

Proposal to ASPB Education Foundation Grant Program

Project title: A Competition for New Plant Biology Videos on YouTube

Project manager: Daniel Cosgrove, member #061250
Department of Biology, Penn State University, 106c Life Science Bldg
University Park, PA 16802
Tel (814) 863-3892; Fax (814) 865-9131 email dcosgrove@psu.edu

Advisory Committee:

Sally Assmann (Penn State University),
Katie George (University of Montana)
Lawrence Griffing (Texas A&M University)
Roger Hangarter (Indiana University)
Beth Judy (Montana Public Radio),
possibly others to be named later

Assmann President-Elect of ASPB. George is at the University of Montana and produces the "Science is Cool" radio program for Montana Public Radio. Griffing is a long-term member of the ASPB Education Committee with diverse interests in plant biology education. Hangarter is past president of ASPB and author of the Plants-In-Motion web site and "sLowlife", an installation focused on the aesthetic wonders of plants as living things; Judy is with Montana Public Radio and producer of "The Plant Detective" radio show.

Rationale and Goals

We propose a project to sponsor an open competition for the best new plant biology videos published on YouTube (www.youtube.com). As anyone with teenagers will attest, YouTube has tremendous outreach and vitality and attracts a wide and international audience, notably a young audience. Its impact as a teaching aide is also growing as more informational videos appear on this site. A simple video clip that I put on YouTube as an experiment 6 months ago has gotten thousands of views and positive feedback, with no advertising whatsoever. I use several YouTube videos in teaching Plant Physiology at Penn State and this seems to be a growing practice by other educators. Currently there are some useful videos on YouTube related to plant biology, but there is also a lot of crap. With some catalytic action from this project, this ratio could improve and the popularity of YouTube could be leveraged to inform a huge audience about plant biology.

Through this competition we aim (a) to encourage budding film makers and other creative individuals to produce informative and entertaining videos on topics of interest to the ASPB Education Foundation, (b) to increase the availability and range of short videos for use by educators, (c) to increase exposure of the public, particularly younger members of society, to plant biology, and (d) to establish a simple webpage with links to recommended videos.

Implementation

Attracting Entries. To draw in as many people as possible, the competition will be advertised on the internet, on YouTube, Google Video, Metacafe and related sites, as well as through ASPB, the Botanical Society and other profession venues, and news releases for media coverage. We'll try to get NPR and other media coverage. Incentives for participation include cash awards, honorary certificates, and exposure on a website dedicated to the competition. We will require all YouTube entries to list a link to

the "Plant Video Competition" web page (see below); in this way, YouTube viewers will have a chance to learn about the contest and could search YouTube for other contest entries.

Potential video categories would include:

1. Lecture-type presentations of plant biology topics;
2. Time-lapse, high-speed, video microscopy and related techniques to illustrate and elucidate plant-based phenomena;
3. Biographies and interviews of plant scientists or others important to the field;
4. Animations, story-book style videos and other creative formats;
5. "Try it yourself" videos illustrating experiments and demonstrations of plant biology concepts that can be repeated at home or in a simple school laboratory without advanced equipment;
6. Wildcard entries that don't fit the above categories.

YouTube has a limit of 10 min per video and this competition will stick with that limit. We are still in the process of considering whether to divide videos based on professional vrs amateur production, short (<5 min) versus long, and other criteria. Since we don't know what to expect, we won't try to overthink this issue, but see what we get and then set up reasonable categories based on what seem practical.

"Plant Video Competition" webpage. A simple website will be set up to provide information about the contest and to accept applications from contestants. The site will also give some guidance about effective video making, the rules of the contest, and pointers on how to get video content reviewed for informational correctness. After the close of the contest the website will serve as a place to go to find links to the winning videos and other meritorious videos.

We suggest that this website be hosted and maintained at the ASPB Education Foundation website. This will draw internet traffic to the ASPB site and the society can maintain control of it. It also relieves us of

having to pay for and maintain the site. However, if this idea is not acceptable to the Foundation, we are prepared to setup the site ourselves (paid out of project funds).

