

**American Association of Biological Anthropologists
Professional Development Committee
2025–2026 Annual Report**

Submitted by Andrea B. Taylor

Early Career Liaison Program

We received two excellent applications for the Early Career Liaison program. The applications covered topics of timely importance to early career scholars including building mentorship opportunities, enhancing understanding and collaboration around ethical stewardship of skeletal remains, increasing knowledge of and access to resources and funding, and creating more opportunities for connecting early career scholars to build support networks. Dr. Jessica Rothwell (Assistant NAGPRA Coordinator, Center for Archaeology and Society Repository, Arizona State University) was chosen as our new Early Career Liaison. Dr. Rothwell will be working closely with AABA Chair of Professional Development, Dr. Andrea Taylor, and the incoming Student Liaison, to create a dedicated early career webpage to make resources, mentorship opportunities, and pathways for involvement in the AABA more accessible and transparent. We wish her the best during her appointment as the AABA Early Career Liaison, and we acknowledge and thank Dr. Amandine Eriksen for her outstanding service as outgoing Early Career Liaison.

Cobb Professional Development Grants (CPDG)

The AABA CPDG committee reviewed 21 eligible applications for the 2025–26 grant cycle. The applicants spanned multiple countries and represented a diversity of career stages, institutions, and subfields in biological anthropology. The applicant pool was very strong, reflecting the excellence of our early career investigators. Each application was reviewed by three Committee members. In reviewing proposals, the Committee considered the significance of the work, the quality of the proposal, the potential impact of the award on the applicant's career (including career stage and access to other funding sources), broader impacts/ethical considerations, and the strength of the recommendation letter and CV. This year the AABA Executive Committee approved an increase in funding support from five to seven awards. The CPDG Committee recommended funding seven proposals, up to \$7,500 each. Award and declination letters were emailed to applicants on February 16, 2026. We congratulate the following award recipients and wish them continued success in their research:

Angela Achorn

Assistant Professor, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Bone Proteomes and Skeletal Pathologies in Nonhuman Primates: A Comparative Study

Luke Fannin

Schmidt Science Fellow and Visiting Scholar, University of St. Andrews
From Nests to Syntax: Chimpanzee Arborealism and the Origins of Language

Arielle Fogel

Postdoctoral Associate, Cornell University

Genetic and Morphological Characterization of a Putative Three-Way Baboon Hybrid Zone

Tisa Loewen

Visiting Instructor, SUNY Cortland

Disentangling Molar Memories

Justin Lund

Assistant Professor, California State University, Fullerton

Developing Accessible Genomics Curriculum for Underserved Communities

Sharmi Sen

Postdoctoral Research Associate, Northwestern University

Microbiome Mediated Adaptation to Extreme Environments in Primates

Taiye Winful

Assistant Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign

Biocultural Drivers of Inflammation in Nigeria: Ethnic Experience and Wahala

A committee of 22 AABA members and the Chair reviewed the pool of eligible proposals. I am grateful for the time and effort that each reviewer provided in assessing these applications, and the helpful and constructive feedback given to each applicant.

In addition to the Chair, our committee this year was:

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| Susan Antón | W. Scott McGraw |
| Ben Auerbach | Robin Nelson |
| Karen Baab | Marin Pilloud |
| Agustín Fuentes | Stephanie Poindexter |
| Christopher Gilbert | Julienne Rutherford |
| Anne Grauer | Lauren Schroeder |
| Sian Halcrow | Denise Su |
| Mark Hubbe | Julie Teichroeb |
| John Krigbaum | Claire Terhune |
| Myra Laird | Christian Tryon |
| Kristi Lewton | |

Professional Development Workshop

The AABA Professional Development Committee and the Science Advocacy Committee jointly organized and ran a workshop on **Thursday, March 19, 12:00–1:30pm** at the 2026 AABA annual meeting in Denver. This workshop, titled "Effective Science Communication Strategies in an Age of Willful Disinformation", focused on training in science communication during a sensitive sociopolitical moment. In this workshop, attendees heard from a keynote speaker, Lisa

Marshall, Associate Director of Science Storytelling at UC Boulder, who addressed critical factors to consider when communicating science to the general public at a time when science is undervalued and funding is threatened. The keynote speaker was followed by a panel discussion led by three award-winning AABA science communicators: Agustín Fuentes, Sang-Hee Lee, and Cara Ocobock.