

Message from the Program Officer

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I. Program for 2005 annual SICB meeting in San Diego

We have a very exciting program planned for our annual SICB meeting in San Diego in January 2005. There will be ten symposia, sixty-two contributed oral sessions, three afternoons of poster presentations, as well as special lectures, workshops, and socials. We continue to attract a large number of presentations (1021 submitted abstracts), and will have about a dozen simultaneous sessions in San Diego during the mornings and early afternoons. Scheduling the posters in the late afternoon without any other competing events worked so well last year in New Orleans that we will schedule poster sessions the same way in San Diego. All symposia, contributed talks and posters have been arranged into sessions, and will be posted on the SICB website for your perusal by early November. The grid will be posted earlier. Workshops and social events are still being scheduled, so check the grid for their times and locations.

Our meeting begins Tuesday, Jan. 4, with a special plenary session featuring a distinguished series of neurobiologists: Michael Bennett (Albert Einstein College of Medicine), Daniel Johnston (Baylor College of Medicine), R. Douglas Fields (National Institutes of Health), Charles Stevens (Salk Institute), and Eve Marder (Brandeis University). The speakers will be evaluating and updating different aspects of the "Neuron Doctrine," such as stability in identified neurons and evolutionary scaling laws. The plenary session will honor Theodore Holmes Bullock for his many contributions to neurobiology. T.H. Bullock, who will celebrate his 90th birthday in 2005, is a past president of SICB (when it was the American Society of Zoologists). The plenary session will start a few hours earlier than usual, at 2:30 pm, so make sure that you arrive early enough for this special event. Thanks to Robert Josephson for his hard work behind the scenes working on the plenary session. A society-wide welcome opening session of the San Diego meeting will be held that same evening (Tuesday) at the hotel (the Town and Country Resort).

In addition to the plenary session, there will be three other special lectures at the San Diego meeting. On Wednesday evening, the DCPB Bartholomew Awardee will present the Bartholomew Lecture. The following evening (Thursday), Dr. James Truman, of the University of Washington, will give the fourth Bern Lecture in Comparative Endocrinology. The title of his talk will be "Insect Ecdysis: dissection of an endocrine cascade that underlies a complex program of behavior." There will also be an address given by the Past-President of the American Microscopical Society, Dr William D. Hummon, who will be speaking on: "Documenting biodiversity: Groveling in the sand and mud."

Symposia are the heart of the annual meeting, and there will be a broad and thought-provoking array of symposia in San Diego. There will be two Society-wide symposia: "Desiccation Tolerance in Animals, Microbes, and Plants: Comparative Mechanisms and Evolution" (organized by Peter Alpert, James Clegg, Brent Mishler, and Mel Oliver) and "Terminal Addition, Segmentation, and the Evolution of Metazoan Body Plan Regionalization" (organized by Nigel Hughes and David Jacobs). The other eight symposia are "Adaptations for Life at High Elevation," "The New Microscopy: Toward a Phylogenetic Synthesis,"

"WormNet: Recent Advances in Annelid Systematics, Development, and Evolution," "Mating Systems and Sexual Selection in Hermaphrodites," "Complex Life-histories in Marine Benthic Invertebrates: A Symposium in Memory of Larry McEdward," "Evolution and Development of the Vertebrate Dentition," "Crustacea of Ephemeral Wetlands and Crustacean Diapause in Variable Environments," and "Zoo-based Research and Conservation." For more information about these symposia, please see their web pages which are accessible from the SICB website.

II. Description of Program Planning meeting

The Program Planning meeting (started two years ago by Stacia Sower, Past Program Officer, and Sue Burk, SICB Meeting Director) continues to be extremely important in pulling together the entire program for the upcoming annual meeting and to select symposia for the following meeting (over a year hence). This Program Planning meeting (which was held Sept. 25 and 26 in San Diego) includes all of the divisional program officers, representatives from associated societies (AMS and TCS), the SICB program officer, Past Program Officer, Meeting Director, and Assistant Meeting Director (the last two from Burk Associates). This annual planning meeting allows the divisional program officers to be more actively involved in the annual meeting and in long-term programmatic planning for the society.

III. Changes in Best Student Paper policy recommended by Program Committee

At this latest Program Planning meeting, it was unanimously agreed that the Best Student Paper award programs administered by most of the SICB divisions would benefit from standardizing some (but not all) of the procedures and requirements of those programs. The Program Committee recommended that each division continue to make its own decisions about the number of awards, type of awards, and criteria for the awards to be granted by that division. The specific changes recommended made by the Program Committee are:

(1) to eliminate division affiliation requirements of candidates for the Best Student Paper programs (at the current time, division affiliation of a candidate is a requirement by DCPB, DEE, and DIZ, but not DAB, DCE, DDCB, DEEB, DSEB, or DVM). Division affiliation is a problem to enforce and administer; e.g. abstract submission occurs before registration, and therefore the division of a candidate may be undetermined. In addition, an individual can change divisional affiliation with a single click on their SICB member information page, making the requirement less meaningful.

(2) that an individual awarded the first place Best Student oral award from any division would be ineligible to compete for the Best Student oral award in that same division or any other division in the future. Similarly, an individual awarded the first place Best Student poster award from any division would be ineligible to compete for the Best Student poster award in that same division or any other division in the future. An individual could compete for a poster award after winning an oral award, and vice versa. (at the current time there are divisional restrictions in the number of awards that any individual could win in DCPB, DDCB, DEE, and DEEB, but not in DAB, DCE, DIZ, DSEB, or DVM). This change would give the society an increased opportunity to acknowledge a larger number of the students making outstanding presentations.

IV. Recognition of helpful individuals

It has been a pleasure to work with a group of outstanding individuals during my first year as the Program Officer for SICB: the Past Program Officer (Stacia Sower), all of the hardworking members of the Program Committee, the members of the Executive Committee (especially John Wingfield, Sally Woodin, Ron Dimock, and Sunny Boyd), and all of the symposium organizers and participants who have worked constructively within the programming constraints. My job has been made much easier by the pleasant and efficient input and assistance from the SICB webmaster (Ruedi Birenheide) and the terrific people at Burk Associates (Sue Burk, Lori Strong, and Brett Burk).

I look forward to seeing everyone in San Diego.