Awards, Selection, Ownership, and Linkage

Video awards will include cash prizes (1st, 2nd prize) and honorable mention certificates (no \$\$\$) in several of the above categories, assuming sufficient entries in each category; categories with insufficient entries will be eliminated or combined. Recognition will also be given for aspects such as most innovative, most entertaining, best sound track, and other attractive features that might shine through. Videos with the highest number of YouTube viewers and the highest ranking by YouTube viewers could also receive recognition on the Plant Videos website. The details of the rewards and incentive system are still in flux and will be decided by further discussion with the steering committee.

Videos will be judged by a small panel, or by multiple small panels judging different categories if there are a large number of entries. All entries will be quickly evaluated to filter out frivolous entries. The panel will assess each submission for informational correctness (an absolute requirement) and video qualities that contribute towards effectiveness. The panel is anticipated to include one or more plant biology professionals (ASPB and Botanical Society members), K-12 educators, and students.

Ownership, copyrights and high-quality versions. Ownership will remain with the persons that created the video. All contestants will have to certify, as part of the application process, that that the entry is original work, that it gives appropriate credit where necessary, and that they have obtained permission for use of copyrighted materials. We have discussed whether we should require contestants to grant free, nonexclusive use of the videos by ASPB. This point requires more discussion.

We also discussed the possibility of asking contestants to supply higher quality version of the videos, for hosting on the project website. This question also requires more discussion, as there are potential legal

complications as well as added costs due to maintaining such a website. If the Education Foundation is interested in this possibility, we will be glad to try to facilitate this option.

Tentative Timeline

June 2008	Notification of the award
July-August 2008	Web site and advertising planning by advisory committee
Sept 2008	Announcement of the contest
Sept-Dec	Keeping tabs on entries; promotion of the contest; encouraging entries; organize review panels
Dec 31	Contest deadline
Jan 2009	Initial triage of entries; start reviews
Feb 2009	Finalize reviews; announce awards; set up searchable web site with summaries of the winning entries and links to them. Seek advertising of the contest and its results.

Management & Budget

Daniel Cosgrove will oversee the project with the guidance and help of the advisory committee who will help establish the guidelines for the contest and help to set up the review panels. Penn State University will administer the monies. We propose to run the competition twice, in two consecutive years. If the program is successful, we can attempt to obtain continuing sponsorship from NSF, companies, other foundations and private donors or pass the project directly to ASPB control.

Budget & Justification

Most of the monies for the project will go towards the cash prizes. The exact amounts and numbers of prizes is tentatively listed in the budget, but is subject to modification by the advisory committee. Money is requested to pay a student who will help set up the web site, answer routine emails about the contest, research ways to advertise the contest and help the manager and advisory committee implement the program and its aftermath. Modest honoraria may be paid to some judges who put in a

lot of time reviewing the videos (particularly students and educators who are not ASPB members and those who are recruited to do heavy-duty triage of the videos, in the event of a large number of entries).

Funds are also needed for postage, communications and miscellaneous expenses.

We propose a two-year budget, so that we can use the experience and successes of the first contest to launch a second contest for even better videos. We are amenable to splitting the funding into two annual payments, but we ask for a commitment from the Foundation to run the contest twice, with the caveat that if the first contest is a total washout we may cancel plans for a second run (and return unspent funds to the Foundation).

We also ask the Foundation's help to host the contest web pages on the Foundation's web site. If this is not feasible, we will set up an independent web site, with costs paid from adjustments in the budget.

Year 1

Grand Prize	1000	1	\$1,000
1st prize	500	5	\$2,500
2nd prize	250	15	\$3,750
student help, wage payroll			\$5,000
honoraria for judges			\$2,000
postage, telephone, misc			\$500
subtotal			\$14,750

Year 2

Grand Prize	1000	1	\$1,000
1st prize	500	5	\$2,500
2nd prize	250	15	\$3,750
postage, telephone, misc			\$500
student help, wage payroll			\$5,000
honoraria for judges			\$2,000
			\$14,750

Total \$29,500