

Spring 2019: Student Representatives Board Report

The Botanical Society of America

Officers

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This year's report is broken down in five main categories. These categories are (i) Membership, (ii) Conference Summary, (iii) Communication, (iv) Grants Trends and lastly an overview of our (v) Future Aspirations.

I. Membership

As BSA continues to age, its members are staying young! We would like to recognize the hard work that the society has done over the years to ensure that the needs of student members are being met. It is membership accessible to students by providing memberships to students at a discounted rate, keeping the cost of student memberships affordable and urging professional members of the society to gift memberships to their students. We hope this commitment will continue as a means of building a strong body of members for the future! Although student membership is in a good place, we believe that there is always room for improvement. We would like to thank Amelia Neely for helping us outline the current trends and status of BSA's student membership.

Below is a graph of student membership over the last 15 years. The bars are the total number of students and the line graph represents the proportion of students to the total number of members of the society. Over the last couple of years, there have been an increase and decline in student members, but there has been an increase in total membership from last year just over these last couple of months.

Graph 1: Student membership over the last 15 years.



Table 1 shows the breakdown of current members. This table shows new members, current members, and members who are on their grace period. There are many members in their “grace” period, but this is normal since most student will renew for the conference or during grant submission. You can see this from **Table 2** which shows quarterly renewal of membership. The last table, **Table 3** shows the total number members with US-citizenships versus non-US-citizenship. This table shows there are ~15% of student members that are not US-citizen, but a category we are interested in increasing.

Table 1: This is an overview of the different types of membership.

Membership Type	Student	Student Family	Student Chapter	Totals
New since Oct	158	0	3	161
Current	166	0	8	174
Grace, exp Dec 2018	389	2	24	415
Totals	713	2	35	750

Current, New, Grace as of 2-22-19

Table 2: Membership by Purchase Date.

	Earlier	4th Qtr 2017	1st Qtr 2018	2nd Qtr 2018	3rd Qtr 2018	4th Qtr 2019	1st Qtr 2019	
	<=Sept 2017	Oct-Dec	Jan-Mar	Apr-Jun	Jul-Sep	Oct- Dec	Jan-Today	N/A**
Gift Memb.	10	46	40	17	15	39	34	0
Reg. Memb	37	62	104	89	21	91	73	25
Totals	47	108	144	106	36	130	107	25

**N/A = There is no dollar amounts associated with these membership. This student members were given to PLANTS recipients as a multi-year memberships.

Table 3: Membership by US Citizenship.

Membership Type	# In US	# Out of US	# N/A*	Totals
Student	543	111	47	701
Student Family	1	1	0	2
Total				703

*N/A = no country associated with record

II. Conference Summary

This section first gives a summary of Botany 2018 followed by an update of the planning of Botany 2019. First, we would like to thank Johanne Stogran for all her hard work in planning the conference and helping us summarize the numbers from last year's conference.

BOTANY 2018

Last year was a very successful conference, with many different student-focused events! At Botany 2018 there was 406 student attendees (37% of total attendees). This number is similar to BOTANY 2017 which was ~40% student attendees. Although the overall percentage of students was less than last year, there was an increase of 130 students. Ensuring that these students got the most out of BOTANY, there were several different student focused activities. Below is more information about each activity.

Conference Activities: I. Skill Building Workshops

- 1) *The Elevator Speech: Crafting an Effective Pitch that Highlights your Research and Illustrates the Broader Impacts:* Working with Amanda Grusz, **21 registered attendees** worked on honing their elevator speech for the conference. Dr. Grusz started the workshop off with helpful tips, followed by participations practicing. This workshop ended up being a small, intimate workshop that provided the attendees a safe place to practice their speeches in a friendly, low-risk environment.
- 2) *Job Search Transparency: Learning the Unwritten Rules to Land your Dream Job:* Our diverse group of panelists, Rob Labort, Jason T. Cantley, Allison Miller, and Ya Yang, enlightened an audience of **51 registered students** by answering questions about the job application process. Although the goal of this workshop was to help young professionals navigate and move forward from graduate school or postdoctoral positions on a positive career trajectory, we found that most of our audience was comprised of undergraduates. **If this workshop is offered again, we suggest there should be a panelist that does not have a PhD.**
- 3) *Applying to Graduate School: (51 Registered Students)* Unlike the other two workshops listed above, this was not a BSA student representative hosted workshop, but we wanted to highlight the importance of this workshop with the high attendance.

Conference Activities: II. Networking Building

- 1) *Undergraduate Networking Event: (75 Registered Attendees)* This was the 2nd Annual Undergraduate Networking Event hosted by Gordon Uno. During the mixer, the BSA Student Representatives introduced themselves and hosted a get-to-know-you Bingo, with the ten winners receiving tickets to the Student Involvement in Botany Luncheon – A Focus on Botanical Career Opportunities.

