Introducing the Early Career Member Representative

I would like to introduce myself as the Early Career Member Representative on the Council of Trustees. I represent the interests of Early career members i.e. those within 10 years of gaining an undergraduate or postgraduate qualification in the life sciences. I have been in this role since July 2017 and I am fortunate enough to be the first person to ever hold this position in the history of the Biochemical Society. The Early Career Member Representative Trustee role and other positions that are representative of the membership on various Society Committees were created in response to the Society Governance Review. One of the key outcomes of the review was to readjust the Trustee body to ensure more proportional representation of the breadth of the Society’s membership, in order to contribute to the Council’s enhanced focus on strategic matters.

The Biochemical Society has approximately 7000 members, of which Early Career members constitute around 20%. The recent focus on including under-represented groups of the Society membership within the Council of Trustees and Society Committees gives early career biochemists and molecular bioscientists the much valued opportunity to help shape the future of the Biochemical Society, and through that the molecular and cellular biosciences. This is an exciting prospect and we should make the most of it!

Early career biochemists and molecular bioscientists represent a diverse group of the Society membership. We have very different backgrounds and career aspirations, and consequently we might have different needs and concerns with regards to the Society’s activities. The recent membership survey indicated several areas of particular interest for Early Career (and Postgraduate) members. These included access to funding, career support (particularly in the non-academic sector), training opportunities, networking opportunities and a platform for member interactions plus conferences and events targeted specifically at Early Career members.

In order to ensure that the relevant issues are identified and addressed effectively, I would like to establish an Early Career Member Advisory Panel with the following key objectives:

- To help ensure that the Society remains constantly aware of the requirements and concerns of early career biochemists and molecular bioscientists and takes the opportunity to map them to existing and future Society activities.
- To provide a consultation forum for the Early Career representatives on the Society’s Committees and the Council of Trustees, to ensure effective input into Trustee-level discussions.
- To encourage engagement of this under-utilized ‘new talent’ in the Society governance structure.
- To expand upon data gathered from the recent membership survey regarding the areas of particular interest to Early Career members.

All Early Career members of the Biochemical Society are welcome to apply to join the Panel. I would like to strongly encourage you to get involved, whether you work in academia, industry, medicine or any other bioscience-related field. In order to truly serve its purpose, this panel needs to reflect the views of all early career biochemists, regardless of their affiliation. Joining the Early Career Member Advisory Panel is a fantastic opportunity to get to know the Society from the inside and to really influence the way it achieves its mission. So, if you feel passionate about the Society and you care about the future of its junior members, please register your interest by emailing Laura Woodland, Head of Membership Engagement at laura.woodland@biochemistry.org by 27 April 2018.

Finally, I would like to remind you about the various Society activities and benefits targeted specifically at Early Career members, which address some of the needs indicated by the membership survey. In the area of conference funding, apart from discounted registration fees for its meetings, the Society offers a range of travel grants and bursaries helping Early career members to attend scientific conferences. For those of you who are currently on a career break, or who have recently returned to work and would like to attend a scientific meeting or training event, the Society offers Stay Connected Bursaries, which cover registration fees for Society meetings, training events and courses plus financial support towards accommodation, travel and care provision. With regards to training opportunities, the Society offers a wide range of training events aimed at graduate level and above, which allow participants to gain hands-on experience in key areas of molecular bioscience and provide the opportunity to ask questions and discuss challenges with experts. Each year the Biochemical Society presents a number of Early Career Research Awards in recognition of the impact of research carried out by scientists with no more than 6 years’ postdoctoral research experience. Please visit the Society’s website for more information.