ASPB Western Section

Newsletter

Spring 2026

Upcoming Event

ASPB Western Section / Bay Area Hub Meeting 2026

University of California, Berkeley
April 22, 2026
Register here!

If you attend, please stop by the ASPB Western Section table to pick up a **free lunch box**.

Travel Awardee Highlights

This year, the ASPB Western Section offered six $250 travel awards for members to attend the ASPB Western Section / Bay Area Hub 2026 meeting.

Learn about our awardees below!

Christine Queitsch

Professor, UW Genome Sciences

I am a Professor at UW Genome Sciences. I have long been fascinated by the complexity and unpredictability that accompanies the translation of genotype into phenotype, beginning with gene expression. Currently, I seek to resolve the complexity of plant gene regulation by adding scale with massively parallel reporter assays and complexity with long-read, single-molecule methods. In prior research, I have applied, adapted, and developed methods that take advantage of the scale of short-read sequencing to address fundamental biological questions in several experimental models, including E. coli, yeast, worms, fish, human cells, and plants. In addition to standard teaching and mentoring duties, since 2009 I have directed our department's NSF-funded summer research program for undergraduate students, and I currently serve as a member of the NIH GCAT study section, which evaluates grant applications focused on emerging technologies for large-scale and integrative biological analyses.

Elohim Bello Bello

Postdoctoral Researcher, Salk Institute for Biological Studies

Originally from Mexico, Elohim earned his Ph.D. in Plant Biotechnology from the National Laboratory of Genomics for Biodiversity (LANGEBIO-CINVESTAV), under the co-supervision of Dr. Luis Herrera and Dr. Ruben Rellan. In 2022, he joined Wolfgang Busch's lab at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies as part of the Harnessing Plants Initiative, where he investigates how plant roots overcome the physical limits of soil. His research lies at the intersection of root biology, genetics, genomics, transcriptomics, and high-throughput phenomics, aiming to uncover the molecular circuits that govern root system penetrability in compacted soils. He is a Lindau Nobel Alumnus and recipient of the Salk Career Development Award.

Joanna Feehan

Postdoctoral Fellow, Michigan State University; Visiting Researcher, Carnegie Science

Dr. Joanna Feehan is a Postdoctoral Fellow at Michigan State University and a Visiting Researcher at Carnegie Science. Her research aims to understand the mechanisms of extreme heat adaptation in Tidestromia oblongifolia, a desert annual native to Death Valley, where air temperatures routinely exceed 50 C. She completed her Ph.D. in molecular plant-microbe interactions at The Sainsbury Laboratory in Norwich, UK, where she investigated mechanisms of immune receptor oligomerization.

Ian Rodriguez

UC Santa Barbara Senior; MARC Scholar

My name is Ian, and I am a UC Santa Barbara senior and MARC Scholar graduating in June with a B.A. in Biology. I am interested in many areas of plant science, including synthetic biology, agroecology, and crop plant research, and my long-term goal is to pursue a research career that improves the food system. I worked briefly on Arabidopsis signaling during a summer internship, but my primary project at UCSB has focused on mammalian cell mechanobiology. I am excited to attend and look forward to meeting people at the ASPB Western Section meeting.

Julia Zheku

Graduate Student, The University of British Columbia

Julia enjoys plants in all shapes and forms. She previously studied biology and horticulture at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. She is currently a graduate student at The University of British Columbia, where she studies plant root physiology. When she is not dividing her time between the field and the lab, you can find her sharing plant facts with anyone who will listen. She also enjoys hiking, reading, and gardening in her spare time.

Pranav Dawar

Post-Doctoral Research Associate, Pacific Northwest National Labor

My name is Pranav Dawar, and I am a biologist with interdisciplinary expertise in molecular biology, bioinformatics, transcriptomics, and proteomics, with a strong focus on applying single-cell and spatial omics to living systems. My current research aims to uncover how plant cells and tissues respond to developmental cues, as well as abiotic and biotic stress, particularly in plant-pathogen interactions such as the Sorghum bicolor-Colletotrichum sublineola pathosystem. I am especially interested in resolving molecular processes at high spatial and cellular resolution to better understand disease progression, stress responses, and tissue-specific regulation. Through this work, I hope to advance fundamental plant biology while also contributing tools and knowledge that can support crop resilience.applications focused on emerging technologies for large-scale and integrative biological analyses.

Promote Your Research

ASPB Western Section wants to promote your research!

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