

## Minutes of the Fly Board Meeting—07202020

Minutes taken by Mark Peifer, Past-President, and approved by the FlyBoard

### 1. Thanks to out-going members, welcome to incoming members

Mariana introduced the meeting, offered thanks to outgoing FlyBoard members and welcomed new members, including our President Elect Tin Tin Su. She also welcomed Denise Montell, current GSA President and Hugo Bellen, incoming GSA President, and the GSA Executive Director and Staff. She summarized the planned agenda.

Mariana then highlighted three major issues and one more minor currently facing our community. 1. NIH and NSF funding, and the importance of model organism research. 2. Future of Fly Meeting. 3. Diversity and Inclusion. 4. Adding a Trainee Representative.

### 2. Reports from the Bloomington Stock Center and the VDRC

Bloomington Drosophila Stock Center (Kevin Cook): The stock center is doing OK. 80 folks help run the stock center. The last few months have been dominated by the adjustment to covid-19, including the usual social distancing and other measures and planning for possible personnel absence (e.g. cross-training). Shipments were suspended for 7 weeks and orders have been down by 50%, reducing fee income (70% of operating budget comes from this source and they had to pay workers time and a half during the shutdown). This led to a significant budget deficit. They are looking at a fee increase of 25-55% for 2021 (e.g., a 25% increase would be from ~\$5.50/stock to ~\$7/ stock). This is not entirely due to covid-19 as there has been a long time freeze in fees. The hope is NIH may provide some additional funding, but there is no concrete information. Kevin was asked if there were fee waivers. Kevin pointed out that this consideration had been a feature in the past but it had been abused.

VDRC (Lisa Meadows): The situation is much the same as for Bloomington. People were working shifts. No stocks were lost. They are now back to normal in shipping. Orders are way down and this is also leading to budgetary issues. They have 4 years of funding in place--It's unknown how this deficit will be resolved. They may have to increase fees, or discard more low-use stocks.

### 3. Discussion from representatives of other community resources.

FlySlack: Erika Geisbrecht reports there are now 229 members. Please help advertise this resource to the community.  
flyslackco.slack.com

FlyBase (Norbert Perrimon). The covid-19 impact is relatively low, due to the fact that most folks could work remotely. They are in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a 5-year grant—this included a 35% cut. Some money has been collected from voluntary community fees (~\$300K over 2 years). A small grant has been submitted to NSF in June. They are working on integrating single cell data with the help of Fly Cell Atlas and EBI.

Gene Disruption Project, BDGP, etc. (Hugo Bellen and Sue Celnicker). NIGMS refused to consider the GDP renewal grant, as they decided to stop supporting additional grants for model organisms. The GDP is collaborating with Norbert and the FlyBase folks to try the grant at ORIP - Office of Research Infrastructure Programs. Sue Celnicker noted the same issue applies to BDGP grant support.

#### 4. FlyBoard Treasurer's report (Michelle Arbeitman)

She showed data on the funds we have invested—this investment was completed with the help of the GSA. The Finnerty Award could be invested as well—the new Treasurer Jessica Treisman will look into this possibility. The Sandler fund is also administered by the community.

A small committee was convened to discuss use of the reserve funds for travel awards. Michelle then summarized their proposal, which was shared with the Board before the meeting.

In this proposal 5% of the account value would be spent per year. This amount would fund about eight \$599 travel awards. She opened this proposal for discussion. Mariana asked whether we would consider other awards or programs—e.g., the proposal by Tina Tootle asking us to consider funding for a summer outreach program. Tin Tin asked how we would use these funds in the case of a virtual meeting—this situation could be accommodated by changing the name to funding for “Conference attendance”, and making the amount flexible. We could also call them “trainee” awards, or open usage to including “child care awards”. Debbie Andrew advocated for funding high school outreach programs, especially in these times of Black Lives Matter. Tin Tin Su and Tina Tootle summarized the "Eclose" Program run from Fox Chase.

