

# Spring 2020: Student Representatives Board Report

## Botanical Society of America

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## I. STUDENT MEMBERSHIP

### 1. Overview

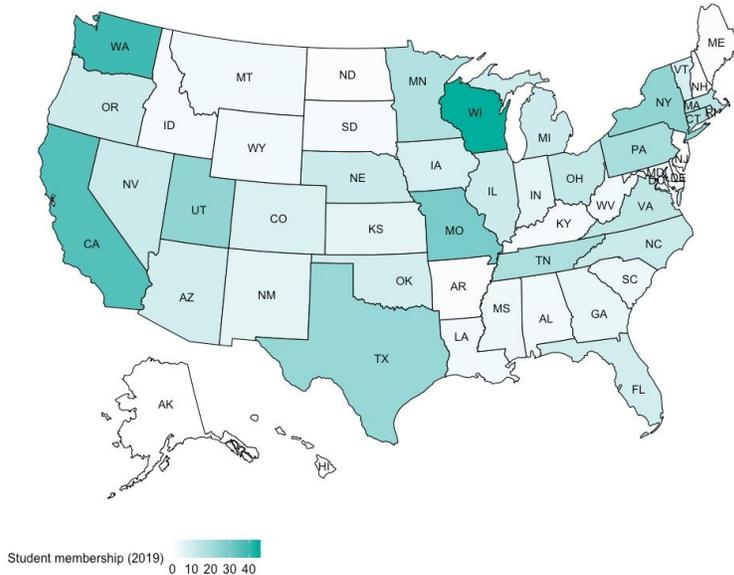
2019 has been a very good year for the BSA student body! Up to Dec. 2019, we have 808 registered student members (692 regular, 94 3-year membership, 22 student chapters), which is a huge increase compared to the previous three years: 643 in 2018, 630 in 2017, and 751 in 2016.

Our current student members are from 37 countries, and 705 (87.3%) are from the United States. The non-US countries contributed to our student body significantly include Canada (14; 1.7%), China (13; 1.6%), and Mexico (8; 1%). **This suggests that the BSA as an international society still has room for improvement for attracting non-US memberships, and actively reaching out to non-US institutions/organizations and collaborations with other local botanical societies might help the non-US memberships to grow.**

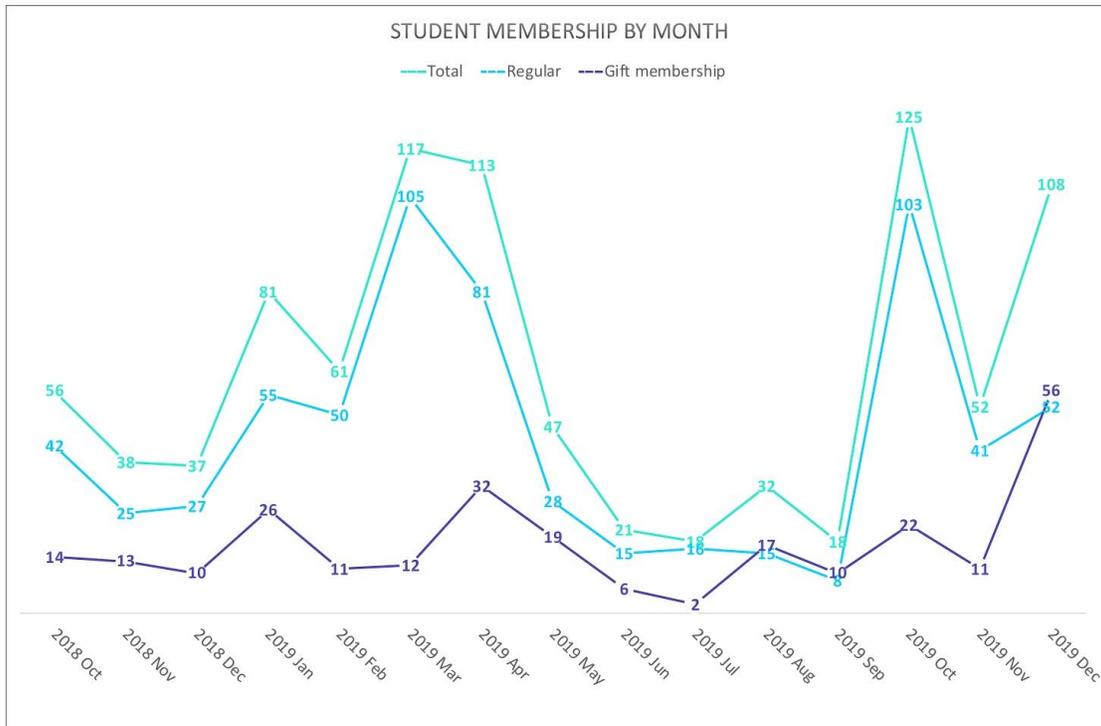
We do recognize that international travel to Botany conferences can be very expensive and BSA only has a limited amount of funding to support student travel, and normally a student might not want to join or renew membership if he/she cannot come to the conference. However, **we can still provide benefits and support to our student members during non-conference seasons to make them feel it is still worth it to retain a membership** even if they cannot go to the

conference that year. This can be achieved by active engagement of BSA social media accounts and renewal of botany.org to provide more relevant information, for instance.

