

# Society for Molecular Biology and Evolution, Council and Business Meetings, 2020

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## Council Meetings

### I. Call to Order

President Marta Wayne called the virtual council meeting to order at 9:05 AM PDT, Friday, June 26, 2020. In electronic attendance were President Marta Wayne, Past President Aoife McLysaght, President-Elect Harmit Malik, Councilors Belinda Chang, Nicolas Galtier, Mary O'Connell, Beth Shapiro, Stephen Wright, and Sarah Schaack, Secretary Nadia Singh, Treasurer Jeff Thorne, *Molecular Biology and Evolution* (MBE) Editor-in-Chief Sudhir Kumar (ex officio), and *Genome Biology and Evolution* (GBE) Editors-in-Chief Laura A. Katz (ex officio) and Adam Eyre-Walker (ex officio).

### Noncouncil Members in Attendance

Lulu Stader (Executive Administrator) also attended, as did Adam Leary, Elisabeth Tattum, and Alex Beaumont from Oxford University Press. Chris Lapine from Allen Press was also present. Giorgio Bertorelle (host for 2022 in Ferrara, Italy) joined for a portion of the meeting. Potential hosts for SMBE 2024 also joined: Becky Zufall and Rich Meisel (Houston) and David Anderson (Banff).

### II. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Jeff Thorne presented the annual treasurer's report, with details on journal and meeting revenue and expenses. Of note this year is that last year SMBE changed the dates of the fiscal year to match the calendar year, which means that the period covered in the report is abbreviated. The Society continues to be in a strong financial position, but with our publishing model changing with our shift to fully open access we will not be able to rely on journal revenue in perpetuity. Full details can be found in the treasurer's report.

### III. Secretary's Report

Secretary Nadia Singh briefly reviewed the Council's actions over the preceding year. The Council voted on seven motions between January 1 and July 20, 2020. The Council approved: changes to GBE editorial board, move to open access, video recording in Quebec, changes to MBE editorial board, increasing the GBE social media budget, partnering with ISMB for a virtual seminar series with Lulu as the point of contact, and having Councilors Stephen Wright and Sarah Schaack initiate conversations with S\*Marts Consulting to facilitate developing a revised code of conduct and allyship in advance of the next SMBE meeting.

### IV. Election of SMBE Officers

Mar Alba chaired a committee to nominate candidates for the positions of President-Elect, Treasurer, and two councilors. The members of the committee were Tom Gilbert, Maria Anisimova, Nancy Moran (Daniela Delneri opted out before evaluations started), and Nadia Singh (ex officio, SMBE Secretary, as per by-laws). The membership of the society was informed by email of the committee composition in early 2020 and asked to nominate candidates for the positions. The council does and will continue to remind the nominating committee every year to prioritize gender and geographic representation among the candidates but maintains flexibility in how this is achieved by the committee.

The final selected nominees were James McInerney and Cedric Feschotte for President-Elect, Shyam Gopalakrishnan and John McCutcheon for Treasurer, and Josefa González, Katerina Guschanski, Gwenael Piganeu and Christian Landry for Councilors. The membership of the society was issued online ballot details through Allen Press. In total, 534 members voted in this election out of the 2,242 members invited. This corresponds to a 23.8% participation rate, which is consistent with historic participation rates. The results of the election are that President-Elect is James McInerney (University of Nottingham, Nottingham, England), Treasurer is John McCutcheon (Arizona State University, Tempe, AZ), and Councilors are Josefa Gonzalez (Institut de Biologia Evolutiva, Barcelona, Spain) and Katerina Guschanski (Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden).

### V. Editors' Reports

The Editors-in-Chief of MBE and GBE gave reports on the current states of their journals (see separate editors' reports for full details). For GBE, submission and acceptance rates are stable. There are several new initiatives that were highlighted including commissioned reviews, perspectives, and special sections; virtual issues, fee waivers; covers. The editors also reported that the social media effort was having a positive impact, as are the issue Highlights. MBE continues to be in a strong position. Transfers to GBE have increased, and the journal is well positioned for the transition to open access.

