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Press Release

AIBS Names 2018 Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award Winners *UC Berkeley and University of South Florida Graduate Students Recognized*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, February 21, 2018

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Washington, DC - The [American Institute of Biological Sciences](#) (AIBS) is pleased to announce that Joanna "Jo" Downes Bairzin and Karena Nguyen have been selected to receive the 2018 AIBS Emerging Public Policy Leadership Award (EPPLA). The EPPLA recognizes graduate students in the biological sciences who have demonstrated leadership skills and an aptitude for future professional success working at the intersection of science and public policy.

Joanna Bairzin is a doctoral candidate in molecular and cell biology at the University of California, Berkeley, where her research is focused on the regulation of developmental patterning genes by an oncoprotein, which could ultimately help inform our understanding of cancer tumor cell development. Bairzin earned her BA in biology from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Karena Nguyen is a doctoral candidate in integrative biology at the University of South Florida, where she is active in outreach, student government, and education initiatives. Her research has been recognized with the Best Scientific Talk at the Southeastern Branch of the American Society for Microbiology Meeting and the Outstanding Student Poster at the American Society for Microbiology General Body Meeting. Nguyen received her BS in biology with a minor in public health from Saint Louis University.

Both awardees are active in their professional communities. Bairzin has previously organized congressional visits as a participant in the AIBS Congressional District Visits event. Through the Genetics Society of America, she has participated on a policy subcommittee that has helped to provide early career scientists with information about career options. Nguyen, a member of the Ecological Society of America and American Society for Microbiology, has served as a mentor, held leadership positions in student government, and participated in media interviews.

Nguyen pursued the EPPLA because she plans "to pursue a career in science policy or informal science education at a museum, zoo, or other community institution." Moreover, "policymakers are ultimately the individuals who decide how funds are allocated toward biological sciences." This view is shared by Bairzin, who states that "we cannot expect busy policymakers to pay special attention to the issues we care about, like federal funding for scientific research and education, if we never talk to them or make ourselves available."

Like Nguyen, Bairzin views "public engagement as a critical part of my job as a scientist, so I've tried to consistently advocate to my elected officials."

This is the fifteenth year that AIBS has recognized graduate student achievement through the EPPLA program. "We continue to be impressed by the outstanding achievements of the individuals we recognize as well as the many other candidates who enter the competition every year," said Dr. Robert Gropp, AIBS Co-Executive Director.

Bairzin and Nguyen will travel to Washington, DC, in April to participate in an AIBS science communications-training program and to meet with their members of Congress as part of the annual AIBS Congressional Visits Day.

AIBS is the national organization dedicated to promoting informed decision-making that advances the biological sciences for the benefit of science and society. The EPPLA program is one way AIBS is working to build the capacity of the scientific community to promote sound decision-making.

The EPPLA program is made possible by the generous financial support of AIBS individual members. More information about the EPPLA program and AIBS membership is available at www.aibs.org.

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