

## 2017 Department of Biology Awards

### IVAN J. PALMBLAD GRADUATE RESEARCH AWARD

*Samridhi Chaturvedi, Doctoral Candidate*



I joined Utah State University (USU) as a PhD student in Fall 2014 and my main interest lies in understanding the genomic basis of evolutionary adaptation to novel environments. As a third year PhD candidate in the Department of Biology, I have completed two research projects to understand host-plant use in Melissa blue butterflies which will be part of my dissertation. The first project is submitted for publication to Nature Scientific Reports and is presently under review. The second project will be submitted for publication this semester. In addition, I have presented my research at various conferences nationally which has helped me contribute to my professional field and interact with scientists with varied specializations.

I have always been passionate about teaching Biology and mentoring students and USU has given me various opportunities to work towards these goals. I have been a Teaching Assistant since Fall 2015 for Introductory Biology labs.

The knowledge I have gained in statistics, programming and evolutionary biology from my own course work has been instrumental in helping me teach these labs to undergraduate students from various fields at USU. These skills have encouraged me to contribute more actively to the student community at USU. Therefore, I am presently planning and developing an Introductory Biology Lab to implement basic statistical and programming methods to introduce students to latest analytical tools. As part of my research and teaching goals, I have mentored two undergraduate students who assisted me in Summer 2016 conducting fieldwork and laboratory experiments for my research. One of these students used this project as a learning experience and presented a poster at the Undergraduate Student Research Symposium, Fall 2016.

Being committed to contributing to my own Department, which supports me through Graduate school, I am the Student Representative of Biology Graduate Student Association on the Biology Seminar Committee. As a student representative, I help organize seminars, coordinate hosts for invited speakers and even help faculty members in selecting Seminar Speakers.

Being more involved in national research communities, I am an active student member of Society for Study of Evolution and Entomological Society of America. As a member, I volunteered for the Evolution Meeting last year to help run several aspects of the meeting smoothly. I will continue to volunteer for these meetings to represent USU to help contribute to knowledge transfer through these amazing conferences.

My future goals combine my research and teaching interests in biology. In addition to pursuing my research aims, I hope to develop a program or assist faculty to teach programming skills to undergraduates in biology to introduce them to computer skills early on in their academic pursuit. I also hope to develop software programs for specific analysis pertaining to my research interests. My long term goals are to work in an academic position in an educational institute. When I am not in the lab rearing butterflies or analyzing big genomic data, I like to read fiction (anything from Stephen King to Haruki Murakami) and watch movies. I am also making the most of being in USA and enjoy travelling to discover new places as a “foreigner” in this country!