

Lane Receives Suffness Award

By Marcy J. Balunas, PhD

At the 2019 ASP meeting in Madison, WI, the Matt Suffness Award was presented to Dr. Amy Lane, an associate professor of chemistry at the University of North Florida (UNF).

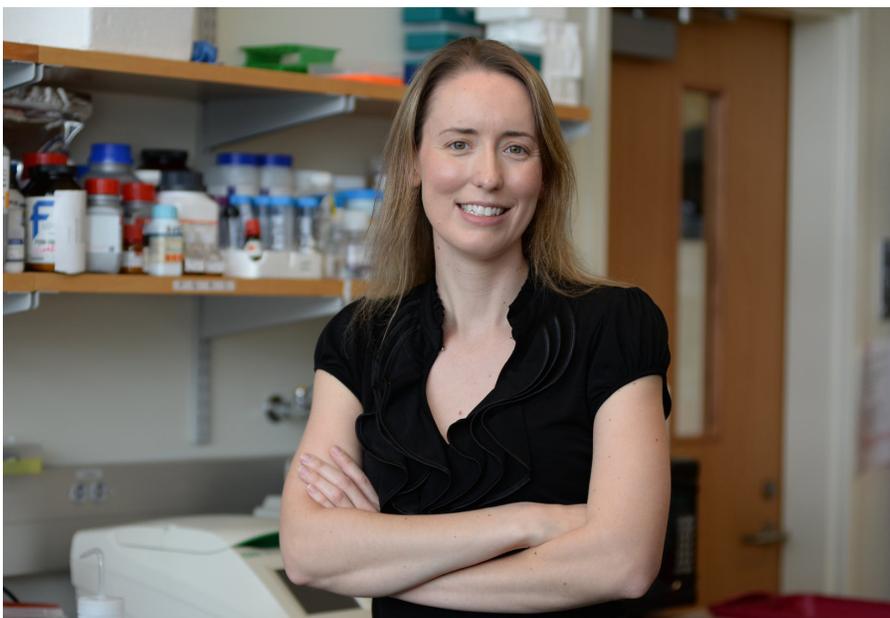
Dr. Lane has been at UNF since 2010, being promoted to associate professor with tenure in 2016. She received her BS in chemistry from Indiana State University, having several research experiences during her undergraduate career. She then moved to Georgia Institute of Technology where she was an NSF IGERT fellow in the lab of Dr. Julia Kubanek. Dr. Lane then conducted her postdoctoral research at Scripps Institution of Oceanography where she was an NIH IRACDA postdoctoral fellow with Dr. Brad Moore.

Dr. Lane presented her research, entitled “Unlocking the Treasure Trove of Biosynthetic Pathways from the Sea,” highlighting her findings related to the catalysis of 2,5-diketopiperazines by cyclodipeptide synthases. Her research program focuses on biosynthesis of marine-derived molecules, and she has published 27 manuscripts, including 13 since arriving at UNF, and holds one patent. She has received both local and national funding, including an NSF Research in Undergraduate Institutions grant as well as the ASP Research Starter Grant, among many others.

In response to what the award means to her, Dr. Lane said, “I am extremely humbled and honored to receive the Matt Suffness Award. I have long been impressed by the caliber of previous Matt Suffness awardees and am excited to join this group. I am grateful for the enthusiasm and support that ASP provides to early stage investigators.”

ASP President Dr. Barry O’Keefe commented that “Dr. Amy Lane is highly deserving of the Matt Suffness Young Investigator Award. She has set up an outstanding independent laboratory; and her publications in microbial biosynthesis, working primarily with undergraduate students, are of the highest level. I truly enjoyed her talk in Madison and look forward to hearing more from her in the future.”

One thing that sets Dr. Lane apart from most if not all other Suffness awardees is that she has done all of this at a primarily undergraduate institution. Since starting at UNF, she has worked



Professor Amy Lane, 2019 Suffness Awardee.

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with approximately 40 undergraduates with only one master’s student, and 11 of her 13 UNF manuscripts have undergraduates as co-authors. Dr. Lane has anywhere from six to eight undergraduates in the lab each year and actively mentors them, working alongside them to develop their research skills to the level needed for publication. This all is in parallel to an intensive teaching load, teaching three to four courses with over 300 students each semester! This is an amazing indication of both her dedication to teaching as well as her commitment to continuing an active research program, further highlighted by her recent selection as a 2019 Henry Dreyfus Teacher-Scholar.

The Matt Suffness Award recognizes the contributions of younger natural product scientists and provides a special forum for these ASP members to present research results. The award is named after Dr. Matt Suffness, who served as the ASP president in 1989-90 and began a Young Investigator’s Symposium. Dr. Suffness is best known for his commitment to the development of taxol as an anticancer drug, and he is remembered for his tireless support of natural product research, his efforts to facilitate multidisciplinary research efforts and his accessibility and sound advice. He was particularly helpful to younger investigators trying to establish a successful research program and career. ■

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