

Society of Systematic Biologists Program Director's Report

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Summary

In mid-March, I became the SSB program director, replacing David Weisrock. At that point the SSB workshops and Symposia and for the 2020 meeting had been chosen. In the fall, the organizers of the two symposia and the workshop from 2020 indicated a willingness to participate in an online version of the meeting if that was to be the form the 2021 meeting took. When the schedule for the 2021 meeting necessitated cutting back to one topical SSB symposium, I contacted the organizers. Originally I suggested the Cellinese and Donoghue symposium postpone to allow the graduate-student organized symposium to occur.

In late January, Hans, Hernandez, and Nash (the organizers of the other symposium) indicated that it would be difficult for them to organize an online symposium this summer. Fortunately, Tracy Heath alerted me to the fact that the SSB Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee had considered requesting a symposium slot before they realized that we had no open spots. I contacted Jessica Ware, and she discussed the open spot with the DEICCommittee, and they have agreed to organize a symposium for June 2021.

Proposals for short-term actions

1. I propose that we accept a symposium proposal by the SSB DEI committee for the 2021 Evolution meeting, in place of the cancelled symposia.
2. I propose that we offer the 2022 symposium slots to the previously accepted 2020 symposia and workshops. If any choose not to re-offer their workshop, then I think we should advertise to fill the remaining spots.

Specifics on each SSB event for the canceled 2020 meeting

Symposium 1: "PhyloCode 2020: Naming the Tree of Life"

Organizers: Nico Cellinese and Michael Donoghue

Response: preferred to wait until an in-person meeting. In the Fall, indicated a willingness to hold a meeting in the online 2021 meeting, if necessary. I encouraged these organizers to re-apply for 2022, when we were cut down to one topical SSB symposium slot in 2021.

Symposium 2: "How do we make decisions about data and analyses in systematic biology? It depends!"

Organizers: Natya Hans, Alexandra Hernandez, and Chloe Nash

Response: In the Fall, indicated a willingness to hold a meeting in the online 2021 meeting, if necessary. In January, 2021 the organizers told me that it would be difficult for them to organize a symposium at the 2021 meeting because of conflicts that had recently emerged;

They would prefer to organize a symposium for the 2022 meeting.

Workshop 1: “Using simulations to learn about data on phylogenetics and comparative studies”

Organizers: Daniel Caetano

Response: preferred not to present in an online form after the 2020 cancellation. Luke Harmon talked to Daniel about trying again in 2022.

Workshop 2: “Robust tree inference from large phylogenomic datasets”

Organizers: Siavash Mirarab, Lisa Pokorny, and Tandy Warnow

Response: I need to get back in touch with Tandy to see if she wants to have a workshop adjacent to/associated with the 2021 meeting.

Ad hoc funding requests

No requests since I have become the program director.

There was an inquiry about funds for translation of some key papers in systematics into Spanish, but a full proposal was not submitted.