

J U N E 2 0 1 0

# SS-ASPB

*Newsletter of the Southern Section of the American Society of Plant Biologists*



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## Greetings Members of the ASPB-Southern Section

The Annual Meeting of the ASPB-Southern Section took place this year at the University of Tennessee Conference Center in Knoxville, TN on April 10-12. The Conference was attended by 111 delegates from 28 universities and organizations including: The American Society of Plant Biologists, Clemson University, Coastal Carolina Univ., College of William and Mary, Duke Univ., East Carolina Univ., East

Tennessee State Univ., Florida State Univ., Louisiana State Univ., Baton Rouge, Louisiana State Univ., Shreveport, North Georgia College & State Univ., North Greenville Univ., Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Oklahoma State Univ., Rollins College, Tennessee State Univ., Texas A&M Univ., Texas Tech Univ., Univ. of Arkansas at Little Rock, Univ. of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Univ. of Florida, Univ. of Illinois, Univ. of Kentucky, Univ. of North Texas, Univ. of South Alabama, Univ. of Tennessee, Univ. of Texas, Austin, USDA-ARS.

## Remember to vote...

*Candidates for 2011-2012 Secretary Treasurer are Dr. Jay Shockey and Dr. Ashlee McCaskill*

*Potential sites for the 2012 annual meeting are Little Rock, Arkansas and Myrtle Beach, South Carolina*

*For more biographical information on the candidates for office and the potential meetings sites see page 6 and 7*

## Symposium

The 2010 Kriton-Hatzios Symposium focused on how small RNAs help to regulate plant gene expression. The featured speakers and their presentations were:

**Dr. Guiliang Tang**, Dept. of Plant and Soil Sciences & University of Kentucky

*“Gene Regulation by Small RNA’s and their Technological Application in Plants”*

**Dr. Zhixin Xie**, Department of Biology, Texas Tech University

*“Explore the Small RNA World: Using Plant Model Systems”*

**Dr. Magdy Alabady**, Institute of Genome Biology and Energy Bioscience Institute, University of Illinois

*“Genomic and Functional Analysis of the Small RNA an mRNA transcriptome and degradome of *Miscanthus x giganteus*”.*

*The symposium was organized by Dr. Paxton Payton.*

## Conference Organizers



Many thanks to Drs. Rebecca Dickstein (left) and Elena Shpak (right) for their efforts in bringing everything together for this year's meeting.

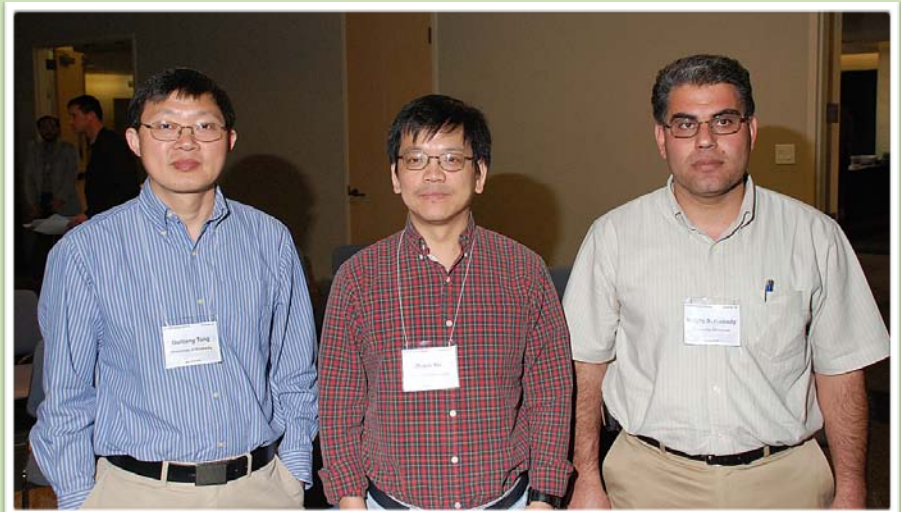


For the first time in many years our meeting had so many graduate student presentations in the oral competition, twenty eight in total, that we had to schedule two concurrent sessions. There were ten student posters in

the Aubrey Naylor Undergraduate Poster Competition. In addition there were four faculty and postdoctoral presentations. There were a further thirty posters. This year's Southern Section Secretary/Treasurer, Dr. Rebecca Dickstein did an outstanding job of arranging the meeting which included continental breakfasts and a lunch on Sunday. She was ably supported by Dr. Elena Shpak, our "on site" coordinator. Dr. Diana Elrod, of the University of North Texas, is also thanked for her help with printing the meeting schedule and badges.

