

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION/PROJECT/CONFERENCE

**Expedition/Project/
Conference Title:** 2015 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS)
Annual Meeting

Travel Dates: 12th-26th February 2015

Location: San Jose, USA

Group member(s): Eliska Zlamalova

Aims: To attend the AAAS Annual Meeting and present my project at the
conference Student Poster Session

OUTCOME (not less than 300 words):-

The James Rennie Bequest enabled me to attend the 2015 American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Annual Meeting which took place in San Jose, California, USA. During the conference I assisted as a session aide at press conferences and at various talks. I also presented a research project that I conducted together with co-author Melina-Theoni Gyparaki last year in Dr. Justin Goodrich's laboratory at The University of Edinburgh.

AAAS is an international non-profit organisation that aims to enable science to benefit a broad society. It is also a publisher of some of the most prestigious international journals, such as *Science*. Every year, it organises a science meeting in a different city in the USA. When I learnt about AAAS annually conference I knew that participating would be an extraordinary opportunity that would truly broaden my horizons. Therefore, I did my best in order to be able to take part. I was accepted to present my research in the Student Poster Session under the category of Cellular and Molecular Biology and to work as a session aide at the conference to receive a free registration. I also applied for a travel grant from the James Rennie Bequest and the funding that I received helped me to cover my expenses for travel to the USA and enabled me to gain this valuable experience.

The project that I presented at the conference was completed during the past academic year at The University of Edinburgh. I worked under the supervision of Dr. Justin Goodrich, whose laboratory investigates the genetics and epigenetics of plant development. The aim of the project was to investigate the role of DOF6 transcription factor in programmed cell death in the *Arabidopsis thaliana* endosperm. The identification of the genes functioning in endosperm will be of practical importance as the bulk of human food is provided by endosperm of cereals.

My time at the conference was in one word amazing and I am very grateful that I could participate because opportunities like taking part in the AAAS Annual Meeting do not arise often for undergraduate students. The conference lectures and workshops enabled me to gain new knowledge and acquire innovative approaches. I also improved my organisation skills by assisting as a session aide which I really enjoyed. In addition, attending the conference allowed me to interact and network with current or future world-leading experts from various academic institutions, which is vital in an ever more globalised and connected world and

JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

scientific community. Moreover, I presented my own work at the poster session which enhanced my communication skills and ability to present research projects to the specialists in the field and to public, which I believe are key skills necessary for successful scientists. Furthermore, I shared results of my research which I think is very rewarding to myself personally but also beneficial for the larger society.

To sum up, the AAAS conference was an awesome experience that definitely helped me to become a better scientist. It was a great reward for my former work and also a huge motivation to try my best in future. Therefore, I would like to thank the James Rennie Bequest for supporting me.