

President's Report, July, 2008

During the past year, we have continued to promote a “greener future,” as laid out by Past President Chris Haufler in August, 2006. We have continued to interact with other plant societies to pursue programs of mutual concern and interest (for example, PlantingScience with the ASPB and other societies). The theme of this year's meeting is Botany without Borders, and we will again convene a meeting of the Presidents, or other representatives, of all the societies meeting together in Vancouver (plus representatives of other societies that are not meeting with BSA this year). We have also continued our emphasis on career development for our student members, and the Society has benefited from the contributions of student members to both the Bylaws Revision Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee. I have also worked with the International Committee, set in place following the 2006 meeting, to expand our contacts and programs worldwide. Finally, a revision to the Merit Award selection criteria and process has been drafted (discussion begun in summer, 2007).

New themes initiated during the past year emphasize science literacy and expanding participation in science in general and the BSA in particular to include members of underrepresented groups. Highlights follow:

- The BSA's PlantingScience educational program has really taken off during the past year, having obtained grant support, new faculty and student mentors, and many new classroom participants. This program is also drawing participation from other plant scientists outside the BSA, and we have developed partnerships with other societies to support the program.
- A Committee on Underrepresented Groups was established, with the objectives of identifying needs and solutions. To date, the following have been accomplished:
 - A webpage for Women in Science has been established on the BSA website, with profiles of women scientists and resources for women
 - Suggestions for making the annual meetings more “family-friendly” have been discussed with the BSA meetings management team
 - Plans are underway for a roundtable discussion on Women in Science for Botany 2009

Additional key goals for the past year were revision of the BSA bylaws and initial discussions toward the development of a new strategic plan for the BSA.

- The Bylaws Revision Committee (Ed Schneider, Scott Russell, Judy Jernstedt, and Andrew Schwendemann) worked with Janice Dahl of Anchor Management to produce a revised set of bylaws and a document of policies and procedures. The revised bylaws will be discussed further at the meetings, followed by a vote of the membership for approval. Thanks to all for their dedicated service in this important task.
- The Strategic Planning Committee, composed of members and BSA staff (Brent Mishler, Chris Haufler, Gordon Uno, Greg Anderson, Janice Coons, Karl Niklas, Kent Holsinger, Mackenzie Taylor, Muriel Poston, Pam Soltis, Simon Malcomber, Theresa Culley, Bill Dahl, Amy McPherson, Claire Hemingway, Heather Cacanindin, Johanne Storgan, Wanda Lovan, Rob Brandt, Jennifer Potratz, Richard Hund) met in St. Louis on March

30, 2008, to discuss where the BSA would like to be in 5 or 10 years and how to get there. Janice Dahl facilitated the discussion and prepared a draft document summarizing the day's discussion. Further discussion by the Committee will take place in Vancouver.

In recent years, the Past President, President, President Elect, and Executive Director have attended the Council of Scientific Society Presidents meeting in early December in Washington, DC. This meeting provides an opportunity for the Presidents and ED to make plans for the rest of the year and for them to meet with the leadership of many other societies. I was unable to attend the meeting in December, 2007, but was elected to the Board of CSSP for the next year. This position has allowed me to participate with a subset of the CSSP membership in other discussions, some of which are relevant to the BSA. Following the December meeting, the three Presidents and Bill Dahl discussed whether or not the BSA should continue its membership in CSSP and whether or not all of us should continue to attend the December meeting. We decided that both meetings—with the CSSP and with each other—were valuable and worth the expenditures.

In March, I chaired the Spring meeting of the Executive Committee. The following were among the topics discussed, some of which will be explored further at the Council and various committee meetings in Vancouver.

- Should the EC meetings be conducted remotely? This approach would save money and be more “green” than having all members travel to St. Louis. We decided that the rapport that develops in face-to-face meetings is worth the expense of bringing the officers together. Attention should continue to be paid to the environmental impacts and the expense of multiple face-to-face meetings per year. (Note that the CSSP is now starting to make recommendations about how to make a Society's annual meeting as green as possible; this is particularly timely as our staff work to make both our meetings and our administrative offices as green as possible.
- We reviewed the revisions to the bylaws, in preparation for sharing the revisions with the membership at the annual meeting.
- We discussed issues of concern that we wanted to see addressed at the Strategic Planning Committee meeting the following day.
- We discussed the future of the Society and membership issues. Student memberships are up, and we discussed ways to continue to improve our services for students. In particular, we discussed opportunities for training and career development at all levels.
- We endorsed the general philosophy of providing administrative services to other societies, as long as these activities are cost-neutral and do not detract from any of the BSA's projects.
- We rejected a proposal from Springer to take over publication of the *AJB*. Although a generous offer financially, it would have stripped the BSA of many of its roles in managing the journal, such as setting prices/membership, etc.
- The latest progress with PlantingScience was presented. We were all very supportive of this program and the role that it plays, and will play, in improving science literacy. We discussed how the BSA and PlantingScience could help support Broader Impacts activities of NSF projects. Additional input and discussion are needed.

- Support was given for initiatives that make our science and our Society more appealing and more accessible to members of underrepresented groups. Possible future activities include (1) obtaining funds to continue the Undergraduate Mentoring program initiated by Program Director Karen Renzaglia with support from NSF; (2) making the annual meetings more family-friendly (suggested by the Committee on Underrepresented Groups). Additional suggestions will be forthcoming from the Committee.

I look forward to further discussion of these and other issues at the Council and Committee meetings in Vancouver.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela S. Soltis
BSA President