



AbGradCon is a truly unique conference for early career astrobiologists - it is attended exclusively by graduate students and postdocs, and is run by a new committee of graduate students and postdocs each year, and in a different location each year. The 14th Astrobiology Graduate Conference (AbGradCon) was successfully held from June 4 – 7 at the Georgia Institute of Technology, in Atlanta, Georgia.

Participants Demographics

- 96 participants
- 48% female, 52% male
- 72.5% participants attended for the first time!
- 49 institutions and 9 countries represented
- Highly interdisciplinary - Astronomy, Planetary Science, Geology, Chemistry, Biology, Engineering & Instrument Design, Biophysics, Geochemistry, Astrobiology, Complex Systems Science, Education & Outreach etc....

Programs

- **Technical sessions:** 23 oral presentations and 72 posters
- **Special Presentation:** Dr. Larry DeLucas, former astronaut and biochemist, delivered two talks, one for conference attendees and one for general public
- **Career Panel Discussions:** Dr. Jen Glass (Georgia Tech), Dr. Amanda Stockton (Georgia Tech) and Dr. Susanna Widicus Weaver (Emory University) discussed career opportunities and choices leading to where they are today
- **Early Career Scientists Town Hall** – Dr. Melissa Kirven-Brooks (staff scientist at NAI Central) briefed opportunities available for early career scientists
- **Primer 3.0 Meeting** - Dr. Shawn Domagal-Goldman offered advice for the early career scientists interested in putting together Astrobiology Primer 3.0
- **Keynote Speakers:** Dr. Shawn McGlynn (ELSI) and Dr. Frank Rosenzweig (NAI CAN7, PI) discussed their journey of scientific discovery
- **Public Outreach** – 1.5-hour interactive science demos, conference attendees acted as science ambassadors, over 200 members of general public attended
- **Educational field trip** to the Georgia Aquarium was offered to conference attendees
- **Proposal Writing Retreat (PWR)** was held the weekend prior to AbGradCon 2018 and was attended by 25 participants from 21 institutions and 6 countries. Participants worked in teams to respond to a NASA ROSES solicitation of their choice.



Group picture of AbGradCon 2018 attendees

Take home: AbGradCon provided opportunities to early career astrobiologists to engage with the wider astrobiology community as well as to form professional networks and to share their work and ideas with their peers. This gathering also bridged scientist and general public through public outreach events.