Genetics Society of America Announces Recipients of Spring 2014 DeLill Nasser Award for Professional Development

Eleven early career researchers receive travel grants to attend conferences

BETHESDA, MD – December 13, 2013 – The Genetics Society of America (GSA) is pleased to announce the selection of eleven early career researchers – five graduate students and six postdoctoral researchers – as recipients of a spring 2014 DeLill Nasser Award for Professional Development in Genetics. The award is a $1,000 travel grant for each researcher to attend any national or international meeting, conference or laboratory course that will enhance his or her career.

“GSA is always honored to present the DeLill Nasser Awards because they are about promoting the future of our discipline,” said Adam Fagen, PhD, Executive Director of GSA. “Attending scientific conferences and courses is an essential element of practicing science, and we are glad to play a role in fostering the professional development of some of our most promising early career members.”

The DeLill Nasser Award was established by GSA in 2001 to honor its namesake, DeLill Nasser (1929–2000), a long-time GSA member who provided critical support to many early career researchers during her 22 years as program director in eukaryotic genetics at the National Science Foundation. Since the formation of this award, over 100 graduate students and postdocs have received funding for travel to further their career goals and enhance their education. The program is supported by GSA, and with charitable donations from members of the genetics community.

The eleven recipients of the spring 2014 DeLill Nasser Awards, their institutions, the conference or course each intends to attend, and a brief summary of their research is listed below.

**Graduate Students:**

**Yang Cao**
University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI
*GSA 55th Annual Drosophila Research Conference*
March 26–30, 2014, San Diego, CA

“I am investigating two fundamental neurobiological processes, synaptic development and neuroprotection, using *Drosophila* as an animal model.”
Huan Chen
Columbia University Medical Center, New York, NY
Mechanisms of Recombination Meeting
May 19–23, 2014, Alicante, SPAIN
“I am studying the molecular mechanism of DNA double-strand break repair and genome integrity in eukaryotes.”

Fang Yun Lim
University of Wisconsin–Madison, Madison, WI
12th European Conference on Fungal Genetics
March 23–27, 2014, Seville, SPAIN
“I study the genes responsible for synthesizing various secondary metabolites prepackaged in the spore (infectious particle) of Aspergillus fumigatus and how these spore metabolites impact disease establishment (invasive aspergillosis) in immunocompromised individuals.”

Matthew Niepielko
Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ
GSA 55th Annual Drosophila Research Conference
March 26–30, 2014, San Diego, CA
“I study the evolution of morphologies; in particular, I focus on how changes in the epidermal growth factor receptor signaling mediate new morphologies on the Drosophila eggshell.”

Nathaniel Sharp
University of Toronto, Toronto, ON, Canada
Evolution 2014 Meeting
June 20–24, 2014, Raleigh, NC
“I study mutation rates and the effects of harmful mutations on males and females.”

Postdoctoral Researchers:

Charissa de Bekker, PhD
Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA
12th European Conference on Fungal Genetics
March 23–27, 2014, Seville, SPAIN
“My research focuses on unraveling the complex mechanisms underlying manipulation of host behavior by the fungal parasite Ophiocordyceps.”
George Eisenhoffer, Jr., PhD  
Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT  
*GSA 11th International Conference on Zebrafish Development and Genetics*  
June 24–28, 2014, Madison, WI  
“The goal of my research is to elucidate the mechanisms that regulate the birth and death of cells within epithelial tissues, and understand how specific alterations may lead to epithelial pathologies and cancer.”

Eric Joyce, PhD  
Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA  
*GSA 55th Annual Drosophila Research Conference*  
March 26–30, 2014, San Diego, CA  
“My research is aimed at understanding the mechanism and function of chromosome interactions, with a primary focus on interactions between homologous sequences.”

Eric Stoffregen, PhD  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC  
*GSA 55th Annual Drosophila Research Conference*  
March 26–30, 2014, San Diego, CA  
“My research uses *Drosophila melanogaster*, the fruit fly, as a model to investigate the biological functions of BLM, a protein that helps prevent cancer by enabling the proper replication and repair of DNA.”

Sen Xu, PhD  
Indiana University, Bloomington, IN  
*Daphnia Genetics Consortium Meeting*  
January 19–22, 2014, Birmingham, UNITED KINGDOM  
“My research aims to understand why the majority of eukaryotic organisms engage in sexual reproduction by examining the genetic mechanisms and consequences of obligate parthenogenesis (*i.e.*, virgin birth) in the freshwater microcrustacean *Daphnia*.”

Amanda Zacharias, PhD  
University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA  
*Systems Biology: Global Regulation of Gene Expression*  
March 18–22, 2014, Cold Spring Harbor, NY  
“I use the nematode worm, *C. elegans*, as a model to study how genes are turned on and off during development.”
Applications were reviewed by the DeLill Nasser Award Selection Committee: Chair Marnie Halpern, PhD (Carnegie Inst for Science) and members Tim Christensen, PhD (East Carolina Univ); Matthew Hahn, PhD (Indiana Univ); R. Scott Hawley, PhD (Stowers Inst for Medical Research); Sue Jaspersen, PhD (Stowers Inst for Medical Research); Kristin Latham, PhD (Western Oregon Univ); Elliot Meyerowitz, PhD (Cal Inst of Tech); Nadia Singh, PhD (North Carolina State Univ); and Jeffrey Williams Thomas, PhD, nephew of DeLill Nasser.

Twice a year, GSA selects graduate students and postdoctoral researchers to receive DeLill Nasser Awards to assist them in acquiring career enrichment. For more information about these awards, visit the GSA website at http://www.genetics-gsa.org/awards/delill.shtml.

ABOUT GSA: Founded in 1931, the Genetics Society of America (GSA) is the professional scientific society for genetics researchers and educators. Its more than 5,000 members work to advance knowledge in the basic mechanisms of inheritance, from the molecular to the population level. GSA promotes research and fosters communication among geneticists worldwide through a number of GSA-sponsored conferences including annual and biennial meetings that focus on the genetics of particular model organisms. GSA publishes GENETICS, a leading journal for seminal research in the field since 1916, and G3: Genes|Genomes|Genetics, which publishes high quality foundational research, particularly research that generates useful genetic and genomic information. For more information about GSA, please visit www.genetics-gsa.org. Also follow GSA on Facebook at facebook.com/GeneticsGSA and on Twitter @GeneticsGSA.

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