

spARO Annual Report 38th Annual MidWinter Meeting Baltimore February 2015

Although most of you probably know the student, postdoc and medical resident chapter of the Association for Research in Otolaryngology (spARO, pronounced 'sparrow') and have already attended at least one of our events, we briefly want to give you an overview of the society in general, and specifically the activities at the last MidWinter Meeting.

The community's main goal is to help every member to succeed in our professions in speech- and hearing-related sciences. Apart from connecting to like-minded peers in the ARO community and the concomitant positive social interaction that can lead to scientific collaborations as well as long-lasting friendships, we specifically try to guide the career development of young researchers by offering several events during the Annual MidWinter Meeting:

- The spARO social focuses on having a good time with (approximately 200) fellow researchers. Free drinks as well as a small buffet are usually supplied by ARO and guarantee a successful evening. This year in Baltimore, we again chose the Heavy Seas Alehouse, whose staff offered us excellent support in every aspect. For the first time, we could collect email addresses of the attendees (which will be compared with the official ARO lists), because we anticipate sending out a newsletter twice a year with important information regarding the society and potentially also grant applications or professional opportunities.

- Although we had to experience some difficulties regarding the date, it was eventually possible to host the Young Investigator Lunch with Dr. Daniel J. Tollin, who had won the Burt Evans (Young Investigator) Award in 2010 and shared valuable advice regarding a successful research career.

- We were pleased to be able to offer a "Communicate your Science" for the first time at the past conference. During this session, Dr. Allison Coffin briefly introduced students, postdocs and residents to her ideas and then focused on practical experience with immediate feedback, which the attendees found to be very valuable. To help against stage fright, free drinks were offered by our organization.



Dr. Allison Coffin (center) talking to spARO members during her interactive workshop.

- The Poster Blitz gave 20 young researchers the opportunity to present their posters in a rapid-pace (under 5 minutes) using PowerPoint slides. An esteemed panel of researchers and clinicians evaluated each pitch presenter on the basis of (1) the ability to convey the impact of their work, (2) the visual appeal of the slides, and (3) the overall presentation. The winners were recognized at the Award of Merit Ceremony and are as follows:
First place: Peter Gottlieb.
Second place: Shefin George.
Third place: Michelle Valero.

- The Mentoring Program has represented a cornerstone of the spARO activities over the last several years. For this MidWinter Meeting, we could offer 8 interactive sessions with experienced “role model” scientists. A wide variety of topics was covered, including “Building Mentoring Relationships”, “Job Search and Independence”, “Clinician/Scientist”, “Careers in Industry”, “Getting Grants”, “Work-Life Balance”, “Working in Administration” and “Publishing”). The small group size usually allows attendees to specifically direct the discussion towards topics of interest for them and take the most out of it.

- We had a special surprise at the Town Hall Meeting this year. After presenting spARO's goals and its leadership team, one lucky attendee was chosen to receive a brand-new iPad mini 3 Wi-Fi 16 GB, sponsored by A-M Systems (<http://www.amsystems.com>).



The winner of the iPad, David Little, together with spARO Exiting Chair Will Hamlet.

The spARO facebook page is active and is used to report relevant information regarding our field of research:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/spARO2012/?ref=ts&fref=ts>

Feel free to post links that you deem important for the others. However, we are trying to keep the site spam-free, which is why we compare the users who want to join with the ARO associate members and the email addresses that we collected at the social. If somebody is not on any of these lists and still wants to join, please send us an email to the address below.

As a final remark, I want to thank the 2014/2015 steering committee, which included Anna Diedesch, Nichole Foster, Ross Maddox, David Morris, Zahra Sayyid, Nate Zuk, (myself), as well as Will Hamlet who did a great job and has made it easy for me to continue the excellent work. The new members of this year's steering committee can be seen here: <http://www.aro.org/?page=spAROCCommittee>

For feedback, suggestions, information or if you want to become active in our organization, please send an email to sparo.ex.officio@gmail.com

Lukas Landegger
spARO Chair-Elect