

Minutes of the Division of Comparative Biomechanics business meeting, January 4, 2011

Bob Full, the Division Chair, opened the meeting with a brief report on numerical trends within DCB. Four years ago the division was created; it started with 198 members, and now the official count is 538. A point of pride is that more of our new members consist of students and postdocs and new faculty members than any other division.

Last year's meeting in Seattle was very successful for DCB, which sponsored two symposia: "Mechanics without Muscle: Evolutionary Design of Macrophytes," organized by Patrick Martone, and "Evolution of the Fish Body Plan," organized by Jeff Walker (cosponsored with DVM). This meeting shows an even stronger showing by our Division. Total registration for the meeting was 1149, making Salt Lake City the 3rd largest meeting. There were 1082 contributed papers, and 11 symposia. DCB sponsored three symposia: "Bioinspiration: Applying Mechanical Design to Experimental Biology," organized by Brooke Flammang and Marianne Porter, "The Biomechanics and Behavior of Gliding Flight," organized by Robert Dudley, and "I've Got Rhythm: Neuronal Mechanisms of Central Pattern Generators," organized by Duane McPherson. At the Salt Lake City meeting, there are 32 sessions related to biomechanics, with 171 oral presentations and 32 posters – the largest number of papers and posters since we started the Division.

At the SLC meeting, there were 41 competitors for the DCB Best Student Paper/Poster. Jake Socha chaired the judging committee; we thank him and the rest of the judges for all of their efforts.

Bill Zamer of NSF addressed the members present. He revealed that NSF does not have an appropriation from Congress – it is operating on a continuing resolution until March. That means that NSF has 85% of the funds it had last fiscal year until a budget gets approved. In FY 2010, for the Physiological and Structural Systems Cluster, the overall success rate for biomechanics-oriented full proposals was 16.5%.

Zamer then discussed the Grand Challenges workshop – NSF wants organismal biologists to tell it where science is going, and what we need in order to do the studies that we need. He encouraged everyone to please participate and help set the direction of NSF. He sees this as particularly important for integrative organismal biology. The American Physiological Society is running a Grand Challenges workshop in DC in April – he encouraged everyone who can to attend their Grand Challenges workshop.

Another NSF program that Bill Zamer spoke about was the RCN (Research Collaboration Network) program, which is evidently very underutilized. The program aims to coordinate activities among researchers than may not normally talk to each other, but should (for example, biologists and engineers). RCN grants can support travel between labs, procurement of common equipment that may be shared, common training, and coordination of research efforts. It does not support bench or field work associated with a single lab. Information describing the program may be found at <http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2011/nsf11531/nsf11531.htm?org=NSF>.

Bob Full mentioned the two current IGERTs that are in the field of Biomechanics: one administered by Melina Hale at the University of Chicago, focusing on motor systems, and the other at UC Berkeley under the direction of Bob Full, on Biological and Bio-inspired Motion Systems Operating in Complex Environments. We should all encourage our best students to apply.

The most contentious point of the entire business meeting was then raised by Bob Full. At the first Executive Committee (ExComm) meeting at the Annual Meeting, a proposal was heard to institute Society-wide divisional dues. In order to support more divisional autonomy, ExComm will support instituting a mandatory \$5 per year charge. Individual Divisions can charge more than \$5 if they want to, but \$5 is the minimum. Each SICB member has to select a primary division that the dues would be applied to. Division Chairs have discretion on what the funds are used for. This issue would be revisited on Friday at the last ExComm meeting of the meeting. Bob asked for comments on the proposal.

Sharon Swartz spoke to oppose the mandatory charge, because it requires that each member has a primary divisional affiliation. The Society has just finished a multi-year painful process that got rid of the primary divisional affiliation, allowing everyone to choose as many divisions as they wanted. She thinks this a step backward.

Bob Full answered a question from the floor asking, Is this helpful for the society? He said that wasn't the major issue – it was more of an accounting issue. One proposal considered by the ExComm was that the dues would be divided proportionally according to division membership.

At that point, the SICB Society Officers entered and introduced themselves. Rich Satterlie, the outgoing Society President, reminded the members that Spring elections need candidates, and asked folks to attend the SICB business meeting. Bob Roer, the new Treasurer, introduced himself and also asked members to attend the Society business meeting. Brian Tsukimura, Society Program Officer, encouraged us to come up with great symposia, and work with Steve Deban, our Divisional PO. SICB is looking for proposals for the San Francisco meeting in 2013; these are due mid-August.

The Society Officers asked for comments and questions. There were positive comments on how much space there was between poster boards at the poster sessions. The Society Officers then left the room.

The discussion on divisional dues then resumed. Marianne Porter suggested that members could choose divisions as they do now, and then select which division(s) to give money to. Bob Full said there was some problem with designating donations, but that Brett Burk would be able to handle all the financial wrangling. Chris Marshall seconded what Sharon Swartz said. Bob Full asked for a vote on the proposal (\$5 charge, pick primary division). Bob said it will make things better for divisions. There was overwhelming opposition to the motion.

