Summary of the International Conference on Arabidopsis Research 2008, July 23-27, 2008

Final Scientific and Technical Report for the period June 15, 2008 to June 14, 2009

Issued Fall 2009

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This project provided participant support for the gathering of plant biologists at the International Conferences on Arabidopsis Research (ICAR) in 2008. The conference is the largest annual international Arabidopsis venue, which allowed the exchange of information at the forefront of Arabidopsis research and facilitated the establishment of new, and the strengthening of old, collaborations and networks. In addition, the conference provides the site for the annual meetings of the Multinational Arabidopsis Steering Committee and the NAASC. The successful meeting had a diverse attendance of 815 scientists from around the world including 322 from the United States, 146 from Canada, 179 from Europe, 134 from Asia, and 34 from a combination of Australia, South America, Africa and the Middle East. The scientific program was of excellent quality featuring 64 talks, including 41 from invited speakers. There were also 6 community-organized workshops featuring 30 additional talks on topics including 'Frontiers in Plant Systems Biology,' 'Sources and strategies for Gene Structure, Gene Function, and Metabolic Pathway annotation at TAIR and AraCyc,' 'Advanced Bioinformatic Resources for Arabidopsis,' 'Laser Microtechniques and Applications with Arabidopsis,' 'Plant Proteomics-Tools, Approaches, Standards and Breakthroughs in Studying the Proteome,' and 'Phytohormone Biosynthesis and Signal Transduction.' A special seminar by Jim Collins, of the National Science Foundation, was arranged to provide information and a discussion forum regarding the future of Arabidopsis research and NSF's funding strategies. Approximately 575 conference posters were presented in general topic areas ranging from Development to Signal Transduction to Genomics to Interactions with Biotic and Abiotic Factors. A survey completed by approximately 40% of the meeting attendees showed high satisfaction with the quality of the presentations, meeting organization and the city of Montreal.

Graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, junior faculty, and underrepresented minorities made up half of the oral presentations thereby promoting the training of young scientists and facilitating important career development opportunities for speakers. Several poster sessions including food provided an opportunity for younger participants to freely meet with more established scientists. The North American Arabidopsis Steering Committee (NAASC) continued its outreach effort and again sponsored two special luncheons to encourage personal and professional development of young scientists and also underrepresented minorities. All conference abstracts and the full program were posted at The Arabidopsis Information Resource (TAIR), a publicly-accessible website (www.arabidopsis.org/news/abstracts.jsp.) TAIR staff members led one workshop and participated in another to convey information to the community about Arabidopsis resources. In addition, conference staff waived the exhibitor fee to allow TAIR to present a community-outreach booth in the exhibit hall. This allowed conference participants to obtain personal instruction on using TAIR. Registration awards were given to selected applicants from the US, Canada, and from outside US/Canada (Note: awards to non-US applicants were funded through outside sponsorship and Canadian fundraising.)