

First group of new members from Bayer diversity fund attend virtual annual meeting

By Susan V. Fisk

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One of the group's "meet and greet" opportunities at the 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting last November.

As announced in October, the Societies, working with Bayer Crop Science and the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS), **created an opportunity for student and early career members¹** to receive complimentary registration to attend the 2020 Virtual Annual Meeting last November.

The program also granted scholars with one-year memberships to the Societies and MANRRS to foster the continuation of relationships developed during the meeting. This resulted in 213 new undergraduate, graduate, and early career members. Fund recipients were from 16 different countries.

"I am so grateful for the opportunities extended to support underrepresented students and early career professionals through the Bayer Diversity Fund," says Nick Goesser, ACSESS CEO. "I was excited to see bright, future leaders engage through networking, professional development, and connections to the science during the Annual Meeting. I am also looking forward to continuing support to celebrate and lift their voices and intellectual contributions into the future."

Heaven Lucero, a recent college graduate working in environmental sciences for Pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico, was one of the fund recipients. "I'm happy I was given the opportunity to attend over 50 virtual sessions and network with over 100 interesting people, all from a screen at home," Lucero says. "All of the meetings I attended discussed ongoing research and were very informative. I look forward to attending next years' event!"

"I was extremely impressed with the level of engagement and participation," says Giovanni Piccinni, Global Production Optimization and Sustainability Lead, Bayer Crop Science. "All of the students and young professionals had interesting questions about

the Societies and careers in academia and industry. I am extremely happy we were able to provide an opportunity for the inclusion of a diverse group of scientists.”

“My hope is that during the meeting, they have been able to fully capture the value and the opportunities that the Societies can provide,” Piccinni continues. “Besides the scientific connections and idea exchange, my hope is that they will recognize how the participation in the meeting and the networking opportunities available through the Societies can springboard their professional careers and scientific achievements.”

Gabriela Hidrobo, a doctoral student at University of Minnesota, is another fund recipient. “Being able to attend the 2020 Annual Meeting online left me with rich insights for my current academic career and future professional development,” Hidrobo says. “I participated in more than a dozen talks, group discussions, and career development sessions. I made meaningful connections with professionals in my field of soil science, and I plan to keep building a network of collaborative work. An extra bonus of having had the event online is being able to go back to view the sessions I did not get to attend.”

ASA, CSSA, and SSSA recognize the [importance of diversity, equity and inclusion \(DEI\)](#),² especially in STEM careers. In addition to the [Bayer Diversity Fund initiative](#),³ the Societies recently announced the [ASF-IDEAS Fund](#).⁴ The Agronomic Science Foundation created the fund to advance DEI in agricultural and environmental science communities.

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