

Annual report of the BSA Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI Committee)
July 2022

Committee members 2020-2021

Chelsea Specht, Chair (2023)
Adriana Hernandez, GSR (2022)
Charles Bush, USR (2023)
Manya Singh, GSR (2023)
Janelle Burke (2023)
Keri Maricle (2023)
Madhav Nepal (2023)
Kadeem Gilbert (2023)
R. Shawn Abrahams (2024)
Ana Almeida (2024)
Rocio Deanna (2024)
Gretchen North (2024)
Adam Ramsey (2024)

Ex Officio members

Anna Monfils (PI, Botany and Beyond)
Melanie Link Perez, Program Director
Michael Donoghue, President, ex officio
Heather Cacanindin, Executive Director, ex officio
Catrina Adams, ex officio BSA Director of Education
Sarah Sims, ex officio Diversity Programs Outreach Coordinator

Recent History:

The Botanical Society of America has had a committee dedicated to broadening participation in botany and the BSA for over a decade, the Human Diversity Committee. Given events surrounding the murder of George Floyd and the associated societal awakening of 2020 combined with disparities brought to light by the pandemic (2020-2022), the focus of this committee was expanded to issues of social justice and creating an inclusive culture within our society and at our annual meeting and the name was changed to the DEI Committee.

In 2022, we had several virtual meetings of the full committee and attended to other business via email communication. We are working toward planning a series of awareness and training in antiracism, responding to racism and bias, dialoging across differences, allyship, the myth of the meritocracy, and other aspects of career development to support the advancement of BSA as a multicultural and antiracist community. The goal is to incorporate these activities into a broad and effective strategic plan that centers our goal to function as an antiracist society and centers the needs of the most marginalized members of our community. We are doing this work in collaboration with the ROOT&SHOOT (R&S) Research Coordination Network funded by NSF. More details are included below.

We are very excited by the recent hire of Sarah Sims as Diversity Programs and Outreach Coordinator and very much look forward to working with her over the upcoming year.

Belonging in Botany Lecture:

BSA has sponsored and organized a Diversity Lecture at our conference for the past decade. As recommended by the Human Diversity committee in 2020, the “Diversity Lunch” format was changed so

that attending the lecture is not tied to the cost of seating. For Virtual Botany2021, the name of the lecture was changed (by vote of the committee) to the “Belonging in Botany: perspectives on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Lecture” and will be followed by a general discussion about diversity, equity, inclusion and access. This lecture will be live at Botany2022.

The 2022 speaker is Dr. Jessica Hernandez, who was the universal top choice of the committee. Dr. Hernandez (Binnizá & Maya Ch’orti’) is an indigenous scholar, scientist and community advocate currently based in the Pacific Northwest. Her book “Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science (2022) is highly acclaimed for breaking down why western conservation practices aren’t working and offers indigenous models that center the voices of Latin American women and land protectors. She is currently an NSF postdoctoral fellow in the Division of Physical Sciences at the University of Washington, Bothell. Her talk is titled “Beyond Belonging: Healing Indigenous Landscapes” and will be presented on Tuesday (26th) at 11am.

For the process this year, Committee members each nominated speakers and provided a short bio for their nominees. Voting was done with a survey that allowed members to select their top two candidates of the 8 presented. The following nominees were also considered:

Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith: <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/maori/linda-tuhiwai-smith> - for her highly influential work on research and indigenous peoples, namely her book "Decolonizing Methodologies" which delves into how scientific research is implicated in colonialism and how we can change systems and reframe perspectives to be inclusive of all knowledge.

Dr. Sarah L. Rodriguez: <https://rodriguezsarah.weebly.com/latinas-in-stem.html> & <http://faculty.tamuc.edu/Sarah%20Rodriguez/> - for her research on Latina experiences in STEM and the importance of identity; equity, access, and retention issues for underrepresented students in the educational pipeline

Dr. Marjorie Weber (<http://www.theweberlab.com/>) Early career evolutionary ecologist doing very interesting research on plant-animal interactions, and she has also spearheaded Project Biodiversify, "an online repository of teaching tools to promote diversity, inclusion, and belonging in STEM classrooms": <https://projectbiodiversify.org/>

Dr. Clif Poodry: <https://ethicscenter.csl.illinois.edu/people/clifton-a-poodry/>

