' duration) regional meetings or workshops. While we may sponsor such meetings in the future as well, these meetings are costly and many other organizations (Gordon Research Conferences, Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, Keystone Symposia, etc.) are organizing such meetings. The new student/postdoc-led local meetings differ from what ASCB and other societies have offered in the past in that they are “bottom up,” conceived by students and postdocs rather than organized “top down” by a society or PIs. These bottom-up meetings tend to offer more opportunities for students and postdocs to speak. Furthermore, in an era of tightening grant support, one-day

local meetings are a low-cost model for scientific communication, since air travel and hotel costs are minimal. As a result, ASCB can sponsor many student/postdoc-organized meetings for less than the cost of one Society-sponsored regional meeting.

### **More Local Meetings Coming**

We intend to have two submission deadlines each year for local meetings—one in the spring (in May this year) and another in the fall (the next will be announced in late summer 2012). Meetings proposed in the spring would typically take place in the fall, while fall submissions would be for meetings to be held in the fall or following winter/spring (although this is not a strict criterion).

We welcome proposals on a wide range of topics pertaining to basic science and career development, as long as there is clear relevance to the broadly defined field of cell biology. Meetings must involve two or more local research institutions or colleges. We also welcome applications from outside of the United States; in this last round, we funded applications from Jamaica, England, and Canada. The application should come from two to four graduate student or postdoc co-organizers, all of whom must be (or become) members of the ASCB.

The proposal should be short and should include, in up to one page: 1) the topic and goals of the meeting, 2) a proposed or approximate date, 3) the intended audience and institutions to be invited, and 4) a statement of how the meeting will benefit the local community. A tentative outline (up to one page) of the sessions is also required and should include, for example, the number of student/postdoc talks, faculty talks, poster sessions, and breakout discussion groups. The meeting outline does not need to be submitted in final form, but should provide enough information to allow us to understand the proposed event. Our goal is to stimulate new meeting ideas and not co-fund already planned or regularly occurring meetings. Sue Biggins (Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center) and Ben Glick (University of Chicago), who are members of the ASCB Council, will review submitted applications. This spring we funded eight proposals, but we will likely increase this number in the fall and in 2013.

## Ideas for the Future

A core strength of the ASCB local meetings is that students and postdocs have the freedom to think of topics that interest them and their communities. However, in addition to accepting “open” proposals, we might occasionally announce a timely call for a student/postdoc-led meeting on a particular topic that represents an important forward-looking direction for cell biology and our Society. The student/postdoc organizers would still have great freedom to plan and organize within that broad topic area. With such initiatives, ASCB can stimulate its membership to think about new scientific directions through the local meetings as well as the Annual Meeting. By interacting with and getting feedback from student/postdoc organizers, we can learn from the scientific and organizational outcomes of such meetings.

Student/postdoc organizers might also work

together with the ASCB in other ways to benefit our broader membership. For example, news or short reports on the meeting (with the consent of the speakers) might appear in the *ASCB Newsletter* or in social media. More ambitious but potentially interesting would be for *Molecular Biology of the Cell* to invite commentaries, perspectives, or meeting reviews from student/postdoc co-organizers and attendees that are based upon the meeting (although the scope could be broader than the content of the meeting itself). And no, PIs would not need to be co-authors, unless they are invited by the organizers and contribute.

It is open territory at this point, so we welcome ideas from the membership on how to develop local student/postdoc-led meetings! ■

*Comments are welcome and should be sent to [president@ascb.org](mailto:president@ascb.org).*

## Upcoming Local Meetings, Fall 2012

### **We Need to Talk: Communicating About the Life Sciences in the 21st Century**

University of West Virginia, Morgantown, WV

Organized by Cheston Saunders, Gina Childers, and Beatriz Vienna (all graduate students)

### **Oxford Fly Retreat**

Maison Française, Oxford, UK

Organized by Caroline Fabre (postdoc) and Catarina Vicente (graduate student)

### **The 2012 METRAPOLIS: Membrane Trafficking and Polarity Interest Symposium**

Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, NY

Organized by Dawn Fernandez (graduate student), Aleksandr Treyer (graduate student), and Ryan Schreiner (postdoc)

### **Cellular Studies Towards the Development of Translational Research in the Caribbean**

University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Organized by Kameka Johnson and Keriyann Smith (both postdocs)

### **Cell Biology at the Frontier of Collaborative Efforts: A Retreat for Postdoctoral Fellows Focusing on Career Development and Scientific Example**

University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center, Albuquerque, NM

Organized by Olivia George and Gloriana Trujillo (both postdocs)

### **Montréal Cell Cycle and Cytoskeleton Meeting**

Concordia University, Montreal, Canada

Organized by Jonas Dorn (postdoc), Benjamin Lacroix (postdoc), Chloe van Oostende (postdoc), and Amel Kechad (graduate student)

### **Appalachian Regional Cell Conference**

(Marshall University, Ohio University, University of Kentucky, University of Virginia)

Charleston Area Medical Center, Charleston, WV

Organized by Danielle Shepherd, Alena Smith, Yanrong Qian, and Mary Allison Wolf (all graduate students)

### **Southern Science Symposium: Cell Biology and Careers**

Ponce School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Puerto Rico

Organized by Elinette Albino-Rodriguez, Abigail Ruiz-Rivera, Maricelly Santiago Ortiz, and Viviana Vázquez Rivera (all graduate students) ■

**We welcome proposals on a wide range of topics pertaining to basic science and career development, as long as there is clear relevance to the broadly defined field of cell biology.... We also welcome applications from outside of the United States....**