## 2010 Kriton-Hatzios Symposium

Dr. Paxton Payton, Southern Section Vice Chair arranged the Symposium on "The Role of Small RNAs in Gene Regulation"



Dr. Guiliang Tang (left) addressed gene regulation by small RNA's and their technological application in plants. Dr. Zhixin Xie (center) discussed the use of small RNAs in plant model systems, and Dr. Magdy Alabady (right) presented studies from his lab on genomic and functional analysis of the small RNA and mRNA transcriptome and degradome of the perennial grass hybrid *Miscanthus x giganteus*.

*On behalf of all of us in the Southern Section, I would like to thank Paxton and our three speakers for an excellent symposium on an exciting area of plant biology.*

## Graduate Student and Undergraduate Presentations

I find it particularly gratifying to be involved with the SS-ASPB. We have a long tradition of putting on conferences that promote collegiality and fellowship and support our student members. I never tire of watching enthusiastic young people describing their research and building their careers. The quality of the presentations and posters was excellent and with young scientists like these coming along, I have no worries about the future of research in plant biology.



Kyle Gabrick of the University of Tennessee won the 2010 award for the outstanding poster presentation by an undergraduate student in the Aubrey Naylor Undergraduate Poster Competition. Mr. Gabrick's poster was entitled *"Luminescence Imaging and its Application to Biosensor Research."*



Amber N. Brown of Florida State University won the 2010 award for the outstanding oral presentation by a graduate student. Ms. Brown's talk was entitled *"Identification of Telomere Length Regulating Factors in Zea maize."*

At the executive meeting held at the 2010 Annual Meeting of the SS-ASPB, the proposal was made that graduate students who present non-competition posters and talks on their research at future meetings will receive a registration discount. Although the exact amount of the discount will be decided on a meeting-by-meeting basis, members unanimously approved of this proposal. Thus, for future SS-ASPB meetings, graduate students presenting their research on a non-competition basis will receive a 10-15 % registration discount. Graduate students who present an oral competition talk will continue to receive an approximately 90-95 % discount on registration fees, as they have in the past.

## Looking Forward to the 2011 SS-ASPB Conference.

Next year's conference will be at [The Gulf Coast Research Laboratory, Biloxi, Mississippi](#), and the Southern Section welcomes [Dr. Paul Stephenson of Rollins College](#), Florida onto the executive committee as the 2010-2011 Secretary/Treasurer.

I would like to draw your attention to the ballot for the two possible sites for the 2012 ASPB Southern Section conference. These are Coastal Carolina University, South Carolina and Little Rock, Arkansas, and also the ballot for the 2011-2012 position of Secretary/Treasurer for the ASPB Southern Section, with two excellent candidates, Dr. Jay Shockey and Dr. Ashlee McCaskill.

In closing I would like to thank all of the participants in this year's meeting and my hard working executive committee, Drs. Marc Cohn, Tim Sherman, Kent Chapman, Kelly Major, Rebecca Dickstein and Paxton Payton.

Let me offer a very special thanks to Dr. Dalton Gossett who this year rotates off the executive committee after six years of dedicated service to the ASPB-SS.

My very best wishes to you all, and let's look forward to meeting up at Biloxi next year.

