

Membership and Communications Report

2021 March Board Meeting

Amelia Neely – Membership & Communications Manager

Membership Overview

	as of 3/1/21		3/1/20		All of 2020		All of 2019		2018		2017		2016	
	2021	% of Total	2020	% of Total	2020	% of Total	2019	% of Total	2018	% of Total	2017	% of Total	2016	% of Total
Corresponding	69	2.9%	69	2.9%	69	2.2%	69	2.3%	65	2.2%	68	2.3%	63	2.0%
Life	95	4.0%	90	3.8%	94	3.0%	87	2.9%	76	2.6%	69	2.4%	60	1.9%
Emeritus	301	12.8%	285	12.1%	299	9.5%	283	9.4%	280	9.5%	281	9.6%	262	8.4%
E Family	43	1.8%	41	1.7%	43	1.4%	39	1.3%	39	1.3%	38	1.3%	36	1.2%
Retired	58	2.5%	59	2.5%	73	2.3%	66	2.2%	65	2.2%	53	1.8%	49	1.6%
R Family	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%	2	0.1%	0	0.0%	4	0.1%	4	0.1%
3 Yr Professional	274	11.6%	264	11.3%	289	9.2%	300	9.9%	242	8.2%	178	6.1%		0.0%
3 Yr Prof Family	20	0.8%	18	0.8%	22	0.7%	20	0.7%	17	0.6%		0.0%		0.0%
Professional	628	26.7%	679	28.9%	857	27.3%	881	29.1%	984	33.5%	1050	36.0%	1305	41.8%
P Family	89	3.8%	97	4.1%	103	3.3%	111	3.7%	129	4.4%	145	5.0%	173	5.5%
CC Professional	26	1.1%	33	1.4%	41	1.3%	38	1.3%	34	1.2%	44	1.5%	46	1.5%
CC Family	0	0.0%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	2	0.1%	4	0.1%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Postdoc*	19	0.8%			15	0.5%								
PostDoc	83	3.5%	98	4.2%	158	5.0%	159	5.3%	173	5.9%	173	5.9%	207	6.6%
PD Family	0	0.0%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	3	0.1%	1	0.0%	2	0.1%
3 Yr Student	153	6.5%	101	4.3%	144	4.6%	94	3.1%		0.0%		0.0%		0.0%
Student	383	16.3%	378	16.1%	713	22.7%	692	22.9%	643	21.9%	630	21.6%	751	24.0%
S Family	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%	3	0.1%	5	0.2%
S Chapter	9	0.4%	13	0.6%	21	0.7%	22	0.7%	34	1.2%	37	1.3%	41	1.3%
K-12 Teachers	7	0.3%	8	0.3%	14	0.4%	12	0.4%	15	0.5%	13	0.4%	19	0.6%
Affiliate	14	0.6%	14	0.6%	30	1.0%	22	0.7%	24	0.8%	33	1.1%	38	1.2%
Associate	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	2	0.1%	5	0.2%	3	0.1%
Amateur	34	1.4%	41	1.7%	59	1.9%	51	1.7%	60	2.0%	64	2.2%	58	1.9%
Developing Nations	49	2.1%	50	2.1%	89	2.8%	69	2.3%	52	1.8%	24	0.8%		0.0%
	2354		2346		3142		3024		2941		2917		3124	
Professional	1754	74.5%	1791	76.3%	2161	68.8%	2130	70.4%	2161	73.5%	2132	73.1%	2209	70.7%
Student	545	23.2%	492	21.0%	878	27.9%	808	26.7%	679	23.1%	670	23.0%	797	25.5%
Other	55	2.3%	63	2.7%	103	3.3%	86	2.8%	101	3.4%	115	3.9%	118	3.8%
<i>Growth/Decline</i>	2354		2346		3142		3024		2941		2917		3124	
	as of 3/1/21		as of 3/1/20		as of 1/1/21									

2020 vs 2019 Membership Comparison

Comparing 2020 to 2019, membership numbers went up slightly by 118 members. Most membership categories had a slight increase except for the Professional members, which fell by 41. Considering that the majority of 2020 was affected greatly by the COVID pandemic we are very pleased with the outcome and our numbers are continuing the trend since 2017 of an upward trajectory. No doubt the pivot to a very successful virtual conference last year helped keep our numbers stable during the pandemic.

YTD Comparison

Comparing 2020 and 2021 end of February membership data we can see that we are pretty much exactly where we were at this time last year with 8 more members in 2021. The comparison of end of February data is significant, March being the one-year anniversary of the start of many of the COVID caused closures and other abrupt disruptions and therefore February is a good indicator of what a typical membership total would be. So far this year we are feeling confident of our membership totals.

