



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 **R. Michael Roberts, Ph.D.**

Dr. R. Michael Roberts began his career as a botanist, but upon moving to the University of Florida in 1970, he began a productive and well-recognized career in reproductive biology. During his years in Florida, he collaborated extensively with Drs. Fuller W. Bazer (2009 Recipient of the Trainee-Mentoring Award) and William W. Thatcher, and he continued to excel in his chosen discipline following his move to the University of Missouri. His stature in the field is evidenced by the numerous prestigious awards he has received, most notably the SSR Research Award and Carl G. Hartman Award, a National Institutes of Health (NIH) Merit Award, the USDA Distinguished Scientist Award, The Wolf and Von Humboldt Prizes in Agriculture, and election to the National Academy of Sciences, to name a few. He has won teaching awards from both the University of Florida and the University of Missouri, which from students is high praise indeed.

First and foremost, Dr. Roberts is a gifted teacher and an outstanding mentor. His mentoring style is to allow his trainees to develop independence and learn to think for themselves. This is a comment heard univocally from every one of his trainees. This does not imply that he has a stand-off attitude—quite the contrary. Dr. Roberts challenges his students to excel and is always available to consult, discuss, argue, and evaluate data so that each student can achieve his or her

highest potential. He is a hard taskmaster, but is also known for delivering praise and acknowledging success. His influence on SSR members is remarkable and profound. More than 50% of his own trainees, as well as the majority of the students he co-trained with Drs. Bazer and Thatcher, are active and productive members of SSR. All have gone on to productive careers in academia and industry, and many have distinguished themselves in their own right. This speaks highly of his mentorship and his ability to motivate his students. This motivation is a reflection of his own career. Dr. Roberts continues to undertake cutting-edge research that remains well funded by the NIH now into its fourth decade. His current work focuses on embryonic stem cells and sexual dimorphism, and his work on interferon tau and maternal recognition of pregnancy continues to break new ground.

Mike has received many honors and accolades during his long and distinguished career, but being the recipient of the SSR Trainee-Mentoring Award probably means the most to him. For him, this award is the culmination of his academic career because it reflects the passion for science he has instilled in each and every one of his trainees. Many of his former trainees have benefited from his insight and commitment and have made significant scientific advances of their own. As we move into the future, his current,

past, and grand-trainees will be the ones who advance various disciplines within reproductive biology. Thus, he truly deserves the SSR Trainee-Mentoring Award, which is the third major award he has received from the Society for the Study of Reproduction. (For those of you counting, the Trainee-Mentoring Award completes Mike's trifecta of SSR's major awards for which he has been eligible.)

In summary, Dr. Roberts's distinguished career, as well as his outstanding mentorship of so many

current members of SSR, makes him most deserving of the Trainee-Mentoring Award. From a personal standpoint, Dr. Roberts has been the most influential mentor either of us has had and he has played a major role in the development of our careers. Even at this stage, we continue to interact with him both scientifically and personally. We speak for many of our colleagues when we say that we consider ourselves fortunate to have been mentored by Dr. Roberts. *(Submitted by Asgerally T. Fazleabas, Ph.D., and George W. Smith, Ph.D.)*