

SRS Pres Blog

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Updates on the Strategic Plan: Career Development

Today, I continue my series to provide updates on our progress in implementing the SRS Strategic Plan and previews of things to come. In this blog, I focus on career development.

A focus on training, mentoring, and career development for the next generation of sleep and circadian scientists has always been in the DNA of the SRS. Indeed, way back in the early 1990s, the SRS was already providing financial support so trainees could attend the annual meeting. I received my first travel award 26 years ago! Soon after that, we started the Trainee Symposia Series (affectionately known as "Trainee Day") and programs have grown ever since.

For the last few years, SRS career development efforts have been led by the Trainee Education Advisory Committee (TEAC) (Chair: Kelly Baron, PhD, MPH; Past Chair: Lisa Meltzer, PhD) and the Pipeline Development Committee (Chair: Phil Gehrman). The latter is a new committee set up as a direct result of the Strategic Plan. The major foci in career development over the last few years have included: a) expanding programs to cover the whole year; b) targeting programs at more selective and specific sets of investigators; and c) better including our international members in these programs. Example of career development activities include:

#### **Mentor-Mentee Opportunities.** [SPAD1]

The first, [the Sleep Meeting Mentor Program](#), pairs trainees with senior investigators at the annual conference, to provide an opportunity to build relationships and networks with a broader set of established investigators.

The second, the [Mentor Mentee Award](#), focuses on a year-long mentor-mentee relationship. It includes funds for the mentee to make one or more visits to the mentor's lab and requires the development of specific new skills and/or submission of a specific manuscript or grant. International trainees have participated in each of these programs.

International members also benefit from a program pairing them with US trainees at the annual meeting, to help them develop peer networks and get the most out of the meeting.

**Workshops/Courses.**[SPAD2] We have held a series of workshops and courses, both at and apart from the annual meeting, designed to provide career development opportunities.

The [Trainee Symposia Series](#) includes a grant writing or leadership development workshop each year for a competitively selected group of trainees. This year, the SRS funded several trainees to attend a full day course on Precision Sleep Medicine.

The SRS and SRS Foundation sponsored trainees to attend each of our state-of-the-science workshops (Implementation Science, Sleep and Metabolism, and 3 on Biomarkers). These trainees have presented data and been intimately involved in authoring each of the [papers](#) resulting from the workshops. Internationally members and trainees have been well represented.

The SRS Foundation has available awards to cover tuition for members (at any career stage) to attend in-depth training courses in [Omics research and Methods](#). Be sure to apply if you are interested!

Fellowships. The SRS has had a major focus in helping develop Fellowships to early career investigators, initiating several Physician Scientist Task Forces. An exciting new development this year was the initiation of the Academic Sleep Pulmonary Integrated Research/Clinical Fellowships (ASPIRE), administered through ATS, initiated and supported by the SRS. Thanks for the generous support sponsors Philips Respironics (\$100,000/year), Resmed (\$100,000/year) and Fisher & Paykel (\$15,000/year), Fellowships were awarded to 7 physician scientists to gain mentorship and training in sleep and circadian research.

For several years, the SRS Foundation has awarded 2-3 [Career Development](#) Awards. While excellent opportunities to establish a track record of independent funding, these Awards have become extremely competitive, resulting in an unacceptably low pay line (~10%). We are working on a plan to address this and will be rolling it out later this year.

Future Plans. The SRS and SRS Foundation are looking to expand our career development efforts.

The Mentor-Mentee programs will continue to grow. We are developing a strategic partnership with the Australasian Sleep Association (ASA) to allow trainees from each society to present at the annual meeting of the other and/or to make a lab visit to a mentor from the other society. We are also developing a program where the SRS Past Presidents will serve as grant writing mentors for early career investigators.

We will continue to sponsor trainees to help them take advantage of opportunities, both at and outside of the annual meeting, designed to build their skill set and advance their career. This includes the 2018 Gordon conference on Sleep Regulation and Function (mentioned later in this update) and the 2019 SRS conference, as well as the ASA meeting mentioned above and a state-of-the-science workshop at SLEEP2018.

We are working to expand our physician scientist opportunities, like ASPIRE to include Neurology and other disciplines.

To accomplish these efforts, the Trainee Education Advisory Committee and the Pipeline Development Committee will be working with our other committees and the Board to integrate career development into everything the SRS does.