



Scientific committee: Federico H. Hoffmann, Chair (Mississippi State University, USA) • Luisa Berná (Universidad de la República - UdelaR, Uruguay) • Lucía Franchini (CONICET, Argentina) • Andrés Iriarte (UdelaR, Uruguay) • Enrique P. Lessa (UdelaR, Uruguay) • Mariana Nery (Universidade de Campinas, Brazil) • Juan C. Opazo (Universidad Austral de Chile) • Lucía Spangenberg (Institut Pasteur de Montevideo, Uruguay) • Ivanna H. Tomasco (UdelaR, Uruguay)

Introduction

The SMBE Regional Meeting in South America took place in Montevideo, Uruguay, October 31-November 4, 2022. The Scientific Committee presented a proposal in response to SMBE, requesting USD 31,000 in support, including \$25,000 for general expenses of the event and \$6,000 for speakers. The proposal was approved, and additional support was obtained from several local sources, including PEDECIBA (Uruguay's Program for the Development of Basic Sciences) and several programs of the Universidad de la República. ANII (Uruguay's Agencia Nacional de Investigación e Innovación) provided additional support indirectly, by supporting a satellite, graduate level course that funded the travel of Federico Hoffmann.

The aim of the regional meeting of SMBE in South America was to showcase the science done in the region, catalyze collaborations among attendees, and exchange experiences on how to succeed under the local funding scenario. We encouraged participation of students (both undergraduate and graduate), early career and established scientists from the region based in either the region or in Europe and the US. Several scientists from Europe and the United States paid their own way to the meetings, adding their expertise and contributions to make the meeting more attractive. Current financial difficulties (including the high cost of airline tickets) made long distance travel within the region difficult. Consequently, as expected, the vast majority of international students and early-career researchers came from neighboring countries. To encourage attendance, we offered students from other countries in the region to cover hotel accommodations and the bulk of their expenses during the meetings. We lodged all international travelers, from students to keynote speakers, in the same hotel, and the group also shared transportation to and from the meeting venues. This greatly facilitated exchanges among international participants.

Keynote speakers

Eduardo Eizirik, Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil.

Daniel Chávez, Arizona State University, Tempe, USA

Rosa Fernández, Institut de Biología Evolutiva, UPF-CSIC, Barcelona, Spain

Jay Storz, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, USA

John Novembre, University of Chicago, Chicago, USA

Julián Echave, Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Nicolás Frankel, Instituto de Fisiología, Biología Molecular y Neurociencias, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Juliana Vianna, Pontificia Universidad Católica, Santiago, Chile

Aoife McLysaght, Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland

Attendees

Number of attendees by category (students, professionals) and country (institution-based).*

Country	Students	Researchers	Total
Argentina	0	0	0
Brazil	9	3	12
Chile	4	0	4
Ecuador	4	0	4
Uruguay	18	7	25
Germany	1	0	1
Total	36	10	46

*Invited speakers and members of the organizing committee are not included in this table.

We consider the meeting a success in terms of the number and diversity of participants, the strong student involvement, the quality of the presentations and the high level of interaction among attendees. The original goal was to have between 50 and 80 participants and the actual full size of the meeting was 64 participants. We intended to have diversity in terms of geographic provenance, career stage and gender participation and we had reasonable success in all those fronts. We had participants from institutions in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Germany and Uruguay, and extra regional invited speakers from Ireland, Spain and the US. Thirty six of the participants were students, which is more than half of the participants, and there was almost a 50/50 representation

of females and males at all levels: 30/34 among all participants, 5/4 in the local organizing committee, 2/2 in extra regional speakers, and 1/4 among regional speakers. Unfortunately, we invited additional female colleagues from the region that were unable to accept our invitation.

The meeting consisted of 48 different presentations: 24 oral presentations organized in successive non-concurrent sessions, and 24 posters divided into two sessions. The program provided ample opportunities for interaction. Oral presentations varied in length, with 15 minutes for students, 30 minutes for early career researchers, 45 minutes for contributed talks from senior researchers and 1 hour for regional and extra regional invited speakers. The plenary talks were open to the wider public to increase visibility for SMBE and allow a wider audience to enjoy the presentations.

To facilitate interactions, breakfast at the hotel was organized so that students would sit with a different extra-regional participant every morning, lunch was provided for all participants all days, and the registration included participation in the opening and closing socials. To increase chances of interaction, poster presentations were divided into two separate sessions, on November 1st and 2nd, allowing for most participants to interact with each presenter, and for presenters to interact among themselves. The meeting provided opportunities to see high-quality research done in the region, high-quality international speakers that were very generous with their time and interacted extensively with students and researchers from the region. This was the first time many of the regional researchers met in person and there was a vibrant sense of excitement about the meeting in general and about participation in SMBE as well.

