



American Society of Plant Biologists

Cultivating a better future through plant biology research

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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ASPB Announces Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship 2017 Recipients

Rockville, MD (June 1, 2017) Fifteen students mentored by members of the American Society of Plant Biologists (ASPB) were selected to receive the 2017 ASPB Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURF). The \$4,000 fellowship permits each student to devote full-time effort to his or her research project for a 10-week period during the summer. The award also includes \$700 to the mentor or institution for lab supplies, a free student membership in ASPB for one year, and travel grant assistance to attend the 2018 ASPB Plant Biology meeting.

There were 26 Category A (Research and Doctoral Universities) and 11 Category B (Master's Universities, Baccalaureate Colleges, and Associate of Art Colleges) applicants for a total of 37 highly competitive projects. The reviewers were impressed by the high quality of all the applicants' projects and the commitment of the students and their mentors to their ongoing research.

The SURF program was once again co-chaired by Michael Campbell, Penn State, and Burkhard Schulz, University of Maryland. This is the seventeenth year of the program. SURF is funded by the ASPB Executive Committee and ASPB Good Works funds. SURF chairs and other ASPB members support the fellowship program in many ways, including reviewing applications, selecting recipients and supporting their research.

Complete project descriptions and photos can be viewed at the ASPB website: <http://bit.ly/2017SURF>.
The 2017 SURF winners are:

Group A – Doctoral Granting Institutions

Samantha Connolly, University of Vermont

Project: Determining the Function of NPF1A in *Lotus japonicus*

Mentor: Dr. Jeanne M. Harris

Cameron Criswell, Texas A&M University

Project: Understanding Plant Cell Death With “bak to life” Screens

Mentor: Dr. Ping He

David “Max” Hagelthorn, UC Davis

Project: Functional Characterization of Stress-Inducible Diterpene Synthases in Switchgrass

Mentor: Dr. Philipp Zerbe

Christopher Imler, University of Florida

Project: Genetic and biochemical evidence for direct rhizosphere acidification in *Vaccinium corymbosum*
Mentor: Dr. Gerardo Nunez

Victoria Morris, University of California, Riverside

Project: Microtubule Dynamics in Cell Division using Maize Tangled1
Mentor: Dr. Carolyn Rasmussen

McKenzie Pickle, University of California, Riverside

Project: Role of Microtubule Dynamics in Cell Division using Maize tangled-1 Mutant
Mentor: Dr. Carolyn Rasmussen

Angus Rae, University of Newcastle, Australia

Project: Measuring Cell Wall Anisotropy in Arabidopsis Roots Using Polarised Fluorescence
Mentor: Dr. David Collings

Alex Riley, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

Project: System Genetics of Rhizobium Mutualists of Varying Partner Quality
Mentor: Dr. Amy Marshall-Colon

Elizabeth Winnicki, University of Hawaii at Manoa

Project: Analyzing the Genetic Diversity of the Varieties of Sweet Potato Found in Hawaii & North America
Mentor: Dr. Michael Kantar

Robert Yvon, University of Massachusetts

Project: Discovering the Connections of the FERONIA Receptor Kinase and its Functional Partners in Arabidopsis
Mentor: Dr. Alice Cheung

Group B – Primarily Undergraduate Institutions

Patricia Goytortua, Instituto Politécnico Nacional

Project: Effect of having a PT or Pising allele associated with lipid metabolism of maize plants grown in Mexican Highland conditions.
Mentor: Dr. Rubén Rellán-Álvarez

Kenneth Kim, University of West Georgia

Project: Molecular characterization of two high light sensitive *Chlamydomonas reinhardtii* mutants, defective in a novel functionally uncharacterized gene.
Mentor: Dr. Mautusi Mitra

Taylor Lewis, Radford University

Project: Computational Modeling of the AS1/AS2 Complex
Mentor: Dr. Tara Phelps-Durr

Lauren Pope, James Madison University

Project: Structural and Physiological Characterization of *Arabidopsis thaliana* β -Amylase 2: a Unique Starch-degrading Enzyme

Mentor: Dr. Jonathan Monroe

Jennifer Walz, University of St. Thomas

Project: Determining the role of xanthophyll cycle dynamics and thermal energy dissipation in the desiccation tolerance of common bryophytes in Minnesota.

Mentor: Dr. Amy Verhoeven

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ASPB is a professional scientific society, headquartered in Rockville, Maryland, devoted to the advancement of the plant sciences worldwide. With a membership of some 4,500 plant scientists from throughout the United States and more than 50 other nations, the Society publishes two of the most widely cited plant science journals: *The Plant Cell* and *Plant Physiology*. For more information about ASPB, please visit <http://www.aspb.org/>. Also follow ASPB on Facebook at [facebook.com/myASPB](https://www.facebook.com/myASPB) and on Twitter [@ASPB](https://twitter.com/ASPB).

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