

SSB AWARDS REPORT - JANUARY 2022

1) Awards Committee

- Awards Director: Liliana M. Dávalos (awards@systematicsbologists.org)
- Committee members (as of December 2021): Brett Aiello, Melissa DeBiasse, Hannah Owens, Anne Yoder

2) Overview

This report outlines activities managed by the Awards Director and Awards Committee, including calls for proposals, proposal evaluations, and awards.

3) Award Committee Members

To keep the perspectives of the committee fresh, we will routinely rotate new members onto the committee. Accordingly, after a few years of service to the committee, Dr. Brett Aiello is rotating off the committee and is being replaced by Dr. Sebastian Hönah.

4) Online System

Our award submission handling system has now been in use for almost two years, and many initial infelicities have been solved. To ensure the handling of support letters through the submission system, we now ask for only form letters (similar to NSF letters of support). These letters always specify the name of the submitter and project, as well as a commitment to student supervision or, in the case of the mini-ARTS, commitment to sharing taxonomic expertise. The switch to form letters considerably simplified grants handling.

Nevertheless, we still face occasional hiccups, as the membership database on which the system relies is not always up to date and does not seem to work well for lifetime members. However, the issue here is the Burk membership, and not the system itself. Another persistent issue concerns finding one's application after hitting save, which affects a minority of submitters for a given call. After troubleshooting these for the latest GSRA, I've come up with a series of steps to work around the issue which will be posted to the submission site next time we open a big call.

5) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in awards

Although there had been efforts to collect demographic data from award submissions in the past, these were not part of the new system, nor were these guided by the newly formed DEI committee. To fill this gap, one awards committee member –Dr. Melissa DeBiasse– worked with the DEI committee to generate standardized demographic questions to be incorporated into our submission system. Answering the questions is entirely optional, this is made clear to submitters, and responses are invisible to reviewers. We hope the responses will in time help us measure progress toward the Society's DEI mission.

Nevertheless, it will be important for us to outline rules regarding access and time limits on these data, and all input from the Council is welcome.

6) 2022 Mini-ARTS

We received 17 applications through the system. This is only four more than the number of awards made in 2018, the last time this award was open. Based on this paucity of submissions, past difficulties in conducting in depth reviews in specialized group-specific systematics, and after consulting with new Treasurer Dr. Emily Jane McTavish, we opted for internal review for all proposals. Conducted by Awards Committee members, this review focused on adequacy to the Mini-ARTS mission and found all submissions to be in line with the Mini-ARTS stated goals.

Based on those internal reviews, we made 17 awards totaling \$59,558.55. Both submitters and Rob Clayton have been notified of the results and disbursements are in process. Additionally, winners were announced on our [website](#).

7) 2021 GSRA

We received 51 applications through the system, which we will need to evaluate early this spring. Although we have a list of ~9 new reviewers so far, we will need many more to rank these proposals and welcome reviewer volunteers for this competition.