



Kevin Elicieri to Receive the Inaugural Spencer Shorte Legacy Award at the 2026 ABRF Annual Meeting

March 23, 2026

The **Association of Biomolecular Research Facilities (ABRF)** and the **Core Technologies for Life Sciences (CTLS)** are pleased to announce the inaugural **Spencer Shorte Legacy Award (SSLA)** will be presented to:



Kevin Elicieri, Ph.D.
Professor of Medical Physics and Biomedical Engineering
University of Wisconsin-Madison

The SSLA Committee will present the Award at the [ABRF Annual Meeting](#), March 31, 2026, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

The Award to Kevin will support the establishment of the **Illuminating People Program (IPP)**, a mentoring matchmaking platform, to recognize the bi-directional intellectual spark that good mentoring has on both the mentor and mentee. This platform will match experienced and early-career researchers, particularly when the candidate-mentee has no relationship with a potential mentor. The **IPP Fellows** program will connect potential mentees/advice seekers and provide gift certificates in recognition of their time and

reward their efforts to invest in their professional goals. The pilot **IPP** will include ten students (selected through an application and review process based on need) once a year for two years for a minimum of twenty students in the initial two-year cohort. Throughout this period, outreach efforts highlighting the mutual benefits of the program will support leveraging additional funding to make IPP an endowed, long-term program.

The SSLA Committee appreciates all the exceptional applications received, each of which represents potential future program opportunities.

“Kevin honors Spencer Shorte’s legacy through his exceptional dedication to building community. By understanding the varied needs of different scientific sectors, he creates vital connections across disciplines. Beyond his scientific expertise, Kevin is exceptionally kind, attentive, and generous with his time. His deeply human-centered leadership is an exceptional and inspiring trait in a highly competitive field.”

Kevin’s significant experience in this area was highlighted through several letters of support for his nomination, noting:

“[Kevin] embodies the legacy and impact of Dr. Shorte in so many ways. [He] has clearly demonstrated scientific excellence with broad, multidisciplinary impact. Kevin is the world’s leading expert in image informatics, having built and maintained the “ImageJ” image analysis ecosystem that is ubiquitous throughout biomedical research. ImageJ and its related tools are routinely used by hundreds of thousands of users around the world.

Kevin’s humility and commitment to open collaboration is well-known throughout the Wisconsin community, and beyond. Kevin is truly the glue that connects the biomedical research communities throughout the University of Wisconsin campus.

His ability to foster interdisciplinary collaboration has also been transformative in the Morgridge Institute, leading to faculty hiring initiatives, public-private partnerships, and establishment of new campus Centers.

Kevin’s dedication to community building has been evident throughout his tenure at [the University of] Wisconsin. Kevin has served as long-standing Director of LOCI (the Laboratory for Optical and Computational Instrumentation), which is a powerful research hub on our campus. Through LOCI, Kevin has built a scientifically interconnected network of investigators, both within Wisconsin and throughout the world. He also continues to serve as a generous mentor to former LOCI trainees.

A quality that makes Kevin extremely rare is that he is selfless and service-oriented, but with absolutely no interest in receiving credit for his service. It is not

uncommon for scientists to claim altruism, but Kevin truly seems closest to having achieved it. He routinely quite capably takes on roles that should be performed by Deans and Department Chairs but asks for no recognition whatsoever. I would estimate Kevin must spend at least 15 hours per week on tasks that only benefit others and do not directly benefit him. His presence is truly magnanimous, and everyone in our community – including students, junior faculty, department chairs, Deans, and Chancellors - routinely benefits from his selfless service to others.

It is remarkable how much [Spencer] and Kevin have in common. They are giants in their scientific community, and they have reached legendary status while retaining the admiration of all who are fortunate enough to encounter them”.

About the Award Honoree



Spencer Shorte was widely recognized for his exceptional scientific contributions. The **Spencer Shorte Legacy Award** honors not only these accomplishments, but also the humanity by which he lived—qualities that made him a deeply respected figure. He was a gifted scientist and an accomplished individual investigator who merged multidisciplinary technologies to advance capability and discovery across decades, countries, and continents.

Spencer is remembered even more for his extraordinary character. His humility allowed him to collaborate openly and learn from others; his community focus inspired him to build up those around him, and his selfless nature put the needs of others before his own. The warmth he showed to everyone he met made a profound and lasting impact. His legacy lives in the colleagues he elevated, mentored, and nurtured with such grace and humility. It is hard to encapsulate the breadth and depth of his impact on any single accolade.

This award serves as a living tribute to Spencer's memory by honoring someone who embodies these core values. The recipient is not selected for a single discovery or a list of publications, but for the exemplary way they conduct themselves — for their dedication to uplifting their community, their quiet selflessness, their unwavering integrity, and the genuine warmth they bring to every interaction. It is a way to ensure that Spencer's ethos, spirit of kindness and collaboration continue to influence and inspire others for years to come.

Visit the [ABRF web site](#) to learn more about the Award Criteria and how to apply.