JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title: American Society for Cell Biology 2024 Conference

Travel Dates: 11/12/2024 – 21/12/2024

Location: San Diego, CA, USA

Group member(s): Domenico Modaffari

Aims: Present my PhD work at the American Society for Cell Biology 2024 Conference.

Meet with a potential collaborator lab based in San Diego.

Photography consent form attached: *(please refer to your award letter)*

☒ Yes
☐ No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

The American Society for Cell Biology's 2024 Annual Meeting in San Diego, CA, served as a vital platform for presenting and sharing new findings within the field of cell biology. I had the opportunity to present my PhD research findings through a detailed poster session focusing on the dynamics of transport of an RNA-binding protein in *Aspergillus nidulans*, which has important implications for understanding cell polarity and rapid growth regulation. During the poster session, I had the opportunity to engage with an impressive variety of researchers at different career stages, from graduate students to established principal investigators.

One of the most valuable aspects of the conference was engaging with researchers working on the same model organism, something not readily available to me at the University of Edinburgh. These interactions provided unique insights that will enhance my research approach. The questions posed during my presentation have helped me identify key aspects to prioritise for a publication, refining the focus of my ongoing work in the final months of my PhD.

I participated in Cell Bio Connect, a program that matched five new attendees with an experienced conference mentor. We met regularly throughout the conference to discuss research goals, share session insights, and develop networking strategies. This structured approach created a supportive community that enhanced my overall conference experience and formed lasting professional connections.

In addition to presenting my research, the conference offered sessions featuring cutting-edge advancements in cell biology. I attended presentations on gene editing technologies, cellular imaging breakthroughs, and novel therapeutic approaches. These talks were particularly stimulating and broadened my understanding of fields of research not very close to mine, challenging me to think about my own research from different perspectives.

I engaged with many researchers focused on local mRNA translation across various organisms, which aligns with my hypothesis about my protein's function. This provided valuable comparative data and methodological insights. I learned of new techniques to assay local translation that I plan to incorporate into my research. Sessions on membrane biology offered complementary perspectives, while a dedicated session on climate change and cell biology highlighted the field's relevance to global challenges.

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A highlight of my trip was visiting a lab at the University of California, San Diego, renowned for their work on molecular motors and cytoskeletal dynamics. This visit allowed me to engage with the group leader and lab members, facilitating an exchange of data and research techniques between our respective groups. The discussions highlighted new methods that could enrich my research. This lab visit has opened the door to a potential postdoctoral position, marking an exciting next step in my academic career and demonstrating the tangible benefits of conference attendance.

Finally, I am deeply thankful for the financial support from the James Rennie Bequest. This funding was essential in enabling my attendance at this significant conference, contributing to my professional development and broadening my network within the global cell biology community. The knowledge gained, connections established, and potential career opportunities identified have made this conference an invaluable experience in my scientific journey.