



**STEP Newsletter
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Greetings,

Welcome to the fourth edition of the STEP newsletter, created by ESA's STEP Committee to keep early professional members and those just transitioning into their careers informed about important discussions, deadlines and information that's particularly pertinent to this growing membership group. The newsletter is now being sent to ESA leaders as well to keep them informed of STEP activities.

Two Important ESA 2016 Annual Meeting/ICE 2016 Deadlines Approaching

Two **ESA 2016 Annual Meeting**/International Congress of Entomology (**ICE 2016**) deadlines are fast approaching. These include the final deadline to [submit](#) a paper (15-min presentation) or poster, which is **February 1st**, as well as the early bird [registration](#) deadline (**March 25th**). An abstract is required for all submitted presentations, so please be sure to include one. No papers or posters will be accepted after February 1.

ICE 2016 offers a unique opportunity for early career professionals, as it provides easy access to a prestigious international audience right in our country—in exciting Orlando, FL. Over 7,000 entomologists from around the world are expected to attend, so there will be incredible networking opportunities as well. If you are in the tenure race, it is always beneficial to make international contacts early, before you go up for full professor. In addition to exposure and networking, ICE

presents a wonderful opportunity to provide service to the international entomological community by serving as a judge, moderator of a contributed section, or on a committee. STEPs can get the greatest return on their investment by participating in multiple aspects of this meeting. This is the first time that ICE has been in the United States in many STEPs' lifetimes (it was last here in 1976), so it is important to take advantage of what could be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Submit your paper or poster today and we'll see you there!

ESA Non-U.S. STEP Travel Award Winners for ICE 2016 Announced

The STEP Committee recently sponsored a competition for travel grants to the 2016 International Congress of Entomology (ICE) for ESA members who are undergraduate or graduate students, postdoctoral researchers, or professionals having less than three years' experience, and who reside outside of the continental United States, Alaska, and Hawaii.

We received a total of 190 applications, from all continents and representing 45 countries, and selected just 27 awardees. A total of \$50,000 will be distributed amongst them for airfare, meeting registration, and lodging/living costs during travel to ICE 2016. The 27 awards were allocated to 2 undergraduate students, 3 master students, 13 Ph.D. students, and 9 early professionals, representing 12 countries and all ESA Sections.

View the list of winners here: <http://bit.ly/1Q0pVTn>

NEW: \$27,000 in ESA U.S. STEP Travel Awards for ICE 2016 Will Be Available

Speaking of travel grants, great news! The STEP Committee will award a total of \$27,000 to 20-25 early professional members residing in the continental U.S., Alaska and Hawaii, to support their travel to ICE 2016. Funded by ESA's Branches and Sections and the Rocky Mountain Conference of Entomologists, these awards will be based on criteria such as the scope and importance of the applicant's research to be presented at the Congress, how the applicant's attendance and participation at the Congress will benefit his or her professional development and the science of entomology, and how the applicant's attendance will contribute to the diversity of attendees at ICE 2016 (Branch, Section, gender, ethnicity, etc.).

Watch your email and future ESA and STEP newsletters for more information.

NEW: NSF Travel Awards for ICE 2016

And even more great travel award news!

The National Science Foundation has awarded a grant to broaden awareness of insect contributions to ecosystem services and to help graduate students and early career professionals (postdocs and assistant professors) from under-represented groups participate in the ICE 2016 symposium, "Insect effects on ecosystem services," scheduled for Sept 27, 2016. Awards of up to \$1,500 each may be used for meeting registration, airfare and housing.

Applications may be emailed or faxed and must include 1) a cover letter (2 page maximum) stating anticipated benefits for career development from participation in this symposium and in ICE, 2) anticipated travel expenses, and 3) a complete CV. Applications must be received by midnight

Eastern time **March 1, 2016**, and awards will be announced by March 18 so that to allow recipients to register by the early deadline of March 25.

