

President's Report for Sigma Xi Annual Meeting
June 22nd, 2021

Good evening and welcome to the Sigma Xi Columbia-Willamette Annual Meeting, which, for the second year, we are holding remotely, due to the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. My name is Annie Lindgren, and I serve as the current President of the SX CW chapter board of directors. Traditionally we hold an in-person event in May when we all come together in person and enjoy good food, good conversation and inspiring science. With vaccination rates high and everyone establishing a "new normal" we are eagerly looking forward to a fall **or winter in-person** event where we can recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of scientific research in the greater Columbia Willamette region.

Tonight we continue our tradition of meeting our new chapter members, learning about research in our community and recognizing a snapshot of the wonderful scientific achievements in our region that exemplify Sigma Xi. After tonight, we will have initiated 8 new members this fiscal year. Our new members include undergraduate and graduate students, a teacher and as beginning and established researchers. We will also recognize a supporter of research for their efforts in furthering our goals, and two students who have received Grants-in-Aid of Research from Sigma Xi. Thanks to Scott's generosity, we also have eight new Outstanding Researchers to celebrate!! Tonight we will introduce each of our new members and announce award recipients, and give them a chance to introduce themselves and their research.

Highlights of the past year:

As we pause to reflect on the hardships for so many the past year, we also have much to celebrate. We were able to hold four, well attended remote lectures this year. Our fall started out with a fantastic lecture by Joy Mutare Kanu on her career path as a Zimbabwean Immigrant to Portland. In November we held a lively panel discussion on the Social Dimensions of Global Pandemics, which included Dr. David Bangsberg, the dean of the PSU/OSHU School of Public health, Dr. Brian Cwick, associate professor of Philosophy at PSU (and a past Outstanding Research award winner), Dr. Lauran Frank, Associate Professor of Communications at Portland State University, and Dr. Lynne Messer, associate professor of community health at the OSHU/PSU school of public health.

In March, we hosted a panel by Dr. Alexander Hunt, an associate professor in the Masheesh College of Engineering and his graduate student, to talk about the interconnections between biology and engineering when studying locomotion in robots.

We ended our seminar series this year with our Distinguished Lecture event, co-hosted with the PSU office of Research and Graduate Studies. Dr. Oge Marques who gave a fantastic talk on Advancements in Artificial Intelligence. Dr. Marques was able to reassure us all that robots are not, in fact, likely to take over the world any time soon.

This year we also partnered with the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation to recruit student moderators for each of our lectures. This gave students interested in pursuing research careers the opportunity to build relationships with peers, practice their public speaking skills and get to know members of the SX community.

Due to the pandemic, our local chapter did not hold a student research symposium for the first time in more than 15 years. However, the board was able to continue its commitment to supporting student research in several ways. Several board members served as judges for the annual Sigma Xi meeting, which was held remotely in Nov 2020, as local science fair judges for NWSE and, lastly, as both judges and award sponsors for the PSU Research Week Student Symposium. As part of the symposium, board members served as judges and learned about the many exciting research projects students were able to continue, even during the pandemic. We are looking forward to holding an in person Student Research Symposium in Winter or spring of 2022, likely in collaboration with the Oregon Academy of science, given the success of our event in 2020.

Another important chapter function is to provide additional support for students who are awarded Grants-in-Aid of Research by Sigma Xi. These students are among the 20% of applicants whose proposals are successful in this rigorous review process, and they represent highest potential for continuing progress in research. We supplement their awards with \$100 from the chapter. This year we had TWO winners from our region, that Tom will introduce later on this evening.

We continue to do outreach for community science. This year Linda has continued to work with several local high school educators to facilitate the Sigma Xi Explorer clubs, which provide High School students with professional development tools and scientific training to build a strong foundation for college success.

The board grew by 3 members in 2020/2021, including two new student members. You will get to meet all of our new board members at the end of the evening as we also say goodbye to two long term members and thank them for their service. This year the board, like everyone else, mastered the art of Zoom and was able to meet successfully on a monthly basis and continue to advance our agenda. The current officers and board members continue to work on maintaining a healthy chapter, which included continued strong fiscal management by our wonderful co-Treasurers Tom Hard and Cheryl Reed-Williams, focused efforts of supporting early career researchers and building stronger connections with the Oregon Academy of Science. We are presently planning to continue to develop updated by-laws with strong succession plan, to ensure the long-term health of the chapter.

This winter and spring has brought challenges and hardship to our Sigma Xi community in so many different ways. Teachers have worked hard to engage and support their students remotely, which I have learned in my own classroom, is no small feat! Researchers have been pushed to new limits to help find solutions to the many health challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. STEM scientists and our broader community continue to battle the implications of pervasive structural racism in our fields and are working hard to ensure that "supporting diversity" is more than just

words. Scientists everywhere are working to increase bonds of trust and communication with the public. However, we are so encouraged by the good work we see everywhere in our region. We would like to take a moment to acknowledge the effort every one of our Sigma Xi members has put into rising to these many challenges.

Finally, we are here because we believe in Sigma Xi's mission: "to enhance the health of the research enterprise, foster integrity in science, and promote the public's understanding of science for the purpose of improving the human condition." In addition, our chapter is committed to supporting the next generation of researchers, and particularly those from our underrepresented communities, with our outreach and student activities. We look forward to more activities promoting these goals next year. Thank you all for your continued involvement and support of Sigma Xi Columbia Willamette Chapter!