

July 20, 2020

Re: Committee Report to the Botanical Society of America Board

From: Kaplan Dissertation Improvement Award in Comparative Morphology

Background: The Kaplan Award was established by the family of Donald R. Kaplan in 2019 to foster research in comparative morphology, the focus of Kaplan's career in research and teaching. The endowment of the Kaplan family currently provides for an annual award of \$10,000. A committee was appointed by then President-elect Linda Watson for the purpose of outlining details of the review and awarding process. Previous documents provided to the Board of the Botanical Society for approval included a detailed description of the origin of the award, how the committee was established, specifications of the award, and how the committee intended to proceed. The Kaplan Committee also provided a Call for Proposals. These two documents were approved by the Board.

First Award Cycle: The Call for Proposals was circulated to Botanical Society members in early 2020, with an application deadline of March 15, 2020. The committee met several times in early May to review applications and make a recommendation. Our selection was based on a pool of 30 applicants. Of these applicants, 11 (37%) were from international students. Among applicants, 17 (57%) were female. Based on the criteria outlined in our description of the award, we selected Annika Smith, a student of Pamela Soltis, University of Florida, as the 2020 winner of the Kaplan Award. Annika's dissertation research is entitled "The unique nectar spurs of the nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum*): Vascular architecture, tissue conflict, and synorganization." We had many outstanding applicants to choose from, which the committee viewed very positively although having so many excellent proposals made the selection process difficult.

Follow-up to first award cycle: The Kaplan committee met on July 14, 2020 to review the first award cycle and determine whether we wished to make any modifications in the process. We decided that the Call for Proposals needed some additional details on the types of research that could be funded by this award. To aid students in preparation of their proposals, we have added some additional explanation of potential research areas to the Call for Proposals. We now state that proposals should "focus on questions that address the evolution or generation of diversity in form and advance the field of comparative plant structure." We have also added more information about how the award is administered, which was explained to the Board in our original outline of the award but missing from the call. We have attached the modified Call for Proposals and would like the Board to review this before the next award cycle. Major changes are highlighted in yellow.