JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

REPORT ON EXPEDITION / PROJECT / CONFERENCE

Expedition/Project/ Conference Title: Gordon Research Conference and Seminar on Mammalian Reproduction 2026

Travel Dates: 07/08/26 – 14/08/26

Location: Sunday River, Maine, USA

Group member(s): Lucy Munro

Aims:

1. Present PhD findings and receive feedback prior to thesis submission and manuscript preparation
2. Network and explore potential postdoctoral positions
3. Learn about and discuss current topics in my field

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

☐ Yes
☒ No

OUTCOME (a minimum of 500 words):-

Overview

The Gordon Research Conference (GRC) and Seminar (GRS) in Mammalian Reproduction are internationally recognised meetings that bring together researchers to present and discuss unpublished findings at the forefront of reproductive science. The meetings provide a unique opportunity to exchange ideas, establish collaborations and engage in scientific discussion within a supportive environment.

The programmes covered a broad range of topics closely aligned with my PhD research and wider scientific interests. Attending the meetings was particularly valuable as I approach the final stages of my PhD, allowing me to present my findings, obtain feedback to inform my thesis, expand my professional network and explore potential postdoctoral opportunities.

Gordon Research Seminar

The GRS precedes the main conference and gives early-career researchers and PhD students the opportunity to present their work in a relaxed, supportive atmosphere alongside others at similar career stages. In addition to presentations from attendees, the programme included a keynote session "**Beyond the Bench: Why Communicating Reproductive Science Now Shapes Its Future**" by Brittany Barreto. The keynote prompted valuable discussion throughout both the GRS and GRC, highlighting the importance of effective scientific communication in a field that involves complex ethical and social issues. It reinforced the responsibility of researchers to communicate their findings clearly and accessibly to the public, helping to address misinformation and promote a better understanding of reproductive science.

I was invited to give a short presentation at the GRS on my PhD findings, entitled "**Sex-Specific Roles of the Meikin-Plk1 Interaction during Mouse Gametogenesis**". The presentation was well received and generated many questions, both during the allocated discussion time and in conversations throughout the remainder of the GRS and GRC.

One of the most valuable aspects of the GRS was its relaxed yet intellectually engaged atmosphere. Researchers at different career stages were approachable, making it easy to discuss ideas, receive constructive feedback and gain alternative perspectives on my work. These interactions helped me develop confidence in communicating my own research and in asking questions of others.

Gordon Research Conference

The GRS was followed by the five-day GRC which featured presentations from leading researchers sharing unpublished findings across a wide range of topics in Mammalian Reproduction. The breadth and quality of the scientific programme provided an excellent opportunity to learn about emerging developments in the field and to consider how these findings related to my own research.

I was also invited to present a poster at the GRC. The poster sessions were especially beneficial, allowing me to discuss my work in greater depth and receive constructive feedback from researchers with a wide range of expertise. These discussions helped me critically evaluate my findings and identify important points to develop further in my thesis. The poster presentation was accompanied by a two-minute flash talk designed to introduce each poster and highlight individual posters among the many presented. This format provided an effective way to present my key findings and generated further discussion with those who may have missed my poster otherwise.

As with the GRS, the informal discussions that took place during meals and scheduled breaks were some of the most valuable moments. They provided an opportunity to explore questions and theories beyond those addressed in the formal sessions. These conversations helped me establish new professional connections and explore potential postdoctoral opportunities.

Overall Conclusions and Impact of the Funding

Attending the GRS and GRC in Mammalian Reproduction was an invaluable experience that made a meaningful contribution to both my academic development and my transition towards the next stage of my scientific career. The opportunity to present my research across multiple formats, receive feedback and discuss my findings helped me refine my thinking. The scientific discussions and perspectives gained during the meetings helped shape my interpretation of the findings and strengthened the discussion of my research. Overall, I left the meetings with a stronger connection to the international reproductive biology community and greater confidence in discussing my work.

I am extremely grateful to the James Rennie Bequest Fund for providing the financial support that enabled me to attend these meetings. This funding made an important international scientific opportunity accessible to me at a pivotal stage of my PhD. The experience was a defining milestone in my scientific development, providing knowledge, professional connections and career perspectives that will continue to benefit me beyond my doctoral studies.