

Annual Reports

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

2021 Annual Report

The Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee started the year with several meetings in February through April to solicit ideas for our annual meeting programs. The primary objectives of the committee this year were to 1) increase student participation in the Diversity Committee Student Poster Competition and 2) enhance the visibility of ongoing DEI efforts within the tri-Societies by organizing special sessions to highlight these activities at the annual meetings. This report summarizes activities of the Diversity Committee in 2021 including highlights at the annual meetings, revised role of the committee and suggestions for the composition of the new DEI committee.

- We had several zoom meetings with active members of the committee in February through April to identify potential activities for the annual meetings in Salt Lake City. The committee agreed on two activities at the annual meetings: 1) Diversity student poster contest and 2) a special session that will combine a diversity committee panel discussion, reception, and social hour. Two working groups were formed one lead by Jordon Wade to develop a proposal for the student competition and social hour and the other led by Augustine Obour, to develop the proposal for the special session. These proposals were submitted to seek funding support and to get approval from the annual meetings task force.
- **Organized Special Session at the 2021 Annual Meetings, on November 8, 2021:** The Diversity Committee held a special session entitled *“Diversity and Inclusion Challenges and Opportunities in the Agriculture and Environmental Science Communities”* which was sponsored by the Agronomic Science Foundation. The session discussed challenges in implementing actionable diversity programs at universities, federal and state agencies, and highlight opportunities for success. It addresses the challenges of implementing current diversity programs at universities, businesses, federal and state agencies. In addition, the panel discussed highlights of the tri-society diversity survey, what needs to be changed and where future efforts should be focused in promoting a climate of diversity and inclusion in Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.
Panelists were: Dr. Zelia Wiley, Assistant Dean and Director for Diversity, College of Agriculture and K-State Research & Extension, Manhattan, KS; Dr. Elizabeth Gillispie, USDA-ARS, Prosser, WA; and Dr. Augustine Obour, Department of Agronomy, Kansas State University Manhattan, KS.
The ACS Diversity Social Hour immediately followed the special session where attendees were able to interact with panelists, Diversity Committee Student poster contestants, and Bridge Scholars. Winners of the diversity student poster contest were recognized at the social hour.
- **Diversity Student Poster Competition at the ASA- ASA-CSSA-SSSA International Meetings:** Every year, the Diversity Committee organizes a student poster contest to highlight the scholarship of students from underrepresented groups at the annual meetings. The poster session is open to undergraduate and graduate students, and posters can also be submitted to the appropriate technical session within ASA, CSSA or SSSA. A goal of the Diversity Committee this year was to increase student participation in the competition. A decision was made at our meeting in March to add the “Diversity Poster Competition Checkbox” on the abstract’s “Title” submission step for the

annual meetings. The “checkbox” was added with the help from Nate Ehresman and Rebecca Polk. This worked; we had a record-breaking number of students participating in the ACS Diversity Committee Student Poster Contest. For the first time, **approximately 240 students** indicated interest to participate in the contest by the abstract submission deadline. However, only 68 students met the deadline to submit their poster for the preliminary judging round deadline of October 15. After the first round of judging, 12 student posters were selected to participate in the in-person contest on Monday (November 8) at the annual meeting.

Augustine Obour (chair) organized the poster contest with help from committee members Lisa Durso, Susan Chapman, Peter Ampim and Elizabeth Gillispie. A big SHOUT OUT to the over one hundred volunteers who helped in the preliminary judging to screen the student posters. On behalf of the ACS Diversity Committee, thank you for volunteering as a judge for the 2021 ACS528 Diversity Committee Student Poster Competition. Your time and dedication made it possible for the success of this year’s competition.

