

## **Minutes of the Division of Comparative Biomechanics business meeting, January 4, 2009**

The Division Chair, Bob Full, called the meeting to order and introduced the elected officers.

The SICB Society officers entered the room and were introduced. Rich Satterlie is the new Society President (taking office at the end of the meeting), and the society is in very sound financial shape.

Bob Full read the current membership numbers for DCB. Two years ago, when DCB was formed, we had 151 members, and now we have 517. At the San Antonio meeting, DCB co-sponsored 3 symposia; at the Boston meeting, we sponsored 1 symposium (Sensory Biomechanics) that had 4 complimentary contributed paper sessions. The Boston meeting was the largest meeting ever for SICB. The iRobot tour filled up to capacity quickly, and left many unable to attend it due to space constraints at the facility. Bob reported on a presentation that Bill Zamer of NSF gave to the SICB Executive Committee: he wants input from SICB on the future of organismal biology, as NSF undergoes yet another transition in organization, and reflecting the changing priorities brought on by the new Obama administration. NSF needs a strong statement from SICB regarding what we see as the “grand challenges in biology” that can only be answered through organismal approaches. One of the key points that Zamer emphasized was that we need to show how organismal biology can connect to other disciplines in these grand challenge ventures. (Note: you can read the Executive Committee’s response linked off of the front page of the SICB website). A strong statement in support of organismal biology also will influence how NSF is organized (or reorganized).

Andy Biewener suggested constructing a wiki where SICB members could post ideas and comments.

Mark Westneat suggested connecting organismal biological approaches to climate and environmental change study programs as one potential way to broaden the applicability of organismal biology.

Adam Summers, currently serving as Program Officer in Integrative Organismal Systems (IOS) at NSF discussed two initiatives of interest to the SICB membership. First was the “Dear Colleague” letter that had recently been sent, describing the “Life in Transition” program – this is actually extra money that NSF has to award. To apply, grant proposals should go to their regular review panel, but the title of the grant should be prefaced by “LIT:”. Adam noted three aspects of the LIT program that might fit into biomechanics research: (1) how the living world is adapting to a changing climate (how organismal performance varies with environmental change), (2) energy transformation through an ecological system, and (3) what are the principles and mechanisms of resiliency and sustainability used by living organisms in the face of environmental change. The “Dear Colleague” letter is available online.

The second NSF initiative that Adam mentioned was a “Sandbox” – potential PIs from different disciplines would be invited to meet, and put together into collaborative groups. This would be structured to enhance multidisciplinary research.

Adam also stressed that being a Program Officer at NSF was rewarding, and should be considered by all of us. Finally, he mentioned that IOS was particularly in need of Program Officers who can bridge biology with engineering, as it is (sometimes) possible to garner extra funds for biomechanics proposals from the engineering directorate within NSF.

Robert Dudley made a brief report on the progress on establishing the Gans Award, named in order to recognize the seminal contributions to comparative biomechanics made by Carl Gans. The award-organizing committee has a target of a minimum of \$25,000, as that is the smallest amount that can be a

self-sustaining endowment fund. They will be soliciting small contributions from individual DCB members; the Gans family will also make a substantial contribution. The award will recognize a unique published contribution in comparative biomechanics for the year.

Bob Full reported on some additional opportunities for biomechanists to make a difference. He discussed how he had recently made a presentation at a science-entertainment exchange symposium. The entertainment executives in attendance seemed outraged that ignorance was deemed a virtue in society, but eventually realized that they were part of the problem, and now want to get the science right when it's portrayed in the media. If you're interested in serving as a consultant to the media, let Bob know and he'll pass on your name. He also asked for volunteers to go as presenters and judges to minority-focused meetings.

The Program Officer, Frank Fish, spoke next. The number of biomechanics talks was up over the past year, leading to unavoidable scheduling problems. Frank asked for suggestions on how to make things at the meetings run more smoothly. At this year's meeting, the Division is sponsoring Sensory Biomechanics, organized by Matt McHenry and Sanjay Sane. Next year in Seattle, the DCB sponsored symposium is going to be on Plant Biomechanics, and we also may be co-sponsoring (with DVM) a symposium on the evolution of fish body shape, organized by Jeff Walker.

Frank urged DCB members to organize symposia for the 2011 meeting. SICB will reimburse up to \$100 in registration fees for all symposium participants, and DCB has additional funds to further defray the costs. He further emphasized that the Program Officer needs to always be kept in the loop at all stages of symposium organization so that funds are allocated properly. Symposium organizers are required by SICB to apply for external funding (though it's not necessary to actually obtain it); NSF should always be approached for funding symposia (it helps to have funding from more than one SICB division for this). Finally, when organizing a symposium, also consider that "complimentary sessions" of contributed papers are a possibility – the magic numbers for those are 5 or 6 papers per session. Frank ended with the statement that the hardest part of symposium organization was the "herding cats" aspect of getting the authors to actually cough up the papers for publication.

Gabe Rivera, the Student/Postdoctoral representative, talked about the successful first annual Southeast Regional DCB/DVM meeting, held in October at Clemson University. 30 participants attended, and Mike LaBarbera gave the keynote address, which was on the biomechanics of movie monsters. Ty Hedrick of UNC Chapel Hill will organize next year's meeting. Gabe encouraged students in particular to participate in the regional meetings, since it's a great opportunity to meet people in the field and a nice environment to get constructive feedback. He also encouraged students to co-organize symposia with their advisers for the regular SICB annual meetings, since it's another way to meet leading names in the field and also to be a co-PI on an NSF grant. Finally, Gabe reminded the DCB members that his term of office ends next January, and we will need a replacement. Any student or postdoc interested should contact Gabe, and Bob.

The business (and all attendees) being exhausted, the meeting was adjourned.