Membership Category Highlights 2020 vs 2019:

- There was an increase of 7 new **Life members** who took advantage of our one-time cost to stay members in perpetuity.
- The **Developing Nations** category grew by 20 members (~ 22% growth), continuing to show the importance of offering this membership level to developing country members.
- **Postdoc Members** have increased by 14 (~ 9% increase) with 15 taking advantage of the new **3-Year Postdoc membership option** which was started on October 1, 2020. The increase has reversed the downward trend that was seen for several years. We expect to see more 3-Year Postdoc memberships as we go through the rest of this membership season.
- **Student membership** numbers continued to increase in 2020, adding 70 members over the year before.
 - 144 Student members have taken advantage of the **3-Year Student membership category** compared to 94 in 2019 (about 35% growth).
 - There have been 441 **New Student members** in 2020, which is about 50% of our student member total.
 - With strong new Student member growth continuing this year we **will be focused on renewing Student members** to keep them in the BSA community throughout their career. Here are some ways we will do that:
 - Strong Student Social Media Presence
 - Student driven communications by the BSA Student Reps
 - Student centered resources during Botany 2021 – Virtual
 - Consideration of student needs for upcoming website redesign
 - Adjusting awards and programs that we already have in place to promote students and support their needs
 - Continue to promote Gift Memberships for Students
 - Include Student Specific questions in an exit survey to assess why they are not renewing
 - The issue of retaining our Student members was presented at the **January 2021 Strategic Planning** meeting and taken into consideration when strategic priorities were discussed. Future planning, including assessing via exit surveys and other avenues the reasons for the loss of Student members, as well as mitigating efforts once the issues are uncovered, will help in our efforts to keep Student members within the BSA community.
 - The 2020 3-month **Gift Membership Drive** was a great success. We exceeded our goal of 175 purchased gift memberships with a total of 189. Gift recipients who started their membership by a certain time were entered into a drawing for a free Botany Conference registration for 2021. This year **we were able to give out three conference registrations**

due to the conference being virtual, two to students and one to a developing nations member. Their photos can be seen in the January 2021 *Membership Matters* newsletter.

- **Professional Members** (Professional, 3-Year Professional and Professional Family) decreased by 41 members (about a 3% decrease) in 2020 compared to 2019. As seen in past years, this category renews at a very high rate but we do not have the new members needed to keep this category growing (only 7% were new members in 2020).
 - The issue of obtaining new Professional members was presented at the **January 2021 Strategic Planning** meeting and taken into consideration when strategic priorities were discussed. Future planning, including ways to attract new Professional members, will hopefully grow this membership group going forward.
 - Professional members are asked each year to consider **a membership fee increase of \$25 per year**. This additional amount goes toward the **Graduate Student Research Award fund**. In the 2020 fiscal year (Oct 1, 2019 through Sept. 30, 2020) **\$24,450** was raised by Professional members opting-in to this membership fee increase. A total of 648 1-Year and 110 3-Year Professional members opted-in to the increase. In 2020 we were able to give out 25 GSRA awards. Due to the continued generosity of the Professional members, as well as the unexpected availability of funds due to our virtual conferences in 2020 and 2021, we are very excited to be able to give out 40 GSRA awards for 2021.

BSA eCommunications

Our 2020 *Membership Matters* eNewsletters **averaged an open rate of 48.4%** which is almost 5% higher than 2019 and outstanding compared to the industry standard of around 30%. This high interest indicates that the monthly eNewsletter is seen as a great benefit to our members and has consistently included relevant and useful information to our member base. A newsletter survey was sent to members in November of 2020 which confirmed these assumptions and led to the addition of a table of contents starting in the January 2021 edition.

In 2020 we continued to send **monthly eTocs for *AJB* and *APPS*** with an amazing **open rate of 49.2%**, a rate slightly increased over 2019, and showing the incredible value that our members find receiving eTocs from BSA. We also started sending out **eTocs for the *Plant Science Bulletin*** with the inaugural issue garnering an impressive **48.6% open rate**.

Other Updates

- I have taken over the responsibility for the SEB database from Heather now that it has been transitioned to CiviCRM.
- I continue to update BSA and SEB websites as needed.
- I work with SEB and SSE on their eCommunications and renewal needs.
- I worked with Rob to update SSE and SEB CiviCRM online renewal forms for 2020-2021 renewal season.