This year Poster Award winners are:

- 1st Place (\$300), Catherine Danmaigona Clement, Texas A & M University, College Station, TX
 - 2nd Place (\$250), Luisa Robles , University of California-Davis, Davis, CA
 - 3rd Place (\$200), Jose Suazo, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL.
-
- ***Co-sponsored special session “ Social and Historical Contexts of Agronomy, Crop, and Soil Sciences: A Collaborative Effort to Foster Justice, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Poster”***. This poster session was aimed at creating a space for conversation and networking that will allow participants to engage with the historical and sociological aspects of our disciplines, including the historically low participation of women, people of color, and other minority groups. While many groups within the Tri-Societies exist to address DEI and justice concerns, they often operate in isolation. This poster session aims to unite and highlight the efforts of various DEI-related groups so that we can support each other, improve wellness and overall flourishing and honor the intersections at which our communities align. We hope that in doing so, we will develop collaborations and ideas which improve diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI), and justice for groups that have historically been marginalized or excluded both indirectly (through social context), and directly (through discriminatory policies). The collaborative nature of this session invites all institutional groups committed to DEI to step forward and engage in this important conversation. In addition to co-sponsoring this session, the Diversity Committee led by Augustine Obour, prepared and submitted a poster entitled “*Diversity in Agronomy, Crops, Soil and Environment Committee: Past, Present and Future*” to documents activities of the diversity committee.
 - **Future of the Diversity Committee:** This summer, there was a discussion in revising the role of the diversity committee to be the lead in overall A-C-S DEI initiatives as defined by the Societies leadership for members and staff. This effort was completed, and new guidelines were developed for the committee effective January 2021. The expanded new committee (ACS528 DIVERSITY,

EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN ASA, CSSA, AND SSSA COMMITTEE) will include representation from each of the other DEI focused committees to enhance coordinated efforts.

- **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Survey Report:** The leadership of the Diversity Committee (Augustine Obour & Lisa Durso) had several meetings with Susan Chapman and Elizabeth Gillispie to learn more about the DEI survey report and recommendations. These meetings were helpful to map out strategies to implement some of the recommendations in 2022. This information will be made available to the full committee sometime in February 2022 when the final report is ready.

Current Leadership of the ACS528 Diversity Committee is as follows:

- Chair, 2021: Augustine Obour, Kansas State University
- Vice-Chair 2022: Lisa Durso, USDA-ARS
- Staff Liaison, Susan Chapman

Acknowledgment of Supporters, and Donors. ACS528 Committee is grateful to the Agronomic Science Foundation for funding support. We also thank the Headquarters Staff of the Tri-Societies for assisting the Diversity Committee. We would like to especially thank, Susan Chapman, and Rebecca Polk for serving as the Committee’s liaisons with the Societies.

Items Requiring Board Attention:

1. Strengthen ties between 1890, Tribal colleges, and community colleges, and large universities to establish pipelines for minorities to participate in ASA-CSSA-SSSA annual meetings.
2. Suggested appointments to the ACS528 DEI committee to ensure continuity of committee activities:

Lisa Durso (recommended chair; 1/1/2021 through 12/31/22)

Tiffany Carter (Member-ASA; vice chair 2022-2023, and chair 2034-2025)

Augustine Obour (stay on past chair)

Peter Ampim (Member-CSSA)

Reddy Raja (Member-CSSA)

Desalegn Serba (Member,-CSSA)

Villamil Maria (Member-ASA))

Jordon Wade (Member-SSSA)

Augustine Obour (Incoming Chair)

Susan Chapman (Staff Liaison)

Elizabeth Gillispie (Ex Officio)

Recommendations for Additional committee members

Zelia Wiley	Non-Member, KSU, Chief Diversity Officer, KSRE
Eugene Law	Grad Student Member
Karletta Chief	Non-Member, U. of Arizona, was 13 year member

Rob Michitsch	Univ. of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, SSSA member, former SSSA early career board member
Kenzo Esquivel	Grad Student Member, Bridge Scholar
Martha Zwonitzer	Grimmway Farms, ACS Member
Cam Anderson	Grad Student Member, Univ. Massachusetts-Amherst, LGBTQ group member



Committee Member Dr. Peter Ampim interacting with Diversity Student Poster Contestant Derrick Platero at the 2021 Annual Meeting in Salk Lake, City. UT.



Dr. Elizabeth Gillispie interacting with Jose Suazo, Diversity Student poster contestant from University of Florida.



A display of Diversity Student Posters at the Diversity Committee’s Social Hour.