Dr. Poodry is currently a Courtesy Professor at the University of Oregon where he participates in the instruction of an ethics course for graduate students. As NSF rotating Program Director, Poodry developed the minority supplement initiative that was copied widely at NSF and later at NIH. He was the Director of the Training, Workforce Development and Diversity Division at the National Institute for General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), NIH, where he was responsible for developing and implementing NIGMS policies and plans for research training programs and capacity building programs that reflect NIGMS’ long-standing commitment to research training and the development of a highly capable, diverse biomedical and behavioral research workforce. At NIH he developed the Institutional Research and Academic Career Development Award (IRACDA) in which postdocs, as part of mentored training, teach at minority serving institutions. He also developed the Native American Research Centers for Health program in collaboration with the Indian Health Service. As a Senior Fellow in the Science Education Department at HHMI he led the Gilliam Fellowship Program and an experiment for adoption/adaptation of the UMBC Meyerhoff Program. Dr. Poodry is a native of the Tonawanda Seneca

Indian Reservation in Western New York. He has served on the advisory boards of both AISES and SACNAS

From Ann: Clif Poodry was scheduled to be one of the speakers in an earlier BSA Broadening Participation symposium but had to cancel at the last minute due to medical issues. He worked for many years at HHMI to promote the training of underrepresented students in STEM in all disciplines. He has since retired.

Dr. Terrell Morton: <https://education.missouri.edu/person/terrell-morton/> - Assistant Professor of Identity and Justice in STEM Education at the University of Missouri. Dr. Morton identifies as a Scholar-Activist. His research and work focus on identity as it informs the persistence and engagement of racialized and minoritized students in STEM postsecondary education. He draws from critical race theory, phenomenology, and human development to ascertain Black students' consciousness and how it manifests in their various embodiments and actions that facilitate their STEM postsecondary engagements. Dr. Morton works to transform the positioning and understanding of Blackness in mainstream education, specifically STEM; seeking justice and joy for Black women, Black students, and other minoritized individuals given the social-cultural-political-historical positioning of their identities. He advocates for identity, justice, and joy to be fundamental for education. He also works to transform STEM learning environments, creating spaces that are recognized and understood as extensions of students' identity rather than sites of oppression that perpetuate hostility and exclusion. *Dr. Morton gave a very inspirational SABER webinar this past fall to an audience of 900 and it generated lots of conversation and dialog between Dr. Morton and the attendees.*

Dr. Kimberly Tallbear: <https://apps.ualberta.ca/directory/person/tallbear#Overview>

Dr. Kim TallBear is the Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples, Technoscience, and Society; and Professor of Native Studies at the University of Alberta. [She is also the author of Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science \(2013\)](#). Dr. TallBear studies colonial disruptions to Indigenous governance, kinship, and sexual relations. She is a regular panelist on the Media Indigena podcast and a citizen of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate.

Dr. Julie Posselt: <https://pullias.usc.edu/julie/> - associate professor of higher education in the USC Rossier School of Education and was a 2015-2017 National Academy of Education/ Spencer Foundation postdoctoral research fellow. Rooted in sociological and organizational theory, her research program examines institutionalized inequalities in higher education and organizational efforts aimed at reducing inequities and encouraging diversity. She focuses on selective sectors of higher education— graduate education, STEM fields, and elite undergraduate institutions—where longstanding practices and cultural norms are being negotiated to better identify talent and educate students in a changing society. Her books include *Equity and Inclusion in Graduate Education* and *FIELD: Fieldwork Inspiring Expanded Leadership in Diversity*.

BSA Impact Award (the new DEI award):

This year this committee completed the process of establishing a new award to specifically recognize colleagues for their contributions to Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. The award is now one of the annual BSA awards presented at the Annual Conference (<https://awards.botany.org/awards/award/2022-bsa-impact-award>). Committee members Madhav Nepal, Adam Ramsey and Shawn Abrahams formed a sub-committee to define the criteria (junior v. senior? Career v. one-time innovation?) and establish the means of recognition for the award, with the idea that we wanted the winner to be able to showcase

their work and for the award to support the elevation of their voice without creating a tax (e.g. be asked to give a DEI-focused talk). The selection was done this year but the entire DEI committee, however there may be a subcommittee focused on this award in future years. The winner will be invited to serve on the selection committee in future years.

The Botanical Society of America *Impact* Award recognizes a BSA member or group of members who have significantly contributed to advancing diversity, accessibility, equity, and/or inclusion in botanical scholarship, research and education. This award aims to honor an individual, group, and/or institution for their impactful work that demonstrates a commitment to building a more diverse and inclusive community of engaged scholars. This can include, but is not limited to, influencing practices and policies and/or increasing access to knowledge and resources through research, teaching or outreach.

The *Impact* Award will be presented at the BSA's Award Ceremony during the Society's Annual meeting. The recognition also includes a plaque and award of \$1000. BSA members are encouraged to self-nominate or nominate another BSA member or external group affiliated with the Society. **Nominations are due May 15th, 2022.**

The award recipient or group will be invited to share insights into the contributions/accomplishments leading to their *Impact* with the botanical community. BSA will work with the award recipient to determine the best mechanism and to provide logistic and organizational support; some examples are a recorded and published video interview, a written profile in the Plant Science Bulletin, hosting an online discussion session, or presenting a seminar during the annual conference or as an advertised Botany360 webinar. The BSA DEI committee looks forward to working with the award winner to developing an event that centers their *Impact*.

