



## 2019 SIMB Election for Board of Directors

The SIMB Election for positions on the Board of Directors will commence March 1, 2019. The election will end at noon EST on March 29, 2019 and members must join/renew by March 28, 2019 by noon EST to be eligible to vote.

Current members for 2019 will receive login instructions for accessing the voting module.

The first step in the election process is the identification of the Nominations Committee (NC ) consisting of the chair and least two members. The committee members are approved by the Board and serve only for the current year and cannot be reappointed within a three-year period. The NC proposes a slate of candidates (usually at least two candidates for each position) with input from the membership. The candidates must be current SIMB members with a demonstrated interest and involvement in SIMB. Upon acceptance of the nomination, the NC informs the candidates of the duties and responsibilities required by each position. In addition to the NC, candidates can be identified via Article 5, Section 4 in the SIMB Constitution using a petition process.

The final slate of candidates is due to the president by the first board meeting during the annual meeting. Candidates must submit a biography and photograph by October 15 for publication in the October-December issue of *SIMB News* and for posting on the website. After voting ends, the Election Committee, consisting of a minimum of two SIMB members, receives access to the voting module and certifies counts from online voting, as well as any paper ballots previously requested and postmarked no later than the deadline date for electronic voting ballots, and delivers the results to the SIMB President and SIMB Secretary for announcement.

The election process and ballots are available for inspection for at least 30 days following the annual meeting. Ballots and records are destroyed six months after the election (unless otherwise directed by the Board) and final tabulation of the votes is preserved.

# Candidate for President

## Stephen R. Decker



I became a microbiologist on a cold Wisconsin day in the mid-1970s after discovering a microscope with my name on it under the Christmas tree. I immediately became obsessed with everything microscopic, especially watching blood cells circulate in my poor goldfish's tail. This fascination drove me to earn a B.S. in Biology (UW-Stevens Point, 1988), an M.S. in Microbiology (UW-Oshkosh, 1992), and a PhD in Microbiology (Colorado State University, 1996). After a two-year post-doc in enzyme discovery at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), I was hired as a staff scientist researching biomass conversion to fuels and chemicals. I am currently a Group Manager/Principal Scientist in the Bioenergy Sciences Center at NREL, managing and mentoring a dozen or

so scientists, technicians, post-docs, and interns on projects in cellulase engineering, fungal molecular biology, HTP biomass screening, and waste-to-energy through anaerobic digestion engineering.

In 1995, while a PhD student at CSU, I attended my first professional conference, the 17th Symposium on Biotechnology for Fuels and Chemicals (SBFC). As the snow drifted down in Vail, I was profoundly impacted by having one-on-one discussions with scientists I had previously known only from their papers. This experience instilled in me a profound sense that student involvement in professional conferences is critical to strengthen and develop not only the next generation of researchers, but our own scientific character.

I stayed involved with the SBFC as my career developed (and SIMB took over meeting management) and became a recurring Program Chair for the 34th SBFC. Never forgetting my first impressions while a student, I focused on pairing young scientists with more experienced mentors to convene sessions, adding student presentation and rapid-fire poster sessions, expanding to more relevant topic areas, and working with SIMB officers and staff to restructure the meeting in line with SIMB guidelines. I also emphasized expanding international participation, increasing industrial attendance, and diversifying the organizing committee across cultural and institutional boundaries. I will continue these efforts as SIMB President, focusing on:

- ▶ increasing involvement of industrial members in meetings and SIMB operations
- ▶ expanding student involvement to increase our future member base and educate our scientific heirs,
- ▶ encouraging more direct meeting participation from members by developing more opportunities to present their work and serve at the meetings, and
- ▶ broadening SIMB membership through outreach to diverse research groups.



# Candidate for President Noel M. Fong



A yeast geneticist by training, Noel is Director of Strain Development at Nucleis LLC, where she does Metabolic Engineering for construction of microbial strains making custom oils and metabolites in fungi and bacteria. She thrives in startup companies, having also worked at Zymogenetics and as one of the earliest employees at Chiron. She received her PhD in Microbiology and M.S. in Food Science from U.C. Davis, and her B.S. in Chemistry and Biophysics from U.C. Berkeley. Rounding out her experience, she did her postdoc at the University of Michigan Medical School/Parke-Davis in insulin signaling, and trained at the Seattle Culinary Academy in pastry (as bread baking IS an application of yeast!).

