

## Committee Reports

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### Membership Diversity Committee

*Robert E. Espinoza, Chair*

In January 2004, SICB's Membership Diversity Committee (MDC), which seeks to increase the ethnic composition, representation, and participation of the SICB membership, was unanimously elevated from an ad-hoc to a standing committee by the Executive Board. With this "promotion" and commitment from the Society, the MDC set out to implement long-range plans to support its goals.

To that end, the MDC initiated a pilot mentoring program at the New Orleans meeting (see Spring 2004 Newsletter: <http://www.sicb.org/newsletters/nl04-2004/committeereports.php3#membershipdiversity>), which provided students and faculty from underrepresented groups at Xavier University with mentors and gathered them at targeted social events attended by members of the MDC, Fred Stollnitz (Program Director for Cross-Directorate Activities at the National Science Foundation), several PIs funded by NSF's Undergraduate Mentoring in Environmental Biology (UMEB) Program, and SICB President John Wingfield and President-elect Sally Woodin. Our pilot program was well received by the participants, so we intend to expand our mentoring program in San Diego in 2005.

This year we will provide awards to at least eight undergraduate students and two faculty members from underrepresented groups (African Americans, Asian Americans, Western Hemisphere Hispanics, Native Americans and Alaskans, and Pacific Islanders) to support attendance at the annual meeting in San Diego. Support is intended for non-SICB members and will include registration (with a one-year membership to SICB), hotel fees, per diems and parking, and special social events (with great food!). To maximize the use of funds, we intend to recruit faculty and students from colleges and universities close to the meeting venue, who will not require travel compensation. (Likewise, in subsequent years invitations will go out to faculty and students from institutions in the vicinity of the annual meeting.) To facilitate continued interactions after the meeting ends, groups of students and faculty from a single institution will be favored for the awards. This year, the MDC will be recruiting participants directly; however, we encourage suggestions for awardees from SICB members and welcome inquiries from students and faculty who are interested in participating in the program.

We also seek mentors (for students) and liaisons (for faculty) to guide these newly established members at the San Diego meeting. If you are willing to serve as a mentor/liaison, please contact me and share your interests. Your responsibility will be to help the student/faculty navigate the often overwhelming program our Society offers its members. This might include helping choose among concurrent presentations and social events and introducing these new members to investigators (faculty and students) who share their interests. We will do our best to match students/faculty and mentors/liaisons with mutual research interests. Postdocs and seasoned

graduate students are encouraged to participate, and you need not belong to an underrepresented group yourself to be a mentor/liaison. Mentors and liaisons will be invited to all social events sponsored by the MDC and will share in the honor of promoting diversity in our Society.

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## **Student Support Committee**

*Brain Tsukimura, Chair*

Students of SICB,

The Student Support Committee wishes to announce 2 award opportunities this Fall, 2004. The membership of the SICB has generously set aside funds to provide two forms of research awards, the **Grants-In-Aid-of-Research** and **Fellowship of Graduate Student Travel**. Students can apply to only ONE program per year. Students have a "lifetime eligibility" to receive only one award (FGST or GIAR) in their career. To apply for either the GIAR and FGST, please visit the SICB website: <http://www.sicb.org/awards.php3#giar> and complete the online application. Please be aware that your application email address becomes your ID for matching letters of support to your application file. Thus, please use the same address throughout the entire application process.

The **Grants-In-Aid-of-Research** (GIAR) are available to provide small awards to graduate students in support of their research in the fields of integrative and comparative biology. Awards are made payable to the individual recipients. No part of an award may be used for the payment of indirect costs to the recipient's institution. All funds must be expended directly in support of the proposed investigation. Any equipment purchased shall be the property of the institution. Awards are made in amounts up to a maximum of \$ 1,000. In Fall 2003, 64 applications were submitted. The SSC reviewed these at the New Orleans meeting (January 2004) and made 26 awards (~40%) for a total of \$23,999 to students from the 9 divisions in the Society. DEADLINE: November 22, 2004.

