Austin 2008

The 2009 Annual Meeting will be held in Austin, Texas from February 28th through March 2nd. Austin is known for being the Live Music Capital of the World and is home to diverse attractions ranging from the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and the Blanton Museum of Art on the campus of The University of Texas, to numerous parks, rivers, and lakes for outdoor pursuits. The 2009 Meeting promises to keep the tradition of promoting plant science, education, and scientific exchange. So, please join us for this meeting. After all, there’s no better place for a group of plant scientists to meet than a city whose motto is “Keep Austin Weird”!

Letter from the Chair

By Kelly Major

Well, it is hard to believe that 2008 has nearly come and gone! With 2009 close on our heels and the annual Southern Section meeting right around the corner, plans for a great time are well underway! The Section’s Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. Paxton Payton, along with local site coordinator, Dr. Stan Roux, is putting together what promises to be a terrific schedule of events. As this year’s Chair, I would like to take this opportunity to invite your students and you to join us in Austin, Texas from February 28 through March 2, 2009 for the annual meeting of the Southern Section of the American Society of Plant Biologists (SS-ASPB).

As always, we are working to provide an opportunity for undergraduates and graduates to interact with their faculty advisors and other researchers at an informal, student-friendly venue. One of the highlights of our annual meeting, the Kriton Hatzios Symposium, allows students to hear presentations given by leading researchers in a particular field of study. Rarely during large, national meetings are student attendees presented with the opportunity to engage investigators, (cont.)
conducting top-notch plant scientific research, in casual conversation. Moreover, we encourage students to actively participate in the scientific process and present their own research in a non-threatening, educational environment. This year, as in past years, the Section will provide financial support for students who wish to present their research at the meeting. Information regarding student support is available through the SS-ASPB website (http://www.ss-aspb.org/). The Southern Section prides itself on fostering student development and collegiality among plant scientists. On behalf of the SS-ASPB Executive Committee, we look forward to seeing you in Austin, Texas!

Accommodations:

**Doubletree Guest Suites Austin**
303 West 15th Street, Austin, TX 78701
Tel: (512) 478-7000  Fax: (512) 478-3562

The hotel is an oasis of warm Texas ambience, and in the center of where you want to be! The hotel in downtown Austin is just off the I-35 and within walking distance of The University of Texas, and Austin's world famous Sixth Street Entertainment district (heart of the live music scene), provides an eclectic mix of nearby antique stores, galleries, restaurants and taverns in the West End Market and Warehouse districts.

**Directions to the Hotel**

**Airport Directions:**
The hotel is only 20 minutes from *Austin-Bergstrom International Airport.*
Exit Bergstrom International Airport and turn left on Hwy 71. Continue to Highway 183 North, continue on 183 North to 7th Street, left on 7th Street to I-35 and turn right on access road heading North. Stay on access road to 15th Street, left on 15th Street. The hotel is seven blocks down on left at the corner of 15th and Guadalupe. Travel time is approximately 15 minutes (non-traffic).

**Transportation available:**
Taxi or Super Shuttle

**General Arrival Directions:**
Hotel is located in downtown Austin. A few blocks from the Texas State Capitol.

Northbound or Southbound - IH-35 Take 15th Street exit. Turn west onto 15th Street. Follow for about 7 blocks. Hotel is on the left hand side.
At this year's meeting, we are trying something a bit different in our scheduling.