Bob Full then said that the other major issue discussed at the ExComm meeting was broadening participation. Cheryl Wilga, representing SICB's Broadening Participation Committee, said that this year the committee has made travel awards to support students, postdocs, and new faculty (assistant profs) attending. 28 awards were made, and all but one person came. Cheryl also mentioned that there was a Broadening Participation social, and two workshops at the meeting.

Bob reminded the members that there are around a half-dozen minority national societies that have annual meetings. We'd like those students to come here to SICB. We need to reach out to those societies and students. Most undergrads who go to the meetings are juniors and seniors looking for grad schools. We need to go to the meetings and tell those students that they're doing competitive work and could come to any of our labs and do well. You can get information from Bob if you are interested in attending those meetings, or in serving as a mentor to the students and profs from those societies who come to SICB.

Bob then revealed that we have our first Carl Gans award winner! The Gans award is structured as an annual prize given either to a distinguished young investigator (must have earned their PhD within 7 years), or for the single best contribution to the biomechanical literature during the previous year. Bob, as the Division Chair, appointed a selection committee, and they found a winner. The winner will be announced at the SICB Business meeting, so everyone from DCB should attend and show their support.

Steve Deban, the Divisional Program Officer, spoke next. He said we've got ~270 contributed papers and posters in biomechanics, representing very diverse topics. Steve worked with Rick Blob from DVM to schedule the talks and posters; they tried to arrange things so there was something for everyone every day, and minimum of conflicts in sessions. Steve asked the members to tell him if you like things, and if you like where your talk is. If you don't, be aware that when you select keywords when submitting your abstract, pick the right ones – the first keyword is the most important. Pick keywords that will help the POs in putting the right talks together. Regarding the complaint that, "Thursday is packed, and it's impossible to see everything!," he said he knows that already...

Steve urged all DCB members to attend the SICB Business Meeting, and also reminded everyone of the multidivisional social (DCB, DVM, DEDB, DSEB) on Wednesday evening, and the dessert social in honor of students and postdocs.

Steve then brought up symposia. At the SLC meeting, DCB sponsored or co-sponsored three symposia – "I've Got Rhythm," "Biomimetics and Bioinspiration," and "Gliding Flight." For the 2012 meeting in Charleston, SC, DCB is sponsoring two symposia dealing with computational methods and approaches. For the 2013 meeting in San Francisco and beyond, Steve wants us to send him our ideas. The deadline is August 19, 2011 for symposium applications for the San Francisco meeting.

Bob Full questioned Steve about having the full day at the end of the meeting rather than ½ day, as it has been for many years now – was that easier, in terms of scheduling talks? Steve said he didn't have any comparison, because it was his first year as Program Officer, but that he thought it would have been harder with just a half day. Bob Full said that the society leadership wants feedback on how well the full day at the end of the meeting works. Rick Blob, Program Officer for DVM, said that in his opinion it was very helpful.

Sharon Swartz mentioned one other proposal, from Adam Summers, that we institute a new type of session starting next year: each talk during the session would be limited to 5 minutes. Each 20 minute block would thus be 3 talks plus 5 minutes for questions. Adam argues that this would work well in podcast format. The ExComm was positive on trying it for next year –it may appear in the options when you submit an abstract. You would be able to choose a 5 minute talk or a regular length talk when you submit the abstract. Frank Fish asked whether you could give a 20 minute talk, a 5 minute talk, and a poster, all at the same meeting. Sharon admitted that she didn't know whether that had been discussed.

Miriam Ashley-Ross, the Divisional Secretary, gave the next report. DCB needs to elect two officers this spring for the positions of Program Officer and Secretary. She urged the members to be willing to serve the division as an officer, since the division doesn't run without the officers. She also urged any members who are not currently listed in the Researchers Database to send her a short statement of research interests, and a photo of either an experimental animal or one that illustrates a technique used by the researcher. Finally, she thanked all the members who were serving as judges for the Best Student Paper/Poster competitions.

Marianne Porter, the DCB Representative to the Student/Postdoctoral Affairs Committee (SPDAC), spoke next. She asked for suggestions for topics for the newsletters. She also related that SPDAC is tasked with updating the career page on the SICB website; she asked that we give her comments on whether it is useful, what works well, and what needs to be changed. There were two SPDAC workshops during the meeting: one on mentoring, and one about issues facing new faculty. She also reminded the members of the dessert social on Friday evening in honor of students and postdocs.

Bob Full asked whether there were any announcements about courses, field station opportunities, or symposia. No takers. Was there any other new business? There was none.

Bob encouraged us to continue to evangelize the Division and make great symposia. He said that after Chairing the Division for five years, he was excited to turn things over to Sharon. He said that it had been a privilege to help getting the Division started, and that SICB is the right home for Comparative Biomechanics.

There being no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned.