American Society of Plant Taxonomists—Student Research Grants

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The American Society of Plant Taxonomists has a long tradition of supporting graduate student research. In 1984, the Society’s Systematic Collections Committee proposed a series of competitive grants for students needing to travel to major herbaria in conjunction with their research (Schofield 1998). Since that time, various other student grants for travel, field work, preparation of illustrations, and laboratory research have been initiated (summarized in Schofield 1998). In 2002, the Society received 43 proposals from graduate student researchers and awarded 13 grants, ranging from $510 to $900, for a variety of research activities. Additional grants could have been made had there been additional funds available.

Over the years, the Society’s governing Council has repeatedly sought to increase both the number of student grants and the amounts awarded. Council members recognize that students are the future of our Society and discipline, and supporting them is an investment in the future of systematic botany. Because the number of students requesting support has increased dramatically over the past 18 years, the Council has responded by seeking to place the Student Research Grant program on a sound financial footing while increasing both the number of grants and the dollar amounts awarded. An ad hoc committee (Daniel Crawford, Chair; Jerold Davis, Brent Mishler, Mark Porter, and Waut Thomas) was appointed by President Walter Judd in 2000 to make recommendations on how best to accomplish these goals. Their recommendations, as modified by the Council, were presented to the membership in the Society’s 2001 Fall Mailing via a letter from the President, Past President, and President Elect.

In brief, the plan consists of endowing 15 student research grants for an annual award of $1,000 each. It is estimated that a minimum of $20,000 will be necessary to generate the required amount for each award and allow for possible growth of the endowment. The official name of each research grant will be determined by the person or persons endowing it. No restrictions (e.g., taxonomic, geographic, methodological) may be placed on the grants, and the perpetual endowments will not be used for any purpose other than supporting student research. Students receiving these grants will be selected by the Awards and Honors Committee during the Society’s annual Graduate Student Research Awards competition.

At the ASPT’s annual banquet during the Botany 2002 meetings in Madison, the first two of these grants to attain the activation level of $20,000 were announced.

The Society’s first grant was generously established by Dr. Shirley A. Graham and Dr. Alan K. Graham (Fig. 1) of Kent State University. Shirley was President of the ASPT in 2000 and has been active in the Society’s affairs for many years. Her research focuses on Liliaceae and has resulted in elegant publications on their anatomy, palynology, cytology, ecology, chemistry, and phylogeny. The name Alan Graham is familiar to anyone with an interest in tropical American vegetation. His research on the evolution of tropical vegetation and paleoenvironments during the Cenozoic Era has been as significant as it is voluminous. The Shirley

Fig. 1. Shirley and Alan Graham (left) and William Anderson (right).