

ACS528 - Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee

2020 Annual Report

The Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee started exchanging ideas for our annual meeting on January 16, 2020. We proceeded with primary objectives to 1) increase the involvement of non-committee members who volunteered during the first committee luncheons; and 2) enhance the participation of unrepresented and minority high school students at the Tri-Societies' annual meetings, to recruit black and POC students for the potential workforce in agricultural and environmental science. This report includes summaries from a Townhall webinar on Diversity, teleconferences, a Zoom meeting, exchanges of emails on the diversity initiatives, a motion to the Board of Directors, and the Virtual Annual Meetings, highlighting the various activities and achievements in 2020. Acknowledgment of donors and supporters and suggestions for improvement are also presented.

- We had several email exchanges with active members of the committee in January and February to identify speakers and activities for our annual meetings. We held our 1st teleconferences with all committee members on Monday, February 10, at 11:00 –12:00 pm CST. Most of the committee members attended our first conference call. During the teleconference, we discussed the following 1) Inviting students from unrepresented minority, and indigenous high schools in Arizona (due time required for preparation, logistic of obtaining parental permissions and funding for transportation this idea was discouraged by the Tri-society Headquarters Staff until next year when there would be sufficient time to start at the beginning of the year); 2) Inviting students from School of Earth & Sustainability at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst to talk about their Diversity program and present a video on diversity program, and 3) Inviting a speaker from Kentucky University to speak about Indigenous program at KU. The committee members agreed on having another luncheon meeting. We identified four speakers, and several members of the committee volunteered to help and contact speakers.
- Prepared the invitation letters for the Special Session on February 18, 2020. Atefeh Hossein sent the invitation to *Paul Brewer* and cc'd me, but he never responded to our emails. I started searching for a replacement. Jean McLain suggested *Valerisa Joe-Gaddy* and *Jacqueline Maximillian*, and they accepted my invitation. I invited *Chandra Holifield*, ay USDA-ARS, and she agreed. Christine Sprunger contacted two students at the University of Massachusetts, and *Mariela Garcia* responded, and the requested information was provided. *Michel Carlson* was identified by LGBTQ+ Scientist and Allies chair as a replacement for the 2nd student. I extended the invitation to him. Michel accepted the invitation to present at the Special Session.

Current Leadership of the ACS Diversity Committee is as follows:

- Chair, 2020: Hero Gollany, USDA-ARS
- Vice-Chair 2020: Augustine Obour, Kansas State University

- **Town Hall Webinar on Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion on June 30, 2020**, was hosted by Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee. and SSSA Representation and Recognition Task Force in collaboration with Women in Science and LGBTQ+ Scientist and Allies. We received valuable inputs from the audience. I tried to answer the many questions that were posted on Google Drive by Susan Chapman and provided a few suggestions for the Tri-Societies Headquarters and Leadership for follow-up.
- **Editor in Chief for ASA Recruitment.** At the request of ASA president Sylvie Brouder to serve on a search committee to identify the new Editor in Chief for ASA, I asked our ACS528 committee member Lisa Durso to help, and she accepted.
- **Response to Member Suggestions.** At the request of SSSA president Ole Wendroth, I contacted Lydia Luisa Jennings, SSSA member and graduate student at the University of Arizona. Lydia, who is from the Pascua Yaqui tribe, shared her desire to initiate actions for improving diversity in our society. I contacted her and provided feedback about our program for bringing in black and other POC of local high school students during our annual meeting to experience our science. I encouraged Lydia to get involved and engaged with active committee members and turn her great ideas into action during our annual meetings in Utah.
- **Fundraising and operational strategy for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fund.** On July 30th, 2020, as a chair of the Diversity Committee, I was asked by the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF) to include a member from our committee on a project to help and formulate the proposal on a fund proposal to support existing and identifying new ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. I designated incoming chair Augustine Obour to serve for three months on this fund proposal, and he served on this funding project. This fund proposal was successful and was approved by the full ASF Board in November. On behalf of the ACS528 Diversity Committee, I would like to thank the committee members Stella Salvo, Chair, Marilyn Warburton, Donn Cummings, Roch Gaussoin, Tabare Abadie, Eric Welsh, Augustine Obour, Nick Goeser, and Sara Uttech for securing funding for Diversity Scholarships.
- **Diversity Graduate Student Poster Competition, ASA- ASA-CSSA-SSSA International Meetings.** Annually, one of the significant activities of the Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee (ACS528) is to recognize outstanding posters presented by graduate and undergraduate students. Incoming chair Augustine Obour organized the poster competition with committee members K Raja Reddy, Christine Sprunger, and a volunteer – Jose Franco (USDA-ARS). I commended them for their evaluation of the Posters. This year recipient of the Poster Award are:
 - 1st Place (\$300), Jennifer MacMillan, Texas A & M University
 - 2nd Place (\$250), Care Anderson, University of Massachusetts at Amherst
 - 3rd Place (\$200), Phillip Hinson, Texas A & M University.

