

**For Immediate Release**

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**Keystone Symposia Awarded \$1.37 Million, Five-Year NIH Grant to Fund Ongoing Diversity Efforts**

SILVERTHORNE, CO – March 12, 2010 – Keystone Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology is pleased to announce receipt of a \$1.37 million, five-year MARC (Minority Access to Research Careers) Ancillary Training Activities grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Entitled "*Empowering Visible Ethnic Minority Scientists and Trainees at Keystone Symposia*," the grant will fund the organization's efforts to enhance participation in biomedical research by historically underrepresented US ethnic minorities. The NIH definition of such individuals encompasses Black/African Americans (not of Hispanic origin), Hispanics or Latinos, Native Americans/Alaska Natives and Pacific Islanders who are citizens or legal permanent residents of the United States.

With a funding period that begins March 5, 2010, the grant will support diversity initiatives that were launched by Keystone Symposia in 2006 and significantly expanded in the years since. Initially, these efforts were made largely possible by a two-year, \$200,000 grant from the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, awarded in January 2008. Shortly thereafter, in April 2008, Dr. Laina King joined the organization as Director of Diversity in Life Science Programs. Currently, Keystone Symposia also receives some corporate support from Amgen Inc. specifically for its diversity programming.

The programs the new grant will fund include outreach to potential scientist attendees, speakers, organizers and Scientific Advisory Board members of Keystone Symposia; a Fellows Program that provides mentoring for early-career scientists committed to diversity and allows them to shadow the Keystone Symposia program development process for one year; and scholarships for underrepresented minority (URM) students and postdoctoral fellows that pay more than half of the costs of attending a Keystone Symposia life science conference. As a result of the new grant, Keystone Symposia expects to award 30-40 additional scholarships of this type each year beyond the 40 that it awarded in 2009. The scholarships are awarded through a competitive application process based primarily on submission of an abstract for the conference in question.

Outreach efforts include partnering with organizations that already have strong ties to the underrepresented minority community, such as SACNAS (Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science), ABRCMS (Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students), and the Minority Affairs Committee of the American Society for Cell Biology, with which Keystone Symposia already has formed substantial

relationships, as well as building ties with universities and colleges. Dr. Laina King has presented at various graduate schools across the country, particularly those with an historical commitment to participation in the life sciences by underrepresented minority groups and others which have significant numbers of URM graduate and postdoctoral students or trainees in the life sciences.

Launched in 2008, the Keystone Symposia Fellows Program gives early-career scientists mentoring in the “behind-the-scenes” working of the life sciences community. Participants in the Fellows Program demonstrate a strong commitment to participation enhancement by underrepresented minority scientists. Three scientists have already completed the program, and another five are actively involved for 2010.

Additionally, the grant will facilitate community-building, such as holding sessions at Keystone Symposia conferences themselves to make underrepresented minority participants feel more welcome and engaged – and to equip them with the tools to take maximum advantage of the networking benefits of the meeting. A long-range goal is to develop Keystone Symposia into a national resource for diversity in the life science community and to share effective approaches with the broader life science community via publications, presentations and the web. Currently, Keystone Symposia is in the early development phase of a database for underrepresented minority scientists.

Said Dr. Andrew Robertson, Keystone Symposia’s Chief Scientific Officer, who authored the grant in conjunction with Grant Coordinator/Program Analyst Heather Gerhart, “In this tight funding environment, we are both delighted and humbled to receive this substantial NIH grant award. The award affirms our ‘whole community’ approach to diversity. On one hand, we devote a lot of effort to attracting and engaging underrepresented scientists, particularly students and postdoctoral fellows. On the other hand, our efforts are also directed at transforming perspectives among ‘majority’ scientists by equipping them with a forum for discussing race and ethnicity, and by helping to acquaint them with the many talented minority students and scientists who are already out there. The grant gives us the ability to commit as never before to long-term, sustainable efforts to ramp up such efforts.”

Added Dr. Laina King, “Bringing more diverse views, approaches and backgrounds to the bench will undoubtedly translate into a more vibrant research community better reflective of society as a whole – and one with a greater ability to achieve real breakthroughs in life science discovery.”

In its fiscal year 2009, Keystone Symposia’s attendance of underrepresented minority scientists as a percentage of total attendance increased by approximately 20% to 6.2% from 5.2 % in 2008 and 5.0% in 2007. Keystone Symposia’s Scientific Advisory Board membership has also increased in diversity, with 23% participation by women and 6% participation by URM scientists; ongoing efforts are underway to increase minority and female representation further. Participation by URM scientists as speakers and organizers in Keystone Symposia meetings has grown by approximately 10% annually between the 2008 and the 2010 meeting seasons. And in 2009, there was a 40% increase in the number of minority scholarship applications relative to the 2008 meeting season.

To achieve maximum success with its diversity initiatives, Keystone Symposia is guided by a Diversity Advisory Committee comprised of leading scientists from academia, government and industry. Currently, the members of this committee consist of JoAnn Trejo, Ph.D. (ad hoc) of the University of California, San Diego; Arthur Gutierrez-Hartmann, M.D. of the University of Colorado Denver HSC/Aurora; Margaret Werner-Washburne, Ph.D. (ad hoc) of the University of New Mexico; Michael Summers, Ph.D. of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County and Howard-Hughes Medical Institute; Jerry L. Bryant, Jr., Ph.D. (ad hoc) of the United Negro College Fund (UNCF); and Tuajuanda Jordan, Ph.D. of Howard-Hughes Medical Institute-Chevy Chase.

## **About Keystone Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology**

Keystone Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology, a 501(c)3 educational and life science conferencing nonprofit, 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 more than 13,000 scientists from around the world on topics ranging from cellular and molecular mechanisms to cancer, cardiovascular/metabolic disease, infectious disease, neurobiology and plant biology. Almost 40% of the attendees are students and postdoctoral fellows. Meetings are held in the US and Canada as well as, increasingly, in overseas locations that have so far included Australia, Austria, China, England, Ireland, Japan, Singapore, South Africa, Tanzania, Thailand and Uganda.

Keystone Symposia relies on the generous support of corporations, foundations, governments and individuals for approximately 30% of its annual budget.

More information on Keystone Symposia can be found at [www.keystonesymposia.org](http://www.keystonesymposia.org). Further information about Keystone Symposia's diversity initiatives is available at [www.keystonesymposia.org/diversity](http://www.keystonesymposia.org/diversity).

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