Because of the reasons listed above, we think the meeting was a success. In addition, there was a very positive response to the meeting in social media (see the attached tweets). One of the major challenges faced by students and researchers outside the US, Canada, and Europe region is the lack of opportunities to participate in meetings where presentations, posters and most interactions are in English. This might seem trivial, but it actually is a major hurdle we face when entering the international academic scene. This meeting offered a friendly venue to do so. The meeting instructions stated that English was encouraged, but not mandated, and Spanish and Portuguese were also listed as official languages of the meeting. All talks were presented in English, which we took as a positive sign because it allowed for much easier engagement of extra regional visitors. We think this is a model that could be used to increase involvement of researchers from other regions in the society. Slots to give talks at the general SMBE meetings are limited and getting one is very competitive. Because regional meetings are smaller in scale, they would offer better opportunities for researchers early in their careers to present their research. All the regionals participants

were energized by the meeting. As a result, we submitted a proposal to SMBE to develop a South American regional section of SMBE under the umbrella of SMBE, we asked for funds to make three regional meetings in South America on a biennial cycle (2024, 2026, and 2028), and the momentum in the meeting prompted a number of the participants to prepare a bid to host the SMBE 2025 meeting in Aguas de Lindoia, in the State of São Paulo, Brazil. Overall, we were very pleased with the outcome.

Financial Report

Below is a summary of the meeting funds and expenses. You will note that we the final cost was lower than anticipated. Basically, paying in US dollars and transferring the money immediately allows for lower prices. As a result, we still have \$7,337.54 of funds, which we propose to use to fund the attendance of Uruguayan scientists to meetings organized by SMBE.

SMBE Funds + Local registrations

1. Facultad de Ciencias, Universidad de la República: summary of income and expenses of the SMBE Regional meeting	
Income	USD
SMBE transfer	\$27,900.00
Local registrations	\$2,503.33
Total	\$30,403.33
Expenses	USD
Hotel & services (see details below)	\$9,180.88
Per diem	\$1,200.00
Administration	\$1,319.82
Airline & Ferry tickets	\$6,344.80
Catering (opening, breaks)	\$3,377.27
Other	\$1,643.03
Total	\$23,065.79
Net balance	\$7,337.54

Notes:

Registrations from local attendees were deposited into this account

Administration: includes bank fees and an administrative fee agreed upon with the Facultad de Ciencias at a rate of 4%

The Facultad provided meeting rooms, AV technical support, and use of a minibus at no extra costs

The contract with the hotel included:

a) lodging and breakfast for all international participants

b) transportation to/from meeting venue

c) closing conference and social

d) the hotel accepted international registrations with credit cards on behalf of the meeting; the amount collected was discounted from hotel bills

Details of hotel contract		
Lodging	\$6,750.00	breakfast included
Transportation	\$250.00	
Catering	\$3,530.88	closing social

Subtotal	\$10,530.88	
Registrations	\$1,350.00	international registrations; collected by hotel on behalf of the meeting
Net total	\$9,180.88	

2. Additional financial support from local sources		
Program for the Development of Basic Sciences (PEDECIBA)		
Biology		USD
Airfare		\$2,050.00
Rental: poster panels		\$1,072.85
Minor expenses		\$12.47
Bioinformatics		USD
Minor expenses		\$450.00
Total		\$3,585.32
Universidad de la República		USD
Airfare		\$900.00
Minor expenses		\$500.00
Per diem		\$500.00
Total		\$1,900.00

3. Overview		
Income		USD
SMBE (funds used)	\$20,562.46	68.8%
Registrations	\$3,853.33	12.9%
PEDECIBA	\$3,585.32	12.0%
Univ. de la República	\$1,900.00	6.4%
Total	\$29,901.11	100.0%
Expenses		USD
Hotel	\$10,530.88	35.2%
Airline & ferry tickets	\$9,294.80	31.1%
Catering	\$3,377.27	11.3%
Other expenses	\$5,378.35	18.0%
Administration	\$1,319.82	4.4%
Total	\$29,901.11	100.0%

Select Tweets


From students:

 **Leo** @Craugastoridae · Nov 3, 2022
Two days ago I presented my research related to HSP gene expression on Neotropical butterflies at the #mvdsmb2022 Satellite Meeting. I felt honored for being there and share with such great academics. This was one of the most amazing academic experience I've had so far.


#SMBE

 **Yanileth F. López...** @... · Nov 5, 2022
Thank you all for sharing your knowledge with us and making us love science even more. I'm incredibly happy to have met scientists who are as inspiring as you are. I hope to see you soon again ✨.
@OfficialSMBE
#mvdsmb2022
[Show this thread](#)

From Invited Speakers:

 **John Nove...** @jnove... · Nov 5, 2022
Congratulations to the organizers of @SMBE_SA_2022 for a great scientific meeting! Not to mention 1) breaking ground bringing @OfficialSMBE to South America for the first time 2) special efforts to support attendance by undergrads at their first conferences.
#globalscience

From Local scientists:

 **Gonzalo ...** @gonz... · Nov 6, 2022
Thanks to the organizers for bring to SouthAmerica Uruguay for 1st time @OfficialSMBE @SMBE_SA_2022 That's the way we can improve science and reach more students. I also took the chance to get back to a first scientist love (Title of the talk in the pic)