In order to facilitate more interaction with our symposium speakers we are moving the talks up to Saturday morning. Here’s what we were thinking for the order of events this year. Let’s see how it works out…

**Tentative Schedule**

**Saturday, February 28**

4:30 – 6:30 pm  Registration
5:00 – 8:00 pm  Annual Mixer
8:00 – 10:00 pm Executive Committee Meeting

**Sunday, March 1**

7:00 – 8:00 am  Breakfast
7:00 – 9:00 am  Registration, Poster set-up
9:00 – 10:30 am 2009 Kriton Hatzios Symposium
10:30 – 10:45 am Refreshment Break
10:45 am – 12:00 pm 2009 Kriton Hatzios Symposium (cont.)
12:30 – 2:00 pm Lunch Break
2:00 – 4:00 pm Oral Presentations: Student Competition
4:00 – 6:00 pm Poster Session, Undergraduate Poster Competition
7:00 – 9:00 pm Cocktails, Banquet
Presentation of awards for student competitions

**Monday, March 2**

7:00 – 8:00 am  Breakfast
8:30 – 10:30 am Oral Presentation, non-competition
10:30 – 10:45 am Refreshment Break
11:00 – 11:45 am Annual Business Meeting
12:00 pm Meeting adjourns
Kriton Hatzios Symposium

Each year our Vice-Chair organizes a symposium on a topic of interest. This year Dr. Stephen Banks has invited speakers to address the topic of plant nitrogen metabolism. We are fortunate to have three outstanding researchers in this field to present talks at our meeting.

Dr. Rebecca Dickstein
Professor of Biology at University of North Texas

Dr. Dickstein’s interests lie in symbiotic nitrogen fixation. Her group's emphasis is to understand the developmental processes of nodule formation, particularly in the stages after initiation of nodule development, those of invasion of the root and developing nodule by rhizobia as well as nodule organogenesis. Most of her current work uses *Medicago truncatula*, which has been selected as a model species for genetic and genomic studies by an increasing number of researchers.

http://www.cas.unt.edu/~beccad/

Dr. Steve Huber
Professor of Plant Biology and Crop Sciences, USDA/ARS Plant Physiologist at Univ. of Illinois

A major focus in the Huber laboratory is on identification of biological mechanisms that regulate important plant processes such as nitrate assimilation and how they impact growth and development. Studies address regulation on many levels, but most of their work is focused on post-translational mechanisms. One such mechanism that plays an important role in the regulation of enzyme activity, but is still poorly understood in plant systems, is reversible protein phosphorylation. With regard to NR, his interests lies in the factors that govern the phosphorylation status of NR, as well as those that may control the ability of regulatory protein 14-3-3 to bind to NR.

http://www.life.uiuc.edu/plantbio/People/Faculty/Huber.htm

Dr. Nigel Crawford
Professor of Biology at Univ. of California San Diego

Dr. Crawford’s group studies the metabolism of nitrate and nitric oxide and is determining how these two molecules regulate plant metabolism and growth using microarray and mutant analyses in *Arabidopsis*. They have identified genes involved in nitrate uptake and reduction and have generated comprehensive datasets of nitrate-responsive genes. They have also identified a gene that regulates nitric oxide synthesis or accumulation and affects flower timing.

http://www-biology.ucsd.edu/faculty/crawford.html
Elections

Candidates for 2009-2010 offices

The Nominations Committee (Jay Mellon, Caryl Chlan, and Kent Chapman) is putting forward Dr. Paul Stephenson and Dr. Rebecca Dickstein for the position of Secretary-Treasurer (2009-2010). Paxton Payton will run for Vice-Chair, Stephen Banks will run for Chair, and Kelly Major will run for Executive Committee, in the coming election by the membership.

