

BSA Board Meeting MINUTES
July 22, 2023, in-person at Botany23, Boise ID
5:00pm-8:00pm Mountain

Who attended: Vivian Negron-Ortiz, Jenny Xiang, Melanie Link-Perez, Michael , Eli Hartung, Josh Felton, Jennifer Hartley, Amy McPherson, Emily Sessa, Norm Wickett, Beth Parada, Rich Hund, Amelia Neely, Tricia Jackson, Brenda Molano-Flores, Jenny Cruse-Sanders, Catrina , Rachel Jabaily, Heather Cacanindin, Rob Brandt, Batabile Mothembu (Ombuds), Ioana (zoom), Allison Miller, Chelsea Specht, Karolina Heyduk.

Meeting called to order – started with introductions

Meeting ombudsperson was introduced and provided a brief overview of the conflict resolution process.

Minutes approval

Motion to approve: Emily. Second: Rachel. Minutes are approved.

Wiley report – Gillian Greenough from Wiley was not present, so the report was discussed briefly by Emily and Amy. A suggestion was made to have Gillian to join the next board meeting.

Business office report – Heather. The business report was discussed, with an emphasis on the positive trajectory of the investment account. Conference registration was strong, and the new abstract submission (plus!) system worked well in its initial run. Efforts to broaden participation were discussed as well. The ability to provide large graduate student research award was applauded.

Staff reports –

IT report – Rob. The need to build an archive of botany conference data was discussed. X-CD (new conference registration/abstract system) can provide this, but the costs will increase linearly with the number of years of conferences (\$1k per year to archive each year). Producing some sort of archive “in-house” was brought up. Interest in having access to videos from virtual talks was discussed. Videos from the previous Pathable platform were downloaded, but a user-friendly way to access them is not in place and is a server-load issue. It was emphasized that having talk authors provide consent for talks to be uploaded is necessary.

Publications update – Emily. The way that AI might change the publication landscape was briefly discussed. The possibility of putting together an ad hoc committee to discuss the approach to this issue was brought up and will likely happen. The board discussed including the Education committee in this (and possibly having a Botany360) was brought up, but it's likely a large enough issue that individual groups (e.g. Publications, Education) should work on this separately. Pam Diggle is in her 9th year as EIC of AJB and will be stepping down so a new search will be initiated relatively soon.

Education update – Rachel. The state botanical references of the BSA website should be updated and the board discussed beginning this process. It was brought up that the

Society of Herbarium Curators would be a good collaborator for this. An update on the Planting Science program was provided, with an emphasis on the need for new mentors and the need to spread the word about the program.

Membership and communications update – Membership is strong, but BSA still needs to recruit new members, keep students involved, and reach out to lapsed members. Renewal of professional members is not an issue, but new professional memberships are not growing at a sufficient pace. An ad hoc committee to assess how to address this issue was proposed. The demographics of lapsed memberships (i.e., is this mainly people who have retired?) and the conversion of student members to professional members was also discussed and this is one reason why a committee is needed to figure these things out. Professional but non-academic membership was brought up, particularly in light of what the society and conference offer these members – one of these things is Botany360, but these are accessible to anyone. It was proposed that a new board position be created that directly serves professional non-academic members. We discussed whether there can be an automatic renewal system, but this poses accounting problems (keeping cards on file etc.) and requires more staff than BSA has. Are there ways to collaborate with other societies to offer joint memberships, but the accounting aspect of this also poses a challenge. There may be an opportunity to work with botanic gardens to tap into the non-academic sphere.

Membership recommendations for approval – The long duration since the last student increase was brought up (no increase since 2008), as was a proposed small increase (\$5). Gift memberships will be doubled in price. The feedback on the student increase from student reps was discussed, as well as what the actual net gain would be with the increase (i.e. would we lose student members and there would then be no net increase in revenue). The need to increase dues across the board was discussed, particularly relative to maintaining liquid reserves. It was suggested that the increase for students be deferred until later in the Fall, and advertise that students can “lock in” to the previous rate before that time (i.e., a “grace period”). The student increase was discussed at length.

Language should be modified to include the September grace period.

Motion to approve to \$5 increase to student memberships and the increase to gift memberships by Emily. Second: Chelsea. Approved.

Financial report

The report started with a discussion of how BSA manages its budget, with an emphasis on the strengths and oversight of the BSA staff and various board members. The board also discussed the need to draw from the investment account in order to maintain the \$400k in liquid reserves as mandated by Society policy. The reduced revenue from the new Wiley contract was also discussed.