My activities in SIMB include:

- ▶ Conference Chair for the 2018 General Meeting in Chicago
- ▶ Program Committee for Fermentation for the last 8 years
- ▶ Speaker
- ▶ Education committee member
- ▶ Diversity committee member
- ▶ International Relations Committee member
- ▶ Former President of the Northern California local chapter
- ▶ Actively working to revive the Southern California chapter.
- ▶ Reviewer for the *Journal of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology and Enzyme and Microbial Technology*.

As a 30+ year member, I am dedicated to service to the Society, and would be honored to be your President.

As a board member, I promote:

- ▶ Career development at two key junctures:
- ▶ Preparing students for the transition from school to industrial careers, especially that first job. This entails finding ways for students to get the kind of experience industry values while still in school.
- ▶ Working with mid-to-late career individuals to expand and showcase their skills and explore options.
- ▶ Outreach to college and graduate students in locations where we have meetings, especially groups normally underrepresented in microbiology.
- ▶ Cross fertilization with organizations with common interests. E.g. American Society for Microbiology, Institute of Food Technologists and American Chemical Society, who all touch upon different aspects of fermentation. As President of the Northern California section, Noel had organized a Summit of local professional societies, where representatives from 30 groups gathered to network.
- ▶ Outreach to international counterparts of our organization.
- ▶ Identifying business opportunities, making SIMB a place where industrial microbiologists can identify resources to realize their ideas:
- ▶ Efficient running of businesses – e.g. outsourcing vs. in-house
- ▶ Growing a business: incubators, funding sources



# Candidate for Board of Directors

## Mark A. Blenner



Mark leads the Protein and Metabolic Engineering Lab at Clemson University. His research group focuses on developing and applying novel genetic and metabolic engineering capabilities in a variety of yeast, to enable biochemical production from alternative substrates. His group also engineers cells and proteins for use in biosensing applications. Mark is the McQueen-Quattlebaum Associate Professor of Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering at Clemson University in South Carolina. Dr. Blenner has received the Young Investigator Award from the Air Force Office of Scientific Research and the Early Career Faculty Award from NASA. He has been a professor at Clemson since 2012. Prior to this, Mark was a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard Medical School. Mark received his B.S. in Chemical Engineering from Manhattan College, and a PhD in Chemical Engineering from Columbia University.

Mark has been a member of SIMB since 2015 and has served as a session chair and invited speaker at several SIMB meetings. He became involved in SIMB because of the great mix of industrial, academic, and national lab representation. SIMB meetings have become one of the most important places for sharing his group's research and learning about the most recent advances in several fields and industries. Mark is active in other societies, including the American Chemical Society and the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, serving various roles from session chair to meeting chair. He is an Associate Editor for *Bioengineering*, on the editorial boards of *Microbial Cell Factories* and *Biochemical Engineering Journal*, and editor of a *Methods in Molecular Biology* book on *Yarrowia lipolytica*. He also serves regularly as a reviewer for the *Journal of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology* and several other related journals.

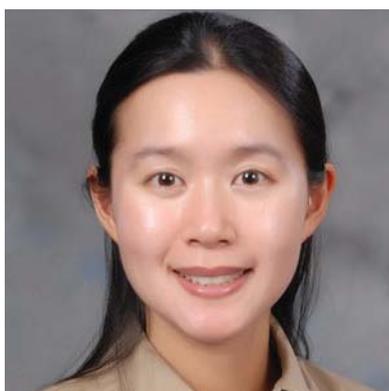
Mark's vision for SIMB is informed by the influence the Society has had on his scientific and career development. As a Director, Mark will strive to increase the impact of SIMB on its members and on society by:

- ▶ Maintaining the high quality of science presented at SIMB meetings.
- ▶ Expanding leadership and development opportunities for members.
- ▶ Increasing the value of SIMB membership to all – including those not attending meetings.
- ▶ Increasing the visibility of SIMB and its members.



# *Candidate for Board of Directors*

## *Katy Kao*



Katy is an associate professor in the Department of Chemical Engineering at Texas A&M University. She received a B.S. degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of California, Irvine and a PhD in Chemical Engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles, followed by a postdoc at Stanford. Her work focuses on microbial adaptation for applications in biotechnology. Specifically, her lab is developing broadly applicable methods based on adaptive laboratory evolution for both strain development and to gain fundamental understanding of complex phenotypes in microbial systems. She was awarded the National Research Service Award by the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation CAREER Award.

Katy has been an active member of the SIMB community since 2008. Her service includes convening sessions, serving as a judge for student poster awards, serving as a member of the Fermentation and Cell Culture program committee, and chairing the Fermentation and Cell Culture program committee. Additionally, she will be serving as the chair for the upcoming 2019 SIMB annual meeting.

