

President's Report for Sigma Xi Annual Meeting

June 15th, 2023

Good evening, my name is Dr. Stephanie Sundborg and I am co-president elect for the SX CW chapter board of directors. Along with our current President, Dr. Annie Lindgren we are delighted to welcome you to our Annual Meeting, this year being held at the University of Portland. As we transition to this next year, we thought it would be helpful if you could put some faces to our names so I will present the President's Report and the other co-Presidents (Dr. Tamara Phillips-Richards, and Dr. Aaron Wootton) will jump in during other parts of the program. But, let's start off by taking a moment to thank our wonderful host, Dr. Aaron Wootton for graciously welcoming us to this lovely campus.

Tonight, we come together to connect, welcome new chapter members, learn about the range of impressive research in our community and celebrate a snapshot of the wonderful scientific achievements in our region that exemplify Sigma Xi.

We are delighted to welcome 3 new members to our Sigma Xi community and are eager for many of the non-members attending tonight to consider joining Sigma Xi.

Tonight, thanks to the generosity of Scott Burns, we will celebrate the work of 4 Outstanding Researchers. We will also give a Sigma Xi award to an Outstanding Educator in recognition of how they further the goals and vision of Sigma Xi.

We look forward to hearing more about the exciting and impressive work during the program.

Events from the past year:

This year has been busy for the Sigma Xi-Columbia Willamette chapter and I'd like to take a few minutes to highlight what we have been up to.

We had the opportunity to host in person lectures for the first time in several years, most recently welcoming our Sigma Xi Distinguished Lecturer, Dr. Laurie McNeil, who presented [*Good Vibrations: the Interplay of Music and Physics*](#), 10 May 2023. While Dr. McNeil was visiting, she met with numerous students including the Physics Society and LSAMP and attended two dinners with Sigma Xi board members.

In April: Richard Alley, [*Finding the Good News on Climate and Energy*](#), 20 April 2023 [also: [visual slideshow](#)]. While this event was remote, we also hosted an in-person viewing party for PSU students and faculty. The chapter has been including presentations annually on different aspects of climate change, and this one allowed us to have a presentation by a researcher who has been active since the 1990s with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) through his role as an SX DL. He is also a research colleague of Board Member Dr. Scott Burns.

In April: We held the Pugh/Lange event. This hands-on event, which provided an overview of the important work done by PSU's Cascadia Meteorite Institute, was given by its leading researchers including their grad students, and it included a tour of their laboratory and a reception. This research lab was of the type that we might want to feature in the future, so we were happy for this opportunity to collaborate.

In December: Paul Lokith, [*The Meteorology and Climatology of the 2021 Pacific Northwest Mega Heat Wave*](#), 01 Dec 2022. This presentation, by a local prior Outstanding Researcher award winner gave insights into a local meteorological event that may or may not be related to climate change.

Prior to this talk, Sigma Xi members attended a viewing and dedication of Peter Abrahams quartz crystal collection in Cramer Hall. Some of you may remember Peter as a long-time board member and supporter of SX-CW. He held the position of secretary for many years on the board.

In October we hosted our 2022 Outstanding Supporter of Research Award Winner, Dr. Carlo Abbruzzese, [*Restoring Oak Forest and Wet Prairie at Washougal Oaks and Lacamas Prairie Natural Areas*](#), 27 Oct 2022. This talk was really well attended including from members of the Native Plant Society and the Extension Service Master Gardeners who wanted to understand better how their work related to the researcher's scientific findings. We were so encouraged to see this broad interest and the seeds of what could be future collaborations.

K-12 STEM support:

This year, we resumed our Annual Wine-tasting Benefit, but rather than raise funds for SX-CW, we focused our efforts on raising funds for the Northwest Science Fair Expo in recognition of its 40th anniversary. NWSE is Oregon's state-wide science competition for high school students and is affiliated with the International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF). NWSE has served more than 18,000 students and given away over 7000 awards, ranging from ribbons to scholarships. Team Oregon, the group of state and local prize winners that represents us at ISEF, has brought home over \$3.9 million in prizes since its founding in 2003. Sigma Xi C-W supported NWSE's fundraising this year in honor of the hard work of the students, teachers, judges, and sponsors who encourage the students and make the fair happen. Through ticket sales and donations, we were able to raise over \$6,000. In addition to providing fiscal support, many SX board members continue to serve as judges, consultants and mentors for both middle and high school science fair students in our region.

GIAR Update:

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 the highest potential for continuing progress in research. For local awardees, SX-CW supplements their awards with \$100 from the chapter. Unfortunately, this year, there were no winners from our region. If you are in a position to encourage student researchers to apply in the future, we hope you will. We are happy to provide you with additional information, if needed.

Board Leadership

All of this great work wouldn't be possible without an engaged and active Board of Directors.

I want to give a special thank you to two board members in particular who have done an extraordinary amount of work on behalf of SW-CX.

First, I'd like to acknowledge the great contribution made by our President, Annie Lindgren. Annie had big shoes to fill following the leadership provided by Linda Mantel, and she has done an exceptional job – and during the very challenging Covid period where we were forced to change the ways we gather and offer programming and support. During her tenure, Annie kept everything going and stayed in touch with everyone, while keeping her own responsibilities in multiple areas – including advising grad students, teaching, continuing her own research, and leading the academics and student representation in the reimagine/redesign/remodel of Vernier Science Center formerly known as SBII. The Board with Annie's help is working to move some initiatives forward that focus on success in a post-covid research world – something that wasn't possible during the height of the pandemic.

I'd also like to acknowledge and give a big thank you to Michelle Girts who graciously stepped in during our leadership transition to offer consistency and structure. She created a seamless transition that allowed our important work to continue. During Michelle's time as a Director, she has spent the majority of her time serving as an officer – filling the role of secretary for many years. We all really appreciate Michelle's collaborative leadership style which reflects confidence, competence, and a great deal of wisdom. Unfortunately, after 14 years on the board, Michelle will be stepping down as a director, but we look forward to her continued involvement with our chapter.

This year, the board continued to hold monthly meetings via Zoom to advance our agenda. The current officers and board members worked on maintaining a healthy chapter, which included continued strong fiscal management by our wonderful treasurer Cheryl Reed-Williams, and thorough record keeping supported by our Secretary Melissa Steinman.

We are also in the process of finalizing updates to our bylaws and a firm succession plan to ensure the long-term health of the chapter. This includes a new leadership structure, a trio of co-Presidents representing 3 distinct universities within our chapter region. This team includes Dr. Aaron Wootton from University of Portland, Dr. Tamara Philips-Richards from Oregon Health and Sciences University, and myself – Stephanie Sundborg from Portland State University. We believe this approach will make our chapter stronger and allow us to connect more extensively across PSU, OHSU, and University of Portland to involve and encourage the broad regional research community.

As we look to the future, we are looking for community members who would like to engage more with the board and the local chapter. Our board has worked to create new "committees" to engage more effectively with academic, industrial and community partners. To date we have created 9 working groups, which you can read more about at our information table. If you are interested in joining any of these committees, feel free to speak with any board members and/or list your name, email address and committee of interest down on the sheet at our check in table. We look forward to working with you all more!

Closing

In closing, I would like to end this report with encouragement and hope. There are many reasons to be discouraged and worried these days, but science remains a beacon of hope. Each of the important programs we offered this year highlighted reasons to be encouraged. And looking at the work happening around the Columbia-Willamette region, I am more hopeful for

our future than ever before. 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!