

Minutes from the Division of Ecology and Evolution Business Meeting, 4 January 2015

The meeting was called to order at 5:52 pm with 13 members in attendance.

Chair Sears began with an introduction of current officers and officers-elect: Current Officers – Donald Miles (Program Officer); Aaron Krochmal (Secretary); Officers-Elect – Donald Miles (Chair-elect); Christopher R. Tracy (Program Officer-Elect); Michael Dillon (Secretary-elect).

Before Chair Sears could begin, we were visited by a representative from NSF to deliver some comments and updates. She noted that, although a final budget was forthcoming, NSF had received tentative word on federal allocations and that the prospect “looked good.” When asked for clarification, the NSF representative revealed that as a working model, NSF would be working on a contingency based on 90% of the 2014 budget, which was based on 90% of the 2013 budget; the predicted allotment, she said, was considerably higher.

The NSF representative then discussed the appeal for symposium proposals for future SICB meetings. Specifically, she said that NSF had supporting “timely, forward-looking” symposia as their priority, particularly those that could generate a white paper.

Next, the NSF representative summarized the application processes for the preliminary proposals, citing recent inquiries about timing, content, organization, etc. Members asked many specific questions regarding submitting preliminary proposals (particularly, to IOS, given the proximity of the deadline to the SICB meeting), doctoral dissertation improvement grants (DDIG) and mid-career / retraining grants.

Chair Sears then updated the members present on the status of the DEE election cycle, noting that the division needed to elect a secretary-elect in the spring of 2015. He then outlined the rules for eligibility, the policies for nomination, and the process of elections. Chair Sears lamented the poor current and historical diversity of DEE officers (including those who run for office), this, despite the division having a fairly high diversity in its membership. This sentence was quickly and fervently echoed by Program Officer Miles. The members present agreed and noted similar problems (and similar resulting aims) in other SICB divisions. Chair Sears then made a charismatic appeal to assist the DEE in improving diversity among its officers by actively recruiting women and other underrepresented groups to run for office.

The society-wide officers then arrived, and after brief introductions, summarized the meeting attendance (~1900 pre-registrants) and participation (~1500 abstracts). The Society-Wide officers then appealed for participation in a post-meeting survey (to be done online). Information from this survey will be used to plan future meetings, and to revamp and meeting structure (e.g. length of talks, number of concurrent sessions, evaluation of submitted abstracts) in light of continued growth in membership and attendance at meetings. Finally, the Society-Wide officers noted that Lynn (Marty) Martin, currently Chair of DEDE, was

appointed Editor of *Integrative and Comparative Biology*. They stated that he will be shadowing current ICB Editor Heatwole for 2015 and will start his term in January 2016.

Program Officer Miles then offered comments on the meeting's programming, noting that the 2015 meeting had ~1500 abstracts (with ~600 posters). He voiced the marked concern that 50 abstracts had been retracted in the days and weeks leading up to the meeting, and a brief conversation about possible reasons ensued (dwindling federal and institutional support, and the price of last-minute flights to FL rose to the top of the list). Program Officer Miles then noted that of the ~1500 abstracts, > 60% were student submissions (both graduate and undergraduate) and that this number represents not only an increase in student submissions, but a marked decrease in submissions from more "senior scientists." Members in attendance voiced approval that we as a society are so open and welcoming to student scientists (many in the audience notes that they themselves joined the society as students and that doing so had a marked, positive influence on their careers), but were concerned with the apparent flight of faculty. A conversation ensued about possible causes, which included the timing of the meeting (winter break), the rigid dates of the meeting (3-7 January), and the nature of meeting locations. We communally agreed that this matter should be discussed in detail at the society level.

Secretary Krochmal then spoke briefly about the Raymond B. Huey Best Student Presentation Competition. All in attendance who were present at the 2015 talks offered enthusiastic support for the competition, and noted with the exceedingly high quality of the presentations last year. Several in attendance voiced concern about the scheduling of the Huey Award session and complained of substantial conflicts with other "important" sessions. Program Officer Miles and Chair Sears both agreed to implement a refined scheduling paradigm (one linked to the registration process) to avoid conflicting with DEE-sponsored symposia, but noted that completely avoiding scheduling conflicts would not be possible.

Secretary Krochmal then raised several key points / observations about the process of registering for the student competition. He noted that applications were exceedingly low (7 talks and 5 posters) despite all student members getting an email notification 4 weeks in advance and then a second one one week in advance. Further, he noted that he received many emails from both students and faculty complaining about the extra work (a one-page abstract) needed to apply to be included in the competition. These complaints are in stark contrast to the high regard for this competition setup, as evidenced by the strong positive feedback from students, faculty, and the other SICB divisions (many of which have adopted a similarly designed competition) Those in attendance at the meeting universally agreed that a one page abstract was in no way too much to ask (some tangential conversation ensued about the likelihood of these students getting jobs in a hyper-competitive market if they are think that writing a one-page abstracts represents an unreasonably high workload). The conversation then turned to options for increasing the number of applicants, which included decoupling the application deadline from the SICB abstract submission deadline and loosening the application

criteria. The divisional officers agreed to discuss this issue themselves and with the general membership during the coming year.

Chair Sears then turned discussion to the forthcoming Beer and Brains student-faculty mixer. This new program, which began at the 2014 meeting, centers on providing DEE students and postdocs the opportunity to interact with symposium speakers and other prominent figures in the fields of ecology and evolution so as to gain insight not only into their work, but more importantly, into the nature of their career paths, training, etc. Researcher participation in "Beer and Brains" was solicited from symposia participants and prominent members of the DEE, and Chair Sears noted the efforts to balance the gender and expertise of the researchers present. Student participation at the 2015 event was capped at 50 so as to keep the student: "brain" ratio ~4:1 (and in keeping with budgetary constraints; West Palm Beach is more expensive than was Austin in 2015 where 65 students were hosted). Secretary Krochmal reported on the online registration process, noting that it went without flaw, but that the spots filled up within 2 hrs of the opening of registration. Discussion then turned to ways in which the division might maximize student participation in Beer and Brains, including better advertising, choosing a "featured" guest "brain," and choosing a "destination" venue at which to have the event. The divisional officers agreed to discuss these and other options for maximizing student participation in Beer and Brains and announce their decisions in Fall DEE newsletter.

Chair Sears then asked for additional questions and comments, and hearing none, he adjourned the meeting at 6:54pm.

Submitted by Aaron Krochmal