Oxford University Press presented their annual report on their work with our journals. Considerable discussion surrounded papers submitted before August 1 and accepted after that date (MBE's cutoff for open access transition), especially related to communicating with authors about the impending change and the impact of that change on MBE's

fee structure. The council also discussed the need for a formalized process for administering fee waivers.

## VI. Other Activities

### *Future Annual Meetings*

It was confirmed that SMBE 2021 will be a fully online meeting and SMBE 2022 will be held in person in Auckland, New Zealand. SMBE 2023 will be held in Italy, and the Council will consider location proposals for SMBE 2024 at a later time.

### *Interdisciplinary and Regional Proposals, Satellite Meeting Proposals*

Councilor Nicolas Galtier presented on these two issues. Of the previous round of funded proposals, a subset was executable as planned whereas others were cancelled for a variety of reasons including the global pandemic. Of particular note, the regional meeting in Malawi (September 2019) was considered highly successful. There was no call for new proposals for either of these two initiatives this year, given the global state of uncertainty.

### *Equal Opportunity Initiative*

Councilor Beth Shapiro reported on the equal opportunity initiative that was started by Maud Tenaillon. There were no applications this year. Council discussed the history of this initiative and the overarching goal of the initiative. Moving forward, Council will communicate with our membership more effectively on the nature and goals of this initiative.

### *Safe SMBE*

Councilor Stephen Wright reported on this developing initiative. The goal is to ensure that our meetings are safe, inclusive, and free from harassment. Another goal is to communicate our values to our membership. The Safe Evolution initiative implemented by the Society for the Study of Evolution has been overwhelmingly positive; SMBE's aims to have similar infrastructure in place for our online 2021 meeting. Implementing this initiative will also entail revising SMBE's code of conduct and communicating a values statement.

### *Allan Wilson Junior Award for Independent Research*

This award is given to outstanding members of the SMBE community who are in the early stages of an independent research career. The 2020 recipient was Iain Mathieson (University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA).

### *Margaret Dayhoff Midcareer Award*

This award is intended for outstanding members of the SMBE community who are in the midst of their research careers. The 2020 recipient was Christian Landry (Université Laval, Québec City, QC, Canada).

### *Motoo Kimura Lifetime Achievement Award*

This award is intended for outstanding senior members of the SMBE community. The 2020 recipient was Brian Charlesworth (University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, Scotland).

### *Walter M. Fitch Award*

The Fitch Symposium provides a forum for young investigators to showcase their exemplary research and continues to be a highlight of the SMBE annual meeting. The Fitch award honors the best presentation of this symposium and this year we elected to celebrate all of the Fitch candidates. The Fitch Symposium was held online and hosted by Past President Aoife McLysaght. It was well advertised and highly attended. The candidates were:

Emily Roycroft, "Museum genomics unlocks a historical record of extinction in Australia"

Matthew Shepherd, "Gene regulatory network evolution through the rewiring of transcription factors"

Alina Mikhaylova, "Mitochondrial mutational spectrum in poikilothermic versus homeothermic vertebrates: effects of temperature and lifespan"

Hannes Dittbner, "Blessing or curse?: Evolutionary significance of gene-flow between two endangered plant species"

Malgorzata Gazda, "A genetic mechanism for sexual dichromatism in birds"

Rachel Moran, "The genomic basis of postzygotic isolation underlying speciation via reinforcement in darters"

Elora Lopez, "Asexual and sexual mutation inheritance in clonal coral colonies"

### *Best Graduate Student Paper Award*

These awards provide recognition for outstanding student papers in both SMBE journals. For MBE, the committee selected one winner and three honorable mentions.

