

The 17th International Conference on Arabidopsis Research was held at the University of Madison, Wisconsin from June 27- July 2, 2006.

ICAR-2006 included approximately 625 scientists from across the world. The scientific program was of excellent quality featuring 73 talks, including 30 from invited speakers. There were also 6 community-organized workshops (facilitated by conference staff) featuring additional talks on topics including 'Submitting data to long-term repositories,' 'TAIR introductory workshop,' 'Web services and demonstration,' 'Public engagement: broadening the impact of your research,' 'Systems biology approaches to analysis of metabolic and regulatory networks of Arabidopsis,' and 'Mechanotransduction in Arabidopsis.' Approximately 440 posters were presented in general topic areas including, among others, Development, Modeling/Other Systems, Energy, Environment, and Genetic/Epigenetic mechanisms.

Graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, junior faculty, and underrepresented minorities made up a significant portion of the oral presentations thereby promoting the training of young scientists and facilitating important career development opportunities for speakers. Several poster sessions 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. The 'Emerging Scientists Luncheon' featured 10 graduate students selected on the basis of scientific excellence of their submitted research abstracts. The 'Minority Funding Luncheon,' featured 8 awardees selected by the NAASC through a widely-publicized application process. This luncheon was established specifically to provide an opportunity for underrepresented minorities, and/or scientists from Minority-Serving Institutions/Historically Black Colleges and Universities to network with NAASC members and representatives from federal funding agencies in an informal and intimate setting. This luncheon included introductions of each award recipient and discussion of outreach efforts and informal research and career discussions.

Outreach Activities:

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. 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.)

To enable participation by under-represented minorities and young, domestic scientists, complete funding was provided to eight underrepresented minorities (funded by NSF), and registration or travel awards were given to 26 domestic graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, including 13 selected from submitted abstracts to give oral research presentations (funded by DOE).