

# Graduate Student Committee 2023: Celebrating a Year of Success

By Ariana Lazo, Ph.D. student at Purdue University and the 2024 Chair of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA (ACS) Graduate Student Committee; Maria Teresa Tancredi, Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia and the 2023 Chair of the ACS Graduate Student Committee

| January 1, 2024

Participants of the Graduate Student Leadership Conference pose for a picture in St. Louis during the 2023 Annual Meeting.

*Participants of the Graduate Student Leadership Conference pose for a picture in St. Louis during the 2023 Annual Meeting.*

---

The ASA, CSSA, and SSSA (ACS) Graduate Student Committee had a busy and productive year in 2023. This article will review all of the activities we organized and sponsored.

## **Graduate Student Leadership Conference**

Like previous Annual Meetings, we started off the 2023 meeting with one of our most appreciated initiatives, the Graduate Student Leadership Conference (GSLC),

sponsored by the Agronomic Science Foundation (ASF). This year, 50 students were selected to be part of this two-day event. The GSLC provides participants with crucial skills and knowledge to harness their abilities and become great leaders.

“Throughout the conference, I felt a genuine sense of inspiration and motivation,” says Pabitra Joshi, Ph.D. student at University of Idaho and one of the attendees of the 2023 GSLC. “The sessions significantly broadened my perspective on ethical considerations and highlighted the crucial role of integrity in effective leadership. The discussion on addressing unconscious bias provided practical insights into fostering a more inclusive leadership approach and how to deal with them. Moreover, the sessions on understanding my leadership personality and conflict management were transformative, deepening my self-awareness and equipping me with valuable strategies for navigating leadership complexities.”

## **Graduate Student Networking Session**

On Saturday afternoon, 140 students and more than 30 mentors joined us for the Graduate Student Networking Session, sponsored by Corteva. The session was a success with even more attendees than in the past! After hearing from Dr. Maria Monteros, students and mentors engaged in an interactive “speed-date” style workshop, during which they had a chance to interact and exchange questions and tips. The event ended with closing remarks from Dr. Mark Jeschke, agronomy manager at Corteva Agriscience. Many of the students who attended hoped to see more mentors from the ASA and SSSA as well as professionals engaged outside of academia (e.g., government agencies, NGOs, and entrepreneurs), so if you are in those fields and plan to attend the 2024 Annual Meeting, we hope you will consider attending this session as a mentor!



*Graduate students and mentors connecting during the interactive part of the Graduate Student Networking Session at the 2023 Annual Meeting.*

## **LOOKING BACK ON MY TIME ON THE GRADUATE STUDENT COMMITTEE**

For the past three years, I've had to pleasure to serve on the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA (ACS) Graduate Student Committee, initially as a member and then as the chair. Since 2020, thanks to the leadership of the chairs who preceded me (Paige Boyle and Rachelle Davenport) and the hard work of all the members, our committee has spearheaded more and more activities and grown substantially—we currently have 19 members!

Serving on the ACS Graduate Student Committee can be challenging at times. We all know how busy graduate students can get trying to juggle research, courses, and, for some, families and children, so finding the extra time and energy to contribute to the work of the committee can be hard. Nonetheless, with the end of my term, I feel a sense of accomplishment and pride.

I want to thank all of the students who, over the years, have been involved with the committee. Your passion and ideas have allowed us to provide some great opportunities to our fellow graduate students and helped make the Societies a place where our contributions are valued and respected. To all the current committee members, I want to say don't let yourself get intimidated by the hard times, and remember that, if you all give the best you can, together you'll be able to accomplish more than you think!

At this past Annual Meeting, I came across some previous committee members who have now moved to new stages of their career. Even though we hadn't seen each other for years, the bond we created while serving together on the committee is still strong. The people you serve with will see your value and will always be willing to help you move forward in your career, so make sure to cherish those relationships.

To the 2024 committee chair, Ariana Lazo, thank you for taking on this role. I know you'll be a great leader, and I'm sure the committee will do amazing work under your guidance!

Lastly, I would like to address all the Societies' graduate student members: please consider getting involved with our committee or other leadership positions within the Societies, and reach out to us so that we can better serve you! Being a truly active member will be a rewarding experience, and it will help you create important networks for your future.

**—Maria Teresa Tancredi**



*Members of the 2023 ACS Graduate Student Committee (l to r: Karl Kunze, Maria Teresa Tancredi, Mala Ganiger, and Om Prakash Ghimire) present the Committee during the Diversity Showcase Poster Session at the 2023 Annual Meeting.*

## Preparing Your Data for the Future of Open Science

Our first collaboration for the 2023 Annual Meeting was led by Society staff members Rebecca Funck, Associate Director of Publications, and Emily Mueller, Journal Program Manager. Ms. Funk and Ms. Muller helped explore a practical issue regarding open data. The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) memorandum on open data reiterates the commitment for free public access to federally funded research. In the face of uncertainty regarding what that means for researchers and authors, this session explored insight into the OSTP memo as well as the importance of open data in general and provided practical answers on how to best prepare data for repositories.

## **Transitioning from Graduate School to Early Career**

On Monday morning, the ACS Graduate Student Committee in collaboration with the Early Careers Members Committee, hosted a special session for graduate students who are approaching a transition from school to their careers. This session involved a panel of early career members from academia, industry, government, and NGOs and provided an opportunity for panelists to discuss their experience navigating the transition process. Attendees were given the chance to ask questions of the panelists to learn about various careers and adjust to a new professional position. In the words of one of the attendees "The transitioning to early career panel was wonderful. I really appreciate how open and honest the participants were about sharing their experiences."