Social Media Report

In October 2019 we hired our first two Student Social Media Liaisons. The Liaisons' responsibilities include BSA's social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as continuing to update the Student Liaison Handbook. They also worked closely with BSA staff, BSA Student Representatives, and members of our publications' Early Career Advisory Board to promote the BSA publications, events, and projects such as the 2020 SciComm Initiative during Botany 2020 – Virtual. It was decided in 2020 that we would switch the position from 2 annual positions to 2 two-year staggered positions to help with the transition to new liaisons each year. Below are the reports from the two current Student Social Media Liaisons, Jared Meek, in charge of Twitter, who is finishing his two years in September 2021, and Sonal Gupta, who started working with us in October 2020 and is in charge of the Facebook and Instagram accounts.

Sonal Gupta's Report:

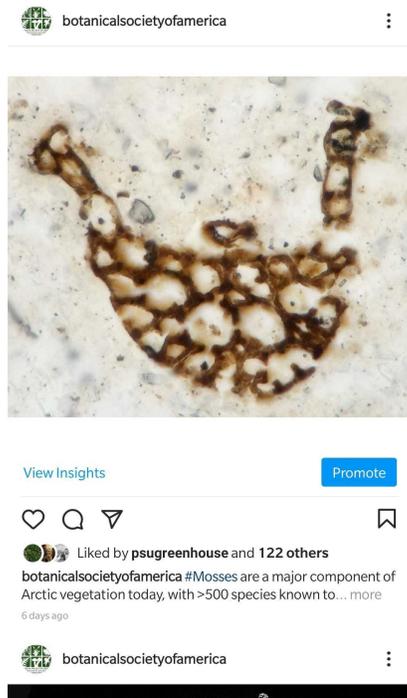
In my role as the new Facebook/Instagram Student Social Media Liaison, I started the **#BSASpotlightSeries** initiative to highlight **early career scientists** in the BSA community. The spotlight series aims to share both scientific goals and achievements, as well as personal interests of the botanical scientists, so we can get to know our BSA community better. The posts seem to be doing well in the community (with ~50 likes on both Instagram and Facebook). So far, we have gotten over 14 nominations, and 9 of these so far show interest in being highlighted. We hope to post 2 Spotlights per month. There is also a webpage where you can see the current and past Spotlight Series participants: <https://botany.org/home/careers-jobs/careers-in-botany/bsa-spotlight-series.html>

Instagram has reached beyond 2000 followers (currently at 2122 followers) and has increased by 362 followers since October 2020, gaining about 70 followers each month. Although it is more difficult to create posts for this platform due to its use of images, posts with science images (for example papers recently published in BSA journals) seem to be getting the highest traction, on average receiving likes from 150 followers. We have been aiming for 2-3 posts per week on average.

Recently, I have been trying to post **stories on Instagram** (a feature that enables you to share multiple photos/videos as a slideshow and then it is removed after 24 hours) regarding cool plants/science since these are quicker alternatives for our audience and I am considering posting all our posts as additional stories too. This could serve as a quick survey to see whether our posts reach more people, which I suspect would be the case.

Our **Facebook** following has increased by 1140 from this time last year totaling 33,739 followers. The number of followers per month seem to be low, however, averaging only about 50 per month since last October. I am not quite sure why this is happening and there does not seem to be a particular post trend associated with this. Per week we have been posting 3-5 posts, with an average reach of 2643 and 153 engagements (click/reactions/comments/shares) on each post. Hopefully, with

Botany2021 coming up soon, we will start getting more visits on our page and posts. Facebook/Instagram Post Examples



Example Post



Example Spotlight Post



Example IG Story_1



Example IG Story_2

Jared Meek's Report:

The Botanical Society of America's **Twitter** account has gained 2,876 new followers since July 2020, which is an average of 360 new followers per month. As seen below, a significant portion of these new followers showed up during July due to the interest in **#BlackBotanistsWeek** and the **virtual Botany 2020 conference**, which led to us passing the important **10K follower threshold**! The interest in BSA's Twitter content has remained consistent throughout the subsequent months, generating at least 250 new followers per month. In total, since hiring the Social Media Liaisons in October 2019, our Twitter presence has grown 53% from 7,932 followers to 12,176 (with a goal to reach 15K by October 2021). The BSA Twitter account continues to be a great resource for sharing journal articles, grant opportunities, and for facilitating networking opportunities between plant scientists, especially students and early-career researchers. We are excited to see how the new BSA Spotlight Series affects social media engagement.

