



President-Elect

Candidate Statement



Neelima R. Sinha

In the Centennial year of the ASPB, the society continues to advance plant biology research, nurture the next generation of scientists, foster community support, and build a forum for global scientific communication. Current challenges faced by our society, including the pressing issues of climate change, habitat destruction, human health challenges, and food insecurity seem evident. In this pivotal moment, as we confront these global crises, there is an imperative for collective action within the plant biology community and beyond. However, the crucial role that plants can play in mitigating the effects of climate change and environmental degradation is underappreciated, a chasm of understanding that permeates from the classrooms of K-12 education to the echelons of society. As we reflect on our

progress in combating prejudice and discrimination, both within our ranks and beyond, we acknowledge the journey ahead lies in fostering a truly inclusive and nurturing environment for all, particularly our emerging scholars.

I firmly believe that cooperation across different areas of plant biology is of great importance in accelerating growth of knowledge.

Amidst the tapestry of my career, woven with threads of inquiry and discovery, I have traversed continents, delving into the intricate mysteries of plant physiology and development. From the hallowed halls of Lucknow University to the fertile grounds of UC Berkeley, and now as a Distinguished Professor at UC Davis, I strove to imbue each step with the spirit of collaboration and inquiry. I have been extremely fortunate to have an exceptional group of students and post-doctoral scholars choose to work with me. This group of young scientists is already making significant contributions to plant sciences and to ASPB, with ~20 of them in faculty or group leader positions world-wide. They have journeyed alongside me, pushing the boundaries of knowledge, unraveling the enigma of plant evolution, and more recently moving these phylogenetically anchored studies to understanding the evolution of plant drought and submergence stress responses. Our most recent research focus on plant parasitism has considerable significance to crop productivity in the US and world-wide. I firmly believe that cooperation across different areas of plant biology is of great importance in accelerating growth of knowledge. My approach is to “develop questions together” in a collaborative setting, rather than starting with a set of “pre-determined inquiries.”



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Neelima R. Sinha (continued)

At UC Davis I served as Chair of the Plant Biology Graduate Group and helped set up a student mentoring committee long before such efforts became mandated by the Graduate Division. I made a significant push to broaden the pool of applicants who apply to enter the PhD program. I also served on many faculty recruitment committees where our goal was to make exceptionally qualified candidates aware of the campus efforts to enhance diversity and to encourage them to think of ways in which they could contribute to the diverse student body on a campus that is soon to be designated a minority serving institution. I was the first in my family to come to the USA for higher education. As an immigrant, the diversity in the student body (where I was in a minority) became immediately apparent. My lived experiences taught me that we have a lot more that unites us than divides us. I am committed to promoting diversity in science. My commitment to undergraduate teaching and training includes offering CURE experiences in my upper division developmental plant anatomy lab course. Several of my undergraduate students have contributed as co-authors on published papers. These training efforts garnered me the Chancellor's award for Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentorship at UC Davis. I am currently a Distinguished Professor in Plant Biology at UC Davis and was elected as an AAAS Fellow in 2007. I was invited to deliver the Kaplan Memorial lecture in 2016 by the Botanical Society of America and received their Pelton Award in 2017. I serve as an elected at-large member of the Agriculture, Food and Renewable Resources Section (O) steering committee of AAAS.

My association with ASPB spans 25 years, and during this time I have contributed to ASPB in a variety of ways. In addition to preferentially publishing in *Plant Physiology* and *The Plant Cell*, I serve as a Monitoring Editor for *Plant Physiology*. In this role, I served as Co-editor for three *Plant Physiology* Focus Issues. In 2018 I was elected ASPB Fellow and have just completed a 3-year term as Chair of the ASPB Fellows nomination committee. I also served on the then Minority Affairs Committee and am currently an ASPB Legacy Society member. My journey with ASPB has been dedicated to advancing the frontiers of plant biology. From shepherding manuscripts through the rigorous peer-review process to spearheading initiatives for broader scientific literacy, my commitment to the society runs deep. If entrusted with the honor of leadership, I pledge to champion initiatives that not only elevate our scientific discourse but empower the next generation of plant biologists and enlighten society at large about the indispensable role of plants in sustaining life on our planet.