- 2) *Botany Luncheon – A Focus on Botanical Career Opportunities: (68 Registered Attendees)* Our keynote speaker Susan Pell wowed the crowd with her fascinating career path and her ability to engage with the a diverse group of community members, and we walked away learning about paper folding activities. Additionally, our career panelists encompassed a wide swathe of professions that included different NGO's, smaller academic institutions, and non-academic sectors. **However, most likely due to the additional tickets given at the Undergraduate Networking Event, we were short of a table that was added last minute. We would also like to include more vegan/vegetarian/gluten-free options for the lunch.**
- 3) *Student Social: (102 Registered Attendees)* BOTANY 2018 Student Social was at a private venue known as Ground Rounds. This private, spacious venue provided students the opportunity to network freely by knowing that everyone was part of the conference. We are extremely grateful for the work that Johanne put into organizing this event and for the sponsorship from Wiley to make it all happen. We found it beneficial to have AJB staff and editors at this event to showcase the society journals.

Looking ahead to BOTANY 2019

We have started to plan several BSA student rep. events for this upcoming year. Below is a little information about these events.

- 1) *Professional Writing: Covering Personal Statements, Research Statements, and Teaching Statements:* This workshop's goal is to provide the skills required for writing a competitive personal statement, research statement, and/or teaching statement. In the workshop, participants will learn from experienced faculty members about all facets of writing a good statement, including drafting strategies, how to be articulate and concise, how to show one's experience and confidence, and other important suggestions. Gordon Uno will provide his professional expertise along with Arizona University writing professional Nick Cenegy. **We are hoping to find a REU program director that would talk about crafting a personal statement.**
- 2) *Undergraduate Networking Event:* We plan to do a get-to-know-you bingo this year as well, with ten tickets given to attend the Botany Career Luncheon. **REQUEST: We would like 10 tickets to give away to undergraduate for the Botany Career Luncheon.**
- 3) *Botany Career Luncheon:* Betsy Arnold from University of Arizona has agreed to be our keynote speaker of this year, and we believe her engaging presentation style and diverse experience and background can provide students with inspirations and encouragement.
- 4) *Section Awards at BOTANY:* There are several different student awards given out at conferences, **but many students don't know about these awards.** We would like to

make a few changes to help increase the awareness of these awards. **REQUEST: We would like to have all the sections and awards listed before students choose the section that they will be presenting with. We would like to make a tweet-able pdf that will advertise for these different awards. If it's possible, we would like to have section leaders to send out emails to students and PIs to remind them about the awards.**

- 5) *Connecting with other Society Student Representatives:* Understanding that there are several different societies at BOTANY, we want to interface with other society student representatives. This could be easy as a coffee break, but we would like help identifying the societies with student representatives. **REQUEST: The BSA student representatives want help identifying other participating BOTANY societies student representatives so that we can share best practices and coordinate activities.**

III. Communication

Social Media:

Social media is one of the most important ways for us to stay connected with our members, and its significance will only keep growing in the coming years, **especially for recruiting new student members**. We recognize an unfortunate fact that many undergraduates and incoming/first year graduate students have no advice and guidance for which professional societies to join, and most of them will only end up joining one or two societies that are related to their interest/research due to limited funding. For many of those students, the way to know a society and to believe that joining this society will benefit his/her professional life is to see their society's official twitter/FB account post, what other people share and retweet about this society, as well as people's comments. We believe there can be a number of ways for us to use our BSA social media to actively engage with our current members and recruit new members:

- 1) *Diversifying Hashtags on Social Media Outlets:* Besides #Botany2019 for the conference in general, we hope to use these hashtags to initiated a series of online events before/during/after the conference for people to engage, interact, and spread the news. Successful examples can be found in Evolution conferences, in which students were encouraged to tweet and share images/photos of their research as if they were chosen to be cover images of journals, and it was very popular. **We will work with representatives of other societies participating in Botany conference, and propose a more detailed plan of what to create and how to promote in the next Board Meeting.**
- 2) *Diversifying Post to have More Interactive Information:* Currently, BSA official accounts mainly post updates about the society, share publications from AJB/APB, and sometimes news articles about plants. These are all very important things to post, but it also sets a serious tone of the official page. By sharing more diverse and "goofy" posts, such as sharing ongoing research progress and outreach/teaching efforts from members, can boost the numbers of likes and shares of the posts, and therefore make it

to be seen by more people. Also, a simple “like” or “retweet” from an official account usually is enough to secure a loyal member — my society is paying attention to me and promoting me.