On behalf of the ACS Diversity Committee, thank you for volunteering as a judge for the 2019 ACS528 Diversity Committee Student Poster Competition. Your time and dedication made it possible for us to reward students for their efforts.

➤ **Special Session, 2020 Virtual Annual Meetings, on November 9, 2020.**

The Diversity Committee held a virtual session entitled “Diversity in Our Sciences: Stories of Success and Strategies for the Future.” This session illustrated diversity in action at universities, federal and state agencies, and highlight current successful programs. It provided a venue for open discussion. What needs to be changed and where do we need to focus future efforts in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences? We had leaders who have been active in diversity efforts speaking about what has worked and what are some challenges remaining. Panelists were: Chandra Holifield Collins, USDA-Agricultural Research Service, Tucson; Jacqueline Maximillian, Department of Environmental Science, University of Arizona; Michael Carlson, Department of Agronomy and Horticulture, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; Valerisa Gaddy, Department of Environmental Science, University of Arizona; and Mariela Garcia Arredondo, a Ph.D. student, and NSF Graduate Student Research Fellow, Soils and the Environment, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

- Organization of the Special Session was led by Committee Chair Hero Gollany and was greatly facilitated by committee members Jean McLain, Lisa Durso, and Augustine Obour, and Rebecca Polk (Staff Liaison).
- The session was moderated by Eugene Law a Ph.D. candidate at Cornell University, and Christopher Ryan a Ph.D. student at the City University of New.
- Integral to the success of the session was Rebecca Polk.

Members of the Committee (2020/1/1-2020/12/1))

- Hero Gollany (Chair)
- Jean McLain (Past Chair)
- Augustine Obour (Incoming Chair)
- Matthew Bright (Member-CSSA)
- Lisa Durso (Member-ASA)
- Atefeh Hosseini (Member-SSSA)
- Gobena Huluka (Member-SSSA)
- Rebecca Polk (Staff Liaison)
- Natasha Rayne (Member-ASA)
- K. Raja Reddy (Member-CSSA)
- Christine Sprunger (Member-SSSA)
- Jordon Wade (Member-SSSA)

- **Acknowledgment of Supporters, and Donors.** ACS528 Committee is grateful to the Bayer Crop Science for the Diversity Session, and Dr. Seth Murray, Chair of Agronomic Science Foundation and Tri-societies (CSSA-ASA-SSSA) for his support. We also thank the Headquarters Staff of the Tri-Societies for assisting the Diversity Committee. We would like to especially thank Nick Goeser, Nathan Ehresman, Susan Chapman, Stacey Giesen, Bhargavi Rahatekar and Rebecca Polk for serving as the Committee's liaisons with the Societies.

Items Requiring Board Attention:

1. A pipeline of Diversity to strengthen ties between 1890, Tribal colleges, and community colleges, and large universities to establish pipelines for minorities to enter undergraduate and graduate STEM programs.
2. Strengthen ties to high schools in urban and other non-ag areas of the US.
3. Motion to the Board of Directors. The SSSA Representation and Recognition Task Force is recommending "A Member-at-Large position to the SSSA Board of Directors with voting privileges" to work on current issues related to the SSSA 2021 Strategic Plan".

Prepared By: Hero Gollany