<https://ecloseinstitute.org>

There also was a discussion about whether some of the excess earnings on the Sandler funds could also be used for other purposes. Michelle Arbeitman and Jessica Treisman will look into whether this is financially feasible, and if so we will then consult former Larry Sandler students like Scott Hawley.

A motion was made to 1. Adjust the proposal from the Treasurer to make it clear that the funds earned by the invested Main Endowment can be used more broadly to support efforts to increase trainee attendance and diversity in our community, like the ones we discussed during the meeting. 2. Empower the Treasurers to examine the Sandler and Finnerty balances, determine whether there are sufficient earnings to fund additional uses for this fund, and then involve Scott Hawley in this decision.

25/26 voted yes, and 1 abstained.

#### 5. GSA's roles, initiatives, and relationship to the fly community

Denise Montell (GSA President):

A verbatim copy of Denise's remarks is presented at the end of these Minutes.

Denise pointed out how the last year has re-emphasized the value of scientific societies. The successful transition of TAGC to an online format was an example. 14,000 attended at least part of the meeting. The financial loss was reduced to \$450K, much lower than had been anticipated and it can be considered an investment in the future. This important role of the society also was illustrated in the GSA response to the George Floyd murder and the Black Lives Matter protests. The GSA acknowledged its own failings in DEI and in working in anti-racism. GSA re-opened nominations for the Board to try to find more diverse candidates. GSA also publicly addressed the xenophobic policies of the current administration.

Denise then addressed the relationship between the GSA and the Fly Community. We are the largest of the model organism communities and well represented in the leadership. She noted that we have reserve funds because the GSA took on the financial risks associated with the Fly Meeting, and she reminded us of the role GSA staff play in organizing our meeting. She noted the need for a "meeting organizer guide" as they turn over each year.

Tracey DePellegrin, GSA Executive Director. She began with a brief re-cap of TAGC and the lessons learned. She noted that the Drosophila community played important roles in organizing the meeting. She discussed the challenges of keeping people engaged. She shared stats—including 76,000 hours of recordings watched. Attendees emphasized that while they want to eventually return to in person meetings, they want to keep hybrid features like talk recordings. There were 3500 online registrants from the Drosophila community. Online registration increased the fraction of registrants who were graduate students. 20% reported an under-represented background.

In discussion Laura Johnston pointed out that we need to ask trainees about their feelings about our community, and ensure we listen to their thoughts about how to maximize the benefit of the meeting to trainees. Helena Araujo (Latin American Rep) pointed out that Brazilian institutions won't cover registration costs. Justin DiAngelo (PUI rep) emphasized that the same issues will apply to PUI people, this year in particular. Denise noted that they are mindful of the impact on different communities, but also noted online meetings do cost money. Lynn Cooley reiterated the value of close collaboration between the GSA and the FlyBoard. Amanda Norvell pointed out that hybrid meetings can reduce the environmental impact of the meeting.

## 6. Fly Meetings

### TAGC 2020

Suzy Brown (GSA Meeting Organizer). The Drosophila Community was well represented at TAGC. She offered some additional statistics, and noted the work done by the scientific organizers to put together the science. She noted that the meeting offered a chance to bring in some additional international participants—particularly noted the ability to bring in participants from Brazil and Iran. She pointed out the need to strengthen networking and community

building in an online meeting. There was some discussion about how to improve poster presentations and scheduling them to improve interactions. Suzy noted they are checking out other online meetings (e.g. SDB) to look for innovation. Alan Spradling noted issues with online recording, as the universal data accessibility may be a disincentive to presenters.

Dros2021 plans. Nasser Rusan

Co-chairing with Amy Kiger. The committee also includes Guy Tanentzapf, Nadia Singh, Karen Hales, and Michelle Arbeitman. Their goals—increase participation and match what the community wants. They will look for good ideas from other communities. In early meetings, they quickly chose a Keynote Speaker, Harmit Malik, who agreed. The committee soon realized that planning an all on-line meeting was the best option and they got this idea approved at a variety of levels, with unanimous agreement. Their new goal is: How can we make the best online meeting. They are meeting in alternate weeks—the committee alone alternating with a meeting with GSA staff. They are currently focusing on abstract submission and meeting program.