For more information or to apply, contact Dr. Tim Schowalter, LSU Department of Entomology, at tschowalter@agcenter.lsu.edu.

Members of underrepresented groups are particularly encouraged to apply.

New Professional Awards to Honor STEPs in 2016

Through the collaborative efforts of ESA's Governing Board and Student Transition and Early Professionals (STEP) committee, we are excited to announce the addition of four new awards to honor individuals who have greatly contributed to the science of entomology:

- The **STEP Outreach and Public Engagement Award** will honor a student transition or early professional working within the field of entomology that has demonstrated excellence, leadership, and creativity in outreach and public engagement.
- The **STEP Research Award** will recognize a STEP member who has made outstanding research contributions to the field of entomology.
- The **STEP Teaching Award** will recognize a STEP member who excels in entomological education.
- The **STEP Extension Award** will be given to a student transition or early professional who excels in entomological extension.

Further details pertaining to these awards will be released soon with updates found in upcoming ESA emails and STEP newsletters.

In addition, the STEP committee is working with the Eastern Branch to develop another STEP award, **The Excellence in Early Career Award**. This award will recognize a student transition or early professional working within the field of entomology who has demonstrated excellence in all the major aspects of intellectual life, including research, extension, teaching, and outreach. The STEP Committee will work with the remaining ESA Branches as they consider similar awards.

A Note from ESA President May Berenbaum

In August, 1980, two weeks after I deposited my dissertation and received my doctoral degree, I started my career as a tenure-track professor at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. At the time, that particular career move wasn't at all extraordinary. Today, a Ph.D. graduate who starts a tenure-track job at a university is almost like a mythical creature—one that you suspect must exist but that you might never see in your lifetime (the human equivalent of, say, the larval stage of *Merope tuber*, the elusive earwigfly).

It's an understatement to say that there has been a profound demographic change in the sciences. This year, the 25th International Congress of Entomology will be held in the United States for the first time since 1976; in the 40 years that have elapsed since then, the number of postdoctoral appointees in the sciences has ballooned from about 18,000 to over 60,000 ([Powell 2015](#)). Today, fewer than a quarter of PhD graduates hold a tenure-track position five years after receiving their degrees. Across the sciences, things are particularly bad for biologists; Between 1993 and 2003, the percentage of PhD biologists having tenure or tenure-track positions 4 to 6 years post-PhD plunged from 25% to 15% ([Trivedi 2006](#)).

The Entomological Society of America has as one of its strategic principles the social responsibility of developing all of its members. The Governing Board recognized that a significant fraction of its membership has not fit well into traditional categories (so postdocs might be considered the human equivalent of Strepsiptera); they have many of the responsibilities of faculty members but like students they are subject to the oversight of their advisors (and also, like students, they're not paid very well; postdoctoral salaries are only about 56% of non-postdoctoral salaries) ([Powell 2015](#)).

Because postdocs are so important to the current and future strength of the Entomological Society of America, decisive action had to be taken to engage and encourage our postdocs—hence, the Student Transition/Early Professionals (STEP) committee was created and new opportunities for participation, training, recognition, representation, and career development are being added to the portfolio of this important committee. As ESA's 2016 President, I look forward to supporting the needs of the STEP community.

Great Tips from the STEP Lunch & Learn in Minneapolis

Transitioning into the job market as a recent graduate or from job-to-job as an early professional comes with a unique set of challenges that are new to many STEP members. To help answer some of our questions and learn how to manage this job transition, the STEP Committee hosted a Lunch and Learn Session with a panel of speakers at the recent annual ESA meeting in Minneapolis.

The panel included ESA members who were recently on the job hunt, know the challenges of this current job market, and currently hold jobs in academia, industry, or extension and outreach. Audience members asked questions about preparing special, but widely-adaptable skillsets, transitioning from academia to industry, and how to get one's foot in the door.

