

Matthew Harris
Candidate for Vice-President

Dear Society for Craniofacial Genetics and Developmental Biology Officers and Members,

I have been an active member of the Society for Craniofacial Genetics and Developmental Biology (SCGDB) for over a decade since my starting as an independent research group leader. Engagement with the society has been invaluable in my success and has shaped my current research approaches in craniofacial development, evolution, and disease. Importantly, the SCGDB has provided invaluable opportunities for my trainees and remains a vibrant scientific community. My experience as a SCGDB member motivates me to help support the mission and objectives of the Society. In this light, I would like to express my interest in becoming a candidate for Vice President of the SCGDB and help support the Society in its future impact on the next generation of craniofacial researchers and teachers.

I believe I am a strong candidate for Vice President of the SCGDB. My research contributions and goals are firmly aligned with the society's mission *to improve our understanding of craniofacial development and disease*. My research is focused on the genetic regulation of craniofacial form and its variation as it speaks to disease phenotypes as well as natural variation. My lab focuses on broad comparative studies in tandem with targeted analysis of gene function in zebrafish and mouse. Through analysis of natural and experimental variants, we aim to uncover core principles of craniofacial development that can reveal unexpected insights into human craniofacial biology. My lab has been active in the craniofacial community for over a decade (arguably since 2006). We have been quite successful with published work on craniofacial genetics in top journals such as *Nature Ecology and Evolution*, *Genetics*, *Bone*, *Development*, *Plos Genetics*, *Neuron*, *PNAS*, and *Current Biology*. More broadly, I have worked to forward the Society's mission through helping to organize two meetings of the Society in Boston in 2013 and 2016 and have worked to promote the Society at different professional venues such as National Institutes of Health Structural Defects meetings, Gordon conferences, and international skeletal research societies such as European Calcified Tissue Society. Additionally, I have, and currently serve as Scientific Advisory board to the Facebase research consortium ([/facebase.com](http://facebase.com)) to facilitate data access and promote basic/translational research in craniofacial biology.

I am a firm advocate for, and feel that I can advance, the SCGDB's goal *to promote education, communication, and policy about normal and abnormal development of the head, face, and neck*. I can offer my experience in mentoring, teamwork, and conference organization to facilitate current and new strategic plans to attract and integrate a diverse community with an emphasis on bolstering diversity and gender representation. Paramount to the future success of the SCGDB is a continually evolving understanding of the needs of our current members, their trainees, clinician scientists and patient advocacy groups. To help promote the Society in these efforts, my approach will be to identify the benefits that our members value most (e.g., network building, education resources, recognition) and then implement new strategies to align the SCGDB's activities, while also providing an accessible space for all to grow as a community. As I work in a clinical setting, I have deep understanding of the need to bridge basic and clinical research to realize advances in both areas. With the evolution in new analytical tools, these areas of craniofacial research have never been more entwined. However, to fully realize this marriage requires integration of the disparate communities through interaction and collaboration. I have worked and will continue to help bridge clinical research groups with basic scientists through special symposia and advocating for the Society at specialized meetings for clinical researchers.

I am excited by the possibility of serving as the SCGDB Vice President and developing a stronger connection with its officers and members. Thank you for your consideration.