



# Department of Plant Biology University of Minnesota August 2009

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## **What's New in Plant Biology:**

### **Igor Libourel joins Department of Plant Biology**

The Department of Plant Biology is pleased to welcome Dr. Igor Libourel, who joined us as an Assistant Professor at the beginning of August. Dr. Libourel was hired as a result of our recent faculty search in Computational and Systems Biology. Igor, who is a native of the Netherlands, obtained his early academic preparation at Leiden University where he earned a M.S. in Molecular Biology. He then obtained a D.Phil at Oxford University, with a focus on the role of NO<sub>x</sub> in anoxic root metabolism in his dissertation research.

He pursued post-doctoral research with Russell Jones at Berkeley, where he worked on NO regulation of germination, and subsequently at Michigan State University with Yair Shachar-Hill, working on metabolic flux analysis in Brassica embryos. He will continue work on metabolic flux analysis, while turning his focus to the microalgae *Ostreococcus*. Using this primitive organism as model system, his lab will investigate the design principles of core metabolism. Dr. Libourel will be based in the Cargill Microbial and Plant Genomics building, where his lab and office will be on the second floor. Please join us in welcoming him to the University of Minnesota.

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## **Phytograd & PBS Graduate Program:**

### **PBS welcomes Jane Glazebrook as Director of Graduate Studies**

The Department of Plant Biology and the Plant Biological Sciences graduate program welcome Jane Glazebrook, who has succeeded outgoing Director of Graduate Studies (DGS) Jerry Cohen in the role of DGS for the PBS program. Jane, an associate professor in Plant Biology, has served the past two years as Associate DGS for this interdisciplinary, interdepartmental program, and is widely respected for her research on genomics of plant defense responses. As Jane steps up into the Director's role, we also welcome Gary Muehlbauer to the ADGS role. Gary is currently associate professor of Agronomy and Plant Genetics and will be promoted to full professor, effective September 1. He is also the holder of an endowed chair in Molecular Genetics. His research focuses on development of molecular genetic and genomic resources for improvement of barley and wheat; tillering in barley; and *Fusarium* resistance in barley and wheat.

We would also like to thank Jerry Cohen for his service to PBS over the past four years -- first as ADGS, then as DGS. His efforts have had a marked impact on the program. Jerry is continuing as Professor of Horticulture and holder of the Bailey Endowed Chair, where his research addresses broad issues in plant biochemistry, growth and development.

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## **Carol H. and Wayne A. Pletcher Graduate Fellowship**

### **General Description**

The College of Biological Sciences (CBS) is announcing the Carol H. and Wayne A. Pletcher Graduate Fellowship for 2010. This *one-year*, \$2500, fellowship is supported by an endowment established through a generous contribution from Carol H. and Wayne A. Pletcher. The intent of the fellowship is to “*support a graduate student(s), with preference given to women, pursuing Ph.D. research in the College of Biological Sciences.*”

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible, a candidate must currently be a Ph.D. student advised by a faculty member whose tenure home/department is in the College of Biological Sciences. The candidate must also demonstrate financial need.

### **Application Process**

Candidates should submit the following:

- A two-page federal application-style (NIH/NSF/USDA) curriculum vitae
- A *two-page, single spaced* letter of application describing your area of interest, demonstrated individual initiative in pursuing career goals, and financial need (i.e. any out-of-pocket need associated with continuing graduate studies)
- A copy of your graduate transcript
- Two letters of recommendation (no more than *one single-spaced page* each):
  - letter from advisor, including comments about the status of funding for the applicant's stipend and research
  - letter from someone familiar with their research

Applications materials should be sent to:

The Carol H. and Wayne A. Pletcher Graduate Fellowship Selection Committee  
Attn: Jean Marie Lindquist  
123 Snyder Hall  
1475 Gortner Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55108

The *deadline for receipt of applications is October 16, 2009.*

### **Selection**

A faculty committee representing the departments of the College of Biological Sciences appointed by the dean, and chaired by the dean or associate dean for research in the college will review and select the recipient(s) of the **Carol H. and Wayne A. Pletcher Fellowship**. A decision will be made and conveyed to the successful (and unsuccessful) candidates by *December 1, 2009*. The donors will be notified and provided information about the fellowship recipient.

