Schoenwolf Honored for Service to AAA and Research Community

AAA’s 2011 A. J. Ladman AAA/Wiley Exemplary Service Award was presented April 12 during the Society’s Annual Meeting to Gary C. Schoenwolf, Distinguished Professor of Neurobiology and Anatomy and Director of the Children’s Health Research Center of the University of Utah.

Schoenwolf’s contributions to AAA have been broad, and their impact on AAA has been significant. As stated in the letter of nomination from Parker Antin, “I know of no member of the American Association of Anatomists who has done more in service for the Association and is more deserving of this Award. Dr. Schoenwolf’s relationship with the AAA has spanned more than 30 years, during which time he has amassed a remarkably energetic record of service in all aspects of Association activities. It is not hyperbole to suggest that some of his efforts have helped to ensure the existence of the Association and the solid financial footing that it enjoys today.”

In accepting the award, Schoenwolf noted that “one is not born knowing how to serve—you have to be taught.” He credited John Ladman with teaching him the importance of service during his postdoctoral years in the Department of Anatomy at the University of New Mexico, chaired by Ladman at the time, and he invited Ladman to join him at the podium to be recognized by AAA members.

Schoenwolf earned the B.S degree in zoology at Elmhurst College and the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Illinois, Urbana. After his postdoctoral training, Schoenwolf was appointed Assistant Professor of Neurobiology and Anatomy at the University of Utah in 1979.

In 1981, Schoenwolf joined the editorial board of The Anatomical Record (AR), beginning an extended period of service to the AAA journals that continues today. From 1998-2002, he was an associate editor of AR, and since 2003 he has been editor-in-chief of Developmental Dynamics, bringing this journal to the preeminent position in developmental biology it enjoys today.

Schoenwolf has served on virtually every committee of the AAA. Beginning as a member of the Governing Board of the Morphogenesis Club in 1982, he was a member of the Advisory Committee of Young Anatomists (1983-1986), was for nine years chair of the Morphogenesis and Developmental Biology Sessions at the AAA annual meetings (1983-1988; 1990-1992), and served on the Membership Committee (1991). He chaired the Program Coordinating Committee (1996-1997), Membership Committee (1997-2000), Nominating Committee (2003-2004), and the Anatomical Terminology Task Force (2005). He has also been involved in organizing the AAA presence at the several quadrennial IFAA meetings held around the world.

Apart from his committee appointments, Schoenwolf has served AAA in several elected leadership roles. He was an AAA councilor and member of the Executive Committee (1998-1991), vice president (1992-1994), and from 1995-1997 served as president-elect and then president. His tenure as president coincided with one of the most critical points in AAA’s history. In addition to his role in securing new journal contracts, he guided the association through key transitions in organizational structure and governance. Schoenwolf was instrumental in establishing the National Office and in hiring AAA’s current executive director. This and other initiatives set in motion a transformation, the results of which we enjoy today in the form of a stable, vigorous, and financially sound association.

Schoenwolf’s career service record has been varied, sustained, and has had a significant impact on AAA’s development and vision of the AAA, helping to shape the association that we enjoy today.

David B. Burr chaired the Henry Gray/LWW Scientific Achievement Award Committee, which also included Donald Fischman and Robert S. McCuskey.

Adapted from a longer article prepared by David Burr for the presentation program.