

Societies approve diversity, equity, and inclusion plans

By Marilyn L. Warburton, David Clay, Ron Turco

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Over the past year, our Societies have worked to assess the current state of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within our scientific communities. In the January issue of *CSA News* magazine (<https://doi.org/10.1002/csan.20632>), we reported on our DEI Initiative accomplishments. Now, we are looking forward with focused actions based on your feedback. Using survey information, member conversations, and research-based studies from literature, a DEI Initiative Recommendations Report was developed. The ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (ACS 528) submitted the recommendations for consideration, and the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Boards of Directors approved the recommendations on 28 Feb. 2022.

These recommendations are listed in priority order with the first four viewed as most important by members. Many of these recommendations require thoughtful planning and development and will be accomplished through working groups initiated from the DEI Committee. Working groups will be brought online in phases with calls for membership participation following the initial organizational stages for each working group. A brief summary of each recommendation is highlighted below.

Professional Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policies

We are responsible within our Societies for putting into place a structure that ensures members' conduct and interactions are appropriate and respectful and that all members and guests are safe from harassment and addresses situations that may arise. This recommendation will:

- Establish a cross-Society Ethics Committee to review, update conduct policies, and develop investigation and resolution policy guidelines; and
- Establish a Society-wide Ombuds Program ensuring that reporters of harassment are safe and have emotional support (for launch prior to the 2022 Annual Meeting).

Education/Training

Opportunities to meet members' desire to have education and training that increases their DEI competency will be developed through:

- Establishing a working group to develop an education and professional development plan (utilizing the results of the DEI survey) and timeline.

Mentoring

Mentoring is one of the most fundamental assets the Societies can offer members and is crucial for establishing an environment of inclusivity. A robust mentoring program

will be developed beyond current capabilities for a variety of audiences. To accomplish this, we will:

- Establish a working group to review and provide input into a comprehensive mentoring system, including software, communications, management, promotion, and evaluation. Of specific concern is providing mentors for first-time Annual Meeting attendees, recent graduates, and under-represented groups.

Societies' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

Thank you to the committee for advancing our DEI Initiative!

Lisa Durso (chair), Tiffany Carter (vice chair), Augustine Obour (past chair), Tabare Abadie, Peter Ampim, Cam Anderson, Donn Cummings, Samira Daroub, Kenzo Esquivel, Elizabeth Gillispie, Eugene Law, Renae Pablo, K. Raja Reddy, Stella Salvo, Desalegn Serba, Christine Sprunger, Tarah Sullivan, Jordon Wade, Zelia Wiley, Samantha Ying, Martha Zwonitzer, and Susan Chapman (staff liaison).

Support and Collaborations

A top priority is to engage and support under-represented individuals through programs and activities and develop long-term relationships with minority-serving institutions/organizations and diversity advocacy groups. As such, the Societies will:

- Develop a plan for analyzing current programs, formulating a path for developing programs, and collaborating with outside groups/organizations/universities; and
- Liaise with the Agronomic Science Foundation and other funders for financial support.

Leadership, Governance, and Policies

Diversity of thought is imperative as the Societies evolve and adapt to the ongoing changes in our world. To ensure equity, it is crucial that the policies and procedures across all activities be reviewed for unintentional bias, disadvantages, and inequities that may prevent those who are interested in fully participating and engaging with the Societies. This recommendation will establish working groups to:

- Oversee a full review of the Societies' policies and processes, including nominations, election procedures, and candidate selection; committee and reviewer appointments; awards application, selection criteria, and processes; peer-review criteria; and governance;
- Develop and execute a plan for continuous assessments to ensure equity of representation within the leadership of each Society, including divisions, communities, committees, task forces, working groups, editorial boards, certification boards, and boards of directors; and
- Develop and implement training for all Society leaders on how they can positively affect change to ensure a culture of inclusivity.

Communication

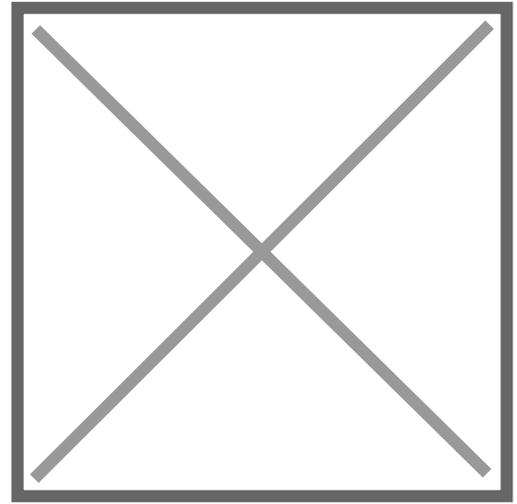
The Societies have established a communications plan that reviews the current platforms, audiences, and opportunities to share our DEI successes and failures with the leadership, membership, scientific community, and public. In all cases, feedback will be requested. Broadly, this recommendation:

- Provides staff with direction to implement the activities outlined in the communications plan; and
- Ensures space for DEI information, on an ongoing basis, through our publications, websites, and other communications that reflects diverse representation and provides for feedback mechanisms.

Measuring Success

Establishing and communicating specific and measurable goals will help guide the Societies forward, assess their direction and improvement, and help members and donors know where the Societies are in their DEI journey. This recommendation will:

- Establish measurable goals and metrics to communicate our progress, and
- Assess the impact of programs and activities, evaluations by program participants, and change in perceptions of DEI in the Societies.



Opportunities to meet members' desire to have education and training that increases their DEI competency will be developed by the Societies.

Ensuring DEI at Staff Level

Diversity, equity, and inclusion runs throughout everything the Societies do, including our staff. Efforts related to DEI will be ensured at a staff level as well, including:

- Establishing a designated DEI staff lead to coordinate with the DEI Committee, leadership, and staff; and
- Developing a review process of policies and procedures in hiring, retaining, and training staff to ensure DEI at the staff level.

Timeline

It is imperative that we prioritize to ensure success given the robust set of recommendations. The full report details the timelines for accomplishing the

components of this significant initiative. It will take tremendous work to implement all of the above recommendations. However, given the energy and commitment of our committee and membership, we believe we will be successful, thus ensuring a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive Societies.

Additional information

View the Recommendations Report, committee roster, provide feedback, and learn more at:

www.agronomy.org/diversity

www.crops.org/diversity

www.soils.org/diversity

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