

**BSA Award Committee: Graduate Student Award in Phylogenetic Comparative Plant Biology**  
Michael Donoghue (Chair), 12 July 2023

Members: Michael Donoghue (Yale, Chair), Barbara Whitlock (U. Miami) Ken Sytsma (U. Wisconsin), Dave Tank (U. Wyoming), Petra de Block (Botanic Garden Meise, Belgium), and Joyce Onyenedum (Cornell), with support from Heather Cacanindin and Amelia Neely.

Note that I (Michael) agreed to Chair this committee in its inaugural year, to help insure alignment with the intentions of the donors. Other possible committee members were suggested by BSA leadership. All those we contacted about serving on the Committee were very enthusiastic, and most agreed to serve.

The Committee met by Zoom on December 8<sup>th</sup> to discuss the award, and the application and evaluation procedures. Several changes were suggested, including a name change: i.e., including the word “phylogenetic” in the title, in part to better differentiate this award from the Kaplan Award. The Chair discussed this suggestion with the donors, who happily approved!

It was decided that the BSA online portal would be used for applications and for our evaluations. We agreed on a slightly modified version of the evaluation rubric that had been developed for the Kaplan Award. We also agreed to solicit just one letter of recommendation, and crafted a slightly modified wording for Broader Impacts:

The 5 single-spaced page proposal should include: background information, methods (this section limited to 1 page maximum of the total), a broader impacts statement (200 words or less) addressing how the work has the potential to benefit society (examples include improving educational outreach, public engagement, and broadening participation), a budget and timeline.

The BSA application portal was opened in December, with an application deadline of 15 February 2023. We received 22 applications. These were diverse in terms of institutions represented (including 6 from outside the US), gender (13 men, 9 women), and subject matter. The Committee agreed that we would each evaluate 11 proposals using the BSA portal, and that we would include commentary that could be shared with each applicant. Each proposal was evaluated by three committee members, avoiding all conflicts of interest.

The Committee met by Zoom on 4 April and again on 12 April to discuss the applications and decide on an awardee. Based on the evaluations we initially focused on the six top applicants, and then narrowed this down to two exceptionally strong proposals. A vote was taken and it was decided to offer the award to **Zachary Muscavitch**, who is working on lichen evolution with Louise Lewis and Bernard Goffinet at the University of Connecticut.

The Committee agreed that in the future we should request a short CV from each applicant. Also, where field work is being proposed, it would be good to obtain information on collaborations, collecting permits, etc.