Her vision for SIMB is to grow the membership, engage young scientists, and continue to bring together members from industry, academia, and national labs to address issues important in industrial biotechnology.



# Candidate for Board of Directors

## Rob Donofrio



Dr. Robert S. Donofrio holds the position of Vice President of Food Safety Research and Development at Neogen. He joined Neogen in February of 2016. He is responsible for the strategic vision, resource management and coordination of product development activities for the following laboratory groups: Immunodiagnostics, Biochemistry, Neogen Culture Media, Molecular biology, Pathogen Detection and General Microbiology. Dr. Donofrio also oversees the Neogen Validation laboratory which is responsible for performing internal product validation and coordinating third party product certification and approval through groups such as AOAC, AFNOR, Health Canada and MicroVal. Dr. Donofrio is also responsible for establishing key collaborations with university and private research centers as well as evaluating novel technologies for potential integration into Neogen's product portfolio. Prior to

Neogen, Dr. Donofrio spent 16 years at NSF International, a public health and safety company with primary functions in standards authoring and third party, independent auditing and testing / claim verification. During his tenure at NSF, Dr. Donofrio served as the Director of the Microbiology and Molecular Biology for over a decade and then as Director of the Applied Research Center for his final 3 years. He was awarded the NSF Star Employee Award in March of 2001 (was nominated for the same award in 2008) and guided his laboratory to the 2006 NSF Team of the Year Award.

Dr. Donofrio obtained his B.S. in Biology from the University of Dayton in 1994 and his M.S. in Environmental Microbiology from Duquesne University in 1996, where he was named Graduate Student of the Year. Dr. Donofrio obtained his doctoral degree in Microbiology from Michigan Technological University in May of 2009, under the guidance of past SIMB President Dr. Susan T. Bagley.

Dr. Donofrio has authored dozens of publications for peer reviewed journals (including the *Journal of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology*), trade journals and training materials. In addition to the Society of Industrial Microbiology and Biotechnology (SIMB), he is a full member of the International Association for Food Protection (IAFP), Association of Analytical Communities (AOAC), and American Society for Microbiology (ASM).

Dr. Donofrio has been involved with SIMB throughout his entire professional career, starting as a poster presenter at the Annual Meeting in 1997 and most recently serving as Program Chair for the 2018 Recent Advances in Microbial Control Conference. Over those 20 years, Dr. Donofrio was the organizer for the Annual Meeting poster session for 10 years, authored multiple posters, presented talks and served as session chair for several Annual Meetings and RAMC meetings, was his company's primary representative for SIMB corporate sponsorship while at NSF International and Neogen and even served as an exhibitor at various SIMB conferences. He is most proud of the two terms he served on the SIMB Board of Directors as Secretary, cycling off in the Summer of 2018.

Dr. Donofrio's reason for running for the position of Director, other than for a love and respect of the Society and passion for microbiology, is to bring the representation and perspective from the food, cosmetics and water diagnostic sectors and third party commercial testing lab sector to SIMB. This includes expertise in commercial method/kit development (bridging the development gap between academia and industry and adoption of novel technologies), method validation, standard development, regulatory compliance, and quality control implementations.



# *Candidate for Board of Directors*

## *Priti Pharkya*



Priti has 13 years of experience in diverse areas of the biotechnology industry, including metabolic engineering, strategy and corporate development and business development. Priti joined Genomatica in 2006 as a research scientist, extending into increasingly senior positions. The roles evolved from computational modeling of metabolism to application of deep expertise of metabolism towards small-scale, fermentation and omics data analysis for the first product, 1,4-butanediol, successfully commercialized by Genomatica, and extending to leadership of projects. Additionally, Priti is highly innovation-driven and has several issued patents related to metabolic engineering of products for high yields and for identification of pathways for bio-synthesis of numerous chemicals to her name. Priti has experience in a commercial role, helping build multiple partnerships, leveraging her technical

expertise. Since November, 2018, Priti has been serving as Senior Director of Strategy and Corporate Development at Genomatica. In this role, her focus is to manage and expand the product portfolio at Genomatica, assess various technologies, and oversee their integration. Priti earned a PhD in Chemical Engineering from Pennsylvania State University in 2005.

At SIMB, Priti has convened multiple sessions on Data analysis and Metabolic engineering. She has been serving as a member of the Metabolic Engineering committee since 2017. Priti highly appreciates the role that SIMB has played in increasing her knowledge of the diverse areas of biotechnology and in building strong relationships with the community. She is highly motivated to build the community further by bringing more members in the fold and by fostering more interactions between academia and industry.