President’s Message

It is my great pleasure to serve as the current President of the Society for Developmental Biology. In this first note, I wanted to share my journey that has been closely intertwined with SDB ever since I was a graduate student. Developmental Biology and SDB have been perfect scientific “homes” that have encompassed the twists and turns of my career. Starting from when I was a graduate student and a young SDB member up to the present time, I have pursued basic questions to address the mysteries that underlie the beautiful coordination of cells and developmental processes that create a complex structure such as the limb, lung, and neural tube. In the past 10 years, I have become equally passionate in using my knowledge to understand how development can go awry, leading to birth defects and disease. This is leading us into the clinic where we have been warmly received for the expertise we can bring to critical clinical problems. As the research questions of my lab have shifted over the years, I have always felt at home in the SDB community. Through the years I have been influenced by so many SDB colleagues and learned how to ask and pursue the best questions. Moreover, our science has grown with new technologies and insights generated by creative scientists throughout the range of studies encompassed by SDB.

I can also look back from the perspective of being the Northeast regional SDB representative from 1999-2005 to my current term as SDB President. Amongst the pleasant surprises is the lasting enthusiasm and commitment on the part of all of the board members. Your representatives bring a high level of integrity to their position and uniformly support their members and the SDB mission. I encourage you to reach out to me and your Regional Representative with your comments and suggestions related to research, education, science policy, and public awareness. I also encourage you to become involved in SDB and the regional and annual meetings are wonderful venues to engage with one another. SDB strongly supports junior scientists and the regional meetings showcase undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, junior faculty, and educators. I hope all of you will take advantage of the regional and national SDB meetings to gain valuable insights, to see old friends, and to make new and unexpected scientific and personal connections.

The major change I see is in the financial health of the Society. When I previously served, we were in a tenuous position in terms of being able to support our mission to further the study of development in all organisms, to promote communication and collaboration among students of development, and to promote the field of developmental biology. We are now on a much stronger financial footing, thanks to the lasting relationship with our Society journal, Developmental Biology (Editor in Chief, Marianne Bronner) and to our SDB treasurers over the years who have worked diligently to secure our resources and to provide knowledgeable council on how to best expend these resources to accomplish our mission.

One thing that has not changed from when I lived in Colorado way back in the 1970’s and 80’s to my return 10 years ago is the beauty of the Rocky Mountains. Come see for yourself at the SDB Annual Meeting to be held July 9-13, 2015 in Snowbird, Utah. Please join us for an amazing set of talks and posters that will highlight the breadth and depth of our field that explores the cellular, molecular, and biophysical mechanisms that underlie the development of a wide diversity of organisms. If you have a favorite rising topic or person that you would like to suggest, please contact me to help make this an exciting meeting.

Lee Niswander

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