

**National Association of Plant Breeders
Early Career Working Group
June 2022**

2021/2022 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 2021, the ECWG leadership was entirely renewed with three new board members:

- Chair: Sarah Turner-Hissong
- Vice Chair: Chandler Levinson
- Secretary: Nikayla Strauss

The year was overall very positive for the ECWG. The monthly meetings continued trends from the previous year and were attended by 5 to 15 people, with a core group of 10 persons attending most meetings.

With these objectives in mind, the ECWG has the following accomplishments and activities to report September 2021 – July 2022.

Securing professional employment and defining career paths:

- Hosted the fourth annual webinar series highlighting partnerships among the public, private, and non-profit sectors of plant breeding.
 - May 2022: Panel discussion with the Land Institute (non-profit breeding organization)
 - Tessa Peters, director of Crop Stewardship
 - Brandon Schlautman, Lead Scientist on perennial legumes
 - Kathryn Turner, Lead Scientist in crop protection genetics
 - June 2022: Panel discussion on public-private partnerships featuring panelists from industry, academia, and breeding organizations titled ‘How to establish and maintain successful public-private partnerships’
 - Lukas Mueller from The Boyce Thompson Institute, who collaborates with breeding groups to develop bioinformatics databases (e.g. Cassavabase)
 - Sara Lira from Corteva, who works in emerging cropping systems
 - François Korn, who established SeedQuest to facilitate agricultural collaborations
 - Webinars were recorded and are awaiting upload to the NAPB Youtube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/plantbreedgenomics/videos>)

Providing social spaces to establish relationships with their peers:

- Fostered social interactions in the second half of the monthly meetings
 - In September 2021, we sent out a survey to ECWG members to rank topics of interest for informal discussion among peers
 - Based on topic ranking, we hosted informal ‘coffee chats’ after each monthly ECWG meeting so that members could share their experiences and advice and ask for input from other members
 - Casual, online video meeting hosted midday across time zones as part of the monthly ECWG meeting
 - Topics included: “how and when to change career paths”, “general early career challenges”, “negotiation strategies (new job, promotion, etc.)”, “how to apply for industry jobs”, and “diversity, equity, and inclusion in mentorship”
 - Attendance averaged around 9-10 participants
 - We managed to take the time to have these conversations at every meeting, with the conversation sometimes extending longer. The goal of this was to increase connection between members of the ECWG, which was successful.
- Planning social interactions at the 2022 Annual Meeting.
 - ECWG meeting and networking event scheduled for the evening of August 9th from 5:30-7:30pm with arrangements at Dublin Bay, Ames thanks to the Planning Committee
 - We will host an interactive icebreaker event along with normal meeting activities

Enhance Training Opportunities and Exposure for Early Career Researchers:

- Early Career highlights continued for the NAPB newsletter

Researched communication infrastructure options for NAPB committees:

- Met with NAPB zoom representative to outline options for managing the zoom account so that there is more flexibility across committees
- Proposed an individual pro license for each committee chair (\$150 each/year), which can be transferred to new chairs annually, and webinar licenses for the Education Committee and GSWG (\$400 each/year)

Upcoming Concerns moving Into Next Year:

- Confirm that webinar recordings are uploaded to YouTube channel
- Re-establish Mentoring Circle program (in progress)
- Collaborate with GSWG and Education committee on webinars
- Maintain participation of active members and encourage participation from new members