

37th Annual Gibbs Conference on Biothermodynamics

Minutes: Business Meeting, October 16, 2023

Touch of Nature Environmental Center

Officers on the Board of Directors: Jim Horn, President; Sarah Bondos, President-Elect; Aaron Lucius, Past President; Karen Lewis, Treasurer; Andrew Herr, Secretary

Board Members-at-Large: Vince LiCata, Madeline Shea

Current Organizers: Tonya Zeczycki & Krishna Mallela

Other Past Organizers in Attendance: David Bain, Doug Barrick, Mike Brenowitz, Jannette Carey, Jack Correia, Peggy Daugherty, Aron Fenton (Vice President), Nick Fitzkee (Asst. Treasurer), Karen Fleming, Ernie Fuentes, Luis Marky, Scott Showalter, Ana-Maria Soto, Liskin Swint-Kruse, Steve Whitten

Conference Volunteers in Attendance: Sukesh Bhaumik, Clarissa Durie, Elizabeth Duran, Sean Fanning, Kurt Piepenbrink, Allyn Schoeffler

1. Call to Order: Jim Horn

2. Report from the Gibbs37 Organizers: Tonya Zeczycki & Krishna Mallela

Tonya and Krishna presented an overview of statistics from the meeting. There were 204 registrants, with 187 attendees on-site; the registrants included 122 trainees, 73 PIs, and 9 corporate sponsors. We had one international registrant from Israel who unfortunately was unable to come due to flight restrictions. A total of 94 labs were represented from 68 institutions.

The registration fees were increased moderately from last year's rates. Given the support from the Timasheff Fund (sponsored by Jim Lee and Jack Correia) and the NSF funding (Fuentes & Zeczycki, co-PIs), the trainee registration rates were discounted.

There were 13 PI talks this year (6 female, 7 male), 13 trainee talks (9 female, 4 male), and 119 posters. The posters were distributed between the Freeberg and Burke rooms in order to spread everything out, and this arrangement generally worked well. One posterboard fell down (the staples gave out), so it may be worthwhile to bring a stapler gun or duct tape in the future to deal with similar situations.

The Fundraising Committee did a fantastic job this year, leading to a record total of \$24,700 in solicited corporate and institutional donations. This total includes first-time funding from NSF and the Biophysical Society. Ernie Fuentes spearheaded the effort to write the successful NSF proposal that led to \$7,000 in funding that was applied to trainee registration costs. Despite the success of fundraising this year, several vendors turned us down due to timing; even though the process began in early March, that was already too late for certain vendors. Ernie suggested starting the fundraising process in January for Gibbs38.

Organizing committee members discussed other observations from this year's meeting.

Madeline Shea (Program Book/Swag Committee) pointed out that there was a serious issue this year with Staples, who notified her at the last minute that they would not be able to print the program books in time for the meeting. After dozens of frantic phone calls and emails, Staples was able to print a smaller 11x17" version that was folded and stapled, which we tested as an alternate approach to the standard, full-sized booklet with plastic binding. Krishna Mallela saved the day by lining up a rush print job at the University of Colorado printing shop and then he and his lab members brought all the program books in their luggage. Thanks, Krishna! We are considering various options for the program books in future years to avoid this type of problem with last-minute printing problems.

Emma Morrison (Local Arrangement Committee) discussed housing at the meeting. Little Grassy Lodge was over-subscribed, and she suggested that we may wish to add a question during registration that asks PIs whether they would rather be placed in a dorm or stay off-site if Little Grassy Lodge is overbooked. There was additional discussion about requirements for quiet hours or limiting noise late at night. Tonya and Krishna had put up a reminder to everyone to be considerate of others late at night, but it was decided that they would announce that quiet hours would be in force between 10 pm and 6 am.

Kurt Piepenbrink (A/V, Logistics Committee) reported that the microphones worked pretty well this year; Krishna and Sukesh set these up ahead of time. He suggested that we may want to consider buying our own Gibbs hardware. Others pointed out that one challenge is that we no longer have the option of storing anything on-site at Touch of Nature, so anything we acquire would need to be brought with us each year. The screen and projector were both updated this year by Touch of Nature, and both were definite improvements over last year. The main issues this year were with the switches used to connect laptops and some problems with audio speakers cutting out.

Karen Lewis mentioned that Katrina at Touch of Nature is developing connections within SIUC and that there are a lot of institutional updates and development going on, which may lead to improvements with some of the A/V issues going forward.

Nick Fitzkee and Jim Horn reported that the online application site (Google forms) and registration and payment processes (JotForm) went smoothly.