The panelists offered some great tips, with an overarching one being mentorship. Finding one or more mentors seemed to be a key commonality in landing the job you want. Mentors can open up opportunities, create connections, and provide guidance throughout your career. Dr. Tamra Reall Lincoln also suggested that if you are searching for a mentor, taking up leadership positions, such as through the Society or at your institution, can expose you to more people from different fields and may often open up opportunities for you that can lead to career advancement.

The discussion also turned to publications and the ever-present question: how many is enough? If you ultimately intend to land a position in academia, publications are important, so Dr. Bob Koch suggested that if your career trajectory temporarily takes you off the academic path, as his did, you should make a point to continue to publish in the interim. Dr. Mitchell Stamm and Mr. Zach Rystrom, both working in industry, added that it can also be a good idea to connect with industry professionals to see what skills and publication records the company you want to join is looking for. Dr. Andrine Shufran recommended that STEP members and students not overlook outreach and extension efforts, which can build marketable skills in addition to research and publications.

The session was moderated by Theresa Cira, the previous STEP Committee Chair, and Ana Maria Velez, the incoming vice-Chair, and the panelists were Dr. Mitchell Stamm (BASF), Zach Rystrom (Diamond Ag Research), Dr. Tamra Reall Lincoln (USDA), Dr. Bob Koch (University of Minnesota), and Dr. Andrine Shufran (Oklahoma State University).

Approximately 65 people attended, and pre-registrants received a free lunch.

Get Involved in the ESA Journal Editorial Process

Publishing in ESA journals is an effective way to gain recognition within your field. [ESA journals](#) cover a wide variety of subjects, so you are sure to reach your target audience. For one STEP's perspective on publishing in the *Journal of Integrated Pest Management*, read [an interview of an author](#) on *Entomology Today*.

In addition to authorship, you can also participate in the editorial process by reviewing submissions or serving as a subject editor. To indicate your interest, contact an ESA subject editor for the [appropriate journal](#), or fill out your [ESA volunteer profile](#).

ESA & Foundation Awards Deadlines Earlier in 2016

Since ESA's 2016 Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with ICE 2016 in September this year, the Professional and Student Awards deadline has been moved up to May 1, 2016 (the previous deadline was July 1). The ESA Fellows and Honorary Members deadline will still be March 15. Submit a nomination [here](#).

Meet the 2016 STEP Committee



Dr. Tamra Reall Lincoln is a postdoctoral research associate with the USDA-ARS at the Biological Control of Insects Research Laboratory in Missouri. She is currently working in cell culture. Tamra has been involved in ESA in many ways, most recently as the Student Representative to the ESA Governing Board (GB) and as GB liaison to the SAC and STEP Committee. Serving on various committees has been an integral part of her career preparation. Involvement in ESA has not only given her a back-door view of how things work in the society, but also exposed her to many research ideas and concepts beyond her research. She enthusiastically encourages others to become involved in ESA.



Dr. Erika Machtinger is a Post Doctoral Scientist with the USDA, ARS in Beltsville, MD. She received her BS from the University of Delaware in Wildlife Conservation and her MS and PhD in entomology from the University of Florida. Erika was raised in the natural areas surrounding the coast of Maine, which fostered her love of the environment and wildlife. Erika has worked at the USDA-BIIRL Laboratory in Newark, DE and also as a wildlife biologist and Environmental Scientist. Because of her involvement with the equine industry, Erika focused her doctoral research on biological control of filth flies. In her current position, Erika is combining her wildlife background and investigating host-targeting integrated control of ticks.



Dr. Amy Morey is a post-doctoral researcher with the Minnesota Invasive Terrestrial Plants and Pests Center and the University of Minnesota Department of Entomology. Her research broadly centers on the intersection of insect cold tolerance, invasion biology, and risk assessment. The goal of her work is to improve invasive species management practices and methods currently used to forecast insect distributions. Amy has been active in ESA since 2008, presenting at yearly branch and national meetings, participating in the Linnaean Games, volunteering, and serving on the North Central Branch Student Affairs Committee. She is thrilled to continue being strongly connected with the ESA community and actively contributes to its function as a member of the STEP Committee.



