

Note From the BSA President Linda Graham 12-9-2003

Our most recent annual meeting in Mobile was a wonderful occasion to see long-time friends, make new ones, and to learn about progress in many areas of botany. Let me take this opportunity to once again thank everyone who contributed to the meeting; it was in many ways a resounding success!

For me, the Mobile meeting was also an exciting time to plan the coming year's activities with the Executive Council (EC) and BSA Committees. A series of luncheons with new committee chairs, the Membership Committee, and the Education Committee was especially helpful in forging channels of communication critical to new activities. Among these is a membership drive; if you haven't received a copy of the new recruiting poster and cards, just ask and you shall receive them! It's also time to renew your membership, if you have not already done so. It is quick and easy to do electronically; if you have questions just contact Wanda Lovan at [wlovan@botany.org](mailto:wlovan@botany.org).

Another initiative stemming from our work in Mobile is the move to establish the Bessey Award as a society-wide teaching award, to be given for the first time in this context at our meeting in Snowbird. Information about this award and nomination process (and for other BSA awards) is available on our website at: <http://www.botany.org/newsite/awards/>.

Our BSA Committees are the engines of our society's progress; their work is greatly appreciated! I have notified all committee chairs regarding membership of their committees for the upcoming year, suggested goals for the year's activities, and requested committee reports by early spring. These reports will be very useful during the Executive Council's early April, 2004 meeting. Committee memberships are listed on the BSA website. If you are interested in serving on a BSA committee, please let our Committee on Committees know; they will be delighted to hear from you.

We have also finished establishing a Centennial Planning Committee to celebrate our Centennial in 2006. The Planning Committee, chaired by Jack Horner [hth@iastate.edu](mailto:hth@iastate.edu), encourages all BSA members to submit ideas for the celebration, both at the 2006 Annual Meeting and during the centennial year. One likely Centennial project is a written history of the society. Toward this goal we have been trying to assemble all of the society's archives at BSA offices in St. Louis. We are very grateful to Jim Mauseth

for finding and sending records that had been stored at the University of Texas. If you know of other possible caches of BSA past records, please let our Executive Director Bill Dahl know.

In response to a call from University of Iowa faculty for support of their position that the herbarium should be retained, I sent a supporting email to the U of I President (and signed the online petition). In the service of helping members endeavoring to prevent other such erosion of plant and environmental science resources, we draw your attention to a letter from the President of the National Academy of Sciences published in the Nov. 28 issue of Science, page 1504. In this letter, the NAS President decries the use of the report Bio2010 "Undergraduate Education for Future Research Biologists" by some administrators (and some educators) to justify "diminution--or even the elimination--of ecology, population and evolutionary biology, and other nonmedical subject areas in undergraduate life sciences programs and curricula." He states that such is an inappropriate response to the report's conclusions, and that in contrast, the best preparation is a broadly-based education in biology (including plant biology).

In mid-November, a small group of present and past EC members met in St. Louis to perform an annual review of our office and Executive Director. We are very grateful for the very useful responses solicited from committee and section chairs and others, and are pleased to report a very positive outcome from all perspectives. We are fortunate to have such an energetic and talented office staff and leadership and I wish to take this opportunity to thank them for their excellent work. If you are planning to visit the Gardens, take a bit of time to stop by the BSA office to greet Bill and Wanda.

One outcome of our November meeting in St. Louis was a staff recommendation to purchase a society membership at the Missouri Botanical Gardens, in an amount commensurate with its generous provisions to our Executive Office, which is located in MBG space. The Executive Council has unanimously voted to go ahead with the MBG membership, which will help solidify the mutualistic aspects of BSA's symbiotic relationship with the Gardens.

With the fall comes our end-of-fiscal year accounting statements; the membership will be pleased to know that the society's accounts remain positive in spite of a shortfall in revenue (primarily due to relatively low attendance) associated with the annual meeting in Mobile. As you may

know, the Meetings Staff has recently conducted and reported on the results of a member-survey to determine what aspects of meetings are most important to you. We intend to use your responses to plan meetings that best meet your needs and that yield maximal attendance.

In late November, Executive Director Bill Dahl and I attended the fall meeting of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents, a group to which the BSA subscribes. Bill and I met the current Presidents, President-elects, and some Executive Directors of several societies having mutual interests. We were especially happy to meet leaders of several education groups, as we were able to discuss some ideas for BSA educational initiatives with them. We heard several experts speak about building society membership and society management. We learned about the cost implications of journal publishing innovations, heard speakers from NSF and other organizations, and brought home a useful mountain of printed information. This experience highlighted our society's need for an increased public policy presence. If you have ideas about how to achieve this, please don't hesitate to contact Bill Dahl or me.

My best wishes for a happy semester break and holiday season.

Sincerely  
Linda Graham