3. Report from the Organizers of Saturday Night Thermo: Vince LiCata & Ana-Maria Soto

Vince and Ana-Maria reported that there were 65 attendees at the beginning of SNT, which increased to 77 by the end of the Flash Talks and 78 for the career panel. There was just enough pizza for everyone. Ana-Maria reported that the student moderators did a great job, and Vince mentioned that everyone did a great job with the Flash Talks and that the speakers are doing a better job of giving short introductions to get on to the science being presented.

For the career panel, Kasie Baker, Ishita Mukerji, and Andy Herr talked about their experiences at Malvern Panalytical, at the NSF/Wesleyan University, and with commercialization efforts while in academia, respectively.

Conference Volunteers were dismissed for the Closed Meeting portion of the agenda.

4. Financial Report: Karen Lewis

Karen reported that overall, the Gibbs37 meeting cost just under \$64,000. For last year's meeting (Gibbs36), we had a net loss of \$12,000 due in part to inflation, supply chain issues, and specific choices we made to increase social distancing after the COVID epidemic. This year was better, although there are still continuing issues with inflation and supply chain limitations.

Our strategy this year was to increase registration fees, focus on fundraising, and to submit a grant proposal to the NSF. Thanks to the NSF funding, the registration costs for trainees were set back to the older levels. Our goal for fundraising was \$12,000, but the Fundraising Committee went way above and beyond, bringing in a total of \$31,250 (this includes the \$24,700 from sponsors, NSF, and Biophysical Society funding as well as \$6,550 in private donations from individuals), which was \$16,000 more than what we raised last year. We should be right on target for the Gibbs budget this year; some costs were lower, some higher than expected, but overall things have balanced out.

5. Planning for Future Conferences: Jim Horn, Karen Lewis, and Sarah Bondos

Gibbs36 (last year) was our first in-person meeting after the COVID pandemic forced us to hold Gibbs34 and Gibbs35 as virtual events. There were stresses and challenges in implementation that made us question whether the Gibbs Conference was still a good fit for Touch of Nature and their post-COVID priorities and mission. This year, the Board decided to research possible alternate locations in case we need to consider a change of venue in the future. Jim, Karen, and Sarah reported on these investigations.

The primary criteria for an ideal venue included: a location in the Midwest (for reasonable accessibility and weather considerations), similar overall cost, a wooded environment, dining and housing for attendees available on-site, serving of ethanol being allowed, and a meeting room with a minimum size of 6,000 square feet. They looked at a large number of potential venues, including resorts, hotels, state park lodges, university retreat centers, and scout or church camps.

Given the constraints, only two venues were judged to be reasonable options, and Board members conducted site visits to these two locations. One venue was run-down and not appropriate for our needs. The other venue was very nice but was judged to be unacceptable due to the political environment and recent state legislation that could make some members of our community uncomfortable or at risk if they were to attend.

The conclusion of the Board is that Touch of Nature is particularly well suited for our needs. Jim Horn and Madeline had a friendly and productive meeting with Brian Croft, the new Touch of Nature (ToN) Director and Katrina Medernach, ToN Hospitality Program Coordinator to talk through some of our concerns, listen to their concerns, and enthusiastically convey our appreciation for this unique venue that can serve our needs well. We appreciate that the Gibbs Conference is a one-of-a-kind event on their calendar.

We have had an excellent experience in planning Gibbs37 and we will continue to work closely with Katrina Medernach and others on the Touch of Nature staff going forward in order to maintain a good working relationship and be able to continue enjoying our time here each fall.

6. 2023 Revision to Gibbs Bylaws: Jim Horn

Jim provided an update to revisions made to the Gibbs Society Bylaws, which clarified the makeup of the Gibbs Board of Directors and stipulated that the Long-Term Board Members will now (a) be called Members-at-Large, and (b) have 6-year renewable terms, staggered 3 years apart. Madeline Shea's term will end during Gibbs38 in 2024. Details are in the new Bylaws posted online and printed in the public portion of the Program Book for Gibbs37.

7. Call for nominations for Gibbs38 organizers: Sarah Bondos

There were nominations for 4 individuals to serve as Gibbs38 organizers; of these, 1 had indicated to board members that he or she was interested in being considered in the future but could not organize the meeting this next year. A vote was taken based on the remaining nominees. Lauren Porter and Janice Robertson were elected as the new Organizers for Gibbs38. Congratulations!!

8. Election of 2023 Officers: Sarah Bondos

Nick Fitzkee, Ernie Fuentes, and Scott Showalter were nominated for President-Elect. Nick Fitzkee was elected as the next President-Elect. Congratulations!!

9. Items from the Floor: Sarah Bondos

No additional items from the floor were raised.