Eligibility

- Nominee must be a BSA member or affiliated tangentially with the Society or affiliated with botanical research or education
- Nominations can be at any career stage or botanically-affiliated career. Nominations from early career scientists as well from students are also welcome.
- Can be an individual or group nomination
- Self-nominations are welcomed
- Nominations must come from a BSA member

Changes to Practices and Procedures:

Inclusive Representation in Leadership:

We continued monitoring the results of our work in overhauling the process for nominations and selection to committees. DEI Committee member Gretchen North served on the Committee on Committees to oversee the process and ensure best practices, and also identify if there are any challenges that the committee could work to overcome throughout the nomination process. Dr. North reported back to the DEI Committee that the nomination process was effective in reaching a broad and diverse pool of candidates, and that procedures followed during the selection process were intentional in centering contributions to diversity and considering inclusion and career development in leadership positions. During the selection process, individuals were considered for their career stage (inclusion of early career in leadership positions), career trajectory (inclusion of PUI, MSIs, and government

institutions) and matching the goals of the individual to the committee service. The DEI committee reviewed the slate of candidates put forward, and was encouraged by the compositional diversity and the how these candidates contribute to diversity in our leadership.

The Election Committee also worked with the chair of the DEI committee to ensure best practices in selecting nominations to run for elected BSA positions. Elected positions this year included President-elect, Treasurer, At-Large Director for Publications, and BSA board Student Representative. I'd like to see greater participation of the DEI committee in nominating individuals to run for positions and in bringing those names forward to the Nominations Committee. Last year I proposed to form a task force but it never materialized. This coming year, I would like **to form a task force on Nominations (2 members plus one student member) and hold a special meeting next year in January to discuss names and forward those to the Nominations Committee by Feb 1.** We will also research and discuss the possibility of having more than 2 names on the ballot as a mechanism by which to increase voter turnout, and using ranked voting as a more equitable form of elevating voices.

Symposia and Conference Speakers:

The 2021 committee emphasized the need to consider the diversity represented by the speakers at the annual Botany Conference as a factor to be considered in approval for symposia and colloquia. We continued to include language in the call that encouraged proposals to include speakers at a diversity of career stages, from a broad set of academic and research institutions, and to consider balance and representation in gender and racial identities. We will continue to prioritize symposia and colloquia that incorporate diverse voices, and are looking for ways to **incentivize symposia and colloquia that explicitly center topics that build on diverse perspectives in all aspects of our science (research, teaching, education, communication).** Examples of proposed symposia and colloquia that support these goals and were selected for funding this year are:

- Black Botanical Legacy: Fostering a Community of Equity in Botanical Sciences
- Tackling coloniality in plant sciences: Legacies and paths forward

Demographic Data Collection and Assessment:

The collection of demographic data was a major point of consideration for 2020-2021: BSA has been collecting demographic data from our members for the past 5 years, but now with more intentionality in the questions asked and how the data will be used. These data will be used to understand who we are, who attends our meeting, who we elevate to leadership positions, who we fund with our research grants, and who we honor with our awards. As part of the R&S consortium, BSA will work with the expert committee to develop mechanisms for analyzing membership data and use this to best support our efforts in building belonging and inclusivity into our culture.

Affinity Groups:

This past year we discussed the formation of affinity groups that BSA can support by centering communities and needs through priorities for funding, networking, collaborations and career development. For Botany2022 we have provided funding to affinity groups interested in hosting social gatherings and providing them support to organize those gatherings in a format that creates the community and impact they desire. The affinity groups self-organize. Over the next year, the DEI Committee is interested in finding ways to elevate the voices of these affinity groups such that any concerns, ideas, suggestions might be addressed such that the goals of these groups are represented in all society activities and actions. This is particularly important for groups that have limited

representation. The Indigenous Voices and R&S initiatives are both working to address the participation of marginalized voices within BSA and will work through the DEI Committee.

Botany and Beyond:

In 2021, a few DEI Committee members (Ann Sakai, Anna Monfils, Muriel Poston) along with BSA staff Catrina Adams and Heather Cacanindin were involved in crafting a new NSF grant proposal entitled PLANTS III: Botany and Beyond for \$1.2 million which includes the PLANTS III pathway program. Sarah Sims was recently hired to help coordinate the diversity and outreach programming that goes along with PLANTS III, Botany and Beyond, and R&S. Through this programming, we aim to link the DEI committee's efforts with Botany360 during the coming year.