### **Background**

Drs. Carol H. and Wayne A. Pletcher have been solid supporters of the University of Minnesota for many years. Carol Pletcher received her Ph.D. in Biochemistry from the University of Minnesota in 1979. Carol served on the College of Biological Sciences, Biological Sciences Alumni Society (BSAS) for several years and also represented BSAS on the University of Minnesota Alumni Board. She served as a senior research

scientist for many years prior to becoming the Chief of Cargill's Corporate Quality Office. Wayne Pletcher is affiliated with 3M.

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### **Achievements:**

Dr. Fumiaki Katagiri was awarded an NSF grant together with co-PI Chad Myers (Dept of Computer Science and Engineering). It is entitled, "Mathematical Modeling of the Arabidopsis Defense Signaling Network," and started on Aug 1, 2009. It is \$755,159 total for three years.

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### **Recent Publications:**

#### **Mesfin Tesfaye – Kathryn VandenBosch Lab**

Mesfin Tesfaye, S.S. Yang, J.F. Lamb, H.J. Jung, D.A. Samac, J. Gronwald, C.P. Vance and K.A. VandenBosch (2009). Medicago truncatula as a model for dicot cell wall development. [BioEnergy Research 2: 59-76 DOI 10.1007/s12155-009-9034-1](#).

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### **Funding:**

#### **UMII 2009 Call for Interdisciplinary Informatics Research Proposal and Training Applications**

The UMII is requesting applications for two of its programs:

##### **1. UMII Seed Grant Program**

These grants are designed to support new research collaborative across the fields of informatics and other disciplines. To foster exploration of promising emerging opportunities in addition to research in established scientific, engineering or art and humanities domains. The goal of the award is to enable the collection of preliminary data that will support competitive extramural funding in the area of informatics and interdisciplinary research. In this cycle the UMII is especially interested in interdisciplinary informatics proposals that encompass the following domains:

- Bioinformatics
- Computational biology
- Health informatics
- Systems biology
- Systems ecology

**Application deadline:** October 15th, 2009, Noon

**Eligibility:** Open to faculty and staff holding a current appointment at the University of Minnesota and eligible to apply for federal support according to University policies.

**Amounts:** Up to \$400K will be available in the FY09 program. Funding range per grant will be between \$25,000 - \$75,000 with an anticipated cap of \$50,000 for most awards.

For more program description and application guidelines go to:

<http://www.informatics.umn.edu/seedgrants.html>

##### **2. UMII Fast Track Training Program**

The UMII Fast Track Training Program is offered to promote expedited training in areas of interdisciplinary research that emphasize the application of informatics, computation and their practices in leading edge research. Open to faculty and senior staff members, attendance in these courses will provide the benefits of an immediate influx in the laboratory, classroom or department of new perspectives and knowledge

on the applications and practices of informatics in interdisciplinary research.

**Application target dates:** August 1st, 2009; October 15th, 2009; and quarterly starting Jan 1st, 2010.

**Eligibility:** Program is open to all faculty and staff members that hold a current University of Minnesota appointment and eligible for University PI status.

**Amounts:** Award will cover registration fees, travel and lodging in an amount up to \$5,000 total. A total amount of \$25,000 will be made available for this program.

For more program description and application guidelines go to:

[http://www.informatics.umn.edu/fasttrack\\_training.html](http://www.informatics.umn.edu/fasttrack_training.html)

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## Calendar of Events:



**Tuesday, August 25**  
**2-6 p.m.**  
**TCF Bank Stadium**

Work on TCF Bank Stadium is nearing completion! Before its official opening, we invite staff and faculty to stop by and *Celebrate U!* This staff and faculty appreciation event is made possible through the generous support of Coca-Cola® and TCF Bank Stadium™. **Bring your U Card** and be sure to:

- Enter TCF Bank Stadium by the Northwest entrance
- Pick up your gift (while supplies last)
- Get your complimentary hot dog/veggie dog, chips, and pop
- Watch a presentation on the Daktronics Video Board
- Enjoy a performance by members of the U of M marching band
- Stop by the information booths
- Learn about the Community Fund Drive
- Visit with senior leaders and Goldy Gopher!

### **Bring Your U Card!**

This event is for U of M staff and faculty only. You must bring a valid U Card to attend this event. Your U Card is your official University of Minnesota photo ID card.

### **Volunteer!**

We are looking for volunteers who would like to help make *Celebrate U!* a success! If you are interested, [send an e-mail](#), indicating when you would be willing to work--either the 1:30 to 4:30 p.m. shift or the 4 to 7 p.m. shift. In the e-mail message, also please indicate what size t-shirt you would like--S, M, L, XL, or XXL.

Thank you, in advance, for your willingness to help!