*Winner:* Ayush Saxena, "Evolution of the Mutational Process under Relaxed Selection in *Caenorhabditis elegans*"

*Runners-up/Honorable Mention:*

Annabel Beichman, "Aquatic Adaptation and Depleted Diversity: A Deep Dive into the Genomes of the Sea Otter and Giant Otter"

Qiqing Tao, "A Machine Learning Method for Detecting Autocorrelation of Evolutionary Rates in Large Phylogenies"

Zhirui Hu, "Bayesian Detection of Convergent Rate Changes of Conserved Noncoding Elements on Phylogenetic Trees"

For GBE, the committee also selected one winner and three honorable mentions.

*Winner:* Ping-Lin Cao, "JmjC Domain-Encoding Genes Are Conserved Metazoans and Are Associated with Planarian Whole-Body Regeneration"

*Runners-up/Honorable Mention:*

Han Mei, "A High-Resolution View of Adaptive Event"

Rubén González, "Mutagenesis Scanning Uncovers Evolutionary Constraints on Tobacco Etch Potyvirus Membrane-Associated 6K2 Protein"

Marissa Lim, “Parallel Molecular Evolution in Pathways, Genes, and Sites in High-Elevation Hummingbirds Revealed by Comparative Transcriptomics”

## VII. Additional Business

President Marta Wayne initiated a conversation about specific actions to improve diversity and inclusion for our community. In the near term, two action items seemed feasible: 1) forming a task force and 2) revising the code of conduct and releasing a values statement. The Council also discussed ally training, with the possibility of having tiers of training available for Council, allies, and session moderators. The Council discussed the charge for the task force, its size, and how to populate it. It was noted that diversity and inclusion are part of all of our roles on the Council. It was suggested that moving forward, individual council members should create reports for “diversity and inclusion” efforts as they relate to that individual’s role on the Council, which should be naturally folded in to the work for the society and its journal. The Council also discussed renaming awards and developing new award criteria.

Given that this conversation required more time than was available during the scheduled meeting time, the Council met again for an additional conversation on this topic. Council members in electronic attendance were President Marta Wayne, President-Elect Harmit Malik, Councilors Belinda Chang, Mary O’Connell, Beth Shapiro, Stephen Wright, and Sarah Schaack, Secretary Nadia Singh, Treasurer Jeff Thorne, and MBE Editor-in-Chief Sudhir Kumar (ex officio). Lulu Stader was a noncouncil member in attendance.

Councilors Sarah Schaack and Stephen Wright presented progress on the Safe SMBE initiative. There was strong agreement within the Council to work with S\*Marts Consulting to formalize an allyship program for our 2021 meeting. Councilors Sarah Schaack and Stephen Wright agreed to continue to take the lead on this initiative and revise our code of conduct.

The Council discussed our task force on diversity, equity, and inclusion. There was strong consensus that this group

would serve an advisory role to the Council. This group would survey membership about priorities, investigate and discuss possibilities, and present recommendations to the Council on a quarterly basis. It will be important for this task force to have co-chairs, and for membership to represent postdocs and faculty and students. Two members of Council should serve on this task force as well. The charge of this task force will evolve, but immediate priorities will be to draft a values statement and review awards. Finally, the Council discussed whether awards should be named after individuals. It was decided that we need to survey membership about SMBE’s process for naming awards.

The Council discussed partnering with other societies that share our values. Relevant societies to include are ASN, GSA, ESEB, SSE, and SSB, among others.

## Business Meeting

### I. Call to Order

President Marta Wayne called the business meeting to order at 8 AM PDT, Thursday, July 2, 2020.

### II. Business

The President highlighted the recent online symposia for the Fitch (June 30, 2020) featuring seven finalists as well as the Faculty Awards symposium featuring Iain Mathieson, Christian Landry, and Brian Charlesworth. She noted that the society is strong, with over 2,300 members, and she reviewed the benefits of membership. The President also discussed several developments for 2020 including MBE’s transition to a fully open access publishing model, SMBE 2021 being held online, and new initiatives to increase diversity and combat racism including Safe SMBE. The President noted that reimbursements for SMBE 2020 were underway. Finally, the President thanked everyone for taking the time to join online and she thanked the nominations committee and everyone on the awards committees for their service to our Society.