



SSR Trainee Mentoring Award

(Supported by the SSR Trainee Mentoring Fund)

This award recognizes an SSR member who as a mentor has had significant impact on Trainees within the SSR. The Trainee Mentoring Award will be presented each year at the SSR Annual Meeting to an SSR member who has consistently demonstrated a measure of support and guidance to Trainees that far exceeds the basic responsibilities required of an academic advisor. The recipient of the 2012 Trainee Mentoring Award is **Peter J. Hansen, Ph.D.**

Dr. Peter J. Hansen is the recipient of the 2010 Trainee Mentoring Award. Dr. Hansen started his independent scientific career in 1985 in the Department of Animal Sciences at the University of Florida. His main research goal is the elucidation of the cellular and molecular processes by which cellular stress disrupts embryonic function and the intercellular defense systems that embryos use to limit these effects. In addition, a second area of research concerns the importance of immunological interactions between the conceptus and mother. Currently, Dr. Hansen holds an endowed professorship in Animal Sciences and was recently promoted to Distinguished Professor.

Dr. Hansen has trained 18 Ph.D., 14 M.S., 1 Master of Agriculture, 10 postdoctoral fellows, and is currently training five graduate students and 3 postdoctoral fellows. In addition, 24 visiting scientists have trained in his laboratory. Fifteen of his graduated trainees and four of his post-doctoral trainees hold faculty positions in the United States and abroad. Since starting his laboratory, his lab has published 145 peer-reviewed manuscripts and another 55 in collaboration with other laboratories. Dr. Hansen has always exhorted his students to join SSR as trainee members and his group has presented 34 abstracts during the annual meetings of the Society for the Study of Reproduction.

As a professor at the University of Florida, Dr. Hansen has been recognized several times as a superior mentor and teacher. These honors include: one departmental award (Mentor of the Year), one award at the College level (Graduate Teacher and Advisor of the Year), and two awards at the University level (Academy of Teaching Excellence and Doctoral Dissertation/Mentoring Award). These honors were bestowed on him as a result of nominations from his trainees.

Dr. Hansen's philosophy of graduate education is as follows:

- **Teach the fundamentals.** He strives to ensure that his graduate students master the basic tools of the scientist. At the completion of their Ph.D. program, his students are proficient in framing hypotheses, are able to design experiments to test those hypotheses, have the statistical tools to analyze the results of their experiments, and are able to interpret their results in an unbiased manner.
- **Transmit values.** Science is a noble enterprise and he wants students to develop values consistent with that view.
- **Develop independent thinking and action.** The capacity for independent intellectual activity is one of the hallmarks of a successful scientist, and he believes that it is important that students get the opportunity to develop

these skills, particularly in the Ph.D. program.

- **Develop an interdisciplinary approach to science.** Science today is becoming increasingly complex and solutions to problems often require expertise from several disciplines. He teaches them the value of interdisciplinary research.
- **Make it fun.** Science can be exasperating, especially to a graduate student who has not yet developed the confidence to accept the frequent frustrations associated with science. Dr. Hansen encourages his students, makes them appreciate the joys of science by celebrating their successes, and tries to make the lab a fun place to work.
- **“Buy in” to each student.** He constantly seeks to improve his mentoring skills. He believes that in order to be a good role model, he must practice the principles and values he wishes to impart to his students. He works to make each student, regardless of their innate ability, the best scientist and person that he or she can be. He tries to understand each student's personality, background, aspirations, strengths, and limitations. He listens and is loyal to his students.

Some of the comments from his nomination letters best describe the type of mentor Dr.

Hansen was and continues to be to his former and current students:

“Dr. Hansen had great trust in me, encouraged me tremendously, believed in me, and treated me as an equal. I am currently a mentor, and I use him as my role model, not only in training my students in science but in guiding them in various aspects of their lives.”

“Pete excels at mentoring graduate students. It is difficult to quantify all of the things that Pete does to stimulate student scholarship and research, but a few things are obvious. Pete is genuinely concerned with having each student succeed with his/her degree program and gain the skills needed to pursue their long term goals. I consider myself extremely fortunate to have worked with Pete during my Ph.D. program.”

“His lab was a very nurturing environment in which a person could grow exponentially in knowledge and confidence to become a scientist ready to tackle any problem. I would like to conclude this letter of nomination with a quote from William Arthur Ward. *‘The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.’*”

Dr. Hansen has inspired and continues to inspire his trainees; for this reason, he is most deserving of this award. (Submitted by Dr. Rocío Melissa Rivera.)