

## Diversity Matters

# ABRCMS and SACNAS: Building a Bridge to Cell Biology through Mentorship and Community

By James A. Olzmann and Milton To

Achieving a diverse and inclusive scientific community is a goal shared by ASCB and many other organizations. Diversity-oriented Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) conferences serve an important role in supporting aspiring minority scientists at critical times in their training. Two of the largest of these conferences are the Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) conference and Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS).

ABRCMS and SACNAS provide undergraduate and graduate students with opportunities to present research, hone professional development skills, discover new research fields, learn about graduate programs, and acquire new strategies for success in STEM careers. In addition to scientific presentations, shared meals, small group workshops, and social events promote network and community building. Indeed, following attendance, students report greater research confidence and a sense of belonging to a scientific community.<sup>1</sup>

Critical to the success of these conferences are the faculty who attend, present, and interact with students. A large number of faculty volunteers are also required to judge presentations and provide students with feedback. Personal interactions with students at this stage can have an enormous impact, and members of ASCB serve as important ambassadors of the cell biology community. Conversations with students at their posters and during social events may seem like small gestures, but they contribute to an overall impactful experience that increases student confidence and scientific identity. Ultimately, minority students' belief that their efforts are valuable, that they

are part of a scientific community, and that they can succeed are important predictors of perseverance in academic science and the pursuit of a scientific career.<sup>2</sup>

ASCB takes an active role at these conferences and members of the ASCB Minorities Affairs Committee (MAC) often participate in an ASCB-sponsored booth, providing information to students about careers in cell biology and the many benefits of professional societies such as ASCB. The ASCB MAC also organizes scientific and professional development sessions to further introduce and expose students to the exciting world of cell biology research.

If you would like to learn more about these efforts and/or how you can get involved in ASCB efforts at ABRCMS and SACNAS, please contact James Olzmann (olzmann@berkeley.edu), Sydella Blatch (sblatch@ascb.org), or other members of the ASCB MAC.

### References

<sup>1</sup>Casad BJ, Chang AL, Pribbenow CM (2016). The benefits of attending the annual biomedical research conference for minority students (ABRCMS): the role of research confidence. *CBE Life Sci Educ* 15, ar46.

<sup>2</sup>Estrada M, Woodcock A, Hernandez P, Schultz PW (2011). Toward a model of social influence that explains minority student integration into the scientific community. *J Educ Psychol* 103, 206–222.

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**ABRCMS:** Indianapolis, IN; November 14–17, 2018



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