Dr. Rob Morrison is a post-doctoral researcher with the USDA-ARS at the Appalachian Fruit Research Center in West Virginia. He is currently researching attract-and-kill technology to manage the brown marmorated stink bug in apples, and is also investigating its native predator community. Rob's long-term research interests include understanding how semiochemicals modify plant-insect interactions, and how we can exploit this knowledge to improve the sustainability of agriculture.

Rob has been active in ESA, serving on committees in the North Central and Eastern Branches of ESA, as well as regularly judging student competitions. He is excited to be serving on the STEP Committee and to be the STEP liaison to the Education and Outreach Committee of ESA, because he believes it is important to increase science literacy among the public.



Dr. Travis (TJ) Prochaska is currently navigating the job front exploring opportunities in extension or industry. He graduated in August with his PhD from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln under the supervision of Drs. Tiffany Heng-Moss and Gautam Sarath where he worked on the biochemical, physiological, and anatomical insights of insect-bioenergy grass interactions to help better understand the potential insect resistance mechanism among defined switchgrass populations. Previously serving as the Student Representative to the ESA Governing Board for

two years, Travis has been able to learn about the topics of interest that STEP and other members find valuable to build webinars and ESA workshops to give back to the Society. This has allowed him to make new contacts that STEP can potentially utilize in future projects to add value to the STEP membership.



Dr. Rebecca Schmidt-Jeffris joined the ESA in 2010 as a graduate student at Washington State University. She is currently a postdoctoral research associate at Cornell University, where she is determining factors that increase risk of European corn borer infestation in vegetable crops. Her broad research interests include landscape ecology, biological control, and the development of innovative IPM practices. She has greatly benefited from her involvement in ESA; her leadership roles have included chairing the ESA and ICE 2016 Student Affairs Committees, organizing the Student Debates and symposia, and an extension careers Lunch and

Learn. She is excited to use this leadership experience to advocate for postdocs and other early career professionals as a STEP committee member. Rebecca would like to help other members become engaged with ESA; contact her with any questions or suggestions regarding how ESA can better serve its members.



Dr. Ashfaq Sial is currently working as an Assistant Professor in the Entomology Department at the University of Georgia where he has a research and extension appointment. The goals of his research program are to investigate biology and ecology of insect pests of small fruits in both field and laboratory settings, and to develop sustainable management programs. The majority of his current projects focus on invasive pest, spotted wing drosophila. He works directly with growers to

help them implement IPM programs in conventional and organic production systems. His laboratory is well funded through federal, stakeholder, and industry grants. He also serves as IPM Coordinator for the state of Georgia.



Dr. Sheena Sidhu is a postdoctoral researcher at University of California Riverside studying pollinator communities and pollination biology in both natural and agricultural systems of southern California. Sheena has valued the benefits of being an ESA member and particularly appreciated the focus on students at branch and annual meetings. She joined STEP to advocate for similar support for postdoc and in-transition members that are at the critical phase of early career development.

Sheena is open to hearing concerns, questions, and suggestions from fellow ESA members in order to provide a voice for STEP members within ESA and to foster a community among peers.



Dr. Ana María Vélez is currently a research assistant professor in the Insect Toxicology Lab at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Her research interests include different aspects of the use of RNAi as a pest management tool and evolution of resistance to insecticides. For Ana, her ESA membership has been extremely valuable since it has provided her with an opportunity to share her research and to network with fellow entomologists. As a STEP Committee member

Ana is eager to advocate for the needs of the STEP community, her main goal is to improve support and recognition of early career professionals. In addition, Ana is interested in promoting diversity and inclusion in the STEP community.

Want to get involved?

If you have any thoughts, suggestions, or questions for the STEP Committee, please contact us by emailing esa.step.committee@gmail.com or by joining our [ESA network](#).

For the full text of newsletter #3, click [here](#).