FY2023 Profit and Loss – income and expenses are as expected

FY2023 Budget to Actual – no discussion

Investment committee report – the current balance and distribution of investments was discussed

FY2024 Draft budget for approval – the need to draw from the investment account was again discussed here. This is one of the big changes from previous budgets. Cutting

costs (e.g., staff travel to meetings, eliminating in-person board meetings) was done to ensure that the smallest draw possible would be taken.

Motion to approve the FY2024 budget as presented: Jenny CS Second: Rachel (for 990 too). Approved.

BSA 990 Tax return for approval – The point of the 990 was discussed
Approved.

Finance committee report – (oral report). The financial advisory committee would like to see more details about the contract with Wiley. They would also like to get more information (a “cost-benefit analysis”) about the financial implications of different conference types (hybrid, virtual, in-person).

Development committee report – Jenny CS. The need to communicate to investors/donors how money is being used was discussed, particularly in terms of emphasizing how members should be communicating how important donations are. Donations are primarily focused on supporting student research. The need for unrestricted donations was emphasized. Members should share stories of how BSA has supported students or professional members in the past.

Conference update – Melanie. Costs and potential revenue were discussed. The benefits of the XCD system, particularly in how it combines multiple functions was communicated, despite some of the shortcomings. Lessons learned from Alaska in how a hybrid meeting can be successful are being put in place, e.g., having a dedicated student technology assistant in every session. There are 950 people present at the meeting; less than 100 people have uploaded talks as of the business meeting. 1041 attendees total; 32% grad students; 53 countries represented; 850 presentations. A decision on whether Grand Rapids will be a hybrid meeting will wait until the fall, as there is a need to find out what happens with the finances of Boise. The potential increase in costs associated with holding meetings in states without discriminatory laws was also discussed. There is the possibility of having some stand-alone virtual meetings or plenary sessions as virtual-only.

DEI report – Specht started with a discussion of how the committee has lost some momentum, but that the members should be engaging more with specific projects, e.g. Root and Shoot, Indigenous Voices, Belonging in Botany, PLANTS. The way the committee selects/recruits a speaker for the Belonging in Botany speaker was discussed. There was also a discussion of how the committee approaches the Impact award. There was an emphasis on how the many ideas *emerge* from the committee but aren't *taken up* by the committee. Progress on inviting a speaker was discussed. Conversations about how the invited speakers might engage with BSA (e.g., facilitating the publication of an article in AJB) were also mentioned.

BSA Policy and procedures adjustment (desk review) – The current status of adjustments made in response to the desk review was summarized. Much of the concern is centered on issues with a small organization – e.g., having redundancy of roles. Other issues discussed were focused on clear language, e.g., that specifies which roles can do which functions, including who can serve as a PI on an award to the BSA. It was suggested that the board considers including ethical guidelines for PIs in the future, and this should be discussed at an upcoming meeting.

Motion to approve the new language in the policies and procedures document: Chelsea; Second: Melanie. Approved.

International botanical congress update – A brief summary of IBC 2024 (Madrid) was provided. The previous NSF awards that BSA received to provide travel money to Early Career Researchers are no longer available, so there has been some discussion in how to create a framework of workshops that might be applicable for NSF funding, which could then include some participant support. Since this would have to go to NSF sometime in the fall, it would have to be < \$100,000 so it doesn't go out for review. Previous awards were in the same range and could fund ~30 participants but it's possible that this number would have to be reduced due to increased travel costs.

Corresponding member recommendation – The nominee for the corresponding member this year was discussed.

Motion to approve Gonzalo Nieto Feliner as Corresponding Member: Vivian; Second: Allison. Approved.

Student report – A summary of student membership and participation at meetings and events was provided. Activities outside of the conference, including a Botany360 event on being a BSA student rep or making the most out of the student conference, publishing in the PSB, and engagement with various committees were also summarized.

Nominations/election reform – There was a brief summary of the reports from the capstone project on election reforms. It was suggested that this discussion be continued later due to the magnitude of the issue and time left in the meeting.

Election reform capstone report
Election reform capstone powerpoint
Capstone report feedback

Climate change working group update – The progress towards putting together a working group and how the committee will be composed was presented, with an emphasis on having global members.

Update on having a joint meeting with the Mexican botanical society – The possibility of having such a meeting was proposed and brought to the attention of the board. Adding a question to the post-Botany survey about this meeting was proposed.

It was proposed that updating the professional ethics standards in the next year is important as the guidelines haven't been updated since 1997.

Motion to move into executive session; Brenda; Second: Rachel; to discuss ongoing issues with the Botany and Beyond grant.

Motion to exit executive session: Emily; Second: Brenda.