Major current issues: Timeline—2 days versus week long versus longer. Currently looking at a longer meeting. Zoom fatigue is an issue and that issue is different for PIs and trainees. They are thinking about the issue of parents with kids at home. They recognize that longer timelines mean issues for colleagues with teaching responsibilities. They are accommodating times for Europe and North America participants (11AM-1PM; 2-4PM ET). They are discussing what features can be translated to an online meeting. One decision--Sessions will be assembled based on abstracts submitted rather than creating sessions and binning abstracts to them. They will keep the new PI forum, and add a similar forum for trainees, especially first timers. They are adding a dedicated Plenary on Diversity and Inclusion—this and other ideas are still a work in progress. They will try to keep the lunch network and add post-session break-out rooms. Poster format and the positioning of career development in program are still in the works.

Discussion continued. Questions about the poster sessions were raised. There was a suggestion of lightning talks as a format—this was tried at Crete and worked but it requires strict timing and it can be exhausting. Justin DiAngelo pointed out the fact that for undergraduate presenters a lightning talk would be a challenge—it was suggested that undergrad posters could be separated and it was noted that sessions were smaller and this reduced stress. Suzy Brown offered suggestions based on different options they used during TAGC. Celeste Berg pointed out the need for guidelines for actual poster format. Bruce Edgar pointed out that we should be thinking about the next transition to the 2022 hybrid format. Suzy pointed out that GSA is thinking about this issue of optimizing the format across communities for future hybrid meetings. Nadia Singh discussed the issue of Award naming, and Mariana pointed out that we had discussed this with a decision that we won't name any new awards for people. Amy Kiger emphasized the fact that the committee has increasing inclusion and participation as a major goal.

Future meetings: Mark Peifer reminded us we had previously discussed possible changes to two big picture issues with future meetings—timing and venue. We had opened a discussion of the possibility to go to an every-other year option (potentially alternating with the European Meeting), and whether we want to continue an East Coast/West Coast/Midwest alternation. Suzy said she is currently negotiating the likely possibility of using the Town and Country in San Diego for Dros22. TAGC's future is still under discussion. Hugo Bellen pointed out that there is a lot of uncertainty about the impact of hybrid meeting on in-person attendance. Suzy said the current research suggests that people still will go to in-person meetings. She also pointed out that travel costs are often more important than registration, and Denise Montell added that the reduced costs meant people actually attend more meetings. We ended by emphasizing the need to work with the GSA very carefully, and it means we will likely meet again as a FlyBoard in the Fall.

Tin Tin Su then raised two issues. How do we better bring trainees into the planning and discussion at all levels? Trainee board members, trainee inclusion in program planning, other ideas? Denise emphasized the idea that having people join the GSA is part of it. Bruce Edgar agrees we need trainees on the board. Should we have both a graduate student and a postdoc on the Board? There was general agreement that both was the best idea. Should we have a trainee on the Elections Committee or other committees? We'd make them different people than the board members, to avoid over-burdening individuals.

Tin Tin then moved to Diversity and Inclusion. Do we have data on the demographics of the Drosophila Community? Tracey told us GSA is now collecting self-reported data on GSA members. This information is being provided to meeting organizers. Nasser Rusan reported that they now have these data and are using that information in planning and increasing participation for Dros21. Tin Tin Su emphasized we need to use this data in all of our deliberations. She also pointed out that in thinking about helping undergraduates participate in summer programs, we need to think about the fact that many have paying jobs to help pay for school. Finally, she called attention to the emerging data that women scientists, especially those early in career, are being negatively impacted by COVID more than men. We could consider using some of the resources we talked about before such as reserve funds, to support such people.

Bruce Edgar is chair of this year's elections committee. He asked us for suggestions and pointed out they will be making a "all Drosophila Community" call for nominations. He pointed out that those on the ballot last year who were not elected are open to be nominated again. With regard to trainees Representatives, after today's discussion and a review of previous FlyBoard discussions and decisions after the meeting, we will proceed as follows: The election committee will select 2 trainee reps from self-nominations—one a postdoc and one a graduate student. The elections committee will publicize this self-nomination process via social media and emailing the community; 2) They will allow the term to be flexible: 1 or 2 years depending on the persons preferences.