NSF- LEAPS:

Over the past year, BSA members have been heavily engaged in the following funded proposals:

RCN: LEAPS: Rooting Out Oppression Together & SHaring Our Outcomes Transparently (ROOT&SHOOT), will build a collaborative network of plant science and partner organizations aimed at seeding and cultivating cultural change towards an inclusive, equitable, scientific future. We will develop and propagate tools for cultivating a sustainable sense of shared belonging and removing oppression from individuals with identities that are historically and currently marginalized (based on gender, gender identity, disability status, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or race). Although each RCN Participant Organization has begun this work, we lack the coordination and resources needed to exert meaningful change; both are essential to achieve lasting impacts and reshape the plant science community. Our goal is to support plant science organizations as they evolve to become truly equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist (ROOT) and through doing so provide evidence, advice, and guides so that others can learn from our experiences (SHOOT).

Chelsea Specht and Catrina Adams serve on the Steering Committee (SC) for Root&Shoot (R&S). The SC meets monthly for 1 -2 hours and has established best practices for engagement and democratic voting, creating an environment in which progressive growth can take place. Both BSA representatives served on the committee responsible for selecting and hiring the Consultants who are now working with the SC and society leaders (list: appendix 1) to build awareness and competency in social justice through targeted training. Once this group completes the training, we will extend this training to additional leaders and members of BSA through member-led workshops and training events.

We have sent out a call for BSA members to become engaged in an Equitable Conferences Working Group and hope that several BSA members will volunteer. This working group will develop community agreements for conferences and participants that outline principles and standards that support equity and inclusiveness, provide recommendations for a transparent site selection process that considers safety and inclusion, provide guidelines for practices that improve accessibility, and generate guidelines for inclusive selection of speakers and equitable programming.

Together with Mary Williams, I am hoping to identify several volunteers who will help facilitate a self-assembling Learning Community for BSA members. The application form will be available prior to Botany2022 and the LC will be advertised as part of the R&S booth at Botany2022. This will dovetail with Botany360 activities.

RCN: LEAPS: Culture Change for Inclusion of Indigenous Voices in Biology

AISES proposes a four-year project, *Culture Change for Inclusion of Indigenous Voices in Biology*, referred to as *Indigenous Voices*, to drive organizational culture change among biology professional societies to transform how Indigenous scholars and communities engage in biological research and professions. AISES in partnership with three closely aligned biological professional societies: Botanical Society of America, Ecological Society of America, and Entomological Society of America, will form a Steering Committee to: 1) assess the current status of Indigenous

inclusion within the organizations, 2) address structural barriers and build Indigenous communities within the organizations, and 3) expand relationships and understanding to fundamentally improve Indigenous representation within biology research and professions. The proposed LEAPS project represents a new collaboration between AISES and BSA, ESA, and EntSoc to advance efforts among all organizations to increase the inclusion of Indigenous peoples, culture, and values in biology, recognizing the unique identities and circumstances of Indigenous peoples in the United States and the implications for education, research, and workforce development through the lens of Tribal Nation Building.

Anna Monfils and Sarah Sims serve on the Committee for Indigenous Voices. The committee had an in-person meeting in April to establish the purpose and outline for the survey. The committee currently meets every other week for 1 hour to revise the survey. The survey will likely be ready for distribution to the partnering societies' memberships this fall. AISES will host an Indigenous Botanists Gathering at the BOTANY Conference in Anchorage to engage attendees, introduce the grant, and build community.

Development of DEAI Resources – Accessibility webpage:

Diversity and inclusion are core values of the Botanical Society of America; this includes accessibility for people with disabilities. In an effort to help all presenters make their presentations more accessible to BOTANY conference participants with a variety of disabilities we've created a brief guide on our new [accessibility webpage](#). While it currently focuses on tips for accessible presentations, this page will be maintained and continually updated with other useful information for botanists related to accessibility and disability justice.

2022-2023 planning:

Current and incoming committee members were all invited to a virtual Zoom meeting June 26th to discuss the planning of the upcoming Botany2022 in Alaska. We have a post-Botany meeting planned for late September.

Submitted by Chelsea Specht, DEI Chair
July 2022

Appendix I: BSA members and affiliates engaged in Movement Consultant training through R&S.

Theresa Smid	businessoffice@aspt.net	Current
Sarah Sims	ssims@botany.org	Current
Amy McPherson	amcpherson@botany.org	Current
Heather Cacanindin	hcacanindin@botany.org	Current
Catrina Adams	cadams@botany.org	Current
Daniel Spalink	dspalink@tamu.edu	Expired
Chelsea D Specht	cgspecht@cornell.edu	Current
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Austin Mast	amast@fsu.edu	Current
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Muriel E. Poston	muriel_poston@pitzer.edu	Current
Leslie Holland	laholland@wisc.edu	Expired