

Report of the Committee on Lectureships for the Year ending June 30, 2019

It is my pleasure to report that the Sigma Xi Lectureship Program continues to be one of our Society's most successful endeavors. It provides outstanding lecturers to chapters and their host institutions, while offering an opportunity for outreach to the broader community interested in science. This is a report of the activities of the Committee on Lectureships from July 1, 2018 – June 30, 2019.

I. THE SIGMA XI DISTINGUISHED LECTURERS

The Committee presented a selection of 17 speakers to serve as the 2019-2020 Distinguished Lecturers. These speakers addressed subjects and issues including geology, history, engineering, anthropology, biology, and physics. The Committee is pleased to announce that, in addition to the lecturers selected by the committee, the American Meteorological Society (AMS) sponsored a speaker for the series. AMS provided funding to subsidize Sigma Xi chapters as they engaged lecturers at local events.

The list of Distinguished Lecturers, along with their brief biographies and information about lectures on offer, was included in the January-February issue of *American Scientist*. The Lectureship Committee is keenly aware of the need to achieve a balanced class of lecturers in terms of discipline, geography, gender and ethnic plurality. These criteria inform our primary responsibility to offer, as lecturers, outstanding research scientists and engineers who deliver stimulating and effective lectures to a broad audience representing a wide range of disciplines.

Based on previous committee experiences and the large number of self-nominations during this fiscal year, the committee agreed that a more precise description of the attributes required for Sigma Xi Distinguished Lecturer selection should be made on the website. Nearly all of the nominees had excellent academic and research credentials but did not have or did not demonstrate the excellent presentation skills that the program is seeking. All candidates sent very large resumes that while informative for academic evaluation and standards, did not necessarily demonstrate outstanding oral communication skills. This precipitated a discussion about rejection language that would be used for failed candidates that had excellent academic credentials but did not provide adequate information to evaluate their speaking skills. The committee erred on the side of inclusion where possible. As a result, the committee suggested that we/Sigma Xi craft a more precise requirements set for the next round including; shorter academic vita, better attention to the topic requirements, testimonials from good sources specifically about presentation skills, and provision of any video or YouTube examples of lectures, society presentations, and talks at various venues ranging from the academic to general audiences.

II. LECTURESHIP SUBSIDY PROGRAM

After a review of the subsidy applications the committee took up the issue of honoraria and making the Distinguished Lectureship Program more attractive to accomplished speakers. Most of the committee agreed that the \$300 honorarium was quite low relative to what is now

common. The committee suggested a range of \$500-\$1000 would be more in-line with other speaker's fees. The committee also acknowledged that the source of the funds was an issue and suggested the possibility of Chapters co-funding the honoraria as a way of increasing it. For fiscal year 2020, a total of \$19,150 was awarded to the following 19 chapters:

Ohio State University, Rockford University, Louisiana Tech University, Vermont, Fairfield University, University of Notre Dame, Quinnipiac, Greenbrier Valley, University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Northwestern Pennsylvania, Iowa State University, Case Western Reserve University, Lamar University, State University of New York at Purchase, Columbia-Willamette, University of Nebraska at Kearney, Kansas City, and the University of New Mexico.

My sincere appreciation is expressed to the members, who serve, so ably, on this committee. The members of the committee for the year ending June 30, 2019 were:

Gilda Barabino	Georgia Institute of Technology
HollyAnn Harris	Creighton University
Marc Lee Imhoff (chair)	University of Maryland
Diandra Leslie-Pelecky	West Virginia University
Tammy Maldonado	University of Colorado
Amy Stockert	Ohio Northern University

The committee is interested in comments and suggestions. Please forward your comments to Janelle Simmons, Manager of Programs.

Sincerely,
Marc Lee Imhoff, Ph.D.
Chair, Committee on Lectureships