

**Zoë Harris**

**American Geosciences Union Fall meeting, San Francisco, USA**

As a result of receiving £500 from the Society of Biology I was able to attend the American Geosciences Union (AGU) Fall Meeting which took place in San Francisco from 14-19<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

This meeting is the main conference for scientists who are in the field of biogeosciences, atmospheric sciences and global environmental change. At the AGU Fall Meeting I was able to present both an oral presentation on the work from my PhD and a poster presentation on the work conducted in the consortium I am part of. My talk was well received by the audience and I received several questions from the audience. This was a great experience as I was able to present my research and stimulate discussion amongst my peers. It is important that PhD students, such as myself, get experience presenting our science and networking with influential scientists in our fields at meeting such as at the AGU Fall Meeting.

My attendance at the conference was extremely beneficial as I was able to present to a room of over 100 people and defend my science, allowing me to develop essential communication skills. These skills were fine-tuned through both my oral and poster presentations as the way in which one must communicate has to change deepening on that persons existing knowledge and understanding. As part of the conference I was also able to attend a workshop Professional Skills Development Workshop for Women & Minorities. This workshop focused on how to negotiate what you want and to work through complicated situations and meetings. I came out of this workshop feeling very empowered and equipped with a host of skills to allow me to enter negotiations with more confidence.

Networking is an essential part of attending any conference to allow you to gain new connections, start up new collaborations and to learn something from all the knowledgeable people around you. At the conference I was able to have discussions about my work and potential future work with several companies who attend the conference as exhibitors showing the latest technological developments in equipment. I was also able to catch up with several other researchers who I had met a few years earlier on a training course, most of whom are based in the USA. My colleges, who I had met at the start of my PhD, were really pleased to see that I presented both an oral and a poster presentation at AGU. They were also able to offer a lot of good career advice of institutions/researcher to consider, as well as several offering to 'put in a good word for me'! It was lovely to meet up with old friends as well as make new connections.

Since the start of my PhD, I have been working towards attending the AGU Fall Meeting as this is the best meeting to attend for my field of sciences. After 3.5 years of work, I managed to secure both an oral presentation and a poster presentation for the meeting. As my project funding had run out I was required to entirely self-fund my trip to the conference. I applied for several grants and was successful in obtaining two other grants, one from the Douglas Bomford Trust and one from the University of Southampton. As well as receiving free registration for volunteering at the conference as a student blogger and live tweeter.

I decided to apply for a Society of Biology Travel Grant as I have been a member of the society for a few years and felt my application was strong enough to warrant award of a grant. I was so pleased that I was awarded a £500 travel grant to help me attend the AGU Fall Meeting! My advice to other students in my position would be to apply for as many grants as you can, spending time and making each application personal to where you are applying. If you give them a good enough reason to support you, such as presentation at a conference or highly novel research, you never know who may say yes!