The **Fellowship of Graduate Student Travel** (FGST) are available to provide student funds for travel and other expenses at distant research laboratories, museums, or field sites. The primary purpose is for travel to "distant" research sites to learn specialized techniques or to use unique equipment or collections. The SSC expects to grant 2-3 fellowships of up to \$2000 this year. In Fall 2003, 27 applications were submitted. The SSC reviewed these at the New Orleans meeting (January 2004) and made 3 (11%) \$2,000 awards, for a total of \$6,000. DEADLINE: November 22, 2004.

**Student Support Program** – Students planning on presenting papers at the SICB meeting San Diego may apply to the Student Support Program to assist in covering registration fees or lodging costs. In return for SICB support you will be required to provide ½ day's service in activities, such as assisting at the registration desk, operating AV equipment at symposia and general sessions, or facilitating with the general activities of the conference. Complete rules and the application form can be found at: <http://www.sicb.org/meetings/2005/studentsupport.php3>. Last year the SICB supported 276 students [18 through registration, and 258 through lodging] at an expense of over \$49,000. DEADLINE: November 1, 2004.

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## **Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee**

*Shea R. Tuberty, Chair*



The chair and divisional representatives who comprise the Student–Postdoc affairs committee are responsible for the steering and organization of student–orientated meeting events. Also we are charged with the goal of providing a more visible leadership role in promoting the needs and concerns of the SICB student constituency that make up ~25% of the SICB membership.

## **Student "First Timer" Orientation**

If you are registering as a student and this is your first time at a SICB meeting, you are strongly encouraged to join the Student/ Postdoctoral Affairs Committee to learn about the benefits of the Annual Meeting, meet your fellow students, and receive tips on presentations at the meeting. Note that if you have been selected as a student worker, you are required to attend.

## **Student/Postdoctoral Luncheon**

The SICB Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee offers students an excellent opportunity to meet with fellow student members in an informal setting. At this venue, students are given the opportunity to meet their divisional representatives to SPDAC and voice their needs or concerns. Students willing to serve as their division rep or participate via an ad hoc committee membership are encouraged to approach the committee at this time.



The 2004 Student/Postdoc Luncheon attracted a record number of attendees!

## 2005 Student/Postdoc Workshop

This popular workshop is designed to address the needs of SICB's developing scientists in an informal, discussion-oriented setting. Each year, academic faculty and other professionals are invited by the Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee to spend part of an evening discussing issues of importance to student and postdoc members of the Society, including topics relating to jobs and career choices, research funding, and development of teaching skills. This is an excellent opportunity to ask questions directly from those currently holding academic/other positions and to gain insight on developing important aspects of one's career. This year's workshop is entitled:

**"Yahoo, I've achieved my degree... but now what?!"**

**Planning the Most Effective Professional Transition: Issues and Options**

In the last 20 years, the number of postdocs in the U.S. has increased greatly and the nature of their experiences has changed in substantial ways. In the life sciences, one or more postdocs have become virtually mandatory for obtaining academic positions, with the median time spent as a postdoc increasing to nearly 4 years. While a "developmental" position, the postdoc has also become an essential aspect of today's research infrastructure, as it is largely the postdocs who carry out the day-to-day lab work and, importantly, their ideas underlie many grant applications on which they cannot be P.I.s. Despite the essential roles of postdocs, their institutional status in academia is often poorly defined, with the value postdocs place on their experiences highly variable. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) undertook a detailed study in 2000, also Sigma Xi continues to monitor the issues relating to today's postdocs (you can participate by going to <http://postdoc.sigmaxi.org/> and completing the 2003–2004 survey), and the SICB Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee has endeavored to participate in these ongoing efforts. This year's *Student/Postdoctoral Workshop* will focus on these issues as well as the options for recently graduated Masters, PhD's, and Postdocs, with invited panels of speakers addressing different aspects of the professional transition to academic and non-academic career choices.

## SICB Society-Wide Evening Social in Honor of Students and Postdocs

Join your fellow SICB members for a Society-Wide Social on Friday night. Coffee, desserts and fruit will be served and a cash bar will be available.

SICB 2004 in New Orleans: Rockin' Dopsie  
and the Zydeco Twisters at the  
Society-Wide Evening Social in Honor of  
Students and Postdocs

