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## Awards go to three exceptional PhD projects at SCIENCE

Faculty of Science | 9/15/2014

**Inaugural SCIENCE PhD Awards were presented on September 12, 2014. The newly instituted award went to three exceptional young researchers, all of whom were engaged in impressive PhD programmes here at the faculty.**



Alexander Sokol, Laura Vang Rasmussen and Lars Behrendt were each presented with DKK 25,000 for their efforts

SCIENCE initiates 330 new PhD student programmes annually and researcher training is an important strategic and focal area at the Faculty in general. Roughly 1200 PhD students are enrolled at the Faculty at any given time, amounting to an annual investment of ½ billion kroner. PhD's make a significant contribution towards developing, revitalizing and maintaining our strong and innovative research environments. Furthermore, nearly 50% of PhD's at the Faculty's are foreign students. This contributes to the on-going development of international networks and collaboration across borders, both during and after the completion of PhD programmes.

The Faculty has made the decision to honour recently graduated PhD's at an annual event, the first of which was held on Friday, September 12, 2014. It included all PhD graduates from the period extending from 1 January 2013 through to 31 May 2014. Roughly 200 attendees took part in the festive evening that included ceremonial speeches, awards and presents during which PhD graduates were thanked for their efforts at SCIENCE over the past three years.

PhD projects completed at SCIENCE are typically of a high scientific calibre and the deanery has thus decided to honour them by presenting PhD awards to three of the past year's most noteworthy. The awards, each worth DKK 25,000, were presented to Alexander Sokol, Laura Vang Rasmussen and Lars Behrendt for PhD projects that, among other things, resulted in a healthy number of published articles and high praise from the assessment committee.

### ***PhD Alexander Sokol, Department of Mathematical Sciences***



Alexander Sokol received a 2014 PhD award for his extraordinary PhD project, "Statistical methods for complex and high dimensional models". Alexander achieved numerous excellent results, both during his PhD programme and in his dissertation, which was one of the best dissertations from the Department of Mathematical Sciences in a number of years, particularly in relation to its originality and overall thoroughness. The dissertation consisted of nine articles where trailblazing ideas provided ample evidence of Alexander's broad scope of knowledge and scientific maturity. The PhD assessment committee deemed that Alexander's dissertation included an impressive assortment of interesting new ideas and results, and that much of his evidence, from a technical perspective, was extremely demanding and inventive.

Alexander Sokol is affiliated with the Department of Mathematical Sciences and can be contacted at [alexander@math.ku.dk](mailto:alexander@math.ku.dk).

### ***PhD Laura Vang Rasmussen, Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management***



Laura Vang Rasmussen received a 2014 PhD award for her excellent PhD project, "Exploring Land Use Change in the Sahel: Complementary Perspectives on Coupled Human-Environment Systems". Laura achieved numerous brilliant results in her PhD project, both during her programme and in her PhD dissertation, which was extremely well written and included an impressive number of articles. Most of these articles have been published in esteemed publications within the field, and she is the main author of many of them. Laura completed an extremely interesting and professionally conducted multidisciplinary PhD project, based upon data that collected under the difficult conditions inherent in fieldwork in the Sahel. An experienced member of the PhD assessment committee stated that Laura's PhD dissertation was one of the best dissertations he had ever read.

Laura Vang Rasmussen is now employed as a Postdoc at the Department of Geosciences and Natural Resource Management and may be contacted at

[lr@ign.ku.dk](mailto:lr@ign.ku.dk).**PhD Lars Behrendt, Department of Biology**

Lars Behrendt received a 2014 PhD award for his exceptional PhD project, "Microenvironmental and Molecular Ecology of the Cyanobacteria *Prochloron* and *Acaryochloris*". Lars achieved a range of impressive results both during his PhD programme and in his PhD dissertation. Six of the dissertation's seven chapters have been published in esteemed publications, with Lars as main author in five of the six published. During his PhD programme, Lars has been able to take advantage of and combine the numerous different academic competencies found at the Department of Biology in an exemplary manner. And, he has presented results at numerous international meetings, including a lecture at a leading international symposium for microbial ecology. The PhD assessment committee has judged that his dissertation was a well-written PhD report that demonstrated a large and interdisciplinary work achieved at a high level, based on the deployment of different techniques.

Lars Behrent is affiliated with the Department of Biology as a Postdoc and may be contacted at [lbehrendt@bio.ku.dk](mailto:lbehrendt@bio.ku.dk).



The SCIENCE PhD award is presented by the Dean, to three graduates selected by the Faculty's research committee, based upon recommendations from Faculty departments.



At the event, PhD graduates from SCIENCE was gathered for a group photo together with Prorector Thomas Bjørnholm (front row, far right), Dean John Renner Hansen (front row, far left), Vice Dean Morten Pejrup (Front row, no 2 from the left) and PhD Committee Chairman professor Kell Mortensen (back row, far right.)

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