Among all the students that registered membership from the US, a rough overview of number of students by state is shown below:



## 2. New members



We want to highlight the incredible increase in student membership in 2019: **378 new members, which is 47% of the total student membership.** The BSA membership report found

that students joined BSA for conference participation, to connect with peers/networking, from a gift membership or recommendation, and for the purpose of publishing or applying for awards. A closer look at the membership by month is shown above, and we want to highlight a few features of this graph:

- *Regular membership spike in Mar/Apr:* This is the time that many award applications were open. However, although the registration counts always increases during Mar/Apr, we think the spike in 2019 is also due to the increased number of awards that are offered by BSA.
- *Regular membership spike in Oct:* Interestingly, the underlying cause for the spikes in regular membership in Mar/Apr and Oct are **different**: among the membership spike in Mar/Apr, the ratio between regular membership renewal to new membership is roughly 1:1, **but in Oct., 98 out of the 103 regular members (95%) are new**. Looking back to what has happened in Sept./Oct. that might have promoted the increase in Oct., we suspect it is due to the announcement of the free registration to Botany 2020 has reached a wide audience. **If this hypothesis is true, this would be very comforting news since we know that such a strategy for membership registration is working well, and our BSA newsletters do make an influence.**
- *Gift membership spike in Apr:* We suspect this is due to the fact that professional members were registering for the conference during this time and accepted the option of giving gift membership to their students.
- *Gift membership spike in Dec:* We think this is due to professional members being actively approached by BSA and give gift memberships in the “giving season”.

### 3. Make our student members stay

In addition to attracting new student members, we want to also emphasize on making them become members who will actively engage in the society and keep renewing their membership. We hope to aid the retention of students through the following:

- Inviting newsletter and PSB contributions from students.
  - Offering student members exclusive opportunities to contribute or interact with BSA may increase membership. Of the 17 students who applied for social media liaison 13 (or 76%) had joined BSA within the last 9 months.
- Promotion of Student Chapters.
  - 10 new chapters since 2018
  - On the Botany website, we plan to add club activity examples and advice from active student chapters.
- Continued interaction with BSA student members via social media.

## II. BOTANY 2019 RECAP

Botany 2019 was a great success for all the student events and students consisted **40.7%** of all conference participants! Among the 497 students who went to Botany 2019, 290

(58.4%) were graduate students, 151 (30.4%) were undergraduate students, and 33 (6.6%) belonged to a student chapter. A brief summary of all the student-based events are listed here:

- Workshop: Professional Writing - covering personal statement, research statement, and teaching statements. 29 registered, and 19 actual participants.
- Undergraduate reception & student social: all tickets sold out and 153 students came!
- Careers in Botany luncheon - 78 participants! Keynote speaker Betsy Arnold (professor at University of Arizona). Including the keynote speaker, we have invited 14 panelists for the luncheon at various career stages and working in various fields, **including government, private sector, junior/senior faculty from R1 university, junior/senior faculty from PUI and liberal art's college, k12 education, post-doctoral researcher, journal editor, researcher at herbarium and botanical gardens.** This diverse set of panelists exposed all the participants to many different career options, and the luncheon got almost all positive feedback from students.
- CV reviewing session (new): got very good feedback from both students who signed up and the volunteer reviewers. We had 10 reviewers and opened 40 signed slots for students. All the sign up spots got filled very quickly and students demanded more slots for the coming years during the conference.

### III. LOOKING FORWARD - BOTANY 2020

#### 1. A brief list of planned student events at Botany 2020:

- Workshop: Time Management and Career Planning  
Speakers include: J. Chris Pires, Karolina Heyduk and Lena Struwe.
- Undergraduate reception.  
**REQUEST: We would like 10 tickets to give away to undergraduate students for the Botany Career Luncheon.**
- Student social
- Careers in botany luncheon  
Currently the potential keynote speaker is Saharah Moon Chapotin, who is the director of the US Botanical Garden. We plan to invite a diverse set of panelists to the luncheon like last year.
- CV reviewing sessions  
We might consider increasing the number of concurrent sessions due to the large demand from Botany 2019. We will also think about a better pairing strategy between students to the reviewers. Last year was blind sign up based on availability of the reviewers, but this year we should act early and consider to match the reviewer's expertise and the student's desired career paths.
- Social media booth (**new**)  
In conjunction with the BSA social media liaisons, we will be hosting a booth in the exhibition hall to showcase the social media/sci-comm efforts from BSA members.

## 2. Options of supporting for student travel

While having a conference in Anchorage will be an amazing experience, it is very expensive to travel there as well. We would like to have BSA to support students' travel to conferences as much as we can. Besides all the available travel awards, **we would like to request the society to allocate some additional funding** for this purpose as well. Heather has suggested us about the lottery system that SSE has for students and postdocs for a few years, and **we request the board to implement this system for Botany 2020 as well:**

**PROPOSAL:** 10 \$500 lottery, or 15 \$300 lottery, to support students and postdocs to travel to Botany 2020.

*Description of the travel award from SSE for reference:* "Student and postdoc members of the BSA can request to be considered for the travel award. To be eligible, they must present a talk or poster and must not have received the travel award in the previous year. Postdocs must also be fewer than 6 years post-PhD without a permanent position. Recipients will be randomly selected from the list of applicants and all applicants will be informed of the outcome by email by May 15th at the latest. Society membership status will be verified prior to awards being given so please ensure your membership is up to date. Funds are given out at the conference."

In addition, to better understand how our students acquire funding to come to Botany meetings, **we request to add relevant questions in our future membership surveys.** For example:

- Were you awarded any external funds to attend the annual meeting?
- Was cost a limiting factor for attending the annual meeting?

## IV. OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

### 1. Social media

Post Botany 2019, the single most major thing we did is to help to find the BSA social media liaison. We participated in drafting job description, screening through candidates, two rounds of interviews. We have also continued to work with the Social Media Liaisons to compile a list of sci-comm/social media influencers who are also BSA members.

### 2. Website

We also started to reorganize the student page of botany.org.

### 3. PSB Spring

We compiled more than 50 grants/internships/workshops in the PSB spring issue. It will be nice to have a good distribution of PSB because we feel it's a very good resource for students who are looking for funding opportunities.