

KU Women's Hall of Fame Citation: Pamela Soltis

April 2004

Emily Taylor Center for Women & Gender Equity

Dr. Pamela Soltis is truly a remarkable woman. As Dr. Douglass Jones, Professor, Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at the University of Florida described, "from valedictorian of her high school graduating class, to summa cum laude college graduate, to KU Ph. D., to winner of the 2002 Dahlgren Prize in Botany from the Royal Physiographic Society of Sweden (botany's equivalent of the Nobel Prize), Pam's academic record reflects a constant pursuit of excellence." She has received such praise in the extremely difficult, male-dominated field of Plant Biology.

Dr. Soltis has made significant scientific discoveries in her field. She is considered a pioneer for her work in the understanding of the origin and evolutionary significance of the chromosomal structure of plants. Dr. Daniel Crawford, Professor, KU Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, states that her "remarkable work is starting to unlock the secrets to the success of polyploids, and will have broad applications in the breeding of economically important plants." She is also making large advances in understanding the evolutionary history of flowering plants. Dr. Crawford continues to rave, "while a number of people world-wide have been involved in this effort, Pam Soltis is at the forefront in the generation of data and in formulating innovative methods for analyzing the massive amount of data."

Her record of publications is considered remarkable by many of her colleagues. Dr. Christopher Haufler, Professor, KU Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, states, "with regard to productivity, her efforts have been nothing short of remarkable...the number of papers is staggering and the fact that she has also edited several books in the process is even more amazing. I simply cannot imagine having the ability to generate the amount of work necessary to accomplish what Pam has in the years since she left the University of Kansas." She has published frequently in the top tier of peer-reviewed journals in addition to editing numerous books. She is also noted for her ability to secure grants, which has totaled in the millions of dollars and has been referred to as "mind boggling."

Dr. Soltis' colleagues speak to the significant work she has done to promote women in the sciences. She serves as a mentor to both undergraduate and graduate women in her field, devoting countless hours to providing advice, opportunities, guidance and support. She also has spoken to numerous campus and professional organizations on issues impacting women in the sciences. She was selected as the "Avon Lady" at Duke University for her presentations on the challenges women face in the academic world, negotiating family concerns and child-bearing with the rigorous demands of academia. This program is funded by the Avon Corp. to bring highly successful women to their campus, hence the "tongue in cheek" name. She has also been invited to speak at other campuses (Washington State University, University of Florida) on these issues.

Dr. David Steadman, Chair, Department of Natural History, University of Florida summarized Dr. Soltis' overall excellence in the following statement: "Pam Soltis is simply the best scientist and colleague that I have known in my nine years at the University of Florida. Her output of research, teaching, and graduate training is unmatched. She is also kind, generous, and humble. I cannot imagine that Pam Soltis is not headed for election to the National Academy of Science." Dr. Soltis' overall contributions to field and her commitment to the promotion of young women scientists has earned her the title of "Super Star", which she is referred to by many. The Commission on the Status of Women is honored to induct Dr. Pamela Soltis into the 2004 University of Kansas Women's Hall of Fame.