

Student Science Policy Award Committee, Annual Report (2023-2024)

Committee Members: J. A. Cook, A. V. Linzey, M. C. Schlis-Elias (Chair), A. Shenko, S. A. Smiley, & Jyotsna Pandey (Ex officio)

Mission: This committee administers the Student Science Policy Award (SSPA) which can be bestowed upon multiple graduate students each year. This award was created to facilitate ASM student members' involvement and training in science public policy. The award would not be possible without the collaboration of the American Institute of Biological Sciences (AIBS).

Information Items:

(1) In January 2024, our committee advertised the ASM Student Science Policy Award available to graduate student members. We utilized social media and Mammal-L to advertise the 2024 award announcement. Making the award visible to potential candidates remains a challenge. We received few applications, but those received were reviewed favorably by the committee members with unanimous votes of support.

(2) Our 2024 award recipients were Anna Willoughby from the University of Georgia and Gabriel Gadsden from Yale University. Both students accepted the award and traveled to Washington, D. C. to participate in Congressional Visits Day (CVD) from April 15th-17th, 2024. Dr. Jyotsna Pandey reported positively concerning the ASM student awardees following the CVD and both students reported having a very positive and impactful experience with the training and CVD events.

(3) In December 2023, Sarah Smiley invited me (Mariah Schlis-Elias) to take on the role of committee Chair, which Sarah had held for about a decade. I accepted this invitation and worked together with Sarah during this award cycle to aid in the transition of duties. Sarah remains a member of the Student Science Policy Award Committee. Otherwise, no alterations to the committee's composition occurred.

(4) The SSPA committee members desire to continue to offer this program as long as it is supported by ASM and AIBS.

Action Items:

(1) The SSPA Committee requests \$6,000 to sponsor two students to attend Congressional Visits Day in Washington D.C. in spring 2025. The Award cost includes transportation, lodging, food, planning, logistical support, and a full day of policy training (Communications Training Boot Camp) provided by AIBS. The funding request increase over last year reflects higher costs associated with travel and lodging as reported by AIBS.

This award will continue to engage mammalogy students in conversations with policymakers on Capitol Hill. These interactions increase the scientific awareness of policymakers through discussions with awardees concerning the benefits of funding mammalian research, natural history collections, biological field stations, the National Science Foundation, and other programs. The awardees benefit from policy training, experiential learning, and interactions with federal scientists and respected policy decision-makers. The award is important for creating a future generation of mammalogists who are engaged in the science-policy interface and can serve as an active voice for our community. We've had very positive feedback from past student participants.

(2) We ask ASM members to help promote the award to current graduate students who have an interest in science policy. Many applicants apply from word-of-mouth advertisements. We anticipate next year's application deadline to be in late January 2025, contingent on funding renewal.

Respectfully submitted,

Mariah Schlis-Elias, Chair
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