## **Increase Your Research Impact by Making DIY Videos**

As communication is essential to research, a hands-on workshop led by scientist and do-it-yourself (DIY) video maker Dr. Eric Brennan was held to educate researchers in making their DIY videos for sharing their research. Throughout this interactive workshop, the 20 attendees learned about basic video-making tools, engaged with other DIY video enthusiasts, and practiced these skills by making short DIY research videos of their own.

## **From the Ancient to the High Tech...a Graduate Student Tour**

Sponsored by ASF, graduate students had the opportunity to participate in the very first tour at the Annual Meeting that was exclusively offered for graduate students to learn about local agriculture and science. For the first tour stop, students visited Cahokia Mounds, a pre-Columbian Native American city considered to be the largest and most complex archaeological site north of the pre-Columbian cities in Mexico.

Students then headed to Sydenstricker-Nobbe, a John Deere training and distribution site where they learned about new technology in production agriculture. Next, students headed back to the city to explore the 79 acres of horticultural display at the Missouri Botanical Gardens, home to one of the world's largest collections of rare and endangered fauna. For the final stop of the tour, students visited Still 630 Distillery where they were walked through the distillation process and ended with a tasting.

The tour, which was nearly sold out and offered at a very competitive price, was greatly appreciated by students. One of the participants commented, "The graduate tour was a perfect way to wrap up the conference! It was a great opportunity to explore St. Louis and to engage with grad students in a casual manner. I'd love to see more of these types of networking activities."

We want to thank Dr. Timothy Reinbott for approaching us with the idea of hosting a tour and helping identify interesting stops!

## **Graduate Student Travel Grant**

Established in 2020, the Graduate Student Travel Scholarship, a travel grant program organized for graduate students by graduate students, continues to provide support for graduate student attendance at the Annual Meeting. For the 2023 meeting in St. Louis, the travel grant received 78 applications and awarded 10 graduate student travel scholarships.

As the Graduate Student Travel Scholarship continues to be successful, we are seeking donations in hopes of permanently endowing the fund by 2025. Thanks to the donations raised during the Annual Meeting, we are now only about \$1,000 away from this goal! We hope to keep supporting graduate student attendance through this program, bringing diverse perspectives and extraordinary students to the ASA, CSSA,

and SSSA Annual Meeting every year. If you would like to learn more about the travel grant or donate, please visit: [acs.org/content/graduate/student/travel/scholarship/](https://acs.org/content/graduate/student/travel/scholarship/).

## **Webinars**

Outside of the Annual Meeting, the Graduate Student Committee hosted a fall webinar series. In the first webinar of the series, "Navigating Professional Meetings & Conferences: Planning Ahead for the Annual Meeting," CSSA President Dr. Seth Murray covered how to prepare for and make the most out of attending professional meetings. In the second webinar of the series, "How to Succeed in Grad School and Beyond," Dr. Antonio Faciola from the University of Florida provided valuable tips and practical advice on how to develop fruitful connections, make the most out of mentee–mentor relationships, and how to build skills that lead to success in graduate school. Make sure to follow the ACS Graduate Student Committee on social media for upcoming webinars in 2024 and reach out to us to suggest potential topics!

## **MOVING FORWARD IN 2024**

As my first year serving on the ACS Graduate Student Committee comes to an end, I reflect on all the committee has accomplished and look forward to another year of success in 2024. Firstly, I want to thank the 2023 committee members for their hard work throughout the year and their contributions to making the committee programming a success. I am continuously inspired by my colleagues and peers on the committee, and I am excited to serve my fellow graduate students as the 2024 committee chair. To my predecessor, Maria Teresa Tancredi, thank you for being a phenomenal chair and for the advice you have shared with me as we transition to a new year. I am grateful to have served on the committee with you! To the graduate student members of ASA, CSSA, and SSSA, I will strive to do my utmost for the committee so that we can continue to provide resources to advance graduate student

success!

Moving forward, students can anticipate the continuation of some of our wonderful programs such as the Graduate Student Travel Grant and the Graduate Student Leadership Conference at the Annual Meeting. The committee is also discussing new programming, workshops, and other opportunities for graduate students in 2024. If you would like to provide feedback for the committee or volunteer, feel free to reach out to me at [alazo@purdue.edu](mailto:alazo@purdue.edu)!

—Ariana Lazo

### **CONNECT WITH US!**

If you would like to stay up to date with our committee, learn more about our work, contribute to one of our *CSA News* articles, or suggest activities you would like us to promote, watch your emails, connect with us on Twitter, now called X (@ACSGradStudents), and Facebook (ACS.gradstudents), or visit: [agronomy.org/membership/committees/view/ACS238/members](https://agronomy.org/membership/committees/view/ACS238/members), [crops.org/membership/committees/view/ACS238/members](https://crops.org/membership/committees/view/ACS238/members), or [soils.org/membership/committees/view/ACS238/members](https://soils.org/membership/committees/view/ACS238/members). If you would like to provide further feedback for the committee, take our post Annual Meeting survey: <https://bit.ly/3sUtpDm>.

---

*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.*