### **Go Green!--Ride the Bus**

U of M buses will run their normal routes every 15 minutes throughout this event providing transportation to and from St. Paul, East Bank, and West Bank campuses. [Read more about transportation options.](#)

### **Event Parking**

Parking is available in three surface lots located north and west of the stadium--Maroon Lot, Lot #33, and

Lot #37. Limited parking options are also available in the nearby ramps. [Read more about parking options.](#)

If you have questions, [e-mail](#) the *Celebrate U!* Committee.

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### **Job Opportunities:**



The Department of Biology at UW-River Falls has Academic Instructional Staff position(s) available for the Fall Semester, 2009. Courses to be taught include:

Biol 100 is an introductory course for non-majors, and Biol 150 is the equivalent introductory course for majors. Both of these courses have two-hour labs (L), all on Thursday (3 lab sections of 150, and 2 lab sections of 100).

Biology 101 is a 3-credit lecture-only introductory course for non-majors. The 11:00 section above meets from 11:00-11:50 MWF, whereas the 3:00 section meets from 3-4:15 MW.

The minimum educational requirement is a Masters Degree in a biologically-related field or the equivalent (if currently in a PhD program with no Masters). The compensation is \$1300 per credit, with benefits included for any staff position over 7.5 credits per semester. Two-thirds of a credit is given for each hour spent in lab, so that is why the 'adjusted credit hours' (ACH) above totals 16.7. Interested persons should email [mark.s.berglund@uwrf.edu](mailto:mark.s.berglund@uwrf.edu) and/or call 715-529-8845 (cell). **This position could be split between two individuals, if necessary, and may continue into the Spring semester.**

Applicants must also formally apply to the Temporary Employment Pool for the College of Arts and Sciences. Note that the contact person is Mary Foster at [mary.foster@uwrf.edu](mailto:mary.foster@uwrf.edu). See the following URL for instructions: [http://www.uwrf.edu/hr/as\\_temp.htm](http://www.uwrf.edu/hr/as_temp.htm)

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### **University of Copenhagen**

Three Faculty Positions in Chemical, Physical & Biological aspects of Synthetic Biology

The University of Copenhagen invites applications for three tenure-track or tenured positions at the Assistant/Associate Professor level. We seek candidates within each of the following areas:

- Plant biology: Function & assembly of metabolons for use in synthetic biology
- Neurobiology: structure & assembly of membrane proteins and signalosomes
- Chemistry: Nanoscale assembly, single molecule imaging &/or manipulation of biomolecular complexes in vitro and in vivo.

We are launching a new research program in Synthetic Biology based on a 5 year grant amounting to a total of 18M€ The program is one out of four research programs granted by the Danish government under a new initiative (entitled UNIK) to further strengthen excellent interdisciplinary research environments at Danish universities.

The positions are to be filled as soon as possible. The position in plant biology will be based at the Department of Plant Biology & Biotechnology, [Faculty of Life Sciences](#); the position in neurobiology will be based at the Department of Neurosciences & Pharmacology, [Faculty of Health Sciences](#); and the position in Chemistry will be based at the Department of Chemistry, [Faculty of Science](#). Further information about the Departments can be found at: [www.inf.dk](http://www.inf.dk), [www.plbio.life.ku.dk](http://www.plbio.life.ku.dk) and [www.kiku.dk](http://www.kiku.dk).

Inquiries concerning the positions can be made to Professor Thomas Bjørnholm, Nano-Science Center, Phone + 45 35321835, e-mail [tb@nano.ku.dk](mailto:tb@nano.ku.dk).

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### **Miscellaneous Tidbits:**

Bell Museum Curator of Plants and Associate Professor of Plant Biology George Weiblen was instrumental in the selection of this year's Seacology Prize, an annual award given by the non-profit, non-governmental organization which works to preserve the ecosystems and cultures of islands throughout the globe. This year's winner is Filip Damen, a customary landowner and community organizer from Madang Province, Papua New Guinea. Damen was nominated for the prestigious international award by Weiblen who conducts rain forest research on Damen's land. Damen led a group of Wanang clans to sign a historic conservation deed in 2000 when neighboring clans opted for commercial logging. Ecological research at Wanang by Weiblen and colleagues has provided an economic alternative to logging and has helped to protect

Papua New Guinea's first scientific natural area in an active logging concession, helping to strike a balance between forest preservation and local economic development. Damen will be awarded \$10,000 and honored at a ceremony at the Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco on October 8.

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