

It's time to get together: Announcing the new society for evolutionary developmental biology in the Americas

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It is with great excitement and future hope for our field that we officially announce the creation of the *Pan-American Society for Evolutionary Developmental Biology*. On behalf of the Council, we (Ehab Abouheif, President and Karen Sears, President-Elect) invite you to visit our new website www.evodevopanam.org and join us! We welcome scientists from all over the world who are interested in evolutionary developmental questions spanning all levels of biological diversity.

Our mission is to provide a voice for and promote evolutionary developmental biology in the America's, to provide a forum for establishing communication and collaboration, and to promote training and education. We hope to accomplish our mission through a number of community building activities, including organizing a bi-annual conference that alternates with our sister society *The European Society of Evolutionary Developmental Biology*, organizing training and education workshops in conjunction with all societies hosting evo-devo sessions and symposia, facilitating the exchange of educational and training materials, advertising all future events in the field, public education, and lobbying funding agencies in the America's on the importance of evo-devo research. Furthermore, our Society will recognize and celebrate the pioneers in the field of evolutionary developmental biology through its Pioneers Award, and will recognize through a number of awards our highly promising students, postdocs and early career researchers.

Many have asked us: why a new society and why now? As a field, evolutionary developmental biology is undergoing great change. On the one hand, our field has never been more relevant and exciting as we are expanding rapidly with recent incorporation of conceptual and technical tools from many sub-disciplines, including genomics, ecological and quantitative genetics, developmental plasticity, ecology, paleontology, cell and systems biology, theoretical biology, behavior, and population genetics. Integrating this long list of sub disciplines into our field is clearly a great recipe for innovative discoveries. On the other hand, it poses a great challenge because the boundaries of evolutionary developmental biology are becom-

ing blurred, and as a consequence, so have the goals and questions of our field. It is therefore critical to bring together all of these approaches, tools, and organisms to define a common core of the field.

Inspired by the great success of the *European Society of Evolutionary Developmental Biology*, whose meeting last year in Vienna hosted over 600 participants, Cassandra Extavour and Alan Rodrigo organized a National Evolutionary Synthesis Centre workshop on the future of evo-devo in the Americas. The objective of this workshop was to bring together a small number of researchers to discuss the past, present, and future of our field. Participants included national and international researchers from multiple career stages and areas of expertise, as well as NSF program officers. A strong consensus emerged from this workshop that we need a society that hosts regular scientific meetings that bring the diverse evo-devo community in the America's together to advance the field. And so, this workshop catalyzed the formation of our new Society.

The inaugural meeting of our new Society is being organized by Nipam Patel (UC Berkeley), Chris Lowe (Stanford), Ehab Abouheif (McGill) and Karen Sears (University of Illinois), and will be held in Berkeley, California from August 5–9, 2015. Register early at www.evodevopanam.org because space is limited to 350 participants. For most of the meeting we will be sitting in one room listening to all of our diverse approaches, tools, and organisms. We have an exciting line up of keynote and invited speakers, and there are plenty of opportunities for all levels of our community to speak and present posters at the conference, so please submit your abstracts. Other activities will include a panel discussion on the future of evo-devo. Finally, the Council is proud to announce Professor Rudolf Raff (Indiana University) as the first recipient of our Society's most distinguished award – the Pioneers Award – and will be presenting the Pioneers Award lecture.

The field of evolutionary developmental biology is at an exciting crossroads, and we strongly believe that the *Pan-American Society for Evolutionary Developmental Biology* will help the field move forward.