

HELPS Program Annual Report

2023 PSG HELPS Report

February 4th, 2024

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Program Status

In the last year, PSG Helping Elevate Long-term Participation in Science (PSG HELPS) has continued to work to encourage the active participation of the next generation of seabird professionals within PSG. To that end, and through the generous support of donors, PSG HELPS has sponsored the annual memberships of students and early career scientists (ECS) and worked to connect new members to the resources that PSG offers.

Committee Members and Hours

To increase the capacity of the program, additional members were recruited in November 2023. Sonya Pastran joined the PSG HELPS Committee as a co-chair, and Emily Runnells and Sabrina Salome joined the committee. Wieteke Holthuijzen and Fernando Medrano continue as committee members. Laney White will step down from her role as co-chair after the annual meeting.

The HELPS Committee has collectively contributed 70 volunteer hours since the last annual meeting.

Increased Accessibility

Fernando Medrano has continued to work to increase the accessibility of the program to the Spanish-speaking seabird research and conservation community by making the HELPS applications available in Spanish and translating outreach materials.

Sponsored Annual Memberships

The primary focus of the program continues to be increasing engagement and accessibility through sponsored memberships. Since the last annual meeting, the program has sponsored the annual memberships of:

- **Nine** students
- **Four** early career scientists

Applications are received through a Google Form (either in English or Spanish) and reviewed by at least two members of the Committee. To date, the program has approved over 90 requests for membership support, 15% of which were from second-time applicants (members can apply for up to two years of support). To support those in the most need of assistance with the limited funds available, the program has become stricter in how it defines "early career scientist" (applicants in the first five years of their current careers) and has adjusted the application process accordingly.

Fewer early career scientists applied for support this year compared to the lead-up to the 2023 annual meeting (four versus thirteen), which is likely due to the fact that the HELPS program did not provide annual meeting registration support this year, so there was less incentive for ECS to apply.

Annual Meeting Registration Support

The HELPS Program did not provide annual meeting registration or travel support this year. There is a need to financially support early career scientists hoping to attend the annual meeting, and the HELPS program will continue to work with EXCO and other committees to determine the best way to do this, to make it a more streamlined process for both applicants and reviewers, and so donor dollars are being leveraged equitably.

HELPS Applicant Demographics

Since the program's start, 45% of applications have been from students and 55% have been from early career scientists. The majority of student applicants are working towards their Masters degrees.

While the vast majority of HELPS members are located in the U.S. and Canada, this year the program also supported members from Peru, Taiwan, and India. Moving forward, the HELPS Committee plans to continue to work with the Communications Committee and the EID Committee to increase outreach to areas outside of the U.S.

USA Jobs Webinar

The HELPS Committee, with support from Amelia DuVall, organized a webinar for early career scientists and students on best practices in applying to wildlife science positions through USAJOBS on January 10th, 2023. Roberta Swift, Heather Renner, Sarah Schoen, and Chelsea McKinney (FWS) contributed as panelists. Over 400 people registered for the event.

This training was identified as a small but actionable way to increase accessibility in the field, as the federal application process often requires "insider knowledge" to be successful. We worked with the EID Committee

and Communications Committee to advertise widely, with an emphasis on reaching out to groups who may not normally have access to resources like this.

The program was open to non-PSG members, as we wanted to make the resource available to a broad audience. It was an effective way to highlight the Pacific Seabird Group to students and early career scientists who may not yet be aware of seabird research or conservation work as a career path.

Future Programming

The new committee members have exciting ideas for expanding the programming the HELPS Committee can offer to further support early career scientists and students, including webinars on Canadian federal hiring practices and navigating internships and pay-to-work opportunities. We hope to continue to work with the EID Committee and the Student Rep to increase mentorship and support of a diverse and vibrant ECS and student membership within PSG.

Funding

The generosity of the PSG community has made the program possible. The HELPS Program has continued to solicit donation requests from PSG members with assistance from the Communications Committee. The program is currently operating in the red, and the Committee plans to explore additional funding avenues, as well as work with EXCO to develop a long-term funding plan for student and early career scientist support within PSG.

Action Items in Progress

- Future Programming
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- Funding
Additional funding needs to be secured to support the program. The Committee plans to explore additional funding avenues, as well as work with EXCO to develop a long-term funding plan for student and early career scientist support within PSG.