



**Science
Societies**

It's a small world after all

By April Ulery SSSA President, aulery@nmsu.edu

| February 21, 2021



In some ways, our planet seems to shrink by the day. Cultures and people across the globe exchange ideas, foods, viruses, and money constantly and at an ever-increasing pace. While SSSA is largely focused on the professional development and science of

its American members, many of our individual efforts are inextricably linked to collaborations, events, agriculture, and climate change in other countries.

Climate, pollution, and even viruses do not respect political boundaries or lines on a map—we all need to work together to improve communications and collaborations across disciplines and countries. SSSA has members from many professions and is not only focused on academia, but includes consulting soil scientists and those working for government agencies and private companies. Additionally, our number one strategic goal is to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion. Both of these factors influence our desire to reach out to international members and soil scientists around the world.

Deeper International Engagement

We have so much in common with both established scientists and students of soil science outside the USA. In fact, many SSSA members grew up, were educated, or currently live and work outside the USA. In the coming months, we hope to explore new ways that SSSA and its members can meet

and shape the planet's pressing agricultural and environmental challenges with deeper international engagement. We are developing new initiatives that will promote collaborative communication in both research and education, open new pathways to participation in the Society for international professionals and students, and add global perspectives to how the work of soil scientists is recognized and certified. Our Grand Challenge, shared among all three Societies, is to *drive soil–plant–water–environment systems solutions for healthy people on a healthy planet in a rapidly changing climate*. If we are to meet this challenge, we must work together across borders and disciplines.



Initially, we will seek ways to invite greater international participation at our Annual Meeting, but that is just the beginning. In 2020, when we had our first virtual Annual Meeting, I was surprised to discover that our international attendance was not much different from usual. The program chairs all fully anticipated higher numbers of international attendance due to full online access and lack of required travel; however, there wasn't a notable increase in attendee participation from many countries. This is something that we would like to improve going forward, whether meeting in person, online, or a hybrid of the two. I would love to hear from you with suggestions about improving international engagement as well as increasing the diversity of our membership.

Please stay tuned—and look in the coming months for new initiatives to help SSSA meet these aspects of our Grand Challenge. Additionally, please vote in our Society elections. Voting is a membership privilege and one of the best ways to get your voice heard in our organization. Our voting turnout is shockingly low, so your vote could make the difference in choosing the SSSA leadership. The election will be open from 8 March through 8 April, and eligible members can vote at www.soils.org/elections.

Thanks again for all of the service that you provide and thanks for reading this article!

More news & perspectives

Back to issue

Back to home

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.