



**Science
Societies**

Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: Operationalizing DEI at the Societies

By Susan Chapman, Director of Member Services; Elizabeth Gebhardt, Senior Publications Program Manager; and Jeanne Pluemer, Associate Director of Meetings

| October 23, 2023



SSSA-sponsored tour to a coffee farm in Puerto Rico during the Society for the Advancement of Chicano/Hispanic and Native Americans in STEM (SACNAS) Conference.

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA have recognized diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) as a top priority in their strategic plans and acknowledge that enhancing diversity and representation within our Societies is essential to fostering strength, creativity, and innovation in our scientific fields. This undertaking is comprehensive and all-encompassing through our programs, processes, and systems and continuously expands as we delve into the work. This focus yielded the DEI recommendation report,

which includes broad and deep actions, approved by the three boards of directors in early 2022.

In addition to these efforts, the staff of our Societies see clear benefits to enhancing DEI and have been taking proactive steps to integrate concepts and practices into the very core of our programmatic activities. Increasing diversity contributes to well-rounded publications, for example, by encouraging diverse representation on the editorial boards and publishing research being conducted around the world. It also brings an Annual Meeting experience where diversity is celebrated and everyone feels respected and has a sense of belonging. Celebrating members and supporting underserved communities helps to create a strong professional home for all. These are just a few examples.

Read on to learn more about our efforts to enhance DEI within membership and communications, publications, the Annual Meeting, and staff development programs and activities.

Membership and Communications



Student Member Cy'Heim McRae, former SASES President, and Susan Chapman, Director of Member Services, promoting the

- **Global Outreach Program:** Provides equitable access to scientific research and colleagues worldwide for scientists and students residing in low and lower-middle income countries as defined by the World Bank, sponsored by the Agronomic Science Foundation.

Societies at the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) National Conference this spring.

- **Graduate Student Travel Grants:** Many of our graduate student members may not have the resources to attend the Annual Meeting, which provides an invaluable opportunity to launch their scientific careers. Considering this, the Graduate Student Committee has launched a campaign to build an endowment through the Agronomic Science Foundation to support student travel grants. Donate at: afsc.org/content/graduate-student-travel-scholarship.
- **SSSA K-12 In-Service Development:** Focused on providing resources to K-12 teachers with limited funds, two soils-focused in-service days were held in Chicago and Memphis with an emphasis on reaching underserved schools: soils4teachers.org/in-service.
- **Collaborations:** The Societies are actively participating at the Society for the Advancement of Chicano/Hispanic and Native Americans in STEM (SACNAS) meeting (through scientific presentations, a tour, and exhibit booth) and at the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) meeting with a booth to promote our activities.
- **Diversity Months:** The Societies highlight members and diverse groups as we look to the future of our sciences, including Black History, Women's History, Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage, Pride, and Hispanic/Latinx Months.
- **Demographics:** Broadening the ethnicity options in the "About Me" section of member profiles has been expanded to include Middle Eastern/North African and

Native of Indian Subcontinent ethnicities.

Publications

- **Outreach in China (2023–2024):** As a result of a dedicated campaign with Wiley, we recruited five editorial board members from China in 2023. This will help increase our journal presence in the region. A brochure and set of videos, translated into Chinese, will detail our publications and submissions requirements to potential authors in China.
- **Plain Language Summaries (2023 pilot):** Three journals will pilot a program to publish short plain language summaries in the HTML version of articles to enhance accessibility of this work to scientists in other disciplines, undergraduates, and media.
- **Peer Review Mentorship Program (2023):** The ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Peer Review Mentorship Program was launched in 2023 to provide training and guidance to early career scientists.
- **Color Figure Policy (2022):** Author guidelines were adopted for figure preparation that accommodate individuals with color blindness.
- **Gender/Neutral Honorifics (2022):** The honorific “Mx” was added to the ScholarOne system.
- **Author Pronouns in Published Articles (2022):** Authors may add pronouns to the byline of their articles. They may also add them retroactively to previously published articles without correction statements or coauthor consent (for their own



The Annual Meeting ACS732 Program Planning Committee has added a DEI representative who is focused on ensuring DEI sessions are part of the Annual Meeting experience.

pronouns).

- **CRedit Taxonomy (2021):** Research contributions are now more transparent and accessible.
- **Wiley Author Name Change Policy (2021):** It is now easier for authors to change their name on published papers.
- **Joint Commitment for Action on Inclusion and Diversity in Publishing (2020):** Wiley is joint signatory.

Annual Meeting

- The Annual Meeting averages 4,000 attendees from 60 countries; anyone in the world with an interest in agronomic, crop, and/or soil sciences is invited to register and attend.
- All scientific abstracts are accepted!
- The Annual Meeting ACS732 Program Planning Committee has added a DEI representative who is focused on ensuring DEI sessions are part of the Annual Meeting experience.
- We work with our Annual Meeting city, venue, and contractor partners on collaborative DEI efforts.
- We design our Meeting with DEI in mind: gender-neutral bathrooms, lactation area, ADA indicator option at time of registration, accessible rooms, pronoun ribbons, inclusive language, and diversity in programming and in presenters.



All ASA, CSSA, and SSSA staff are required to complete a 14-hour certificate in DEI in the workplace within their first year of employment.

Staff Development

We continue to look internally at staff development, training and hiring, and retention policies that aim to recruit, engage, and retain a diverse workforce. Some recent actions include:

- **All staff are required to complete a 14-hour certificate in DEI in the workplace within their first year of employment.**
- **We hold regular events (about once a month) honoring heritage months and other DEI topics.**
- **Our hiring processes were revisited to minimize bias.**

Learn More

To learn more the Societies' DEI activities, including strategic planning, benchmarking reports, and achievements, visit: soils.org/diversity, crops.org/diversity, or agronomy.org/diversity.

Visit Us at the Annual Meeting

We invite you to explore the many ways in which members and staff are integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into Society programs and initiatives by visiting us at the DEI Poster Session at the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meeting in St. Louis, MO on Tuesday from 4:00–6:00 pm. View all of the DEI focused sessions at <https://bit.ly/45QRTv6> or by scanning the QR code.

Text © . The authors. CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. Except where otherwise noted, images are subject to copyright. Any reuse without express permission from the copyright owner is

prohibited.