

Completion Report for BSAS Scholarships

Name and affiliation:

Vasilis Symeou,
Newcastle University, School of Agriculture Food and Rural Development

Award Name and value of the award:

Murray Black Award, £600

Was any additional funding secured to support the activity?

(If yes, please state the value and source of funding):

£500, University of Newcastle School of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development

Start/end date of the award:

29-05-12 until 01-06-12

Summary of the award (Briefly describe the objectives and how was it undertaken):

(approximately 300 words)

I travelled to Denver, Colorado, USA to attend the XII International Symposium on Digestive Physiology of Pigs that took place between 29th May and 1st June. I presented a poster on: "Prediction of digestible phosphorus and calcium retention and requirements for different pig genotypes". I also had a 15 minutes theater presentation on: "Modelling the digestibility of dietary phosphorus - Model logic and concepts". This was one of the very few oral presentations made in the conference by non-invited speakers. The theater presentation of my work was one of the primary motivations to attend the Symposium on digestive physiology of pigs. I presented on the 2nd session on the 2nd day of the conference. In addition I attended the specialist symposia on: (1) "Mucosal Immunity and Pathogenesis"; (2) "Neonatal Development of Digestive and Absorptive Capacity"; (3) "Long Term effects of Pre and Early Postnatal Nutrition /Environment".

The highlight of the conference was the meeting with the French and Canadian team on modeling nutrient for growing and finishing pig systems. We discussed the principles of my research and identified areas that need improving, so that the end model will be of international impact. Currently we have been investigating the option of spending some time at the French team's facilities. Also, by attending the conference I become acquainted with the very latest developments in modeling.

Benefits of the Award:

This is the main part of the report and the two sections below should be approximately 1000 words in total. You may focus on benefits to yourself, to the animal science community, or both – depending on the nature of the activity undertaken.

Benefit of the award to you (e.g. new knowledge or skills, new contacts and collaborations):

Being a 2nd year PhD student, I am at a stage in my studies that I develop my own unique research pathway. It came at a right time that I attended this international conference and received constructive criticism. This criticism has been taken into account and I am in the process of altering or providing more evidence to justify my ideas so as to produce an internationally recognized model.

Presenting in front of 300 delegates was a unique experience and the perfect opportunity to establish myself as a young scientist in the field of Digestive Physiology of Pigs. The presentation allowed me to present my ideas to international experts. After the presentation, it was easier to build networks within the research community, as peers delegates already had an idea of the type and quality of my work. Therefore, most of the delegates were coming to me to discuss my work, rather than me looking for them. The presentations allowed me to publish my own ideas to international experts.

Attendance to the Digestive Physiology of Pigs that happens once every three years was my only opportunity to attend it whilst being student. This conference provided me with the opportunity to meet other groups from all around the world who work in a field similar to mine. I have been exposed to their latest work, questioned their methodology, exchanged ideas and improved my knowledge and was infused with new perspectives and ideas towards my research.

Attending the DPP conference, allowed me to establish a network of contacts that I keep in touch and do not hesitate to ask their opinion on academic matters that I am not sure how to tackle. As a young scientist, learning from those who have plenty of experience in related research, discussing what advice they can offer, and receiving their opinion on my ideas clearly enhance the quality of research I produce.

The Digestive Physiology of Pigs conferences also provided me with the unique opportunity to publish a manuscript to the prestige Journal of Animal Science. I had the opportunity to understand the quality and structure of work needed so as to get your work published. I was also able to peer review two papers that will be published in the journal from the conference.

Benefit of the award to the animal science community, academic and industrial:

The focus of my PhD research is on minimizing P excretion and maximizing P digestion. Improving the mineral digestion as well as minimizing the impact of pig farming to the environment. All these are very important factors that will determine the sustainability of the pig industry in the UK and Europe. The development of a model to predict nutrient excretion (namely phosphorus) under different feeding scenarios in growing and finishing pig systems would be used to improve the supply of digestible P to pigs in a manner that more closely matches their requirements and consequently reduces P excretion and feed costs. The environmental and industry benefits that will accrue from this are obvious.

Other supporting information:

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