

African Graduate Student Fund Committee

Committee Members: Risky Agwanda, Jesse Alston, Bruce Buttler, Adam Ferguson, Jacob Goheen (past Chair), Anne-Marie Hodge, Prince Kaleme, Alicia Linzey, Molly McDonough, Patricia Moehlman, Ryan Norris, Link Olson (Chair), Safian Rabiou, Chloé Warret Rodrigues, Robert Rose, Duane Schlitter, Matthew Snider, and Sydney Stephens.

Mission:

The African Graduate Student Research Fund committee grants awards to African nationals pursuing graduate degrees in the form of \$1,500 grants and online membership in the American Society of Mammalogists. Eligible students must be citizens of African countries and currently enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program.

Information Items:

(1) The African Graduate Student Research Fund committee was an *ad hoc* committee formed in 2013 and was promoted to a standing committee in 2016. Currently, 18 members comprise the committee, including two new members for 2020 (J. Alston and M. Snider). Founding member Jake Goheen officially stepped down as chair in July 2018 but continues to mentor and advise current chair Link Olson. Please contact Goheen or Olson if you are interested in serving on this committee. We are particularly interested in additional members from African institutions.

(2) In 2012, the committee began collecting contributions towards an endowment fund that would support this program in perpetuity. The balance of this fund stood at roughly \$51,000 as of 31 March 2020, down approximately 22% from 2019 and \$15,667 short of the \$66,667 minimum necessary to award two \$1,500 grants from annual interest. In 2019, two awards were made with the interest generated from the endowment and two more were made with *ad hoc* funding from several generous donors. In 2020, a total of \$21,080 was received in donations, \$3,000 of which was requested by the donor(s) to be used to fund two additional 2020 awards beyond that or those supported by interest from the endowment. Of the remaining donated funds, \$16,000 is intended to be used to support a symposium proposed for the 2021 meetings (see Action Item 2), and \$2,080 was donated towards the endowment. An additional \$1,500 donation has been promised by a member of this committee who has stipulated that it be used to fund a 2020 award, for a total of three awards funded by donors this year. ASM members interested in contributing to this fund should earmark their donations to ASM with the notation “African Graduate Student Research Fund.”

(3) In 2020 we received 24 applications from citizens of 12 African countries enrolled in 20 institutions spanning 15 countries and three continents. This is down from a record 55 applications received in 2019 but still ranks as the third-largest number received in a single year since the inaugural competition in 2014. Whether the COVID-19 pandemic had any effect on application numbers is unknown. We anticipate awarding four grants this year.

(4) In 2020, the application deadline was moved back one month, from 15 March to 15 April, on a trial basis in order to shorten the turnaround time. Recipients will be notified by no later than 30 May 2020, and their names will be formally announced via the Society's web page and social media outlets when other annual awards are announced in June. Each awardee will receive a grant for \$1,500 and an online, three-year sponsored membership to the American Society of Mammalogists.

Action Items:

(1) The committee seeks board approval to make one \$1,500 award for 2020 from the endowment. An additional three awards have been made possible through donations (see above).

(2) Along with the International Relations, Conservation, and Human Diversity Committees, the committee is co-sponsoring the effort to organize a symposium entitled, “Recent advances in the conservation of African mammals” at the 2021 joint American Society of Mammalogists–International Mammalogical Congress in Anchorage, Alaska. This symposium would represent the first effort to increase exposure of meeting attendees to historically underrepresented geographic regions, and attendance by mammalogists from these regions. With the Board’s support, it is our intent that this symposium would represent the first in a longer-term commitment by ASM to promote global diversity of mammalogists and mammalogy. A request is being considered for the next ASM budgetary cycle for the Board to consider matching funds of up to \$9000, which the Board unanimously supported in an informal straw poll at the annual meeting in Washington D.C., as reflected in the unabridged minutes from last year's meeting. Since this time, our committees have raised \$21,000 for this effort. We ask for the Board's support in dedicating \$9,000 to this effort.

Respectfully submitted,
Link E. Olson, Chair
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