Never in my lifetime have scientific societies been more critical or their value more obvious. To name just a few ways that GSA has had a unique and positive role to play over the past six months, let's remember that when the pandemic hit and sent us all into quarantine, GSA made a truly painful but obviously necessary decision to cancel the in-person TAGC meeting that had been >3 years in the planning. GSA leadership considers the TAGC concept to be a critical component of advancing our mission, so having to scrap it at the last minute was pretty devastating. Not as devastating of course as the physical pain and suffering that the virus was and still is wreaking across the world, but devastating nonetheless. But as you know, during that critical time of confusion and isolation, GSA was able to bring us together and give us TAGC online. Without ever having done anything like that before, and with nary a model to follow, the staff just stepped up to the plate, took a swing, and hit it out of the park. From a mission standpoint, TAGC was a wild success. Tracey will have a bit more to say about it, and it's important because it is likely going to create a paradigm shift for the future of scientific conferences, but I will just provide one number. Whereas just under 3,000 people were registered to attend the in-person meeting, >14,000 people attended at least some part of the online conference. Canceling the in-person meeting could have meant a multi-million dollar loss to GSA. However due to Tracey's outstanding leadership, the loss came to ~400,000, mostly because we made it free. But I don't really consider it a loss. Obviously that is not a sustainable model, but because it was scientifically so successful, we can think of it as money well spent. It's just that again, we cannot and I don't think anyone expects that we should, provide conferences completely free of charge. Although it was money well-spent in my opinion – we all needed that conference at that moment complete with up-to-the-minute SARS CoV2 genetics information that you could not find in the news we were all reading...so although it was money well-spent it did create something of a hole in the GSA budget.

Although TAGC was the first crisis of 2020 for GSA, it was not the last. When George Floyd was murdered, suddenly jolting us all awake and shining a bright light on our collective acceptance of systemic White Supremacy in the country as a whole, each of our individual institutions that we have helped build, and in the synaptic connections deep within each of our own minds, well that was crisis number 2. GSA stepped up again, quickly put out a statement promising action and followed up with a strategy. The board turned to our Equity, and Inclusion committee, we reopened our nominations, proactively sought more diverse candidates for our election for new board of directors.

That was the second but not the last crisis of the past six months because then came the xenophobic policies from our current government. GSA put out a statement and together with other societies signed on to petitions, made statements on social media. Universities and societies through those efforts succeeded in getting the executive order reversed that would have kept F1 visa holders out of our universities. Never have scientific societies been more important or their value more obvious.

I encourage you to visit the GSA website find a committee doing work that you are passionate about. We invite you to volunteer and make a difference. I'd like to just take a couple of more minutes to say a few words about the relationship of the Fly community to GSA. GSA is an unusual society in that it is a composite of individual organism communities, which vary a great deal in size and organization (some have boards like FlyBoard, others do not). The fly community is the largest and most influential of the organism communities. Hugo and I of course are both fly people, as is the GSA secretary Erika Matunis, and the treasurer, Michael Buszczak. So rest assured that your interests are well-represented, and of course we are all just an email, phone call or zoom away if you ever have questions, suggestions, or anything.

In addition, GSA of course runs conferences including the fly meeting, together with the elected conference organizers and Flyboard.. GSA takes the financial risks associated with the meetings, and as you heard, these can be substantial, and offers tremendous expertise with respect to programming and logistics. It can be a wonderful collaboration. Sometimes there are challenges because meeting organizers, Flyboard and GSA boards turn over frequently and so it can be hard to keep everyone in the loop in understanding the nature of the collaboration but we are working on improving communication between all the parties and we will be putting together a meeting organizer guide that should help. In any case, I hope you feel as I do extremely proud to be part of such an amazing and impactful organization and I will stop there and turn it over to Tracey.