

For Immediate Release

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Keystone Symposia Appoints Five Fellows as Part of Diversity in Life Science Initiative

SILVERTHORNE, CO – December 11, 2009 – Keystone Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology is pleased to announce the appointment of five new Keystone Symposia Fellows for 2010. Launched in 2008, this unique program enables five talented early-career life scientists (postdoctoral trainees or assistant professors) to shadow the Keystone Symposia program development process for one year. Fellows are selected based on their research promise as well as a commitment to promoting diversity in the biomedical and life sciences. As such, the program is a critical component of Keystone Symposia's initiative to increase participation by scientists from underrepresented minority groups in all aspects of its conferences.

The five newly appointed fellows are **Dana Crawford, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University's Center for Human Genetics Research; **Jameel Dennis, Ph.D.**, Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology at Virginia Commonwealth University; **Dana-Lynn T. Koomoa, Ph.D.**, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i; **Fatima Rivas, Ph.D.**, Postdoctoral Fellow at The Scripps Research Institute; and **David Wilson, Ph.D.**, Senior Research Scientist at the National Institute of Aging/National Institutes of Health.

Many of these early-career life scientists bring unique perspectives as members of underrepresented minority groups themselves. Dr. David Wilson, for example, is a Native American who was raised on a Navajo Nation reservation and strives to encourage younger Native Americans to pursue careers in science. "Diversity at the bench gives rise to diverse ideas pushing towards a common goal," he says. Dr. Koomoa, a native Hawaiian, believes that "bringing people with diverse perspectives together will drive innovation and enhance biomedical and life science research."

The five new fellows will participate in teleconferences, scientists study group sessions, online research topic review/analysis sessions and Keystone Symposia's two semi-annual Scientific Advisory Board meetings, to be held at Keystone Resort in Colorado in January and June of 2010. The Scientific Advisory Board is a 60-plus-member global board of distinguished scientists from academia, government and industry.

Said Dr. Andrew Robertson, Chief Scientific Officer at Keystone Symposia, "We are honored and excited to work with these five talented scientists in the upcoming year. The program is truly symbiotic, as we gain valuable insights from newer investigators when developing our meeting programs, while they in turn have the opportunity to "rub shoulders" with some of the most respected, accomplished scientists in their field." Echoing his sentiments, Dr. Laina King, Keystone Symposia's Director of Diversity in Life Science Programs, added, "Supporting our Board of Director's objective to broaden participation "at the bench," the 2010 Fellows bring an incredible richness of perspective to Keystone Symposia and the broader life science community."

In the inaugural year of the program, Keystone Symposia graduated three fellows: **Cherié L. Butts, Ph.D.**, a research scientist at the USFDA; **De'Broski R. Herbert, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor at the University of Cincinnati School of Medicine; and **Nicole LaRonde-LeBlanc, Ph.D.**, Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland.

About Dr. Jameel Dennis

Dr. Dennis is an African-American Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology at Virginia Commonwealth University who earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Neuroscience from the University of Virginia. His previous research projects focused on mitochondrial dysfunction in Parkinsonism and extracellular matrix dependent inflammation in renal fibrosis. He is currently investigating oligodendrocyte morphogenesis during Central Nervous System development.

About Dr. Dana Crawford

Dr. Crawford received her Ph.D. in Genetics and Molecular Biology with Dr. Stephanie Sherman at Emory University in 2000. Following her graduate studies, she spent two years as an Epidemic Intelligence Service Officer at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and in 2006, she joined the faculty of Vanderbilt University's Center for Human Genetics Research after a four-year postdoctoral fellowship in the Department of Genome Sciences at the University of Washington with Dr. Deborah Nickerson. Dr. Crawford's primary research interests include the broad field of genetic association studies to identify genetic variations associated with human complex diseases or traits.

About Dr. Dana-Lynn Koomoa

Dr. Koomoa is a Postdoctoral Fellow in Dr. Andre S. Bachmann's Laboratory at the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i. She received her Ph.D. from the Department of Molecular Pharmacology, Physiology and Biotechnology at Brown University in the Spring of 2005. Her current research involves investigating the malignant progression of neuroblastoma.

About Dr. David Wilson

Dr. Wilson is a Native American molecular immunologist who graduated from Arizona State University and is currently at the NIH investigating the biological functions of the SIRT6 enzyme.

About Dr. Fatima Rivas

Dr. Rivas comes from a Salvadorian immigrant family and believes that she adds a different perspective to her research as a Hispanic woman. Fatima obtained her Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from California State University, Dominguez Hills. She earned her doctorate degree in 2006 from the University of California, San Diego and attributes much of her success to programs such as USTAR (NIGMS), which played an important role in her decision to go to graduate school. She is currently a postdoctoral fellow at The Scripps Research Institute working in the Nicolaou laboratory. Her current research areas are total synthesis of natural products and drug design.

About Keystone Symposia

Keystone Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, has been conducting internationally renowned, open scientific conferences since 1972 and has been headquartered in Summit County, Colorado since 1990, when the organization left the University of California at Los Angeles. Annually, Keystone Symposia holds more than 50 meetings involving nearly 14,000 scientists from around the world.

More information on Keystone Symposia can be found at www.keystonesymposia.org. Further details about the Fellows Program can be found at www.keystonesymposia.org/fellows and about Keystone Symposia's diversity initiatives at www.keystonesymposia.org/diversity.