*Stephen W. Banks*

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## News from the ASPB executive committee

*By Dr. Tim Sherman, SS-ASPB representative to the ASPB Executive Committee*

The ASPB Executive Committee meet on March 20<sup>th</sup>. Here are some items of interest to our section:

- A. The ASPB is interested in fostering diversity in its national awards and has streamlined the nomination process. The number of nominations in recent years has been rather low. Please nominate individuals you think are worthy of recognition.
- B. The ASPB has hired the legislative affairs consultant firm Louis Burke and Associates to handle these societal issue until a replacement can be found for Brian Hyps. The original plan was to have someone on staff by Fall 2009, but the lead candidate for the position took another job, so ASPB has had to re-start the search. Depending on the skills and experience of the person who is eventually hired, he or she may replace Louis Burke and Associates or may augment their activities.
- C. ASPB is fostering interactions with societies that have concerns about plant biology on a more global level than just in the US. The recently formed Global Plant Council, which includes representatives from 13 major plant science societies around the world, is meeting Montréal just before the ASPB meeting this year. ASPB is partnering with the Generation Challenge Program, a [CGIAR](#)-based funding effort for research aimed to help resource-poor farmers in developing countries, with a focus on Africa and South America. ASPB helped support the 6th Bi-National Mexico-USA Plant Molecular and Cellular Biology meeting held in Guanajuato, Mexico on November 9-13, 2009
- D. The [Arabidopsis TAIR database](#) is scheduled for a decrease in NSF funding. ASPB is looking into how it can interact with Arabidopsis scientists over that issue.
- E. There will be another [Lab Leadership Workshop](#) before the ASPB meeting in Montréal this summer. The workshop will run from July 29-31, 2010. There is also a workshop being planned to focus on helping plant scientists to find funding opportunities through NIH. Jean Rosenberg has indicated that representatives from different federal funding agencies will be at the ASPB meeting.
- F. The journal open access issues are still up in the air. The Obama administration wanted all publications resulting from federal funding to be open to the public, but how that policy will be implemented is still unclear.
- G. There was discussion on ASPB presence at society meetings to help recruit underrepresented minority students into plant biology. Next year's theme at the [SACNAS](#) meeting is GMO plant material; the SACNAS meeting will be held in Anaheim, CA next September. This meeting is highlights undergraduate research, particularly that of underrepresented minorities.

ASPB Executive Director, Dr. Crispin Taylor, was in attendance at this year's meeting. We wish to offer our appreciation for him working us into his very hectic schedule.



## Election for next year's officers

Each year we fill four positions on our executive committee and vote for the site of our next year's annual meeting.

### The candidates...

Our executive committee nominates a candidate for each position from within the current executive committee. This allows for continuity in these important offices. You can vote for the person that we have nominated or a write-in candidate of your choice.

For 2011-2012 we are nominating:

- **Dr. Paxton Payton** to our Executive committee
- **Dr. Rebecca Dickstein** to Chair
- **Dr. Paul Stephenson** to Vice Chair

For the position Secretary-Treasurer, we recruit volunteers from the membership at large to serve.

The candidates for Secretary-Treasurer- 2011-2012 are:

- **Dr. Jay Shockey**, USDA-ARS, New Orleans, LA
- **Dr. Ashley McCaskill**, North Ga College & State University, Dahlonega, GA

A biographical sketch of each candidate is given below.

### Dr. Jay Shockey

Dr. Shockey received a B.S. in Biochemistry from New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM in 1991, and a Ph.D. in Molecular Biology (also from NMSU) in 1996. After graduation, he was awarded a National Science Foundation Postdoctoral Fellowship in Biosciences Related to the Environment in conjunction with Dr. John Browse at the Institute of Biological Chemistry, Washington State University, Pullman, WA. After leaving Dr. Browse's laboratory in 2003, he joined the industrial oils group in the Commodity Utilization Unit, Southern Regional Research Center, USDA-Agricultural Research Service in New Orleans, LA. He was promoted to SY (scientific year) scientist status in 2005, and became Project Lead Scientist beginning in 2006. Presently, his group focuses on determining the cellular and molecular factors that control vegetable oil biosynthesis in oilseed plants, especially those that produce industrially-useful oils. Particular focus is directed towards cloning and analyzing genes representing many of the different enzymatic steps that make up the Kennedy pathway for triacylglycerol synthesis, as well as many other accessory and regulatory proteins that influence this pathway. He has authored or co-authored 16 papers in refereed journals and two book chapters. He is an active member of the American Oil Chemists Society and has been an active member of the American Society of Plant Biologists – Southern Section since 2004.

