Enlisting young physiologists

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The Journal of General Physiology

The JGP and the SGP

In the role of *JGP* editor, in early September I had the pleasure of attending the annual *Society for General Physiologists*' (SGP) meeting at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) at Woods Hole, MA. H. Lee Sweeney (University of Pennsylvania) and David Eisner (University of Manchester) organized an outstanding four-day program on the topic of "Muscles in Health and Disease." The talks and discussions were informative, up-to-date, and wonderfully diverse. This issue of the *JGP* presents a summary of the meeting written by participants Bob Dirksen and Roger Bannister.

The SGP was founded in 1946 by a group of physiologists with the express purpose of promoting "interest in fundamental physiological processes in a broad sense, not in application of physiological knowledge." As told by one of its founding members, C. Ladd Prosser, in his "Brief History of the Society for General Physiologists" (presented at the 50th anniversary SGP meeting in 1996 and published in the *JGP* in April 1997, vol. 109, issue 4, pp. vii–ix), the SGP founders were concerned that practical, medically oriented physiology might overpower more basic research on biological mechanisms, and hoped that their association would act as a counterbalance to this inclination.

The SGP and the *JGP* have an interconnected history that dates formally to 1961 when the *JGP* began publishing the abstracts of the annual meeting. Informally, the connection arose through the overlapping populations of *JGP* editors, authors, and SGP members. Thus, for example, W.J.V. Osterhout, *JGP* editor from 1918 to 1961, was one of the founding members of the SGP, and historically a large number of *JGP* publications have come from SGP members. At the core of the relationship are the shared goals of the society and the journal. The *JGP*'s mission "to publish original work of the highest quality that elucidates basic biological, chemical, or physical mechanisms of broad physiological significance" (Pugh and Andersen. 2008. *J. Gen. Physiol.* 131:515–519) is remarkably similar to that of the SGP, with obvious differences arising from the means by which the two organizations promote the science they share. In an addendum to his history of the SGP, Prosser provided a list of the annual symposia organizers and topics. The complete, updated list of organizers and topics is available at the SGP's website (http://www.sgpweb.org/past_symposia.html). A large fraction of the symposium organizers have published in the *JGP*, testifying to the continuance of the interconnected history.

Paul F. Cranefield Awards

One of the most important functions of organizations that hope to endure is the discovery, development, and promotion of promising young talent. The SGP and *JGP* have teamed up in such an effort in the creation of the Paul F. Cranefield Awards. The nomination form for the "young investigator award" on the SGP website states:

"The Paul F. Cranefield Award was created by the Council of the *Society of General Physiologists* to honor Paul F. Cranefield, M.D., Ph.D., who for 30 years served as Editor of *The Journal of General Physiology*. The Award is meant to recognize an independent young investigator who in the preceding calendar year has published an outstanding article in the *Journal*. It further was stipulated that the Award criteria should be such that the Award need not be given every year. The Awardee is selected by the Society's Council based on nominations submitted by the Society membership and the editors of the *Journal*."

Recipients of the Cranefield Young Investigator Award to date are Tzyh-Chang Hwang (2000; http://jgp.rupress.org/cgi/content/full/117/3/203), David D. Friel (2001; http://jgp.rupress.org/cgi/content/full/119/2/123), Daniel H. Cox (2003; http://jgp.rupress.org/cgi/content/full/123/2/95), Tsung-Yu Chen (2004; http://jgp.rupress.org/cgi/content/full/125/2/111), Frank T. Horrigan (2007; http://jgp.rupress.org/cgi/content/full/131/2/103), and Merritt Maduke (2008).

The SGP also instituted two additional Paul Cranefield Awards in 2005 to be given to a postdoctoral researcher and a graduate student, respectively, who are first authors of *JGP* articles during that year and have had a major role in the planning, execution, and analysis of the results— and contributed significantly to the writing. As mandated by the awards, this year's recipients, Giovanni Zifarelli (Institute of Biophysics, CNR,

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Genova) and Andrés Jara-Oseguera (Universidad Nacional de México) gave talks on their work at the SGP meeting. These were well received; see the report in this issue on the SGP meeting for details.

Recruiting young authors

The editors of the *JGP* would like to take the opportunity provided by the annual SGP meeting to highlight our desire to enlist young investigators in its publishing ranks. Though our review process is tough and thorough, it is fair, presenting to the potential author as level a playing field as possible, with important checks and balances at each step of the process. The editors carefully select at least two expert reviewers based on a submitted manuscript's content, and the reviews in turn are carefully evaluated during our weekly meetings for fairness and appropriateness. When the initial reviewers' evaluations are in conflict, another reviewer's—typically a member of the Editorial Advisory Board—opinion is sought. Most reviewers of *JGP* submissions understand that the goal of the review process is to ensure the clarity of exposition as well as the correctness of conclusions, and as a consequence, reviews tend to be lengthy with detailed suggestions for revision. The editors in turn require submitting authors to make all reasonable changes, so that reviewers see the impact of their reviews. Most authors agree with the editors that the overall process invariably leads to substantial improvement in the quality of the science published, and many express this opinion explicitly in their letters. We believe that the review process at the *JGP* can be a helpful training ground for a young physiologist learning the ropes of publishing, providing as it does several levels of valuable feedback. In concert with the SGP, we are committed to supporting the careers of promising young physiologists.