Candidates for Secretary/Treasurer

Dr. Rebecca Dickstein

She earned a B.S. degree in Biochemistry in 1976 from Pennsylvania State University in State College, PA. After working for several years in industry, she completed a Ph.D. degree in Biochemistry in 1985 under Lawrence Grossman at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD. In 1985, she started working on plants and symbiotic nitrogen fixation as a Postdoctoral Fellow at Mass General Hospital in Boston in Fred Ausubel’s lab, where she worked until 1989. In 1990, she was an NSF-NATO Fellow in the Plant-Microbe Interactions Lab in Toulouse, France where she began to work with Medicago truncatula as a model legume. Later in 1990, she moved to Drexel University in Philadelphia, PA as an Assistant Professor where she earned the rank of Associate Professor in 1996. After moving to University of North Texas (UNT) in 2000, she was promoted to Professor in 2007. Her current research is still in symbiotic nitrogen fixation with a focus on Medicago mutants defective in rhizobial invasion of developing root nodules and genes associated with formation of the symbiosome. She is the recipient of research grants from the USDA, NSF, the Texas Excellence Program, Drexel and UNT Faculty Research Programs, as well as a teaching grant from NSF when she was at Drexel. Becca teaches courses in biochemistry, molecular biology, and signal transduction at UNT. Dr. Dickstein has been a member of ASPB since 1990.

Dr. Paul Stephenson

He earned a B.A. degree in Biology in 1984 from Hartwick College in Oneonta, NY. He completed a Ph.D. degree in Plant Biology in 1998 under Bernard Rubinstein at the Univ. of Massachusetts, Amherst. From 1998 through 2000, he held a position as a visiting Assistant Professor of Biology at Rollins College. After briefly teaching at Ohio Wesleyan University (2000/2001) he returned to Rollins College in 2001 and was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in 2007. His current research interests include investigating the regulation of hydrolytic enzyme secretion in carnivorous pitcher plants (particularly Nepenthes ventricosa), cloning and characterizing candidate enzymes, and using fluorescent in situ hybridization to localize their expression. In 2007 he began a new research project in collaboration with researchers at the Florida Institute of Technology. This investigation studies the hydrolytic enzymes involved in mixotrophic metabolism of toxic algal bloom causing dinoflagellates. He has also worked on projects studying programmed cell death during floral senescence and vascular tissue differentiation, and is particularly interested in proteolytic mechanisms that are involved in cell death in plants. He is the recipient of a major research instrumentation grant from the NSF and has been awarded grants in aid of research from the Sigma Xi, the Univ. of Massachusetts, Ohio Wesleyan Univ., and Rollins College. Paul teaches the following courses at Rollins: genetics, botany, general biology, molecular biology, and a variety of biology courses designed for undergraduate non-science majors. Dr. Stephenson has been a member of ASPB since 1996.
Potential sites for the 2010 annual meeting

Winter Park, FL

The Orlando/Winter Park area has been proposed as a site for the 2010 SS-ASPB meeting. Several choices are available for the conference site, including Rollins College (provided that the 2010 meeting date corresponds with spring break for the college). Both Winter Park and downtown Orlando have hotels that could accommodate the conference. Orlando International Airport provides service to all major U.S. cities and is located within a 30-minute drive of both Winter Park and Orlando.

In addition to the major attractions in the region (Disney, Sea World, Universal and MGM studios), the Orlando/Winter Park area has numerous other local attractions that may be of interest to ASPB members such as the Harry P. Leu Botanical Garden, the UCF Arboretum, Big Tree State Park, Wekiva State Park, The Morse Museum of Fine Art, as well as many restaurants and shops. The Orlando/Winter Park venue may also attract ASPB members from the University of Florida, University of Central Florida, Florida State University, and

Knoxville, TN

Knoxville is another choice for the 2010 SS-ASPB meeting. Two major venues for the conference, the University of Tennessee conference center and the Knoxville Convention Center, are located in downtown Knoxville walking distance from various hotels, restaurants and the University of Tennessee.

Downtown Knoxville features Market Square, Volunteer Landing and World’s Fair Park, surrounded by restaurants, shopping, and entertainment. The historic Old City offers over a dozen clubs within two blocks, with an active music scene featuring local up-and-coming bands along with nationally known groups.

Nestled at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains along the Tennessee River, Knoxville is a short drive from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Nearby Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge are major regional tourist destinations, with Dollywood theme park alone attracting over 2 million visitors in

Voting will be done online. Check your email for a link. If you do not receive email with the link, contact Tim Sherman for directions on how to vote.
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