

**National Association of Plant Breeders
Early Career Working Group
July 29, 2020**

2019/2020 Annual Report

The Early Career Working Group (ECWG) of the NAPB has the mission of assisting self-defined early career professionals with three primary objectives: securing professional employment and defining their career paths; providing social spaces to establish relationships with their peers; and to provide service and mentoring opportunities.

In September of 2019, the ECWG leadership transitioned and Amanda Hulse-Kemp and Sushan Ru entered as committee co-chairs and Nilesh Dighe as secretary. Sushan Ru had to resign from her leadership role mid-year, and the leadership was readjusted with Nilesh Dighe as co-chair and Dan Packer as secretary.

With these objectives in mind, the ECWG has the following accomplishments and activities to report September 2019 – July 2020:

Securing professional employment and defining career paths:

- Hosted the second annual webinar series titled “From Here to There: The Twists and Turns of a Plant Breeding Career”.
- Three monthly webinars hosted in March 2020, April 2020 and May 2020 using the NAPB Zoom account interviewing established Plant Breeding professionals about their career paths and advice for emerging professionals across a variety of disciplines.
- Webinar interview participants represented professionals from private industry, academia, commodity groups, and extension (see Figure 1).
- Webinars were coordinated and hosted by ECWG members at three different institutions: Driscolls, University of Florida, and Start-ups.
- Webinars were recorded (2 out of 3, lost one due to technical difficulties) and uploaded to YouTube on the NAPB channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/plantbreedgenomics/videos>).



Figure 1. Flyer created to advertise the Early Career Working Group “From here to there” second event of the 2020 series.

Providing social spaces to establish relationships with their peers:

- Hosted three online “Coffee Hours” in December 2019 and February 2020, months where other meetings/webinars were not scheduled.
 - Casual, online video meeting hosted midday across time zones.
 - Each “Coffee Hour” had a designated host in charge of establishing a meeting link, advertising, and providing conversational starts.
 - Topics included: “Designing your DREAM Plant Breeding Job”, “Brining Diversity into Your Breeding Program”.
 - Attendance varied from 3-8 participants.
 - One event in June 2020 was scheduled but did not occur due to COVID-19 involved technical difficulties, planned topic “Working in Interdisciplinary Teams”
 - The ECWG intends to start hosting these again after the 2020 Annual Meeting.
- Planning social interactions at the 2020 Annual Meeting.

- ECWG networking lunch break – scheduled for Wednesday, August 19th at the 2020 Annual Meeting. (Listed on official schedule thanks for planning committee.)
- We will host an interactive icebreaker event along with normal meeting activities during the break.

Enhance Training Opportunities and Exposure for Early Career Researchers:

- Advocated for speaking selection spot for Early Career Researcher at Annual Meetings.
 - Speaker spot selected from Early Career Researcher abstracts submitted for poster presentation at the Annual Meeting by the Education Committee.
- Working with Communications Committee to have a newly added Early Career Member highlight in the organization Newsletter.
- Initiated Interactive Discussion Topics during normal Monthly meetings to engage participants.

Upcoming Concerns moving Into Next Year:

- Entire leadership of the Committee will need to be replaced for the upcoming year due to ineligibility of serving additional time for currently serving members.
- Difficulty maintaining interactive committee members, need to be able to better recruit younger active members moving from student to Early Career positions.
 - Require support from the Membership and Annual Meeting Registration committees to better track Early Career Researchers including specification of Postdoctoral Researchers in the overall organization.