

**Report on trip to Gordon Research Conference on 'Fertilization and Activation of Development'.
Plymouth, New Hampshire, USA. July 16-21, 2017. By John Parrington.**

I would like to thank the SRF for giving me the opportunity to attend and present my recent findings at this conference. The SRF travel grant, plus some funds I managed to access from Worcester College, Oxford, made it possible for me to make the trip to New England to attend this important meeting. I have been a regular attendee at the past at this GRC conference but I think this was probably my best experience yet. Subject areas included 'Epigenetic, Environmental, and Aging Effects on Fertilization and the Early Embryo', 'Influences of the Reproductive Tract on Fertilization, Gametes, and Early Embryos', 'Sperm Function / Finding, Binding, and Fusing with the Egg', 'Fertilization Interactions and New Findings in Fertilization, Sperm, and Environment', 'Eggs, Egg Activation, and Early Embryos', and some fascinating new findings were presented in all of these areas. I was particularly glad that I had attended as my poster presentation 'PLCzeta is the physiological trigger of embryogenesis in mammals, but offspring can be conceived naturally in its absence', was picked for a short oral presentation. As we had just published the findings in *Development* (Hachem et al. 2017. *Development*. 144:2914-2924.), it was a particularly useful occasion to present the findings and get valuable feedback on their significance and on our proposed future research direction in this area. Giving a talk also allowed me to mention that the findings in the *Development* paper had been partially funded by an SRF Academic Scholarship. The fact that I had been picked to give a talk meant that the GRC committee also gave me a small amount of extra money towards my travel and accommodation, which was very useful as the SRF and Worcester College funds had only covered a portion of my expenses. I also had many useful conversations with colleagues and initiated a valuable new collaboration. As well as attending the conference, I also got a little chance to visit Boston and the beautiful countryside of New Hampshire. All in all, a very valuable and enjoyable trip, made possible by the SRF's generous help.