### Dr. Ashley McCaskill

Ashlee McCaskill received her B.S. in Botany from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville in 1995. She received her Ph.D. in Plant Molecular Biology from Cornell University in Ithaca, NY, in 2007. Her thesis advisor was Dr. Robert Turgeon, with whom she investigated the polymer trap model of symplastic phloem loading. Their work culminated in the first molecular genetic data supporting this model. While in graduate school, Ashlee helped establish the Plant Biology Graduate Student Association and served as that group's first president. In addition she garnered extensive teaching experience, acting as a teaching assistant for numerous courses for four years and was awarded the honor of Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant in Plant Biology. In 2009, Ashlee accepted the position of Assistant Professor of Plant Biology at North Georgia College and State University in Dahlonega, GA. Since North Georgia is primarily an undergraduate institution, Ashlee has spent her first year engaged in teaching Botany and both the majors and non-majors courses in Introductory Biology. In addition to teaching, she will be developing her research program involving undergraduate students during the next year. Ashlee has been a member of ASPB since 2003.

## Site Selection for the 2012 annual meeting



### Little Rock, Arkansas

With an area population of nearly half a million, Little Rock is big enough to offer a great selection of nightlife, shopping, museums, lodging and restaurant choices. Yet, we've found it maintains the charm, personality, and safety you won't find in larger metropolitan areas. Because of its central location, it offers an interesting blend of cultures and lifestyles.

Little Rock is Arkansas's capital city, and home of the state-of-the-art Clinton Presidential Center as well. The newly opened facility offers a commanding view of the Arkansas River, providing a permanent home to the largest archive of presidential material in America. Visitors of all ages enjoy the miniature White House, complete with working clocks, televisions, and even chandeliers that light! Little Rock Arkansas is an educational, kid-friendly family vacation spot.

Nearby the Presidential Center, you can catch one of three trolley cars for easy transport around the downtown area. Be sure to stop along the River Market District, where you'll find the areas best selection in shopping, restaurants, museums, and other Hot Springs cultural highlights. One of the most unusual tourist highlights are the ducks at the Peabody Hotel. Hotel staff load ducks into an elevator, lay down a special red carpet, and the waterfowl march down the path to a fountain for the day's swimming and posing for pictures. Kids and adults alike flock to the area for the daily parade, a community highlight since the 1930's! Don't forget to check out the Farmer's Market itself. Be sure to include Little Rock for the best blend of big city excitement and friendly, home-town atmosphere.

Many service Little Rock via the Little Rock Regional Airport (LIT) and offer non-stop jet service to Atlanta, Dallas, Memphis, and Charlotte.



### Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Myrtle Beach is the heart of the Grand Strand, a 60-mile stretch of sandy beaches that 300,000 residents call home, and is among the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the USA. The Myrtle Beach area has about 2,000 restaurants and 500 hotels to accommodate the estimated 12 million people who annually visit to enjoy a family-friendly beach atmosphere. For the botanically-minded, Brookgreen Gardens offers educational and cultural opportunities while strolling through gardens, a zoo, and sculptures. Brookgreen Gardens is both a National Historic Landmark and listed on the Register of National Historic Places, and is conveniently right across the street from Huntington State Park.

Myrtle Beach is home to the nearly 8,000 students who attend Coastal Carolina University, and is less than 100 miles away from Wilmington, NC, and the historic city of Charleston.

Myrtle Beach Airport is a mile from the beach, and three miles from the Myrtle Beach Convention Center; many other (1) hotels also have facilities to host meetings.



## Remember to vote!

All current of SS-ASPB can vote for officers and the upcoming meeting site. If you are also current member of the ASPB national, you can vote online at: <http://www.aspb.org/sections/southernvote.cfm>

If you have paid dues to only the Southern Section, you will have to vote via email. Please contact Paul Stephenson ([pstephenson@rollins.edu](mailto:pstephenson@rollins.edu)) and he will email you a ballot that you can use to vote.

The voting deadline is July 2nd, so don't wait!

## 2010-2011 officers

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