Department of Energy – Final Technical Report

Grant Title: Student Travel to Pan-Am Congress of Plants & Biofuels in Merida, Mexico
Award #: DE-FG02-08ER64612
Award Amount: $15,000.00
Award period: 6/15/2008 to 6/14/2009

The Pan American Congress on Plants and BioEnergy convened in Mérida, Mexico, June 22 to 25, 2008. The program was organized by Steve Long (University of Illinois) and Nick Carpita (Purdue University), along with co-organizers Marcos Buckeridge (University of São Paulo, Brazil) and Federico Sánchez (Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México). More than 200 scientists from over a dozen nations around the world gathered to discuss key issues surrounding the development of biofuel feedstocks and to report on their research in this area.

This three day conference had invited speakers surrounding developing renewable and sustainable energy resources which are typically propelled by three important drivers – security, cost and environmental impact. The first day of the conference was delegated to governmental policy makers and designers of national research and plant biologists, agronomists, microbiologists, economists and ecologists in relation to bioenergy security in the Western Hemisphere that is sustainable and ecologically and economically sound. Speakers from countries that have already made themselves energy independent shared solutions to improve efficiency that is being researched. Venture capitalist and industry leaders also spoke on their commitment to economic success in a new green agroindustry. Days two and three explored bioenergy crops and introduced the participants to the breadth of the agricultural landscape, the underlying biology of bioenergy plants and new ideas to enhance biomass yield and quality of the energy crops of the future.

These presentations educated the participants in an effort to develop energy strategies in countries across the world that become energy independent while developing economic growth and clean, reliable and affordable energy. Presenters educated student on reducing net greenhouse gas emissions, improving fuel efficiencies, indigenous energy alternative such as ethanol and improving bioenergy crop plants. Sessions surrounding developing bioenergy crop plants were held relating to the growth and development, cell wall synthesis and architecture to improve the next generation of energy plants.

This grant was used to supplement registration and provide lodging support for graduate students, post-doctorals, and early career scientists attending the congress. Among these awardees partially funded by DOE and other agencies were 18 individuals, including nine graduate students, two post-doctorals, and seven early career scientists. The PIs on the grant worked closely with the Minority Affairs and International committees of ASPB to identify appropriate travel awardees; among the 18 awardees, nine were female, and two were African-American.

Submitted & Certified by:

Kimberly Kimnach