We want to thank Rich Hund for his hard work managing the social media accounts and willingness to tweet anything we send his way. We also want to recognize that it takes times and effort to manage social media accounts, and we would like to work with different branches of BSA in making this happen. **We would like to create a Student Social Media Liaison position. We would be willing to create a job description for this position.**

Newsletters & the PSB Student Section:

Over the course of each year, we disseminate information to students about society news, upcoming events, and important deadlines through student newsletters (via e-mail) as well as the Student Section of the Plant Science Bulletin. Our last two articles had a central focus on BSA membership. Our fall article “*Why do societies matter? How, as a student, can I benefit from them?*” highlighted the importance of BSA along with an interview of Minya. The spring student section included two different articles, “Roundup of Student Opportunities” written by BSA student representatives and “Establishing a BSA Student Chapter at our University” written by BSA student members, Michelle L. Gaynor and Simone Lim-Hing.

Following up with Past BSA Students:

As BSA updates botany.org, we want to use this opportunity to establish a section that’s specifically for students to provide information not only about the benefits of being a student member of BSA, but also various aspects relating to students’ lives. We are hoping to establish a routine to actively maintain and update the pages as well.

One of our main goals is to update the “[Botany from students' perspectives](#)”, which featured some of our former student members but has not been updated for many years. In an effort to rejuvenate this section, we plan to update the page and feature more students on a more regular bases (e.g. twice/three times a year, featuring two/three students each time). This will be a great way to help students to promote themselves and stay connected. Furthermore, we tried to contact all the previously featured students on the page, and asked them to write up an update about their lives -- this will be a new “**BSA student member: Then & Now**” part of the page. We asked them to talk about the path they took from being a student to where are they now, and how being a member of BSA have helped along this path, what is their day to day life like, and maybe some advices or comments to our student members (including undergrads and grad students) that will be reading it. So far, five people have already agreed to write the update for us.

IV. Grants and Resources

Over the last five years the BSA student representatives have curated and published available grants that student can apply to help fund their research. Inlight of the increase in funding from the BSA we want to highlight some trends in available grant funds and fellowships for students. While the grant funds that are available have decreased, in part because of NSF programs being terminated and few grants have decreases over that last couple of years. **While**

BSA has increased its grant over this last year, as students of the society, we hope this growth continues to original goal for \$2500 for graduate students. We should also start a discussion around increasing the BSA Undergraduate Awards to \$500. This increase would make BSA grant competitive and comparable to the other grants available for Botany students.

Table 4: A Summary of Grands/Awards from the last five years.

Grant/Award	2015	2017	2018	2019
BSA Graduate Student Research Awards	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$1,500
BSA Undergraduate Student Research Awards	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200
Cross-Disciplinary Training Grant	\$3,500	Discontinued		
EDEN Research Exchange	\$3,000	Discontinued		
NSF Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant	\$13,000	\$13,000	Discontinued	
Torrey Botanical Society Fellowships and Awards	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Prairie Biotic Research Small Grants	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,500
The Lewis and Clark Fund for Field Research	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
ASPT Graduate Student Research Grants	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000
Richard Evans Schultes Research Award	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500
Sigma Xi Grants-in-Aid of Research	\$1,000	\$2,500	\$1,000	\$1,000
Young Explorers Grant	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000
Systematics Research Fund	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$1,500
The Exploration Fund Grant	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$2,500
The Arnold Arboretum Awards for Student Research	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
Garden Club of America Scholarships	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$8,000
Average Grant:	\$4,138	\$4,371	\$3,592	\$3,246
Median	\$3,250	\$3,750	\$2,500	\$2,500
Total number of grants	16	14	13	13

V. Future Aspirations

During this report, we highlight some changes we would like to make to improve the BSA student membership experience, but below is a brief summary.

Engaging Members: While about half of the student members will attend BOTANY, we understand that many are unable due to financial needs, field work, or any other reason. Our goal is engage our student members outside of the conferences.

Social media:

- 1) Create Student Social Media Liaison positions that can focus on engaging students on social media by diversifying the (1) hashtags used and (2) content posted.
- 2) Better use of BSA student page and creating new content that can be added during the update of the new website.

Continue to Increase BSA Grants:

- 1) Continue to reach the original goal for \$2500 for graduate students and start a discussion to increase the BSA Undergraduate Awards to \$500.

Enhancing the BOTANY Experience:

- 1) Give away 10 tickets to the Botany Career Luncheon during the Undergraduate Mixer.
- 2) Increase awareness of section awards by (1) providing a list for students to choose the section they will be presenting within, (2) creating a tweet-able pdf advertising for these different awards, and if it's possible, (3) we would like to have section leaders send out emails to students and PIs to remind them about the awards.
- 3) Help with identifying other societies student representatives.
- 4) Better connection of art and science in an effort to fight plant blindness. Can we print out some award winner photos (e.g. submissions from Triarch Botanical Images and also AJB cover photos) and showcase them in the poster venue?