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The Microbiology Student Group at UC Berkeley is a team of graduate students who are not only fascinated by the microbial world, but also seek to build a diverse, active microbiology community in California broadly and the Bay Area specifically. Every spring, we host our annual Microbiology Student Symposium (MSS), a one-day, student-driven conference featuring student talks, a poster session, representatives from local biotech companies, and two keynote talks by prominent microbiologists. The Microbiology Student Symposium is an entirely student-led, -run, and -organized event that caters specifically to early career researchers. For many, this symposium is their first research conference. Our attendees range in career stage from undergraduate students to graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. Moreover, we encourage lab technicians and research assistants who are interested in applying to graduate school to attend and consider giving a talk/presenting a poster. We invite two keynote speakers at the professorial level to give talks – however, we specifically seek out keynote speakers who are junior faculty/assistant professors and are currently growing their research programs. We have designed our symposium to be free of registration fees so that all scientists (across many career levels) can attend.

This year, our Symposium was held on April 15, 2023 at the Clark Kerr campus of UC Berkeley. There were over 100 registered attendees from schools within the Bay Area (UC Berkeley, UC San Francisco, Stanford, CSU East Bay) and beyond (UC Davis, San Diego State University, CSU Bakersfield, Oregon Institute of Technology). The Symposium showcased eleven talks by graduate students and postdocs, two poster sessions featuring primarily undergraduate research, keynote addresses by Dr. Nicholas Shikuma (San Diego State University) and Dr. David Booth (UC San Francisco), and representatives from local biotech companies. Overall, the event highlighted the dual purpose of the Microbiology Student Group: it emphasized the incredible breadth and diversity of microbiology research, and also provided a unique opportunity to build community and network amongst other early-career researchers.

Funding from ISME was used for sponsoring travel grants for students attending the Symposium from other universities. We thank ISME for their generous support – our event would not have been possible without it!